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Experiences and Perceptions of Instructional Lead Teachers on Improving Teacher Quality

Maryam Thomas
Walden University

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Walden University

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Maryam Aziza Thomas

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Review Committee

Dr. Sunddip Aguilar, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Michelle McCraney, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Mary Howe, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2020

Abstract

Experiences and Perceptions of Instructional Lead Teachers on Improving Teacher

Quality

by

Maryam Aziza Thomas

MEd, Trinity University, 2008

BA, North Carolina Central University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2020

Abstract

Research suggests that instructional coaching enhances a teacher's instructional quality thereby improving students' chances for academic success. Instructional Lead Teachers (ILTs) are positioned within a Northeastern school district to improve instructional quality via a coaching paradigm; however, it is unclear how ILTs influence teachers' instructional practices. The purpose of this bounded multisite qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of ILTs regarding their instructional support responsibilities and practices in improving instructional quality. Grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory, the research questions addressed ILT perspectives of their influence on teachers' instructional practices and identified supports ILTs need to increase their effectiveness. Ten ILTs, who served in middle schools, participated in semistructured interviews and 4 were selected for observations. Data were thematically analyzed using open and axial coding. ILTs believed they served as an authority to provide instructional support, their work was important to improve student achievement, coaching strategies changed teachers' classroom management skills, and noninstructional duties interfered with their coaching responsibilities. They identified support from administration, structure for the position, and more training are needed to be effective ILTs. The results of the study were used to create a coaching structure and 3-day professional development designed to address the specific needs of ILTs. These endeavors may contribute to positive social change by helping district administrators provide ILTs with the structure and training needed to effectively influence teacher practice thus improving the educational outcomes of students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the women in my family, past and present. To my foremothers – Allie J. Parker, Mildred D. Benton, Emma Finch, Ava Harris, Mary Benton and Sallie O. Cannon Weaks – I derive my resilience, love and loyalty to family from the strength you've passed down and the burdens you bore.

To my mother, Ava Joyce “Zubaidah” Parker, the ultimate educator, whose endless nights and time spent curating learning experiences for children, inspired my own curiosity and imagination; this moment is the fulfillment of your own journey and I am honored to carry your torch.

To my sisters Sabriyah, Karima, Zubaidah, Fatima, and Hadiyah whose unbridled love and support provide energy for me when I am weary and laughter as the theme music to my life. I am because of you all.

To my three heartbeats, my daughters – Imani, Iesha and Aya - anything imaginable is possible. Persistence, resilience, adaptability and belief are the ingredients to success. Bet on yourself always. Seek knowledge and balance for fulfillment. I dedicate this work to your future dreams.

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Section 1: The Problem

New educational standards, such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and New Generation Science Standards (NGSS), as well as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) policy, call for schools and teachers to reform practices to meet new demands for educational quality (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). New standards for learning, exposed the faltering academics of students across the nation. In a Northeastern state, students have struggled to master grade level standards in literacy and mathematics. According to the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), more than 60% of eighth grade students in the Northeastern state, scored below proficiency standards in both reading and mathematics (The Nations Report Card, 2018). These scores were relatively the same in 2015, which suggest no growth within the 2-year time span.

In the XYZ district, a pseudonym for the district that I will study, most students are performing well below proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. In 2017, the Northeastern state assessments indicated that approximately 29% of students in Grades 6-8 met or exceeded state level standards in reading and less than 15% met or exceeded standards in mathematics. These scores are comparable to previous years. To address the poor academic performance of students, the district identified training a high performing workforce as a priority in the 5-year strategic plan. To that end, the district provides principals the option of hiring an ILT, whose primary responsibility is to improve the pedagogical practice of teachers at a specific school site. According to a principal within

the district, ILTs are a common position that reports directly to principals, are a part of school staff, and, therefore, understand the specific needs of teachers within the building.

Researchers agree that changing policies in education have narrowed the focus on the role of the teacher in increasing student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Fuller, Hollingsworth, & Pendola, 2017; Harris, 2012; Weiss & McGuinn, 2016). Therefore, teachers must continuously retool their approaches to instruction to learn new ways to respond to new standards and demands for student achievement (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). In a rank list, resulting from meta-analyses of over 800 factors affecting student achievement, the domains of *teacher* and *teacher practices* were cited 14 times in the top 23 highest influences on student achievement (Hattie, 2008). The positive correlation between teacher practices and student achievement has resulted in school district administrators seeking better ways to focus on improving teacher practices. As a result of these understandings, the XYZ district provided the option of hiring an ILT to improve teacher practices, ultimately to improve student achievement. Teaching is an ever-changing field, requiring continuous and relevant training to keep up with new demands. Yoon et al. (2007) cited the correlation between teacher learning and student learning, noting that teacher professional learning improves a teacher's capacity to teach through additional skills, knowledge, and techniques. Teacher learning is, therefore, necessary to address the changing demands of educational policies.

The Local Problem

The key to improving student achievement scores lies within the quality of instruction provided by teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Fuller et al., 2017; Goodwin

et al., 2015; Mincu, 2015). The problem at the XYZ district was that despite the adoption of the ILT position, it was unclear how this role had influenced teacher practice. This was especially true at ABC Middle School (a pseudonym) that provided two ILT positions to support teachers. Although the XYZ district was underperforming as a school district, the students at ABC Middle School were performing well below XYZ district averages for performance in both reading and mathematics for seventh and eighth grade students. In 2017, only 15% of students met proficiency in reading and 0% in mathematics, as measured by state assessments. The gap in practice was the discrepancy between (a) what research constitutes as the role and practices enacted by instructional coaches and (b) what may not be happening.

In a state-mandated master plan, the XYZ district has identified coaching (including mentoring) as a solution and strategy for improving teacher quality and developing a highly effective workforce. The XYZ district has dedicated two teacher support programs to improve teacher quality. The district offers a mentoring program for 1st year teachers and a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program that provides underperforming nontenured teachers with differentiated coaching. Both teacher support programs focus on improving the instructional practices of teachers with less than 3 years of experience; however, there were no programs for teachers with more than 3 years. ILTs were therefore charged with supporting the instructional practices of all teachers including those with 3 or more years' experience.

According to an instructional director and principal within the district, principals in the XYZ district hire ILTs to directly improve the instructional practices of teachers

within their buildings. The use of ILTs in schools allows for in-house continuous coaching and professional development to improve teacher capacity. However, according to a literacy specialist within the district, the role and support for ILTs are at the discretion of the building principal and therefore, ILTs may find themselves with additional responsibilities outside of teacher coaching. Kane and Rosenquist (2018) noted that instructional coaches often lack the time necessary to fulfill their responsibilities as they have myriad noninstructional responsibilities.

According to literature, instructional coaching was used as a high leverage strategy to improve teacher capacity and thus student achievement (Kurz, Reddy, & Glover, 2017; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Instructional coaching includes key practices revolving around curricular and instructional approaches to teaching. These practices may include modeling lessons, deepening content knowledge, observing and providing feedback, and supporting specific teaching practices (Kurz, Reddy & Glover, 2017; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). The XYZ district job description of the ILT was consistent with the key practices of an instructional coach. Researchers agree noting that lead teachers enact instructional coaching responsibilities (Galluci et al., 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Neumerski, 2012) thus making the term synonymous.

The XYZ district defined the role of an ILT as those teachers who receive additional time during the day to support, lead, and assist with the enhancement of the instructional program within schools. Further, the district charged ILTs with leading in the areas of curriculum, district initiatives, assessments, and pedagogy. The full duties of an ILT in the XYZ School District ILT are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

XYZ School District ILT Job Description

ILT Job Responsibilities and Duties
Provide program orientation and support newly hired teachers
Lead collaborative planning based on student assessment data
Lead the development and implementation of common and formative assessment in core content areas
Report and consult regularly with school's principal
Communicate orally and in written text
Model best practices for teachers as required
Conduct non-evaluative observations and provide feedback to teachers

The use of an instructional coach has been found to directly increase teacher quality (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). In a longitudinal study of coaching practices in an urban environment with disadvantaged and diverse learners, Teemant (2014) found that coaching transformed the practices of teachers as much as 1 year after the coaching ended. Further, teachers participating in the program cited coaching as helping them to improve their instruction through learning how to differentiate instruction, effectively run small groups, improve questioning and discussion skills, increase student engagement, and reach their diverse learners.

Despite a district-wide focus on improving teacher quality, the XYZ schools continue to struggle with low and/or stagnant literacy and mathematics achievement

scores. Data regarding the effectiveness of professional learning opportunities in the district have not been collected. Specifically, the perceptions and experiences of ILTs have not been analyzed. The lack of academic progress in the district supports the need to study this problem to reverse the current academic trend and bring about sustainable improvement for the XYZ district.

Rationale

Evidence of Problem at the Local Level

In the strategic plan, the XYZ district has outlined training a high performing workforce as one of five strategic goals in a plan to ensure outstanding academic achievement for all students. Currently 71% and 85% of students are performing below grade level standards on reading and mathematics, respectively, as measured Northeastern state assessments. Moreover, a review of middle school performance over the last 3 years show little to no improvement (see Table 2 for reading performance and Table 3 for mathematics performance).

Table 2

Percentage of Middle School Students Meeting or Exceeding Reading Benchmarks

Grade	2015	2016	2017
6	23.5%	25.2%	23.9%
7	27.7%	32.3%	31.5%
8	24.7%	25.8%	24%

Note: The data reflect XYZ district performance on the Northeastern state assessment.

Table 3

Percentage of Middle School Students Meeting or Exceeding Mathematics Benchmarks

Grade	2015	2016	2017
6	12.7%	16.1%	14.4%
7	12%	≤5%	12.6%
8	11.2%	15.8%	9%

Note: The data reflect XYZ district performance on the Northeastern state assessment.

According to the XYZ district's master plan, coaching and PD are identified professional learning strategies to build teacher capacity to improve student achievement (2016). Ellsworth, Glassett, and Shaha (2015) stated that sustained professional learning positively influences student achievement. Instructional coaching has been a widely accepted form of PD used to improve teacher practices (Fuller et al., 2017; Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis, 2016; Kurz et al., 2017; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). ILTs are situated within the XYZ School District to increase the professional capacity of teachers by providing job-embedded coaching and PD as a part of their role.

Wenner and Campbell (2017) suggested that understanding the role of an instructional coach may not be automatic; those in charge of increasing teacher capacity must receive training on how to perform the role. An assistant principal in the district revealed that training agendas for ILTs show that the district offers content-only training sessions in which concepts, curricula, and literacy embedded tasks are addressed.

Further, according to a district official, because it is a school-based position, the role of

ILT can look differently in each school; some are responsible for one content or multiple areas of content, some have partial classroom responsibilities while others do not, and some are utilized as administrators or substitutes, despite the position description.

Evidence of the Problem in Literature

Student achievement has been identified as a primary focus for school districts and at the forefront of U.S. educational policies. Teachers have been identified as the most influential factor in improving achievement, therefore, improving teacher practice has remained a primary concern for school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Fuller et al., 2017; Goodwin et al., 2014; Hattie, 2008). Many school districts spend billions of dollars to implement outside programs to improve teacher quality. The use of in-house experienced leaders, such as instructional coaches, allows districts to save money and strengthen their professional communities. Therefore, districts implement instructional coaching programs to provide specific and personalized instructional support for teachers, versus old methods of workshops and training sessions (Kraft & Blazar, 2017).

Research supports the use of coaching to improve teacher performance (Kurz et al., 2017; Mangin, 2016; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Pehmer et al., 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). However, there has been inconsistent research on the role of the coach and how the preparation of instructional coaches influences their ability to improve teacher capacity (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). People responsible for building teacher capacity must have skills in communication, leadership, pedagogy, adult learning, rapport building, and leading professional development (Jacobs et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2015; Scornavacco, Boardman, & Wang, 2016; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017; Wenner & Campbell,

2017). However, Galluci et. al (2010) noted that most coaches are unprepared to assume their positions of improving others. At present, there are no documented district-sponsored efforts to guide ILTs in their role. The purpose of this study was to explore how ILTs fulfill their instructional support responsibilities, understand their perspectives and experiences regarding instructional support, and identify what supports they need to be effective.

Definition of Terms

Instructional coaching: The act of providing targeted support for the improvement of teaching and learning (Lai & Cheung, 2015).

Instructional Lead Teacher: A school-based employee who may have teaching duties assigned to them with a primary responsibility of leading teachers in improving instructional practices (ILT Job Description, 2013).

Instructional coach: An individual who provides on-site and targeted professional development to meet the needs of teachers (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Mentoring: The relational process in which skills and knowledge are provided to a person with less experience for the purpose of developing the entire person (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010).

Professional development: An approach to improving an educator's effectiveness in improving student achievement (Hirsh & Killion, 2007).

Student achievement: How a student performs in relation to an established grade level standard (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Teacher capacity: The development of skills and knowledge for the expressed purpose of improving instruction (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016).

Teacher training: A method used to provide teachers with knowledge, procedures, practice and support to implement an intervention or change in practice (Floress, Bescheta, Meyer, & Reinke, 2017).

Significance of the Study

The XYZ district is one of the largest urban school districts in the Northeastern, United States. The vision of the district centers on graduating students who are college and career ready. However, according to the district's strategic plan, the district struggles with high teacher attrition rates, a ballooning poverty rate, and low student achievement. The district has outlined academic excellence as a cornerstone goal and has focused on improving teacher effectiveness as a strategy for improving student achievement. To that end, several resources have been allocated toward improving teacher effectiveness. The ILT position was one such position that principals utilize to improve teacher effectiveness in their schools. This study may be significant because ILTs influence teacher practices which in turn will influence student achievement. Bayer (2014) offered that professional learning improves a teacher's instructional practices.

Teacher quality has been considered one of the strongest factors related to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Hattie, 2008; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015). This study may improve the practices of ILTs which will affect teacher effectiveness. Identifying practices, barriers, and needs may provide insight into how best to support ILTs in their roles so that teachers can receive the instructional support they need to

promote academic achievement. If teachers are better prepared, students may be better prepared to face the rigors of grade level exams.

The results of this study may also identify professional learning for instructional coaches so that they can be better prepared to enact their roles. This study promotes social change because the results can lead to increases in effective teaching, student achievement, and organizational effectiveness. With over 60% of the XYZ district student population receiving Free and Reduced meals, the impact of improving educational outcomes for this population may be tremendous.

Research Questions

The study's research questions (RQs) sought to understand the perspectives of ILTs as they enact their coaching responsibilities in middle schools. The RQs were designed to understand how they perceive their role and how they fulfill their instructional coaching responsibilities. The RQs that guided this qualitative case study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the ILTs' perceptions of and experiences with instructional coaching of middle school teachers?

RQ2: What instructional changes do ILTs observe in the teachers' classroom practice?

RQ3: What supports do ILTs believe they need to increase their effectiveness in providing instructional support?

Review of the Literature

In this section, I will provide the conceptual framework that grounds the study as well as a synthesis of literature pertaining to instructional coaching. For this literature review, I focused heavily on the use of Walden library online databases, specifically SAGE Online Journals, Education Research Complete, and ERIC. Occasionally, I used Google Scholar to diversify my search for current peer-reviewed literature. To guide this literature, I used the following search terms: *instructional coaching, teacher coaching, teacher quality, improving instruction, improving teacher practice, instructional practices, and student achievement*. Several themes emerged from my search: (a) the need for instructional coaching, (b) the role of coaches, (c) types of coaches/coaching models, and (d) impact of coaches. Each theme is addressed below following the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was rooted in social cognitive theory because I focused on how individuals learn from others. Social cognitive theory, developed by Albert Bandura in 1986, holds that humans engage in their own development and learning (Bandura, 2001; Pajares, 2002). Departing from previous behavior theories, social cognitive theory rejects that environmental factors influence behaviors and centers the impetus for human behavior and learning on cognition; environmental factors, according to his theory are a contextual influence on behavior (Bandura, 2001; Pajares, 2002). The theory posited that humans learn through direct observation, modeling, setting goals, planning a course of action, and reflecting on

experiences (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1989; Connolly, 2017; Pajares, 2002). Further, there are an interplay of influences that form learning – situational, interpersonal, and behavioral, thus, making learning an internal process that can be influenced externally (Fletcher, 2018).

According to Bandura (1999), modeling and observation are central to human learning because observing the actions of others informs the observer of what to do or avoid before trying for oneself. Modeling allows for one to gain new skills by observing behaviors and actions that can be recalled and used as an example for future use (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1999). Learners are more likely to retain information that was modeled and call upon that information later to serve as a guide. White (2017) likened modeling and observing to the teaching and learning process, noting that the interactive process allows learners to codify new behaviors, and when combined with feedback, strengthens retention of information. Modeling and observing are two behaviors that ILTs are responsible for enacting in accordance with their job responsibilities.

Human learning was appropriate for this study because it describes the learning needs of both teachers and ILTs. The principles and behaviors outlined by Bandura served as the main lens for interviews and observations. As indicated by research, instructional coaches enact teacher learning through modeling, observation, and feedback; these behaviors align to principles in social cognitive theory. However, the types of learning needs for ILTs who are responsible for teaching teachers were unclear. ILTs are tasked with improving the instructional practices of other teachers. Therefore, they must be able to ensure that the instructional supports and learning provided meet the

needs of the teachers they serve. Social cognitive theory outlines characteristics of learning that align to the practices of instructional coaching. Modeling, observation, goal setting, and self-direction are activities enacted by coaches leveraged for improving teacher practice. Social cognitive theory provides a guide for understanding the approaches an ILT must undertake to address the needs of their learners – teachers. The research questions I developed were grounded in social cognitive theory as they highlight the ILTs perceptions of their role, how they enact their role, as well as supports needed to address their role as learners and facilitators of learning for teachers.

Review of the Broader Problem

Improving Teacher Practices

Teachers are the most important factor when considering impact on student achievement. Quality teachers influence a student's ability to learn whereas an ineffective teacher can have a negative impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Goodwin et al., 2014; Hattie, 2008). Consequently, district leaders and policy makers have focused their educational reform efforts on improving teacher quality (Goodwin et al., 2014; Woulfin, 2017; Woulfin, 2018). PD has been considered as the solution and catalyst to improving teacher instructional practices (Goldrick, 2016). Emergent literature suggests traditional PD, such as one-time workshops, are ineffective and do not yield changes in teacher practice (Kraft & Blazar, 2016). Dudek et al. (2018) offered that traditional workshops provide limited opportunity for teachers to transfer newly learned skills into classroom practice. They further noted that teachers must be supported in implementing new skills to ensure they do not revert to old practices.

To be considered useful, PD must occur within the context of the learner, be focused, and on-going (Dudek et al., 2018; Kane & Rosenquist, 2018; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2017). Researchers have noted that PD must: (a) focus on content and materials, (b) include coaching and feedback, (c) focus on both individual and groups of teachers, (d) use adult learning theory principles, and (e) provide teachers with opportunities for observation, modeling, and practice (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2017; Killion & Roy, 2009).

Teacher coaching as a form of PD has gained widespread attention in recent years (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018; Blazar & Kraft, 2015). Desimone and Pak (2017) illuminated the intrigue with coaching noting that it can be a successful form of PD because it includes some of the same principles of effective PD: a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) collaboration, and (d) duration. Kraft and Blazar (2017) noted that districts implement instructional coaching as a new way to provide specific and personalized instructional support for teachers, versus old methods of general workshops and training sessions. Early studies of coaching found mixed results. Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) noted that instructional coaching on a district-wide scale was not found to have a measurable effect on school improvement. Early studies suggested that coaches rarely engaged in coaching activities with teachers such as modeling (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Neumerski, 2012). However, emergent results of coaching as a form of improving teacher practice has encouraged researchers. Research has identified coaching as a systemic reform initiative to improve the instructional capacity of teachers to positively impact student outcomes (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Galluci, DeVogt Van Lare, Yoon,

& Boatright, 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Although research supports the use of coaching, there has been limited knowledge of the effectiveness of certain models and types of coaching (Blazar & Kraft, 2015).

Instructional Coaching

State level policies and reform initiatives have placed pressure on school districts to identify formal ways to improve teacher capacity, one of which has been hiring instructional coaches (Huguet, Marsh, & Farrell, 2014; Scornavacco et al., 2016; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). New standards and policies require new approaches to improving instructional quality, which, in turn, improves student achievement. Coaching specifically improves a teacher's sense of effectiveness, instructional skills, and impact on student achievement (Teemant, 2014). Kane and Rosenquist (2018) proffered that coaching allows teachers to try out new strategies for student learning with someone more knowledgeable. The XYZ School District offered the position of an ILT to support the instructional practices of teachers because of the need to increase student achievement.

A review of literature showed differences in how researchers characterized instructional coaching. Knight (2016) considered instructional coaching a "learning relationship between a teacher and professional development facilitator who share goals towards increasing instructional quality and student achievement" (p.1). Galluci et al. (2010) proffered that teacher leader enacted instructional coaching, should be nonsupervisory, and intended to support teacher practices towards district reforms. They further noted that instructional coaches provide job-embedded support that includes

observations, modeling, and feedback. Regardless of variances, researchers agree that instructional coaching includes teacher instructional improvement. The XYZ district has sought to include instructional coaching using ILTs as a district reform for improving teacher practices.

Coaching as a form of improving teacher quality has been empirically researched and the results are mostly positive. In a mixed-methods study of coaching practices across schools in New Orleans, Kraft and Blazar (2017) found that teachers who were coached scored higher than those in the control group as measured by observations, evaluations, and student surveys. In addition, principals and students rated teachers who were coached as more effective in providing challenging assignments than those who were not. In a longitudinal study of coaching practices in an urban environment with disadvantaged and diverse learners, the results of instructional coaching were significant (Teemant, 2014). The study found that coaching transformed the practices of teachers as much as 1 year after the coaching ended. Further, teachers participating in the program cited coaching as helping them to improve their instruction through learning how to differentiate instruction, effectively run small groups, improve questioning and discussion skills, increase student engagement, and reach their diverse learners (Teemant, 2014). In a randomized trial of two cohorts, Blazar and Kraft (2015) found inconsistent effectiveness of teacher coaching across those cohorts, indicating coaching effectiveness, length of time spent with a coach, and focus areas as probable reasons.

Role of a coach. There has been no established standard role of an instructional coach. Coaches take on a number of roles including department chair, mentor, data

coach, and professional developer (Neumerski, 2012; Scornavacco et al., 2016). Broadly coaches provide individualized professional development, specifically, coaches enact a set of behaviors that include but are not limited to: (a) conducting observations and providing feedback, (b) facilitating meetings, (c) assisting with instructional planning, (d) setting goals, (e) modeling lessons, and (f) unpacking curricula (Anderson, Feldman, & Minstrell, 2014; Grenda & Hackmann, 2014; Kurz, Reddy & Glover, 2017; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Neumerski, 2012; Scornavacco et al., 2016). Coaching has been considered a widely accepted means of shifting teacher's instructional practices (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). However, ambiguous roles, unclear direction, and misuse of the position can create challenges to effectively shifting teacher practice (Jacobs et al., 2016). Kane and Rosenquist (2018) noted that coaches only spent about one-fourth of their time working with teachers, due to numerous tasks such as substitute teaching and tutoring students.

Instructional coaches are positioned to influence the instructional practices of teachers to ultimately effect student achievement. As with any role, there are specific behaviors and skills needed to fulfill the role. Jacobs et al. (2016) identified that coaches need core competencies such as understanding adult learning, theoretical knowledge of the teaching and learning process, the ability to establish a rapport, and the use of modeling and inquiry. Other researchers suggested that coaches must be competent in a content area so that they are able to assist teachers in relaying subject matter to students (Anderson et al., 2014; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

Conversely, other researchers suggested interpersonal skills are important to the success of any coaching relationship. A 2-year, mixed-methods research study conducted by Ellington, Whitenack, and Edwards (2017) suggested that the relational competencies of a coach matters more to teacher quality than just having an instructional coach available. The study compared the practices of two mathematics coaches; coach A who formed relationships with teachers by facilitating collaboration on activities, discussing instructional best practices, and refining approaches and coach B who focused on directed activities such as data and assessment analysis. Students whose teachers were supported by coach A scored as much as 13 points higher on the state student achievement exam than students whose teachers were supported by coach B. Effective coaching, therefore, requires relational skills and collaboration.

Wenner and Campbell (2017) noted that instructional coaches must be trained. They offered that leading colleagues and enacting coaching roles and behaviors required a specific set of skills. Conversely, Blazar and Kraft (2015) found that there was little research to support the skill set needed by coaches in order to be effective. Woulfin and Coburn (2017) expanded on the notion of training for coaches, noting that like teachers, coaches are also in need of capacity building. The breadth of the coaches' role requires professional learning so that they can effectively influence teachers to improve instruction. Researchers indicated that coaches need training in coaching, professional development, and research-based instructional strategies to provide a repertoire of skills to draw from when working with teachers (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Carver et al. (2016) offered that because coaches were former teachers, there was a natural inclination to overlook the need for training, however they are most often unprepared. Knapp (2017) argued that coaches need training in the areas of content, instructional practices, and coaching. Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) suggested that coaches should learn through both on the job and external professional learning opportunities but noted that there was little research that describes the type of training that coaches need. Further, they noted that there has been little research devoted to the correlation between an instructional coaches' professional learning and their ability to improve the practices of teachers they support.

At present, ILTs in the XYZ district enact their position in a myriad of ways without clarity in their roles. According to an assistant principal in the district, many are assigned administrative duties and lack professional learning to develop the capacity of teachers. There have been no significant gains in student achievement since the ILT position was created in 2013.

Mentoring. Mentoring has been widely accepted as a form of employee support in the workforce (Jenkins, 2013). Mentors are typically provided to new employees with the goal of ensuring that the employee becomes aware of the components necessary for effective job functioning (Becker & Orland-Barak, 2017; Jenkins, 2013; Kolman, Roegman, & Goodwin, 2017). Jenkins (2013) asserted that mentoring and coaching are not alike; coaches focus on performance and skills development, whereas a mentor focuses on nurturing and affective behaviors such as sensitivity and relationship building. Although Kolman et al. (2017) highlights the affective tone of mentors, they also purport

that mentors enact behaviors found in coaching, such as providing reflective feedback and observing instructional practices. Blazar and Kraft (2015) likened coaching to mentoring; mentors provide teachers with general advice, whereas coaches respond to observed practices with focused feedback.

The role of mentors includes developing instructional skills, collaborating, providing direction, forming a trusting relationship, and encouraging reflective practices (Becher & Orland-Barak, 2017; Carr, Holmes & Flynn, 2017). In regard to mentoring relationships, Sowell (2017) stated that a mentor's primary responsibilities are relationship building, coaching in classroom management, and improving instructional skills. Mentoring has related to improved teacher performance and student achievement (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Callahan, 2016; Carr et al., 2017; Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sowell, 2017). Mentors strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers through assisting with lesson planning, enhancing student-centered approaches to teaching, providing ideas on differentiating instruction, finding resources, observing lessons, and sharing expertise (Becher & Orland-Barak, 2017; Callahan, 2016; Sowell, 2017). Instructional coaches are mentors who partner with teachers to improve student performance (Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015).

Mentoring and instructional coaching are interrelated; neither mentoring nor coaching relationships are supervisory in nature and they both seek to enhance a teacher's professional practice (Sowell, 2017). Mentoring, however, focuses on teachers new to the profession, whereas coaches serve new teachers and those beyond a beginner status (Carr et al., 2017). Further, coaches focus on performance and development and engage

in an observation, modeling, and feedback cycle (Carr et al., 2017; Jenkins, 2013; Thomas et al., 2015). Researchers agree that mentors must be adequately prepared to provide support to new teachers and direct them towards proficient practices (Callahan, 2016; Carr et al., 2017; Becker & Orland-Barack, 2017; Sowell, 2017). Callahan (2016) found, in order to be effective, mentors need clear guidelines for their roles and specific training to develop the capacities of teachers.

Data Coach. Instructional coaches are used within school districts as a means of school reform with the specific task of improving the instructional capacity of teachers (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Federal educational law, ESSA, requires the use of “data-based instructional decision making” to improve student outcomes (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016, p. 43). Instructional coaches focus on data to improve teacher practice. Love (2009) suggested that focusing on data allows teachers to address gaps in student performance by diagnosing strengths and weaknesses. Data provides evidence of learning that allows teachers to identify learning priorities, select strategies to address deficiencies, and track the progress of students (Holcomb, 2001). Marsh et al. (2015) purported that using student data can improve teacher practice by helping teachers make decisions about instructional delivery. Although Marsh and Farrell (2015) agreed that the use of student data may be critical to reform, they found inconsistent evidence that coaching teachers on data use improves teacher capacity and student achievement.

Mandinach and Gummer (2016) stressed the importance of teachers becoming data literate as a means of improving instructional practice. They noted that the use of data allows teachers to identify student gaps in student learning in order to make

instructional decisions for varied learners. Research suggests that teachers have too much data available and therefore lack the appropriate skills to make use of data to improve instructional practice (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2010; Marsh et al., 2015). A teacher's ability to make sense of the data drives their understanding of its use and importance in changing instructional practices. Instructional coaches are usually the facilitators of learning how to use data to inform instructional strategies. They help teachers in activities such as interpreting assessment results, identifying and creating instructional strategies in response to results, and understanding student misconceptions (Marsh & Farrell, 2015).

Professional learning facilitator. Professional learning has been a widely accepted form of improving student learning because it strengthens teacher practice (Anderson et al., 2014; Bayer, 2014; Tanner, Quintis, & Gamboa, 2017). Yoon et al. (2007) affirmed the correlation of professional learning and student learning, positing three steps as evidence: (a) professional learning enhances a teacher's experience, (b) more knowledge and skills effective teaching, and (c) improvements in teaching positively impacts student achievement.

Effective professional learning must be targeted, continuous, occur on-site, and specific to individual teacher needs (Anderson et al., 2014; Bayer, 2014; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). Goodyear (2017) stated that professional learning for teachers must be continuous if it is to drive student learning. She further offered, specificity in learning, identifying the needs of students, collaborating on practices, and receiving feedback therefrom were facets of professional learning that enhanced student outcomes. An

analysis conducted by Yoon et al. (2007, p. iii) confirmed the need for continuous professional development, asserting that if a teacher devoted an average of 49 hours to professional learning, a students' achievement significantly improved. Contrarily, in a meta-analysis of 60 causal research studies, Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2017) found that professional learning, in the form of coaching, did not have to be enacted in high doses. They found that the quality of coaching was more important than the devoted hours.

Coaches increase the capacity of teachers by increasing their knowledge of best practices in the field of education and supporting them as they try new approaches (Tanner et al., 2017). Coaches increase a teacher's understanding of content, curricula, and instructional delivery through designing learning experiences for teachers and professional collaboration (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Woulfin (2017) added that the work of a coach is firsthand, assisting teachers with transferring newly learned skills into classroom practice. Wood et al. (2016) asserted that professional learning should be in the form of coaching. Coaching as professional learning allows for practice within a classroom, modeling, opportunities to practice new skills, and can be multi-leveled to fit teacher needs.

Administrator support of coaching. Due to accountability pressures to improve student performance, many districts and schools have implemented instructional coaching as a lever for improving teacher quality. When coaches are school-based, principals are responsible for hiring them and framing their roles and responsibilities. Foltos (2015) noted that the success of any coaching program rested on the interdependent relationship between the coach and administration; the collaboration between the two can be critical

in helping coaches define their role and purpose in improving teacher quality. Supportive principals assist coaches because they frame building level-expectations for initiatives and remove barriers that coaches may find, like resistant teachers or other noninstructional responsibilities (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018; Range et al., 2014). In a study of a new literacy coaching program implemented in 29 schools, Matsumara et al. (2009) found that principal support and belief were associated with higher levels of participation. Endorsement of instructional coaching, actively communicating with teachers about instructional coaching, and observing implementation of coached lessons were reported as supportive actions that yielded greater teacher buy-in and adoption of new instructional strategies.

Coaching Models

Classroom checkpoint model. The Classroom Checkup (CCU) model focuses on improving teacher's capacity in the area of classroom management and behavioral techniques. The premise of the CCU model is that a teacher must increase opportunities for students to engage in direct response to a question or statement, in the classroom, which in turn increases student engagement. The model focuses on research based practices for improving classroom management, such as explicitly teaching behavior expectations, positive reinforcement, and increasing student time on task (Kleinert, Silva, Coddling, Feinberg, & St. James, 2017; Pas, Larson, Reinke, Herman, & Bradshaw, 2016). The model aims to increase a teacher's management strategies through six steps:

1. Interviewing a teacher to determine present levels of management strategies.
2. Providing feedback to the teacher about data collection from observations.

3. Distributing a list of strategies to address specific needs.
4. Collaborating with a teacher to choose specific strategies to implement.
5. Developing a plan of action for classroom practice.
6. Monitoring use of interventions in classroom practice through a cycle of observations and feedback (Kleinert et al., 2017, p. 6).

Coaches use relational skills to help teachers to identify strengths, areas for growth, and targeted areas for development. Through ongoing observations and feedback, coaches assist teachers in practicing and confirming effective management strategies. Kleinart et al. (2017) indicated that when applied, the CCU model increased teacher's consistent use of effective classroom management strategies that ultimately provide increased opportunities for student achievement. While Pas et al. (2016) did find the CCU model as promising for improving teachers use of effective classroom management practice, however they did note that the model is extensive and can present issues with fidelity in implementation. In their study, they noted that coaches circumvented or shortened some parts of the model due to time constraints.

Classroom strategies model. The Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) model focuses on both behavioral and instructional practices of teachers. Within this model, coaches observe teachers, multiple times, in order to collect data on current classroom practice to identify teacher's practices in need of change. Coaches then develop a plan of action, monitor the implementation of the action items, and provide ongoing feedback to the teacher. Coaches use the Classroom Strategies Assessment System (CSAS) tool, which is an empirical observation instrument, used to collect data on instructional and

classroom management practices. The CSAS tool is comprised of 3 parts: (a) Strategy Counts which outlines eight behaviors that are calculated via tally, (b) Rating Scales which outlines instruction and behavior management strategies that coaches quantify during observation, and (c) Classroom Checklist, which outlines the presence of classroom structural elements that coaches mark as evident or not evident (Reddy, Dudek, & Lekwa, 2017).

Coaches conduct observations, review baseline data collected and then develop a plan to implement and monitor. The CSAS tools establish a set of behaviors and strategies and provide an opportunity for common understanding between coach and teacher. Further, observations and coaching using the tools allow for tracking of measurable growth in specific instructional and management practices. The CSC program is an evidenced based model that focuses on quantifiable data to guide coaching efforts toward improving teacher practices (Reddy, Dudek, & Lekwa, 2017).

My teaching partner model. The My Teaching Partner (MTP) coaching program is a web-based coaching model that utilizes video recordings of classroom practices to improve instruction. The model utilizes the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) as an observation tool to collect evidence and guide coaching practices. The CLASS tool is utilized as a common language between teacher and coach as well as to document growth occurring from the partnership. The tool is organized into three broad dimensions: (a) emotional support, (b) instructional support, and (c) classroom organization. The model focuses on teacher-student interactions as the basis for improvement and operates on a 2-week cycle, with a minimum total of six cycles

between coach and teacher. In this model, teachers are provided a web-based coach, record lessons, and then receive ongoing feedback around certain areas of instructional practice. Coach and teachers engage in a 5-step process that includes: (a) the teacher recording classroom instruction, (b) the coach segmenting a clip of the recording to note areas of strength and areas of improvement, (c) the coach returning the video clip with reflection points aligned to the CLASS tool, (d) the teacher reviewing the video clips and responding, and (e) both coach and teacher determining a plan of action (Gregory et al., 2017). The MTP coaching program has shown promising results, connecting use of the coaching program with increases in student achievement and engagement (Allen et al., 2015).

Kansas coaching model. The Kansas Coaching Project is a research-based instructional coaching model created in 1996 that uses problem solving as the primary approach to teacher learning. The model is based on the experience between instructional coach and teacher to be collaborative (Knight, 2002). The model has six principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, and practice. Using these principles, coaches enact an 8-process cycle:

1. Teacher onboarding through a myriad of ways including but not limited to: interviews, referrals, marketing presentations.
2. Informing participants of theoretical knowledge of teaching practice and foundation of the program.
3. Modeling practices for practices
4. Observing teacher's implementation of practices

5. Partnering to review data
6. Refining instructional approaches and support based on data
7. Reflecting on instructional experiences (Kurz et al., 2017, p. 68).

In 2010, the Kansas Coaching Project set out to refine and revise the 8-step process into a more succinct but equally effective model, a 3-step process emerged. Within the 3-part cycle both the coach and teacher identify a goal and teaching strategy, the teacher, with coaching support, learns how to use the identified instructional strategy, and then the instructional coach observes the performance of the teacher to see that there has been improvement towards the identified goal (Knight, Elford, Hock, Dunekack, Bradley, Deshler, & Knight, 2015). Instructional coaching models help to define the role of the coach and bring about consistency and coherency to the work they do to support teachers. At present, it is unclear if ILTs utilize a coaching model in the XYZ district.

Effectiveness of Instructional Coaches

When implemented effectively, instructional coaching can have a positive effect on the growth of the instructional practices of teachers (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Marsh et al., 2015; Neumerski, 2012). Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2017) conducted an empirical review of literature and meta-analyses of coaching impact on both the instructional practices of teachers and student achievement. The results of the empirical study found that, regardless of model, coaching had a positive effect on teacher practices and student achievement; regardless of whether the coaching program was content-specific or general, coaching increased a teacher's ability to influence student learning. Moreover, regardless of coaching models used, the study found higher effect sizes with

coaching paired with instructional resources such as curriculum and group trainings followed up with individualized coaching sessions.

A teacher's instructional quality improves a student's achievement (Hattie, 2008). In a study of over two hundred teachers, König and Pflanzl (2016) found a correlation between the general pedagogical knowledge a teacher has and their instructional quality. Furthermore, the authors noted pedagogical knowledge as a stronger predictor of instructional quality, over teacher education grades and personality. Therefore, the more a teacher understands strategies for teaching, the better the instruction and ultimately, the more a student learns. Instructional coaches provide support and build the capacity of teachers in pedagogical knowledge and skills, thus increasing a teacher's instructional quality (Fleisch, 2016; Galluci et al., 2010). Desimone and Pak (2017) expanded this notion adding that coaching improves a teacher's understanding of instruction and provides opportunities for practice at increasing proficiency with instructional skills. Student achievement increases as the instructional knowledge of a teacher increases (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

There is no recipe for successful coaching; however, research points to several needed skills (Knight et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Effective coaches must be skilled in building relationships and collaboration (Marsh et al., 2015); have knowledge of pedagogy, content, and adult learning styles (Anderson et al., 2014; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017); use inquiry, model targeted behaviors, demonstrate thorough understanding of teaching and learning, and be capable of facilitating the learning of adults (Jacobs et al., 2016). Knight et al. (2016) summarized that coaches simply need to

identify a goal, provide insight into effective instructional strategies, model and explain the use of instructional strategies, and provide targeted feedback and monitoring of teacher practices towards a set goal. Respective of the identified behaviors of successful coaches, research points to the need for coaches to also undergo professional learning to hone skills necessary to provide effective learning experiences for teachers (Galluci et al., 2010; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). As coaches improve their practices, teachers improve their instructional repertoire which will ultimately lead to better opportunities for student academic achievement.

Implications

The XYZ School District boasts a 5-year strategic plan that outlines the pathway for outstanding academic achievement for all students. Two out of the five areas of focus are academic excellence and high performing workforce. To that end, the plan stated, “every employee will be empowered with the requisite knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to positively impact organizational performance” (p. 13). Good teaching yields increases in student performance and is influenced by instructional coaching (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018; Teemant, 2014; Woulfin, 2017). Instructional coaching is viewed as the premier means by which a teacher’s instructional knowledge and skills are improved (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Coaches facilitate experiences for teachers that allow them to learn new strategies, apply new strategies, and receive feedback therefrom (Knight et al., 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). The processes enacted by instructional coaches improve a teacher’s capacity for instructing and therefore influence better learning opportunities for students.

The results of the study may reveal the need to provide a structured coaching model and training to ILTs in the XYZ School District. A structured coaching program would also provide professional learning to the ILTs in the XYZ School District. A structured program may provide guidance to the ILTs regarding how to enact coaching responsibilities, target learning for adults, implement research-based practices, determine learning needs, and provide credible support. The increase in teacher performance from a structured program may, in turn, increase student achievement on state mandated assessments. Furthermore, providing clarity to the role of ILTs may assist the district in achieving both a high performing workforce and academic excellence as outlined in the strategic plan.

Summary

The XYZ School District offers the position of ILT to principals to hire with a focus on improving the instructional practices of teachers, in order to increase student achievement. The lack of clarity in the role of the ILT causes the use of the position to vary from school to school. The XYZ district utilizes ILTs as a method for coaching teachers to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning for students. Coaching has been a widely accepted form of professional development, used to build the instructional capacity of teachers. Coaches provide on-site support for teachers learning instructional strategies to benefit students. However, research suggests that coaches are also in need of support to fulfill the unique but important responsibilities. Coaching has been considered effective provided coaches are clear about their role and have the appropriate skills to train teachers.

In section two of this paper, I discuss the methodology of the study, inclusive of a rationale, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Section three of the paper outlines the project study that will be composed based on the results of study. Section three will also include a rationale, literature review, and project description. Section four provides a conclusion to the study as well as a reflection.

Section 2: The Methodology

In choosing a methodology for this study, I considered my research problem, the purpose of the study, and my research questions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative multisite case study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaching of middle school ILTs, identify how they influence the instructional practices of the teachers they serve, and assess what supports they need to increase their effectiveness. The implementation of coaching using ILT's was unknown in the XYZ School District at the time of the study.

The research questions were aligned to a qualitative design as it provided an opportunity to examine a phenomenon as well as provided ILTs an opportunity to give perspectives and meaning of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Bodgan and Biklen (2007) posited that qualitative designs are best suited when research questions are open-ended and focused on how the participants derived their perspectives. They further noted that qualitative research designs are characterized by natural settings for the data source, the use of thick descriptions, an inductive discovery process, and a focus on meaning. In contrast, quantitative designs are focused on empirical evidence and the testing of hypotheses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A quantitative design was not the best suited for my study, as it did not align with my research questions, purpose or problem.

Research Design and Approach

Although a qualitative research design was determined, there are five types of qualitative designs to choose from: narrative inquiry, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A narrative

inquiry design involves studying the human experiences of individuals through examining personal stories or firsthand accounts (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Procedurally, narrative inquiry involves a single focus or a group of individuals sharing personal accounts of a common experience or life event in chronologically (Creswell, 2007). Common forms of narrative inquiry designs are autobiographies, biographies, memories, and oral history (Lodico et al., 2010). A narrative inquiry design was not most appropriate for my study, as I did not intend to narrate the experiences of ILTs.

Phenomenological research design is the study of the experiences and the meanings that people derive from them (Lodico et al., 2010). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) expand this understanding noting that in phenomenology, researchers seek to understand the meaning of an event from the varied perspectives of people engaged in a situation. The focus is on shared and “pre-reflective” experiences of subjects about a phenomenon; emotions and affective experiences are central to conducting phenomenological research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although this study addressed perceptions, its focus was on the implementation of the phenomenon versus the feelings of ILTs as they experienced the phenomenon.

Ethnography focuses on culture and the unique characteristics of a group. Ethnographic researchers spend a significant amount of time with a group or community and study the relationships, interactions, and complexities of that group. Although ethnographers study the perspectives and meaning of participants, the result of the study is a cultural description that provides intimate knowledge of a group or community and

the researchers explanation of the phenomenon (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An ethnographic design was not most appropriate for my study because of the extensive field research required and the predominant focus on culture.

A case study design was selected as the most appropriate for this study. Yin (2014) defined a case study as an investigation of a specific phenomenon in its usual context. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested that case studies are different from other forms of qualitative designs because of the focus on one case. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that in order to be considered a case study, the unit under study must be bounded, meaning that it must be a single particular case and data collection must be finite. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined a case study that occurs across multiple settings as multisite case study. Conducting research at multiple middle schools allowed me a comprehensive view of the phenomenon of instructional coaching across the XYZ School District.

Participants

Lodico et al. (2010) stated that purposive sampling is germane to qualitative studies because it allows the researchers to get in depth information to help in answering research questions. Glesne (2011) added that a careful selection such as the one in purposeful sampling provides the researcher with the best opportunity to learn about the phenomenon. There are many types of purposeful sampling, but I utilized a homogenous sampling strategy, in order to study the perspectives and practices of ILTs in the XYZ District. According to Creswell (2012), a researcher uses homogenous sampling when targeted participants have defining common characteristics. According to literature, there

is no target sample size in qualitative studies but that research questions dictate the sample size (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). At the time of the study, there were 25 ILTs employed in middle schools in the XYZ School District. The study targeted all ILTs who served at the middle school level. Ten participants were identified as the sample size. The small participant sample fit within the tradition of qualitative research. Creswell (2007) noted that studying a few sites allows the researchers to go in-depth, providing rich detail of the sites and participants in the study.

In order to initiate the research study, I applied to the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB# 04-25-19-0297585) to ensure that my study met ethical guidelines. Upon submission and approval to move forward, I followed specific steps as outlined by the Office of Research in the XYZ district. To receive district approval, I submitted an application to conduct research that included Walden's IRB approval documentation, a copy of my proposal, inclusive of consent forms, and data gathering documents. The completed application to conduct research and all accompanying documentation was completed online. Once approved, the district provided me with a "Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study" form that was signed by each building principal before I solicited participation. I picked up the signed document from each principal and provided the originals to Office of Research; I retained a copy for my records. In an email, I introduced myself as a researcher interested in conducting a study at the school, shared the purpose of my research and attached the "Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study" form from the district. Principals replied to my email, confirming approval and printed and signed a copy of the form that I picked up from each person as

original signed forms were required by the Office of Research. Creswell (2012) noted that it is necessary to gain permission from individuals, either formal or informal, who can assist the researcher in getting building access, locating information and participants. These people are considered “gatekeepers” and building principals are included within the definition (Creswell, 2012, p. 211). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) proffered that gaining access can be a significant challenge to researchers and that gaining the support of important individuals at the site, like building principals, is essential in carrying out the study. They further noted that it might be necessary to allay any anxieties about your role on the premises by providing detailed information about your purpose, your actions, and procedures.

Upon approval by the principal, I moved forward with seeking participants for the study. Principals who signed “Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study” received an email from me requesting that they provide the email addresses of the ILTs within their school building. Once I received the email addresses of the ILTs, I sent an email to potential participants introducing myself as the researcher, provided an overview of the study, explained the benefits and risks of their participation, as well as inquired about the preferred means of communication while conducting the study; the options were personal email, professional email, or face to face contact. Participants who agreed to participate in the study completed a Google Form. Participants provided identifying information as well as preferred methods of contact so that I could conduct the interview. Participants who completed the brief Google Form to participate in the study received a follow up communication, based on their preference to schedule the interview.

Communicating with potential participants and making myself available to answer any questions was the beginning of establishing a researcher-participant working relationship. Other means of establishing a working relationship with participants included being sensitive and respectful of time constraints (as they communicated them), being flexible in meeting times, communicative and transparent about all parts of the data collection process, as well as ensuring that participants knew their rights and were fully aware of my methods for ensuring and maintaining their confidentiality. Steps to protect the identity of participants was explained verbally, written in documents, and reiterated at each phase of the data collection process.

In order to participate in the study, all participants reviewed the informed consent form and emailed me confirmation of consent, using the phrase “I consent.” Lodico et al. (2010) defined informed consent as a document that explained the research process to participants that includes the potential risks as well as rights to withdraw from the study. Ensuring confidentiality is a primary concern for all research studies and protects participants from harm. Methods to ensure confidentiality of participants during this study included the use of assigned pseudonyms (e.g. ILT A) to protect identities, assigning letters to identify participants, when transcribing interviews as well as when writing field notes during observations. During the course of data collection and analysis, information was stored in a Microsoft Word file on a locked on a computer with password protection. Data will be stored for 5 years beyond the completion of this study and then destroyed.

Presently, I am employed in the XYZ district and have been for 15 years. I am currently a second-year principal and have held roles such as Assistant Principal and Instructional Lead Teacher. Although I am not a principal at any of the research sites, my role as a principal may have made some participants feel obligated to participate, therefore I emphasized that participation was voluntary and reiterated their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I sought to conduct the study as an objective and unbiased researcher. I avoided making assumptions and evaluations during interviews and observations. During the data collection process, I ensured trustworthiness and unbiased research by asking probing questions, audio recording interviews, and transcribing after each interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). These steps ensured that my research remained unprejudiced and focused on the perspectives of the participants.

By recording and probing during the interview process, I ensured that participants' perspectives and points of view were reflective of their words and not mine. Further, I recorded observations of the observed settings and actions of participants as they went about their day. The observations were documented as field notes which were aligned to and guided by the conceptual framework. Using this document ensured that I utilized a standardized approach to each observation site. Recording information as it was observed contributed to a rich description that was guided by what was seen versus interpreted or assumed. Another way that I sought to ensure unbiased research was through ensuring triangulation of data through both the collection and analysis processes (Yilmaz, 2013).

Data Collection

Creswell (2007) described four methods of data collection for qualitative studies: interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. Yin (2014) noted that the use of multiple methods of data collection strengthens a study. Lodico et al. (2010) termed the use of multiple forms of data, triangulation, and confirms that it deepens the understanding of the phenomenon. In this study, I used two forms of data collection: face-to-face semistructured interviews and observations. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that semistructured interview questions are a mix of structured and flexible questions. They further noted that semistructured interview questions are used when specific information is needed, but the researcher sought to explore meaning. Both data collection instruments, the interview guide (Appendix B) and observation guide (Appendix C) are based on facets of social cognitive theory as well as research provided in the literature review.

After receiving IRB approval through Walden University as well as approval through the XYZ district Office of Research, I began the data collection process. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants from any potential harm, each participant was identified by a pseudonym in place of their name, such as ILT A. For further protection of data, each transcribed interview and observation note was stored on Microsoft Word document, saved under the pseudonym of the participant and stored in a folder on my computer which is password protected.

Observations

I conducted four, half day observations, of ILTs over the course of two weeks. Participants were selected based on those who responded and agreed to be shadowed. The observations were scheduled around the availability of the ILTs. Each participant was observed at their school site for four hours and included activities such as: collaborative planning, interactions with teachers and staff members, a leadership team meeting, classroom instruction, and preparing for an upcoming presentation. The observations provided their routines and activities and whether the coaches enacted activities aligned to social cognitive theory, such as: direct observation, modeling, goal setting, reflecting, or planning for support.

I arrived at each school site a few minutes early, checked in with the building principal (if available), and waited until the ILT arrived to escort me from the main office. During the visits, I utilized an observation protocol (Appendix C) to write my observations regarding the ILTs daily activities and interactions with staff members. Observing each ILT in their natural setting allowed me to further understand the individual role of each ILT within their school buildings as well as their responsibilities and how they enacted their roles.

The observation instrument was adapted from The Instructional Coaching Cycle (Knight et. al, 2015) and aligned to human learning as outlined in the conceptual framework. The social cognitive theory stated that humans learn through setting goals, direct observation or modeling, planning a course of action, and reflecting on

experiences. The three areas of the instrument - identify, observe, and learn - aligned to the same behaviors outlined by the social cognitive theory.

Interviews

ILTs were interviewed individually regarding their perceptions of their role, any instructional changes they observed in the teachers they support, and any support they needed to fulfill their roles. Interview questions were designed to provide answers to research questions as well as to determine how and if ILTs utilized facets of social cognitive theory as they undertook their roles. Interviews are a primary form of data collection for case studies (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2014). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined an interview as an intentional discussion between two or more people. They further noted that in qualitative studies the researcher focuses on the words of participants and their interpretation of the phenomenon; researchers therefore must not guide or direct the interviews but allow them to run its course. Interview questions were crafted using Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) guidelines for asking good questions. In keeping with the qualitative tradition, interview questions were semistructured and open-ended (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As a novice researcher, a guide (Appendix B) was used to structure the interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews occurred over a two-week period with each interview lasting no longer than 50 minutes and took place at a location determined by the participant. Seven of the 10 interviews took place at the participant's school and occurred after the end of the school day; three interviews occurred at an off-site location. Each interview began with the reading of a transcript that

restated the purpose of the research, a review of the informed consent form, as well as stating the need to audio record the session. During each interview probing was used to have participants expand on answers that at times were vague or limited. Some examples of probes I used were: “can you think of an example?” “can you elaborate?” “you stated...can you tell me more?” Before each session ended, participants were asked if they would like to contribute anything more to the conversation. Each participant took the opportunity to reiterate concerns about their role, share additional information regarding their experience, or their hopes for the future of their role. The interview closed with thanking and reassuring participants that their identities were protected using pseudonyms. I also informed participants that I would be emailing a summary of the findings back to them to check for accuracy in interpretation.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used two methods of data collection: interviews and observations. Once the interviews were conducted, I transcribed the interviews from audio to text and stored in a Microsoft Word document. Participants’ names were replaced with a pseudonym in order to protect identities and ensure confidentiality. In order to analyze the data, I compared the interview transcripts with the observation notes to look for any alignment and patterns specific to the research questions and social cognitive theory. Further, in analyzing transcriptions and observation notes, I looked for connections between their responses, observed behaviors, and social cognitive theory.

Yin (2014) outlined five phases for analyzing qualitative data: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I began a thematic

analysis process after the collection of each set of data: individual interviews and observation notes. To familiarize myself with the data, I listened to the audio recording, read and re-read transcriptions and observation notes, noting ideas and comments pertaining to the research questions in the margins (Creswell, 2007).

Using a thematic data analysis approach, I began with an open coding strategy for both data sets. According to Saldaña (2013), a code is a word or phrase that represents a summary of a portion of collected data. The data can be observation notes, interview transcripts, field notes, journals, and so forth. Creswell (2009) described the coding process as organizing and segmenting chunks of data in order to determine the essential meaning in the collected data. Starting with the interview transcripts first and using the open coding strategy, I read through and highlighted words and phrases, being mindful to include anything that might be relevant in answering the research questions. Next, I assigned a tentative label to each section based on the meaning I initially determined. I repeated this process for each transcribed interview as well as the observation notes. After the open coding process was completed, I generated a long list of open codes.

After each data set were analyzed, I conducted a second level of coding, axial coding, to determine the most important codes relevant to answering the research questions. I reviewed the raw data and open codes, grouping information into categories based on commonalities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, I developed categories and sub-categories from the recurring patterns emerging from the secondary coding process. During the process of axial coding, I reviewed categories, reorganized the data, deleted redundant codes, combined axial codes, and aligned codes to research questions. I

searched for key concepts and patterns in order to further develop categories (Appendix D). Summarizing and clarifying the data are important in the process of determining meaning from the data (Merriam, 2009).

Stake (2013) explained that during analysis a researcher must identify themes. I kept a list of categories from the observation and interview data. These categories were reviewed to determine patterns emerging as subthemes and were useful in describing the phenomena of instructional coaching and in answering each research question. As a researcher, I reviewed the data, continuously, searching for repeated ideas among the categories. Finally, the data were condensed further by creating groupings of connected categories until themes emerged. Data were reviewed multiple times until no new themes emerged, which is considered saturation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the descriptions of the phenomenon and are associated with the research questions.

Once themes emerged, I triangulated the observation data with the interview data. My data analysis process involved two data sets: interviews and observations. According to Yin (2011) triangulation can be achieved through comparing multiple data sets, gaining multiple perspectives on a common topic, or confirming information with a participant to ensure the description of the perspective was accurate. For this study, I used methodological triangulation, as there were multiple data sets used (Yilmaz, 2013). To establish quality control and credibility, I crosschecked the themes ensuring there was support from each data to corroborate findings. Codes from each data set were in the

above-mentioned spreadsheet and were used to in the recursive process of determining themes.

To establish validity of the study and ensure I accurately represented the thoughts and experiences of participants, I conducted member checking. Creswell (2012) termed member checking as the process of providing participants with findings to confirm accuracy of their data. For this study, I emailed the findings to participants for them to check the findings for accuracy of their data. Participants were asked to email feedback, within one week, affirming or denying accuracy of their data. During the analysis process, I also attempted to identify data that challenged the patterns or provided an alternative viewpoint that contradicted any emergent themes (Yilmaz, 2013). Discrepant cases are reported in the analysis.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of ILTs regarding their role and practices in improving teacher quality. To do that, I employed direct observations and semistructured interviews. Yin (2012) noted that utilizing data from more than one source makes a study credible. Observations were documented using a protocol (Appendix C) adapted from The Instructional Coaching Cycle (Knight et al., 2015). Four ILTs were selected for observations based on their agreement to participate and observations occurred in their natural setting according to their availability. After observations were concluded, I conducted 10 semistructured interviews with ILTs at a location of their choosing; seven interviews occurred at the school site and three occurred elsewhere. Each interview lasted no longer than 50

minutes and an interview guide (Appendix B) was used to ensure consistency in the interview process. After observing and transcribing interviews, data were analyzed using a thematic coding process. During the recursive process of analysis, data were organized, re-organized, grouped, and categorized in order to reach theme saturation and determine the themes. The following research questions were used to guide the analysis of data:

1. What are the ILTs perceptions of and experiences with instructional coaching of middle school teachers?
2. What instructional changes do ILTs observe in teacher's classroom practice?
3. What supports do ILTs believe they need to increase their effectiveness in providing instructional support?

Findings

The problem of this bounded multi-site qualitative case study was that despite the XYZ district's adoption of the ILT position, it is unclear how this role has influenced teacher practice. The XYZ district has identified teacher coaching as a solution for improving teacher quality with the ultimate goal to increase student achievement. However, the majority of students in grades 6-8 in the school district were performing below proficiency benchmarks in reading and mathematics, despite the presence of the ILTs. ILTs are hired as school-based coaches to improve teacher instructional practices; however, the role was enacted differently across buildings. ILTs may find other duties assigned to them that are outside the primary responsibility of improving teacher practice.

Consequently, the aim of this study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of ILTs regarding their role, how they enact their instructional support

responsibilities, and what supports they deem necessary to be effective in their role. I utilized Bandura's social cognitive theory as the conceptual framework for the study as it outlined principles associated with human learning. Humans learn through direct observation modeling, setting goals, planning a course of action, and reflecting (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1989; Connolly, 2017; Pajares, 2002). The actions outlined in the social cognitive theory align with the strategies employed by instructional coaches; therefore, if utilized teachers may have the best opportunity to improve their instructional practice.

I found that ILTs in the XYZ district believe in their work as instructional coaches and feel as though their work is purposeful and necessary towards improving educational outcomes for students in the district. However, their experiences as a collective group are marked by variances with how the role is enacted in each school setting. For most of the ILTs, noninstructional responsibilities consumed much of their time and therefore impacted their availability to improve teacher practice. For several, citing examples of success with coaching were limited and some could only be provided from previous year's experiences. The findings from this research will allow me to inform the XYZ district on how to better support the work of ILTs so that their efforts can ultimately influence student achievement.

ILT Demographics

Interviews were conducted with 10 ILTs; all currently working in middle schools serving grades 6-8. Table 4 shows the demographics of the ILTs. Of the group, five ILTs support only one content area, one supports two content areas, and the remaining four support more than two content areas. The group averaged 13 years as a classroom

teacher. The ILT is a new position in the district, beginning in 2013. Two ILTs have been in the role since its inception, four have between four - and five - years' experience, and four have less than four years' experience.

Table 4

Demographics of Instructional Lead Teachers

Pseudonym	Number of Years as a Teacher	Number of Years as an ILT	Content that is Supported
A	9	1	ELA
B	18	5	Mathematics
C	12	5	ELA
D	8	5	ELA/SS
E	11	7	All contents
F	9	4	All contents
G	19	1	ELA
H	20	7	ELA/SS/Science
I	12	3	All contents
J	8	2	ELA

Results for Research Question 1

RQ 1 was “What are the ILTs perceptions of an experience with instructional coaching of middle school teachers?” Table 5 shows three themes that emerged from seeking to understand both the perspectives and experiences of ILTs regarding coaching middle school teachers.

Table 5

Themes Identified from Data Analysis for Research Question 1

Research Question	Data Source	Themes
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What are the ILTs perceptions of and experience with instructional coaching of middle school teachers?	Interviews Observations	<p>ILTs influence student achievement</p> <p>ILT is an instructional authority and teacher support</p> <p>Noninstructional responsibilities pose challenges to instructional coaching</p>
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Theme 1: ILTs influence student achievement. An emergent theme regarding the beliefs of ILTs about their instructional coaching role was the importance of instructional coaching and how it directly ties to student achievement. Eight of the 10 ILTs interviewed connected their role and/or the strategies they used to the improvement of student achievement. ILT A noted that she accepted the position because she felt she could have “more of an impact on education and student achievement from outside of the classroom.” ILT F offered a perspective that defined her role in student achievement. She offered, “although I’m not the direct teacher, my guidance helps ... with ... instruction, which then helps the student to be successful...”

ILT I referenced the position as “that one little push that pushes teachers”, noting that the role is “the difference between kids reaching and not reaching [academic] goals.” She expanded on the idea of ILTs as an influence on students, highlighting the importance of efficacy, stating “I feel like, if I can coach a teacher out of a fixed mindset into a growth mindset then that can move a student from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset...if I can get more teachers to believe that kids are capable, that convinces students.”

ILT J, in the role for just two years, provided an answer that summarized the perception. She stated the following:

I believe that by building teacher capacity and understanding of the standards and the curriculum, our students receive better quality instruction. Better quality instruction ultimately should and often does lead to higher [academic] achievement. Very often I work with teachers on troubleshooting behaviors in classrooms and once we can get past the behavior management piece, then instruction begins to occur, which directly impacts [student] achievement.

Further analysis revealed specific examples of how ILTs beliefs about how their work connects to student achievement. Five ILTs mentioned the use of data in their work with teachers. ILT E described “I ... create a collaborative culture where teachers are looking at data, coming up with resources, lesson plans or whatever to move student achievement [progress].” ILT H explained that she begins her work with teachers by first focusing on student achievement data and determining next steps for improvement. ILT B expanded on the idea of using data in conjunction with coaching to influence student achievement. She mentioned:

... we examine student work, look at trends among their work, and look at what strategies the teachers used, and compare those strategies to the output that the students had. We then discuss ways to improve, using data to make decisions about instruction.

During an observation of ILT B, she modeled data conversations with students for a 6th grade teacher. ILT E shared that she measures her performance with teachers in how

students perform. She stated the following “the more that I'm learning about MAP-R and ESOL data and all the other type of assessments, I'm able to give that information to teachers and we can drill down and really look at what the students need...” The ILTs’ perceptions and experiences regarding how their work influences student achievement is consistent with research suggesting that teacher coaching has a positive influence on the student achievement (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018).

Theme 2: ILT as an instructional authority and teacher support. A major theme connected to perceptions and experiences of instructional coaching was the idea of supporting teachers and being skilled enough, instructionally to provide that support. ILT C shared “I think you have to have knowledge and capacity around instruction, ... know pedagogy from different perspectives,” ILT E emphasized having an instructional repertoire and being resourceful, sharing, “I always tell the teacher, I may not have the answer, but I know where to find the answer. I also help teacher’s problem solve, help them find resources, [and] help the students.”

ILT F expanded on the idea of being an instructional authority by adding “I would say I may not be ... the content expert, but I am the expert on how you can deliver instruction, how you handle or develop classroom management, what it means to have cooperative learning and grouping stations.”

All ILTs asserted that they support teachers. ILTs A, C, G, and H highlighted their support for teachers as instructional coaches. “I do a lot of supporting teachers...sharing information, explaining information, supporting their understanding of the information. So, it's been super support role.” first-year ILT A. “... to support

teachers and help them build their craft,” ILT C. ILT G echoed similar sentiments about the position being an instructional support role, noting her primary focus was to observe instruction and provide feedback to teachers that will make them stronger. ILT H detailed how the focus of her work shifts, but never the purpose “... I just provide the support.”

While supporting instruction was primary role as an instructional coach identified by ILTs, classroom instruction was not the only area of support noted. Many shared that they saw themselves as comprehensive support. For example, ILT J shared that providing resources, professional development, securing additional planning time, and advocating to administration on behalf of teachers as within the constructs of her position. Similarly, ILT E shared an experience of assisting a teacher with tracking down maps in the building as an example of providing support in other ways.

During analysis, building relationships in seeking to support teachers emerged as a subtheme. DeWalt and Maryberry (2019) affirmed that building relationships is essential to be a successful coach, noting that taking the time to build relationships increases buy-in and trust from teachers. Four ILTs discussed the need to establish relationships to build trust to ultimately influence teacher practices. ILT G offered, “You have to establish a relationship with the teachers that you're supporting...” ILT C shared that she established relationships by frequent check-ins, providing encouragement and instructional resources. She stated that as a result of the relationships she developed she can influence teacher practice, “... [I have] courageous conversations to help them be

better. I tend to take one little good thing... shout them out in planning and then that'll encourage them..."

Building relationships helps ILTs have tough conversations with teachers about their instructional practice. ILT H noted that supporting teachers creates an "insightful relationship" that allows for more targeted support than what is typically provided from her administrators. ILT F sentiments were similar noting "...this is what the data is saying versus what you're saying you're doing, so something's not matching. [I can] have those hard conversations that are non-punitive versus when they get to an administrator." ILT E described relationship building and its influence in the following way:

I'm a sounding board. Number one being a nonjudgmental, non-evaluative sounding board; where they can bring their concerns without fear of reprisal is probably the most important piece of my work with teachers... I'm not going to judge them, and I'm going to help them understand or help support them, they can do their best work.

Theme 3: Noninstructional responsibilities pose challenges to instructional coaching.

In seeking to understand the perceptions and experiences of ILTs with coaching in middle schools (RQ1), my analysis revealed all but two ILTs identified competing responsibilities as a challenge that negatively influence their role. Observation data further affirmed this theme as two of the ILTs observed had additional responsibilities that prevented them from coaching responsibilities. ILT D was responsible for teaching a class and ILT C had to conduct make-up testing although was scheduled to provide feedback to teacher. Interview data suggests that ILTs hold or have held roles outside of

coaching such as, testing coordinator, Title I coordinator, grade manager, classroom teacher, textbook coordinator, and master scheduler. Kane and Rosenquist (2019) found that school-based coaches were more likely to have other administrative duties assigned to them rather than their primary role of coaching teachers.

ILTs perceive the additional responsibilities as detractors from their main responsibilities of improving teacher practice. For example, ILT I explained “most of the year I was working on either the literacy tasks or scheduling.” ILT F explained the difficulty, stating, “I would say the biggest challenge is the additional duties... like 25%, I'm doing the coaching and the informal walkthroughs, in comparison to 75% of everything else they need me to do.” ILT J likened the position to “a band aid role.”

When asked to expand, she offered:

We're often pulled to do lunch duty. But when [changes] in staffing occur, we end up doing two, sometimes three a day. Very often we're short on subs, we have to be pulled to sub in a classroom. A lot of my time... was spent planning and grading for vacant [substitute] positions, which in a sense is a part of my role, but I don't feel it's the most effective use of the time...that's what I mean when I say band aid, it's trying to fill the gaps we don't anticipate.

Other ILTs experienced being utilized as a substitute teacher. ILT B shared “you never know when they're going to call you. Some days I don't cover [substitute] classes, but some weeks I might cover ... five to 10 classes and can't even [do] one collaborative planning meeting a week.” ILT C called the demand for multiple responsibilities outside of her primary role as feeling like “a glorified sub.”

ILT H expressed that her role can change from year to year:

Every year is that different... this year I didn't spend as much time coaching as I would like to because I taught a class. So, when you're teaching a class that kind of takes away from your responsibilities in your role that you would love that you're there for, you know to support ... this year I spent more time, 60%, being a teacher and 40% of actually being the ILT.

ILT D shared a perspective that affirmed ILT H's experience, noting that within her five years of being an instructional coach she has done everything from teaching classes, to conducting pull out lessons with students, and testing. Conversely, ILT A expressed a different experience; she denoted that about 90% of her time is spent on duties as an instructional coach, however, was clear that her experience was anomalous, "it seems my situation is not the most common and I get to do a lot more of what I think the ILT is supposed to be doing. I do a lot more instructional coaching than busy work."

When discussing the "other duties as assigned" that is noted in the ILT job description, three of the ILTs identified administrator responsibilities as absorbing most of their time. ILT F termed herself a "quasi-administrator," sharing that this past year she assumed administrator duties such as dealing with behaviors and parent issues. ILT I illuminated the "quasi-administrator" experience, sharing that she does it all "handling discipline, clearing hallways, responding to radio calls...so that's the challenge for me." She further detailed that those administrator duties often keep her from her primary responsibilities:

Another challenge is just being able to get into the classrooms and just being able to observe teachers to see what it is they're doing and what ways that I could be of more support. Having so many lunch duties...getting pulled in so many different directions. I've felt like my job more than ILT is to keep the building afloat.

ILT E felt similar but detailed a different experience while trying to enact her instructional support. She shared an example of how she was attempting to model a lesson when she was disrupted with her name being called on the radio, "...that radio is my enemy [my name is called on the radio] and I try to act like I don't hear it..." Moreover, she summarized the extent of the competing responsibilities and how she perceives they undermine the effectiveness of instructional coaching:

For instance, we had some emergencies with the front office staff, so I was in the front office a lot and that is a challenge because now I'm breaking that trust with teachers...that's one of the challenges is that sometimes you are pulled in a million different places and you can't be in the classroom where you want, where I want to be.

For teachers to improve their instructional practices, they must be provided with consistent coaching in order to sustain new learning. Some estimates suggest as much as 2.5 hours per week of support, which can be difficult as coaches often find difficulty with time to provide continuous support (Moody, 2019; The New Teacher Center, 2016).

Results for Research Question 2

The ILT position is marked by instructional interactions with teachers. According to the job description, growing teacher capacity is central to the position. To understand the phenomenon of instructional coaching, I looked for ways in which ILTs observed instructional changes in teachers' classroom practice. Table 6 identifies the themes that emerged from seeking to determine the instructional changes ILTs noticed as a result of their coaching.

Table 6

Themes Identified from Data Analysis for Research Question 2

Research Question	Data Source	Themes
What instructional changes do ILTs observe in teacher's classroom practice?	Interviews	Classroom management is the main instructional change. Coaching practices used by ILTs

Theme 4: Classroom management is the main instructional change. Changes in classroom management practices was the only consistent change that most of the ILTs identified. Six of 10 ILTs mentioned the sustained improvements in classroom management when sharing how teachers have benefitted from their support. ILT I considered improvement in management as a gateway to better instruction. ILT J noted that one teacher she was supporting had improved in management, albeit in small ways, sharing "I have seen her now pull students aside and address them individually rather than yelling at them across the classroom. And she has said '... that [is] much more

effective, '...so I do see progress.' ILT G shared a similar experience supporting a second-year teacher, noting how she coached him to effectively respond to student misbehaviors, "...they have to see a response so that they know they need to stop. And so...we went through our little coaching sessions, I sat with him through the next class and he used his tools..." She further noted how the teacher realized that the strategies he learned from her were effective, stating "it really does get me the results that I'm looking to achieve" and continued to put them in practice.

ILT B noted that she worked closely with two teachers during the school year who struggled with "managing procedures and responding to student's behavior." She mentioned that she sought several measures to ultimately improve their practice identifying using modeling and videotaping teachers with reflections as a part of her practice. ILT I provided an example of improving a teacher's management practices noting that she shifted his belief about the students and thus influenced his future approaches, "I think he was able to see that it's possible for the kids to sit and learn."

While classroom management was the predominant and consistent example of instructional change that ILTs noted, there were other examples that were mentioned. Four ILTs mentioned that they influenced teacher practice by providing support and guidance with instructional grouping and two provided questioning and discussion techniques as improving as a result of their coaching. The broader sentiment, however, was that changes were incremental or not sustained due to lack of time devoted to consistent coaching. For example, ILT D expressed not feeling effective as she noted

that there were not many changes she saw in the instructional practices of teachers as a result of her efforts.

Theme 5: Coaching practices used by ILTs. I used the social cognitive theory as a framework for understanding the human learning practices enacted by ILTs, specifically determining whether they employed direct observation with feedback, modeling, goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflection. Primary and secondary analyses of data revealed a predominant use of both direct observation with feedback and modeling with limited use of goal setting and not one reference to the use of reflection and planning a course of action.

Goal-setting. Three ILTs cited the use of goal setting when describing their instructional influence on teachers. ILT D highlighted an 8th grade teacher who had a goal of implementing small group instruction “we did co-planning each week to show that every lesson should have at least one way in which a small group instruction is being done...she really improved in that area.” ILT H also described how she used goal setting to sustain changes in teacher practice:

When I first meet with the teacher, I do an observation and I take notes. We come back and discuss the lesson... to focus on; then that will be the goal ... the next time that I come into their classroom, we will focus on that goal to see if we have met that goal ... But each time that I go in there, I'll be looking for that particular goal to see if they have achieved it.

ILT G mentioned the use of goal setting, but described an informal use of the

practice. She stated, “we find the goal in a free-flowing conversation where they get to reflect and I get to affirm, confirm, or question some things that they're sharing, and we start developing some strategies from there.” Regarding goal setting, both ILTs A and J noted that setting goal was not a practice of theirs with teachers but were areas in which they wanted to focus on next school year.

Feedback. Direct observation with feedback and modeling were the primary forms of coaching used by ILTs in the XYZ School District. Seven ILTs noted use of those practices with mixed references to effectiveness. ILT H noted that direct observation and feedback were a part of her daily routine, sharing that she visits, meets, and identifies a point for improvement for future visits. ILT A shared, “I go in and observe, just get a general idea for areas of growth, send feedback, then meet one on one with them...based on what I see in the data I collected when I go back into the room.” Both ILT E and D noted that despite conducting observations and providing feedback, many times changes were not sustained or teachers “do it for show” meaning they showed improvement due to a visit from an administrator.

Modeling. When seeking to understand how modeling is used, ILT B offered the following:

... a brand-new teacher in the seventh grade was having difficulty doing anything beyond direct instruction. I ... modeled ... how to use rubrics to set expectations for learning and [how to] do a gallery walk where you make sure that all students are held accountable for the work. ... she ... adapted it and made it her own.

ILT E shared that although she has modeled, it has not been as successful as she hoped:

I have had teachers who when after I modeled a lesson or demo, they still reverted back to old habits. I needed to just do it more or give them more feedback, observing them more...I didn't get a chance to get to them, so maybe they fell off because I wasn't there..."

ILT J mentioned supporting a teacher by modeling how to create "presentations for the passion projects" located within the Reading/English Language Arts curriculum. She detailed "...I taught, took the lead role in teaching and modeling for [period] 2. She taught with me [period] 3...and then she was comfortable leading..." Noting that experience as a "success story" she shared that the modeling provided the teacher with the capacity to lead the projects and now implements them with new improvements each quarter.

Results for Research Question 3

Research question 3 involved seeking to understand the supports ILTs needed to be more effective with coaching teachers. Data from interviews yielded that coaches need support from administration, clarity in the structure for their position, and training in coaching. Emergent themes are noted in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Themes Identified from Data Analysis for Research Question 3

Research Question	Data Source	Themes
What supports do ILTs believe they need to increase their effectiveness in providing instructional support?	Interviews	Administration support for the ILT position Clarity in structure and training for instructional coaching

Theme 6: Administration support for the ILT position. A major theme that emerged when seeking to identify the supports ILTs felt they needed was the support of administration. Four ILTs noted that their administration was supportive of their work and thus cited the support as a positive contributor to their effectiveness. ILT A shared that she “wanted to be an ILT for the right person” noting she intentionally decided to work for her principal, because she was familiar with her vision for the role and knew she would have the opportunity to do “more instructional coaching than busy work.” ILT G characterized her administration as “very supportive.” She further asserted that the support she receives from her administration has filtered into her relationships with teachers. Although ILT E shared her struggles with the role and competing responsibilities, she explained that her principal supports her effectiveness in mandating teacher participation in her planning sessions. ILT I shed light on the idea of administration’s support stating, that while she believes her administration is supportive, the demands placed upon them creates the need for the ILT position to be used differently. She offered:

... the data coach and I are the next in line - so I think I spend a lot of time doing that [handling discipline, clearing hallways, responding to calls] in support of the administrator and we don't necessarily have the time to go in and do the other part of the job, but I don't necessarily feel like as though, they don't support the position.

Other ILTs shared how the lack of administrator support created barriers to

effective functioning. ILT F detailed the need for administration to support her [to] help teachers to improve instruction and noted the lack of support and follow through “undermines” her work. ILT C shared a similar vantage, explaining the need for administration to mediate teacher push back. She indicated limited effectiveness with teachers “I can't enforce them to do anything. I can suggest. I can encourage, I can show them the best way to do... I think if leadership is not there and not supportive... you can't do your job.” ILT B, who has been in the role for five years, made a case for the need for administration's support. She noted the difference in her role when her administration changed, “With our previous administrator, my job was to work with teachers, help them improve their practice, perform informal observations, [and] provide feedback and strategies and model when necessary...”

ILT J, with only two years as an instructional coach, also illuminated the difference in her role with a change in leadership:

Administration's vision of how an ILT should be used translates directly into how they support us... if administration believes that we are ... the most impactful instructional coaches we can be and they have a clear vision for how they want that to be done, meetings occur. There's constant communication [with us] and there's even some coaching and support for us as coaches... If an administration doesn't have a clear vision for how we're used or they want us to establish our own vision, those meetings don't happen. ... when there is not a strong vision for how the role is used, very often that's where the challenges come in.

Theme 7: Clarity in structure and training for instructional coaching.

Another major theme that emerged was the need for structure and more training for the instructional coaching position. All of the ILTs were unsure of the structure for instructional coaching in the XYZ district. Regardless of years in the position, ILTs felt there was a lack of clarity and structure for instructional coaching. ILT H, in the role for the most years, had this to say: “there was not really a clear cut, defined, roles and responsibility for being an instructional lead teacher.” ILT A, in the position for one year, recalled difficulty in how to enact instructional coaching because “I personally have to have some kind of structure.” ILT F, in the role for seven years, echoed the need for a more structured position for instructional coaching, asking for outlined district level expectations so that she could stop “just making it up as you go along.” ILT I believed clear expectations would lead to more effectiveness, “the position can be a game changer, provided that we have structures in place and clear expectations.”

ILT D noted the need for both clarity in structure and training to enact instructional coaching. She requested a “precise description...what is expected and then ...effective training, really giving that support for what is it you're expecting.” ILT H discussed “ILTs, play a very important role in the building. However, they are one of those resource teachers that are not receiving PDs or are not being provided any type of guidance.”

Despite having mixed levels of experience, ILTs believed that they need training for the position to be effective. Five ILTs mentioned training in coaching cycles and best practices in coaching. When asked to specify types of training, ILT A mentioned

“how to organize coaching cycles” and ILT H noted “observing and giving feedback” with an expressed interest in prioritizing a teacher’s need. ILTs D and I also wanted training on coaching practices, but really specified needing more training in data protocols. Three ILTs mentioned training in the teacher observation system so that they could better support teachers for formal observations. ILT G was the only coach who did not express a need for any specific training, due to her participation in a prior leadership and coaching training. However, after the interview she emailed me to express that she believed that training in adult learning theory would be beneficial for all ILTs.

Several ILTs stated that they have relied on previous trainings or used the internet to aid navigating the position as the offerings in the XYZ district were either “non-existent” or poorly fit their needs. ILT A has utilized Pinterest to learn about coaching cycles and useful coaching documents, while ILT F and G used their learning from their degree programs as information on how to lead teachers in the classroom. When asked about training, many of the ILTs noted that the XYZ district does offer a “coaching cohort” for ILTs that is primarily reading, and mathematics focused. These content-focused sessions delve into the curricula and classroom level implementation at differing sites across the district for reading and mathematics. ILT G explained what happened during the monthly sessions:

I go to the leadership and coaching meetings, but we don't spend a whole lot of time talking about what the coaching models are. We spend a lot of time going

into classrooms and talking about what should have been there, what wasn't there, what was happening, how to remediate it, [and] how to get somebody to receive your feedback.

ILT I, who serves as a non-content ILT, did not find the sessions useful. “The first one I went to, they talked about coaching styles, but for the most part I think we spent more time talking about the curriculum... I was sort of feeling like a fish out of water because it was specific to the reading curriculum.” ILT E shared that the mathematics cohort is similar in that it is devoted to the implementation and understanding of the mathematics curriculum and therefore does not address the specific needs of the ILT position in regard to coaching.

Discrepant Cases

Merriam and Tisdell (2017) described discrepant cases as data that are not consistent with or refutes emergent themes or findings. To establish credibility, I purposefully checked for discrepant cases, and while I found a prevalence of data to support the identified themes, I did find two discrepant cases. Two of the ILTs, ILT A and ILT G did not perceive or experience that noninstructional responsibilities posed a challenge to their position. Both ILTs noted that most of their time was spent on instructional coaching responsibilities. While they did participate in noninstructional responsibilities, they noted that it did not negatively influence their position as an instructional coach. ILT A noted that 80% of her time was spent on coaching activities, while ILT G noted that 90% of the time she is coaching teachers.

Evidence of Quality

As a researcher, I sought to establish credibility and transferability through the research methods, analysis, and reporting. Yin (2012) noted that a research study holds validity when there is an accurate collection and representation of the participant's ideas and thoughts. Lodico et. al (2010) expanded an understanding of validity, noting that credibility, included validity, and is established in three ways. The first is when a researcher follows specific methods designed to yield thorough and accurate representations of a participant's experience. Second, is when a researcher ensures that the interpretations gleaned from the analysis of data truly portrays a participant's perspective as it was intended. A third way that credibility is established, is when a researcher uses multiple sources of data to ensure deep understanding of the phenomena under study. Transferability is met through a researcher's deep description of the participant's experience, thereby allowing other readers to determine similarity in one's own setting or experience (Lodico et. al, 2010).

To establish credibility, I utilized two sources of data – interviews and observations – to collect, analyze and compare experiences and perspectives of ILTs. I used the same protocols (Appendices B & C) when interviewing and observing participants in order to reduce variability in data collection as well as to minimize bias. Upon completion of each interview and observation, I provided participants with a summary of my findings to confirm or refute accuracy in interpretations. I did not receive any objections or requests to change interpretations, thus confirming that my findings were accurate and trustworthy. When reporting findings, I focused on the use of

the participants' words to illuminate the themes. The descriptions and language used by participants provided a rich explanation and detail of their perspectives which may allow readers to develop images in their minds, thereby seeking to achieve transferability.

Limitation

Lodico et al. (2010) proffered that researchers must entail any specific limitations of their study, offering that that no study is without some limitations. One such limitation of the study is that while each participant was currently in the position of an ILT, several of the participants could not recall current examples of instructional coaching practices. Such a lapse in current examples was as a result of the position changing each year. For example, ILT H was assigned to teach a class whereas that was not the case in previous years.

Summary

The problem of this study was that despite the adoption of the ILT position, it was unclear how they have influenced teacher practice as student achievement has remained stagnate. The ILT is an instructional coach whose responsibilities lie in improving teacher quality to ultimately influence student achievement. The study utilized Bandura's social cognitive theory because the principles he outlined that define human learning align to the coaching responsibilities of the ILTs. To explore the problem, I focused on three research questions:

1. What are the ILTs perceptions of and experience with instructional coaching of middle school teachers?
2. What instructional changes do ILTs observe in teachers' classroom practice?

3. What supports do ILTs believe they need to increase their effectiveness in providing instructional support?

Through ILT interviews and observations I gained an in-depth understanding of the ILT perspective and experience. All participants viewed themselves as instructional support for teachers, noting various ways they enact that support. From gathering and providing resources to building relationships to assisting with instruction, ILTs believed in the importance of their position. An analysis of data revealed that while ILTs viewed their roles as important to increasing student achievement, additional noninstructional responsibilities impeded their ability to provide continuous instructional support to teachers. Classroom management emerged as the most consistent instructional support provided by ILTs.

ILTs mentioned principles of human learning such as modeling, observation, direct feedback, and goal setting. ILTs relied on the use of modeling, observation and direct feedback, with only 3 noting the use of goal setting and not one mention of planning a course of action and reflection as a part of their instructional support.

ILTs noted they needed clarity and a defined structure for their work, support from administration, and training. The district offers content training that focuses on the reading and mathematics curricula; however, it is misaligned to the needs of ILTs. There are no PD opportunities that provide support and training in coaching activities. These findings are consistent with emerging research regarding how to effectively support a coaching program. Addressing the needs of ILTs in the XYZ district may provide more opportunities for coaching and better trained ILTs, which may, in turn, better prepare

teachers for the needs of their students. Coaches perform better when there is an identified structure, support, and training for their position (Galey, 2016; Knight et al., 2015).

The ILT position is a new position to the district. The responsibilities of ILTs vary from school to school, with no consistency in expectation or appropriate training for the position. The district would benefit from a quality coaching program that ensures that ILTs have the time and resources to effectively improve teacher capacity. The findings of this study support the creation of a uniform structure for coaching and ongoing professional learning for ILTs and administrators. The project I designed is a coaching structure aligned to the social cognitive theory that emphasizes goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress. The accompanying 3-day PD will introduce ILTs to the coaching structure as well as provide a universal understanding of the role of an ILT as a coach. While the 3-day PD is targeted to ILTs, administrators are invited to attend in order to provide a common understanding of the position and increase the supports ILTs receive once back in their school buildings.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of ILTs as they enact their instructional support responsibilities and to determine what supports they need to be effective. The study was conducted in the XYZ School District in the Northeastern, U.S. that serves over 200,000 students. An analysis of student achievement data revealed that over 80% of the student population struggled with proficiency in reading and mathematics. The district has identified improving teacher quality and academic excellence as the cornerstones of the strategic improvement plan. The ILT is one position principals utilize with the purpose of improving teacher quality in order to ultimately influence student achievement.

Data were collected through four observations and 10 semistructured one-on-one interviews of ILTs at the middle school level. An analysis of data revealed that while ILTs viewed themselves as support for teachers, competing responsibilities and lack of structure for the role negatively impacted their ability to effectively provide that support. Further analysis revealed that clarity and structure for the role, the support of administration and specialized training were key needs that they felt could improve their ability to improve teacher quality, thereby improving student achievement. Based on the results of the analysis, I developed a structure for coaching and a 3-day summer PD. In this section, I describe the project and goals, rationale, a review of current literature, evaluation, and implications.

Description and Goals

This project is a coaching structure and 3-day PD. The coaching structure, a 6-week cycle, will provide a standardized frame of reference for ILTs in how to approach their work. During the analysis, it was noted that there was no model or coaching structure utilized by any of the ILTs. ILTs selected activities and behaviors based on prior knowledge or simple research. Although more professional learning will be needed, this project outlines a three-day summer PD designed to introduce ILTs to the coaching structure, standardize an understanding of coaching, and build capacity around meeting the needs of teachers. Administrators will also be invited to the workshop so that they have a clear understanding of the role of the ILT and both ILT and administrator can collaborate to identify ways to remove certain barriers, such as competing responsibilities.

The goal of the coaching structure and complementary workshop is to educate ILTs on effective coaching practices, inclusive of goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress to improve teacher practice, and ultimately student achievement. ILTs noted that while they were invited to monthly training sessions, those sessions solely focused on content and curricula implementation. ILTs in the XYZ district are seeking greater access to training and collaboration around the specificities of instructional coaching. Providing a coaching structure and complementary ongoing training may possibly be the missing piece to improving teacher practice and thus influencing student achievement in a positive direction.

Rationale

The problem under study was that despite the adoption of the ILT position, it was unclear how ILTs have influenced teacher practice as student achievement in the district remained unchanged. It was unclear how ILTs enacted instructional coaching to teachers in order to improve their pedagogical practices. An analysis of data revealed that there was no standard execution of the role and ILTs enacted their responsibilities in a myriad of ways. A consistent structure for their role, support from administration, and specialized training, specifically focused on goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress, were identified as ways in which to bring greater effectiveness to the position. To that end, I created a coaching structure and 3-day PD for both ILTs and administrators.

The data gathered in this study revealed that there was a discrepancy in the outlined job responsibilities of the ILT and what their day to day responsibilities were as assigned by administration. Often, participants cited competing responsibilities and “other duties as assigned” as a main impediment to their effective functioning. The overuse of the position, by administrators, suggested a lack of clarity and understanding of the position, and how to optimize it for the benefit of teachers. An analysis of data also revealed that the district did not use a coaching structure to guide the work of ILTs and offered limited training in instructional coaching. Participants reported the use of prior classroom instructional knowledge, prior trainings, and the internet as ways in which they sought to develop their own capacities in supporting teachers.

A coaching structure and complementary 3-day PD session were chosen because ILTs expressed the need to have a consistent approach to how the position is enacted and noted that training in coaching strategies and behaviors would be useful. Because ILTs serve under the direction of principals, administrators will be invited to attend the training. The training will take place during the summer to provide an opportunity for ILTs and administration to receive training in advance of the school year. The coaching structure provides a three-step process to guide the work of ILTs that is aligned to the social cognitive theory. Utilizing this structure, ILTs will assess classroom practices, meet with the classroom teacher to determine a goal and plan for support, provide targeted coaching, and finalize the time frame with a reflection on progress within a 6-week period. The workshop will focus on reviewing the coaching structure, developing a working understanding of instructional coaching, defining a clear structure for the position, and providing common practice for some of the essential skills coaches must have, such as goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress. By providing time during the summer, ILTs and administration will have an opportunity to calibrate their understanding the work and collaborate for coaching implementation at their school site.

Review of Literature

The findings from my data collection and analysis revealed the need to address professional learning for ILTs. I conducted a literature review using Walden University's library databases. I searched ERIC, SAGE, and EBSCOhost primarily for scholarly peer-reviewed articles from 2014 to present. I used the following search terms: *curricula for*

instructional coaches, professional development for instructional coaches, effective professional development, teacher leadership, training for teacher leaders, and instructional coach skills. Although instructional coaching as a phenomenon has been widely researched, there was minimal literature on training instructional coaches.

Andragogy

This project study was designed using Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy. The theory of andragogy holds that adults have a process of learning separate from that of children (Knowles et al., 2005). Training ILTs will require a specialized approach to learning that respects their prior knowledge and role as trainers for teachers. Knowles offered that as humans mature, they take on more responsibility for their own lives decreasing the need for external factors for learning and seeking self-direction in learning experiences (1973, 1975). Adults are more apt to participating in learning when it is relevant to their lives and current experiences. The foundation of andragogy holds the following assumptions regarding adult learners: (a) motivation to learn, (b) orientation to learning centered around life experiences, (c) experience as the primary source of learning, (d) the need for self-direction, and (e) differentiation in learning (Knowles et al., 2005).

Adult learning is more complex and different than how children learn (Leigh, Whitted, & Hamilton, 2015; McGrath, 2009). Instructors of adults must understand how to tailor practices and activities to meet the needs of adult learners (Merriam, 2001). Facilitators of adult learning must model for learners versus direct them and must engage adult learners in understanding the purpose of acquiring new skills before adults will be

open to acquiring new information (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012; McGrath, 2009). Designing professional learning for ILTs utilizing the principles of andragogy will provide the best opportunity to increase the professional practice of ILTs.

According to literature, adult learning experiences should be organized and aligned to the following principles:

- Adults should take part in the design and assessment of their learning;
- Adult learning should focus on the lived experiences of learners;
- Adult learning is maximized when it is relevant to their lives, particularly their careers;
- Adults learning experiences should be problem based;
- Instructors of adult learning should facilitate versus dictate (Knowles, 1984, 2005; Kearsley, 2010).

Although ILTs expressed a need to be trained for instructional coaching, they also viewed themselves as instructional authorities. Respective of this understanding, the activities I designed in the professional learning series for ILTs were structured to be correlative to the ILT experience, focusing on having ILTs build their understanding and growth in coaching, goal setting, and planning a course of action through scenarios, reflective activities, and collaborative conversations highlighting their expertise.

Professional Development

Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) outlined professional development as a necessary and integral part of a district's plan to improve an educator's capacities to influence student achievement positively. Furthermore, the law highlights that all

members involved in an educational system should receive professional learning, not just teachers (Learning Forward, 2017). From an adult learning standpoint, professional learning can encourage adults to continuously improve and inspire them to become more adept in their roles (Bohonos, 2014). ILTs noted that while the district did offer monthly training sessions, they reported that they were not always suited to their needs. The trainings provided did not prepare them to provide instructional support for teachers as they most often concentrated on specific contents and curricula.

Although there has been much research devoted to the professional development of teachers, there is minimal research on designing professional learning for those who instructionally support teachers. Interestingly, however, research does suggest that instructional coaches need training and development in order to effectively enact their roles (Knapp, 2017). Wenner and Campbell (2017) reached the same conclusion in their empirical literature review of teacher leadership. They concluded that “it is presumptuous to think that teachers intuitively know how to lead their colleagues or schools without any focused support in the form of professional development (p. 136).” Scornavacco (2016) noted that coaches must be effectively supported and trained for schools and districts to fully benefit from the position.

Effective professional development. Professional development has been identified as a necessary component to improving the practices of educators and schools. Patton, Parker, and Tannehill (2015) argued that effective professional development should help participants to transfer information gained into practice. They also noted that effective professional development should be collaborative, practical, incorporate active

learning strategies, and focus on the needs of the participants. Holzberg, Clark, and Morningstar (2018) identified similar essential components of effective PD. They are:

1. relevant content focus that aligns with educator's knowledge and beliefs
2. opportunities for active learning
3. team-based participation, and
4. sustained and implemented over time (p. 54).

Administrator support. The ILT position functions under the direct supervision of a building principal or another administrator. Therefore, the structure of an ILT's role and responsibilities are governed by each administrator at each school and is subject to how they view the role. Woulfin and Rigby (2017) noted that administrators should create a systematic structure for coaches to conduct their work effectively. They further noted that coaches need not only professional learning but oversight in the way of informal and formal supervision by administrators. The net result of poor oversight and monitoring of how a coach supports the improvement of teacher practice is stagnate student achievement (Reddy, Glover, Kurz, & Elliott, 2019).

In order to support the work of an instructional coach, administrators need capacity building designed to help them understand the position of an instructional coach and coaching activities. The training of administrators is critical as it expands their understanding about the work of a coach and therefore can influence the support for the role. Providing professional learning experiences to both coaches and administrators can increase the support and implementation of coaching (Mangin, 2014).

Instructional Coaching as a Lever of Instructional Leadership

School reform has placed an increasing pressure on urban schools to improve student achievement (Harris, 2012). Principals are one of the most important factors, when considering influences on student achievement (NAESP, 2012). Although there is evidence to support the positive influence of a principal as an instructional leader, it is equally difficult for principals to accomplish this due to a myriad of responsibilities and organizational structures, particularly at the secondary school level (Sheng, Wolff, Kilmer, & Yager, 2017). Therefore, instructional coaches have been used as a key component in assisting principals with instructional leadership.

Principals distribute responsibilities for instruction to coaches thereby allowing them to have ownership and influence over teacher performance. Grenda and Hackmann (2013) found that distributing responsibilities for instructional leadership to staff members and teacher leaders within the building was a practice that promoted greater collaboration and school success. Sebastian, Allensworth, and Huang (2016) also found that effective principals used teacher leaders to assist in the responsibilities of improving teacher learning but argued that principals must still have a direct influence over instructional matters. Eckert (2018) confirmed that staff members participate in instructional leadership, however noted that participation must be collective rather than distributed.

ILTs in the study are situated to assist in the oversight and implementation of best practices in teaching. While they do participate in instructional leadership through the

coaching activities, they engage with teachers, they have noted that their experiences are not mostly collaborative with their administrators.

Effective Coaching Activities

There has been no consistently defined set of responsibilities of an instructional coach. According to literature, they take on several roles and conduct activities having to do with instruction - lesson planning, curriculum mapping, data analysis, and training teachers (Woulfin, 2014). ILTs reported conducting activities such as co-planning lessons, observing lessons, providing feedback, and unpacking curriculum standards that are all in alignment with their job description. However, many of the participants noted that the coaching activities they were able to engage in were inconsistently implemented as other duties took them away from their role. Wall and Palmer (2015) affirmed that instructional coaches are often assigned additional responsibilities that are not instructional in nature.

Instructional coaching has been identified as one way to improve the instructional practices of teachers; primarily it is the behaviors and actions of coaches that are noted to improve teacher performance. Setting a goal or determining a focal point for coaching is an integral step towards improving a teacher's capacity (Aguilar, 2019). Knight (2019) suggested that identifying a goal allows a teacher to become clear about their practice and defines an actionable target for improvement. Once a goal is determined, the coach must determine a course of action to assist the teacher in reaching the goal. This step is critical to building a teacher's capacity because it is at this stage where the learning occurs. In planning a course of action, the coach and teacher engage in collaboration, co-planning,

practicing specific instructional strategies, observing and providing feedback, modeling, looking at student work, and monitoring progress (Aguilar, 2019; Knight, 2019; Psencik, Mitrani, & Coleman, 2019).

Mühlberger and Traut-Mattausch (2015) found that reflection, goal setting, and actions plans were important practices of coaches that positively influenced teachers. They noted that the trio of behaviors not only encouraged self-improvement but provided a focus point for growth. Reddy et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of goal setting and support plans, but also added that performance-based feedback and modeling were also important actions.

In their review of empirical literature regarding teacher education, Gibbons and Cobb (2017) found that the productive coaching activities differed in effectiveness based on whether a coach was working with individual or groups of teachers. With individual teachers, the study found that both co-teaching and modeling were highly productive coaching activities. For groups, the study noted that examining student work, analyzing a classroom video with discussion and conducting a lesson study were highly productive for groups of teachers. ILTs enact their roles both individually and with groups of teachers as they are most often assigned to support departments of teachers. While there is a myriad of activities to conduct, Reddy et al. (2019) asserted that the effectiveness and efficiency of a coach lies in the training and support they receive to fulfill their role.

Preparation for Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaching has been utilized widely as a lever for improvement in schools. The ESSA federal law outlined the need for districts to invest in and train

coaches as they are noted to be a part of a school's reform efforts (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Coaches are typically underprepared for their roles and need specific training and support (Knapp, 2017; Scornavacco et al., 2016). Wenner and Campbell (2017) noted that most of the training for coaches occurs via a formal education program or through attendance at conferences and PDs.

Coaches who do receive training usually receive content-focused learning sessions although there are other needs for them to enact their roles proficiently. The content of training sessions should include district instructional reform initiatives (Woulfin, 2018), pedagogy and leadership skills (Wenner & Campbell, 2017), student learning and leading change (Smylie & Eckert, 2017), and fostering positive and collegial relationships (Johnson, 2016). Smylie and Eckert (2017) proffered that coaches were unlikely to improve without specialized training.

Although coaching as a phenomenon has been widely researched, there is a dearth of literature devoted to how to effectively prepare coaches or even the features of a training program (Carver, 2016). Cosenza (2015) profiled the *Teacher Leader Model (TLM) Standards* that are utilized as a source for their teacher leader preparation programs. The standards were a nascent attempt to define how to prepare teacher leaders to become effective coaches. The seven domains to the standards are:

1. fostering a collaborative culture
2. accessing and using research
3. promoting professional learning
4. facilitating instructional improvement

5. promoting use of assessments and data
6. improving outreach to families and community, and
7. advocating for students and the profession (p.199)

Berg et al. (2016) also conducted a study profiling four entities that utilized the *TLM* standards for their coaching preparation programs. They argued that while the standards were a good start, they were missing critical components such as a shared understanding or vision for improvement and expertise in classroom instruction.

In a study of a coaching training program, Carver (2016) found that participants engaged in critical reflection, dialogue, journal writing, case study reviews, and problem solving. Participants self-reported feeling transformed and prepared for the role of coaching. New leaders (2015) reported the use of role play, practice, feedback, and reflection as part of their coaching training program. A critical part of any preparation program for coaches is the feedback coaches receive on their learning. The University of Florida Lastinger Center, Learning Forward, and Public Impact (2016) cited the evaluation of coaching effectiveness necessary to any development program.

Project Description

To support the learning needs of ILTs I propose a coaching structure called The Teachers Academy along with a 3-day PD titled “Learning to Lead.” The coaching structure is a 3-part process that includes goal setting, developing a plan of action, conducting coaching, and reflection on progress. The 3-day PD is designed as an introduction to coaching series with a recommendation to continue sessions, monthly, and throughout the school year. The “Learning to Lead” workshop will be held during

the summer because ILTs work an additional 10 days beyond their 10-month duty. Since administrators will be invited to attend, the summertime provides the best opportunity for uninterrupted learning, collaboration, and planning. The main purpose of the PD is to provide a clear understanding of the coaching structure and training for the ILT. The goal of the project is to provide training on the coaching structure and coaching behaviors, such as goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress. The project will build an ILTs capacity for coaching as they will learn how to set goals, create a plan of action to support a teacher's needs, and utilize different coaching practices.

Potential Resources, Supports, and Barriers

To implement the "Learning to Lead" PD series, I will need a variety of resources and supports. First, I will need to meet with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction to share the project and receive approval to conduct the summer sessions and have them posted on the district's online professional learning platform so that participants can self-register. I will need permission to utilize the main room at the Curriculum and Instruction office as well as a projector, cart, speakers and copier to print materials for participants. I will provide cookie, donuts, and pastries for each day of the workshop as well as other materials such as chart paper, pens, markers, and sticky notes. Building principals will be needed to encourage ILTs and an administrator to attend the 3-day workshop. ILTs work an additional 10 extra duty days that principals have discretion to utilize. Many principals allow ILTs to work five days before the start of the year and five days after the start of the year. The recommendation for principals will be to make the 3-day training a part of an ILTs mandatory duty days before the start of the school year.

A barrier that could negatively impact the project is that it will be held during the summer. ILTs may be off for the summer break or have signed up to teacher summer school. Moreover, administrators may be on vacation, conferences, or summer leadership institutes. It will be important to choose the best dates for the three-day workshop. I selected three consecutive days in the second week of August because it is close to the start of pre-service week but will still offer time for ILTs and administration to prepare presentations and arrangements for the return of teachers. The training will also provide time for ILTs and administration to collaborate on their vision for coaching at the school site and therefore begin the process of framing an implementation plan for the year.

Proposal for Implementation

I will meet with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction in the Spring to review the proposed project and implementation dates. Once approved, I will request to present the project to building principals at the May systemic principals' meeting so that I can generate interest and they can begin to share expectations for attendance with ILTs. The registration for the summer series will be open for approximately four weeks (June-July). At the close of registrations, participants will receive a confirmation email; an email reminder will also be sent approximately two weeks before the training that will include pre-work for the initial session. Participants will be sent the article "Coaching Matters" to read before the first session. The project will occur over a period of three consecutive days, in August before the school year begins. During the 3-day professional

learning series, participants will be exposed to how to establish a culture for coaching in their schools, learn about coaching principles, and delve into coaching practices.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role is to oversee all aspects of the implementation of the project. I will copy, collate, and organize all necessary materials as well as secure the training location and navigate permissions from all district parties. I will be solely responsible for advertising the project and establishing relationships with stakeholders, such as building principals and instructional directors, so that they are aware of and see the value in ensuring participation from their staff members (ILTs and administrators). Lastly, my responsibility will be to facilitate the three-day training, while simultaneously evaluating its effectiveness using formative measures such as observing and listening to conversations, conducting check-ins, reading participant reflections, and reviewing daily training evaluations.

While I am primarily responsible for the project, there are other important people who are needed to ensure the training's success. ILTs, first and foremost, are the targeted audience for the training and their attendance is critical. ILTs will be undertaking the work of coaching in school thus their participation, learning, and insight will be critical. Principals and assistant principals also play a necessary role in the success of the project. Principals establish and communicate areas of focus for their schools and thus can negatively or positively influence ILTs to effectively enact their responsibilities. In coordination with the principal, assistant principals carry the vision of the school and ensure the proper management and operations of a school. In many instances, assistant

principals are given responsibilities over departments and areas of the school building, therefore making their knowledge of the roles of ILTs necessary.

Project Evaluation

As with any learning experience, one must ensure that the outcomes targeted for the session(s) were accomplished. My project will include both formative and summative assessment measures.

Formative Evaluation

Formative assessments are when evidence of learning is gathered and used to determine the next actions needed to further or solidify learning. It is informal and can be accomplished through a variety of measures (Jiang, 2014). I will conduct formative assessments checks both during the sessions as well as at the conclusion of each day, and I will conduct continuous assessments while facilitating the PD. These measures will include focused listening and note-taking during participant discussions and share outs, quick writes, and observations. Conducting in-moment assessments throughout the sessions will allow me to change course and/or clarify the learning so that intended outcomes are met.

At the conclusion of each day, I will also provide participants a written evaluation form that will need to be completed as an exit slip. The written form will serve as an evaluation of the entire day's learning and will provide insight into each participant's comprehensive experience. The evaluation will help me to determine if the professional learning experience is on the right track as well as identifying what information needs additional coverage. Participants will be asked to share their opinions on whether we met

each of our stated objectives as well as their understanding of the topics and strategies in the session. Moreover, participants will be provided an opportunity to provide open response, which will allow for them to share anything not captured in the rating scales. Formative assessments provide on-time feedback that will allow me to address the needs of the learner; it is a critical component to my project study.

Summative Evaluation

Summative assessments are considered assessments that are conclusive in nature and ultimately summarize learning (Dixon & Worrell, 2016). They do not provide feedback and are meant to determine whether learning has occurred. I will provide participants with a summative evaluation at the conclusion of the 3-day PD. Guskey (2002) proffered that evaluating activities in professional development sessions were necessary for determining whether the activities met the overall goals. He offered that an effective evaluation of a professional development must include both the participants experience and the knowledge gained from the activities. He further noted that how an organization supports professional learning, how participants use the new learning, and how students were ultimately impacted as important factors as well. The results of the summative evaluation will be used to inform future professional learning sessions for ILTs.

Evaluation Goals

The overall goal of the workshop is to provide ILTs with a clear understanding of the coaching structure and training for their role, specifically in the areas of goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress. The evaluation goal aligns to the

overall workshop goal in that it will measure both the participants' learning and the transfer of that knowledge. Both the formative and summative evaluations will provide valuable information to determine whether the daily outcomes are met as well as the overall goals. Furthermore, the data from the evaluations will provide me with areas to clarify, concepts to revisit, and future learning needs. The results of the evaluations will also provide use tangible information for the district as the recommendation is to offer monthly sessions for ILTs. Through the monthly sessions, ILTs can bring evidence of concepts addressed during the PD thereby ensuring that the learning has been implemented. Guskey (2002) noted that effective evaluations must include evidence of how participants utilize new knowledge and skills.

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders for this project are ILTs, administrators, teachers, and students. ILTs are the primary stakeholders and the PD was designed for them using results from the study. Although the content is targeted towards ILTs, administration influences the effectiveness of their role. Administration can create or reduce barriers for ILTs; therefore, they are the secondary stakeholders for the project. The knowledge administrators will gain from the training sessions may allow them to collaborate with ILTs to identify how to support coaching at their school and to monitor expectations for coaching at their schools. Teachers and students are stakeholders because they are the ultimate beneficiaries of focused, intentional, and continuous coaching. As the instructional quality of teachers improve, the benefit to students may be experienced through increases in academic achievement.

Project Implications

An analysis of data revealed that ILTs needed not only structure but training for their roles. Providing clarity and structure in the approach to the work of ILTs as well as training to effectively fulfill the role may positively influence teacher practice. The professional learning ILTs receive may increase their capacity and competency for effective coaching. Training may improve the preparation of ILTs which may in turn improve their coaching practices with teachers. Trainings will include preparation in activities that promote human learning such as targeted and specific feedback on teaching, modeling, goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress. Better trained ILTs may improve not only job satisfaction but may also positively contribute to achieving a high performing workforce, which is a focus area in the XYZ district's strategic plan.

A teacher's instructional knowledge influences his or her instructional delivery and ultimately student performance (König & Pflanzl, 2016). ILTs are charged with improving the pedagogical practices of teachers. As ILTs learn, that learning is transmitted to teachers. With improved teaching strategies and targeted instructional delivery, teachers may be better suited to meet the needs of students. Student academic performance may increase which will assist the XYZ district in moving in a positive direction towards their vision.

Although the PD is targeted toward ILTs, school administrators may also benefit from the learning. Administrators are key figures when implementing initiatives within any school building. An analysis of data revealed that administration's support for ILTs

either eased or burdened their responsibilities, however, it was noted that regardless of positive support ILTs were assigned additional responsibilities that impeded their work. The PD may show administrators the full scope of the role and responsibilities of an ILT and will provide a structure for their work. Furthermore, it may provide administrators with an in-depth and accompanying experience in the role as an instructional coach so that they are aware of how to better support them in the school building. The collaboration and consensus building that may occur during the 3-day PD may provide a pathway for effective implementation once they return to the school site.

The XYZ School District currently struggles with low and stagnate achievement rates that have not improved in the five years since the creation of the ILT position. While the district recognized the need for the position, there is a lack of structure and training for the position. The project study will promote a structure for how to enact the instructional coaching role, and training to support both ILTs and building administrators in implementing a high-quality instructional coaching program with emphasis on goal setting, planning for action, and feedback. The project provides a cohesive approach to build the collective efficacy of ILTs and administrators to ultimately improve teacher capacity. An improvement in teacher capacity may ultimately lead to improved student performance.

A quality education is necessary for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to compete with their counterparts. The XYZ district has over 60% of students on Free and Reduced meals. Likewise, more than 50% of the students in the district are not on grade level in Reading and Mathematics as measured by state

assessments. The coaching structure and 3-day PD is the social change necessary to improve educational outcomes and address the stagnate academic performance in the district.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The XYZ school district currently offers an ILT position whose primary responsibility is to improve teacher quality to positively influence student achievement; however, student achievement has remained unchanged since the inception of the position. The purpose of this multi-site qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of ILTs as they enact their instructional support responsibilities, determine any observed changes in the instructional practices of teachers, and identify what supports they need to be effective. Findings from the study revealed that ILTs need clarity and structure for their work and training for their coaching responsibilities. Therefore, I created *The Teacher's Academy*, a structure for coaching, and *Learning to Lead*, a complementary 3-day PD. In the following section, I will provide my reflections and conclusions about the project.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The strength of this project is that it was developed from the findings of the study and aligned to needs of ILTs. The project is a coaching structure and PD series. Coaching is a form of professional learning for the improvement of teacher capacity; however, coaches are also in need of training (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Patton, Parker, and Tannehill (2015) offered that PD can promote change in practices and provide affirmation with the new learning. The 3-day PD is designed to be provided over the summer so that ILTs and administrators have an opportunity to convene without the

interference of the school year and being in the role. The summer provides an opportunity to learn and time to plan implementation and execution. During the PD series, ILTs will have an opportunity to interact with other ILTs and discuss practices, share ideas, and refine practices together. The PD will cover topics specific to their work such as the coaching structure, adult learning theory, goal setting, planning a course of action, providing effective feedback, and reflecting on progress.

Limitations

One limitation of the project is that the timeframe for training limited and therefore ILTs may not carry their learning forward and put it into practice. Coaching requires a significant level of instructional knowledge and interpersonal skills that can often inundate a coach. When taking on new roles, coaches need support (Knapp, 2016). Without support during implementation of new learning, they may resort to prior, more comfortable practice. A recommendation to address this limitation is for curriculum and instruction departments in districts employing this model to hold monthly meetings in which coaches can come together to reinforce learning, discuss practices, and affirm practices. Monthly meetings will provide continuous support for new learning and can reinforce effective coaching practices with ILTs.

Recommendation for an Alternative Approach

The problem that prompted the study is that despite the adoption of the ILT position, student achievement in the district has remain unchanged. An analysis of data revealed there are a multitude of factors that influence the role of the ILT including competing responsibilities, lack of clarity and structure, and specific instructional

coaching training. One alternative recommendation to address the problem would be for the district to develop an evaluation system that aligns directly with the role of the ILT. An evaluation system would allow for monitoring and measurement of the effectiveness of ILTs. Reddy et al. (2019) suggested that an assessment measure to determine the effectiveness coaching could provide greater clarity around performance and provide feedback to improve coaching practices. They further noted that an assessment measure should include self-assessment from coaches, a supervisor's rating, and feedback from teachers that the coaches serve. An evaluation system would ultimately allow the XYZ district to measure the performance of ILTs as well as provide insight into targeted areas of support for training and refinement.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

The research process has been a humbling, intensive, yet rewarding experience. I began this process thinking I was clear about the direction of my study and learned very quickly that I only had a surface level understanding of scholarly writing and research. The continuous rounds of feedback and edits allowed me to refine not just my research, but my understanding of scholarly research. The process required me as the researcher to frame my research around a significant problem, to ground everything in evidence, and learn as much about the problem as possible. That preliminary process allowed me to move into the next phase of the process as a knowledgeable and competent researcher. As a qualitative researcher, I learned to temper my conclusions and allowed the process and data to yield the answers to my questions.

My favorite part was both the data collection and analysis processes. Using an inductive approach, I took an inquiry stance and sought to listen, hear, and absorb as much information from the participants as possible; after all, my study was about their experiences. As I listened to the perspectives and experiences of each ILT, the themes began to take shape as I began to note commonalities in their experiences. It was exciting! Transcribing and coding the data allowed me to immerse myself in the experience of an ILT and understand the phenomena deeply.

My intimate relationship with the data allowed me to develop a project that sufficiently addresses the needs of ILTs in the XYZ district. In designing the project, I used research to inform the types of activities and the content that would be delivered. The most important learning from the design of the project was the importance and use of both formative and summative evaluations. Evaluation is perhaps the most important component of the project or presentation as it allows the presenter to determine if the aims have been met. I included both formative and summative assessments in the project and now ensure that evaluation is a consistent process in any professional learning within my school building.

The research and project development process has positively impacted my role as an educational practitioner. Using research findings to determine a solution to a problem is a process that I began to apply and utilize in my role as a district administrator. While in my daily work I often use data to determine a focus, rarely have I used research to determine how to solve the problem. When seeking to determine best fit solutions to

specific challenges within my school building, I now seek literature to support determinations.

Within my role as a building principal, I now oversee two ILTs. The results of my research guided me in defining stricter parameters around additional responsibilities of ILTs within my own school building. Additionally, I have developed the capacity of my assistant principals regarding how to effectively support the work of the ILTs. I have utilized research to guide leadership meetings and now hold separate meetings with ILTs to discuss their work, experiences in coaching, and training on specific aspects of their responsibilities. Furthermore, I have begun to discuss the implications of my research and relevant literature with colleagues. I can provide insights into how to effectively support the work of ILTs within their buildings as each of our goals are connected to improving teacher quality so that our schools may improve academically.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

ILTs are hired in the XYZ district to support and improve the practices of teachers. The district outlined job responsibilities of an ILT involve helping to unpack curricula, conducting informal observations with feedback to teachers, modeling lessons, and coaching teachers. The work is important because the study revealed a discrepancy between the expected role and the actual role of the ILTs. An analysis of data revealed that while ILTs see their roles in accordance with their outlined job responsibilities, they are unable to consistently enact their role due to competing responsibilities. Further, while there are a host of outlined responsibilities, there are limited trainings for ILTs to

learn the role. The work of this study is important because it may lead to clarified roles and responsibilities for ILTs in addition to training.

The project developed from the results of the study will provide ILTs with structure and training to enact their role. The results of this study may provide the district and principals with the knowledge and pathways to support ILTs so that they can effectively enact their roles. With improved knowledge and better support for their role, ILTs will be better suited to address the differentiated needs of teachers. The work of ILTs could revolutionize instructional practices within their respective buildings thus leading to increases in student achievement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The social cognitive theory outlines how humans learn as well the conditions and ways that learning is optimized. ILTs are situated within their school to provide learning experiences for teachers to influence their practices which in turn may ultimately influence student achievement. Although the written responsibilities of ILTs are aligned to social cognitive theory, their actual roles varied greatly. An analysis of data revealed that ILTs often had additional responsibilities that interfered with their coaching roles. Even when ILTs had an abundance of time to devote to their roles, there was no training provided to support them in understanding how to enact their coaching responsibilities. To address the specific and immediate needs of ILTs, I designed a coaching structure and 3-day PD. Implementing the project study will provide ILTs with a basis for enacting their work and clarity on how to proceed in positively influencing teacher practices.

There are several directions for future research around utilizing coaching to improve teacher quality. One such direction would be to examine the perceptions of effectiveness of ILTs through the perspectives of teachers and administrators. The study would be qualitative and would involve interviews with teachers and administrators. The perspectives of teachers and administrators on the role and implementation of coaching practices would provide useful information to determine a comprehensive lens for improving the work of coaches.

Additionally, another direction for future research could be conducting an empirical review of standardized measures to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional coaches. While literature suggest several practices enacted by effective coaches, there is limited research on a standardized way to measure the effectiveness of coaching practices (Reddy et al., 2018). This mixed-methods study may provide greater opportunities to bring coherency and clarity to the role of the coach. Moreover, it will allow for greater monitoring and measuring of effectiveness as well as implications for training.

Conclusion

This study examined the perspectives and experiences of 10 ILTs, specifically focusing on their perspectives of and experiences with coaching as well as the support the deemed necessary to be effective. The findings of the study indicated that while ILTs are passionate about their positions and believe in the importance of their work. Despite challenges in the form of noninstructional responsibilities, ILTs have found ways to provide instructional support for teachers; however, there is little structure, clarity, or training for them to enact their roles. To remedy the problem, a coaching structure and 3-

day PD series was created to address the immediate needs of ILTs. The project will provide a universal approach to work of ILTs and train both ILTs and administrators on coaching. While the project presents an immediate solution, it is not a panacea; it is recommended that the XYZ district continue to support the work of ILTs through regular trainings and meetings.

I embarked on this study, seeking to find the linchpin for student achievement in the XYZ district. While there may be no single answer, I did identify a problem that could ultimately significantly influence outcomes for students in the XYZ district. Through my study I found that ILTs are an underutilized resource in the district and was able to design a solution to maximize this critical resource. The work of the ILT is critical in addressing the teacher quality issue that plagues most districts. Through this intensive and investigative process, I comprehensively understand the value of the role of the ILT. This study is significant because research suggests that leveraging the work of ILTs may produce gains in student achievement that has otherwise eluded the XYZ district. I entered this journey as a committed educational practitioner, but am now exiting this process as a scholar, researcher, project developer, and most importantly a change agent. I will continue the work to change educational outcomes for students, particularly those in underserved communities.

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Appendix A: ILT Coaching Structure and Professional Learning Series Project

The Teacher's Academy

The Why

ILTs expressed the need to have a formal structure that guides how they enact their instructional coaching responsibilities. A standardized guide to follow ensures that administrators are clear about the responsibilities of an ILT and also removes the lack of clarity for ILTs around what do to and how to go about their work. The structure focuses on goal setting, planning a course of action, feedback, and reflecting on progress – principles that are aligned to the social cognitive theory.

The What

The purpose of the Teacher's Academy is to optimize teacher quality through pedagogical support and relevant job-embedded professional learning.

The How

The structure guides ILTs into taking an assessment of teacher practices, meeting to conduct goal setting and then utilizing differentiated coaching approaches to support teachers to ultimately improve pedagogical practices. Coaches move through a six-week cycle with teachers so that learning is targeted and assessed continuously.

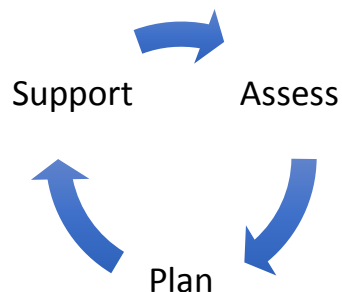
The Process

The Cycle

Step One: ILT conducts an assessment of teaching and planning practices

Step Two: ILT and teacher meet to conduct goal setting and a plan for support

Step Three: ILT facilitates differentiated support and coaching; ending with a reflection of progress.



The Continuum of Support

The continuum of support outlines a leveled and differentiated continuum of support to guide an ILT's work with teachers. The continuum requires an ILT to determine the level of support a teacher may need and conduct coaching activities within that level to improve a teacher's practice. The continuum is leveled from minimum to maximum support depending on a teacher's need.

Table A1

ILT Coaching Continuum of Support

Level I	Level II	Level III
Minimal support:	Moderate support:	Maximum support:
Identify an instructional strategy to implement	Weekly classroom visits w/feedback conducted by ILT	Video-tape lesson with analysis
Read instructional articles of relevance	Model specific strategies	Tandem teach with ILT
Complete reflective writing	Collaboratively plan lessons	Meet with ILT twice a week for coaching sessions
Check with ILT bi-weekly	Observe a peer teacher and debrief	Submit weekly lesson plans
Select a workshop to refine practice	Create bi-weekly pacing	Observe multiple teachers within and outside school building
	Attend workshop based on identified area of need	

Instructional Goal Setting and Support Plan (Example)

Teacher Name: Ms. Freeze

Date: October 1, 2019

Standard: Classroom Environment

Target Date: November 15, 2019

Area of Focus <i>What area within the will you focus on?</i>	Target for Improvement <i>Where do you want to go from here?</i>	Action Steps <i>What specific strategies/steps will you take to reach your target?</i>	Evidence <i>What will the outcome look like? What will progress look like?</i>
<i>Rules/Expectations</i>	<i>Implement effective behavior management techniques</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read "ABC of Discipline article" 2. Take anecdotal notes every day about behaviors 3. Create rituals/routines for the classroom 4. Teach and reinforce rituals and routines 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will refrain from calling out and disrespecting each other 2. Students will follow 2-3 rules consistently 3. Expectations for behavior will be observable by a visitor to the classroom

Learning to Lead: An Instructional Coaching Professional Learning Series

Purpose

The purpose of the “Learning to Lead” series is to provide an understanding of and training for the role of an Instructional Lead Teacher, specifically focused on the behaviors of goal setting, planning a course of action, providing feedback, and reflecting on progress. The 3-day workshop will cover topics germane to the role of the ILT such as defining the role and responsibilities of a coach, understanding and addressing the needs of adult learners, providing effective feedback, data analysis, and so forth. The sessions are designed to be interactive and will offer continuous opportunities for practice, reflection and planning.

Learning Outcomes

During Day1 participants will define the role of an instructional coach, define a vision of coaching for their sites, explain the components and structure of The Teachers Academy, and collaboratively plan an introductory presentation acclimating teachers at their site to their roles and responsibilities. On Day 2 participants delve into the practices of coaching by describing and applying the principles of andragogy, describing the coaching process – goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress, and outlining components of effective feedback. Day 3 will be an expansion of learning, covering the specificity of coaching including data analysis protocols, understanding the district’s evaluation system FfT, having difficult conversations and differentiated coaching. An outline of each day’s agenda, activities and timeline is noted below:

Day 1

Establishing a Culture for Coaching

Time	Activity	Notes
8:00am – 8:30am	Registration	Continental breakfast will be provided
8:30am – 9:00am	Opening and welcome	Review the norms, goals, learning outcomes and introductions
9:00am – 10:30am	What is coaching?	Collaborate to review and define the role of an instructional coach
10:30am – 11:00am	Reflection: <i>Where is the gap?</i>	Participants will conduct a gap analysis, examining the stated responsibilities and what is really happening at their school sites.
11:00am – 12:00pm	Creating a shared vision of coaching at your site	Administrators and ILTs will collaborate to write a vision statement and partnership agreements of coaching for their school sites.
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch	Lunch will not be provided
1:00pm – 2:45pm	Defining your work: <i>The Teacher Academy</i>	Participants will learn about The Teacher Academy structure for organizing their work. Participants craft an introductory presentation for their school sites.
2:45pm-3:00pm	Reflection & Evaluation	Participants will share any reflections on learning; participants will complete evaluation

Day 2

What's the work? Effective coaching principles and practices

Time	Activity	Notes
8:00am – 8:30am	Breakfast & Mingle	Continental breakfast provided
8:30am – 10:30am	Andragogy not pedagogy: <i>How adults learn</i>	Participants will define principles of andragogy and apply to their role of a coach.
10:30am – 12:00pm	How does coaching work?	Participants will explain the process of coaching through practicing how to set a goal, plan a course of action, and reflect on progress.
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch	Lunch will not be provided
1:00pm – 2:45pm	Effective feedback: Written and verbal	Participants will outline and practice components of effective feedback
2:45pm – 3:00pm	AHA! & Evaluation	Participants will share any AHA! moments from the day's learning and complete evaluation

Day 3

In the thick of it: Competency in coaching matters

Time	Activity	Notes
8:00am – 8:30am	Breakfast & Mingle	Continental breakfast provided
8:30am – 10:00am	Differentiated coaching	Participants will apply the skill/will matrix to determine how to coach teachers with differentiated needs
10:00am – 12:00pm	Unpacking data & analysis protocols	Participants will data analysis protocols and ways to lead data dive sessions
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch	Lunch will not be provided
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Understanding the FfT: Teacher evaluations matter	Participants will review the FfT to determine how to support teachers in their formal evaluations
2:00pm – 2:45pm	Looking forward	Participants will create an implementation plan to guide their work at their school sites
2:45pm – 3:00pm	Evaluation	Participants will complete an overall evaluation

Day 1 PowerPoint Presentation

LEARNING TO LEAD: IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY THROUGH COACHING

Day One

Presenter: Maryam Thomas



1

DAY ONE: THINGS WE WILL ACCOMPLISH:

- Objectives:
 - Define the role and characteristics of an instructional coach
 - Develop a vision for coaching at your school site
 - Describe the components of The Teacher's Academy coaching structure
 - Design an introductory presentation of coaching for your schools

4



NORMS

- Be mentally present
- Disagree with ideas, not people
- Assume positive intentions
- Ground statements in evidence



3



WHAT IS COACHING?

- Think about the text, you read, "Coaching Matters"
 - Think about: What is the research behind coaching? What are the effects/benefits?
 - What are some words that personify the work of a coach?

LET'S TALK:

- Share your thoughts about the article
 - What resonated with you?
 - What is coaching?

5



WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COACHING?

- Directions: Your group will rotate to one of the designated areas in the room. At that location you will read the title on the chart paper. List the characteristics that you think of when you read the title.

6



CREATE A PROFILE OF EFFECTIVE COACHING CHARACTERISTICS

What does it sound like?

What does it look like?



7



A CRITICAL REFLECTION: WHERE'S THE GAP?

Administrator: *Does my leadership support the role of a coach and the effective characteristics?*

ILT(experienced): *Am I implementing my role with fidelity?*

ILT(new): *What do I need to implement my role with fidelity?*

8

LOOKING FORWARD: A VISION OF COACHING

- What are the best ways to support coaching at the school site?
 - *Provide time for the work*
 - *Establish clarity in the position*
 - *Discuss boundaries for confidentiality*
 - *Develop a partnership*
 - *Regular meetings*
- Discuss ideas for coaching at your building site
- Collaborate to write a vision statement and partnership agreements for your site
- **BE PREPARED TO SHARE!**

• Reference: Knight, J. (2018). The easiest way to triple the impact of coaching: Principal Support. Retrieved from <https://www.ccsd.org/learning-center/your-easiest-way-to-triple-the-impact-of-coaching-principal-support/>

9

DEFINING YOUR WORK: THE TEACHERS ACADEMY

- In your numbered group, read the Teacher Academy outline. Write 3 test questions that could be asked to assess someone.
- Mix and Mingle: Rotate around the room, ask a participant one of your questions. If they answer correctly they keep the sticky note and vice versa.
- When you no longer have any of your questions, take your seat.

ROUNDTABLE

10

SHARING YOUR ROLE & YOUR WORK

- The new school year is upon us and it is your time to introduce your role and the purpose of your work with teachers. Your principal has given you a 45-minute time slot on the pre-service week agenda. You must craft a presentation that introduces your role and responsibilities to staff members.
 - How will you introduce your role?
 - What should teachers know about what you do?
 - How will you share with them?
 - How will you establish a culture for coaching in your schools?

11

KEY SUMMARIES FOR TODAY: 6 WORD MEMOIR

- On a sticky note and using only 6 words, summarize the learning from today

12

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & ATTENTION TODAY



13

Day 1 Training Notes

- During the introduction, provide context for the sessions with a brief overview of the project study that led to the creation of the learning series.
- Slide 5 participants should have read “Coaching Matters” article. We will discuss and then collaborate to define coaching and the role of the coach. Listen for conversations during discussions to reveal what participants may already know.
- Slide 6 charts should be labeled “Coaching Conversations” “Coaches as Reflective and Flexible” “Coaching with Strategic Actions.”
- Slide 7 participants should work to create one master list then rotate to identify what the characteristic looks like and sounds like in practice. Do not accept any suggestions; ensure that you use probing and clarifying language to ensure that the characteristics and examples are actionable.
- Slide 8 hand out the ILT job description. Lead a brief discussion of what we have revealed and how it aligns to the job description. Have coaches and admin reflect on the statement. Ask if there is a participant that would like to share; if there aren't, provide an opportunity for participant to list most salient parts of reflection on sticky notes for a silent gallery walk.
- Slide 9 pairs should write agreements that are based in their reality at their school sites and the article. Vision should speak to ideal state.
- Slide 10 lead a roundtable allowing participants to lead the discussion about the structure.
- Slide 12 have each participant share their memoirs.

- Slide 13 make sure each participant completes the evaluation; share pre-work for the next day's session.

Day 2 PowerPoint Presentation

LEARNING TO LEAD: IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY THROUGH COACHING

Day Two

Presenter: Maryam Thomas



1

NORMS

- Be mentally present
- Disagree with ideas, not people
- Assume positive intentions
- Ground statements in evidence



2

DAY ONE FOLLOW UP

3



DAY TWO: THINGS WE WILL ACCOMPLISH:

- Objectives:
 - Define and apply the principles of andragogy
 - Describe the coaching process
 - Outline components of effective feedback

4

ANDRAGOGY NOT PEDAGOGY: HOW ADULTS LEARN

- **Quick write:** *Think about a time when you learned something new, as an adult. Why did you decide to learn? What did it take to learn it?*
- **The Huddle:** *Move about the room, when the music stops I will call out a number. You must group yourselves in that number and share the response to the quick write.*



5

ANDRAGOGY VS. PEDAGOGY

- Watch the video "[An introduction to Malcolm Knowles Andragogy](#)"
- During the video, take notes on the information. Be prepared to create a 10 second elevator speech to describe andragogy.

Retrieved from: <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/instructional-design-adult-learners/introduction-to-malcolm-knowles-s-andragogy-theory>

6

THE PRINCIPLES OF ANDRAGOGY

- Adults must feel safe to learn
- Adults come to the learning experience with history
- Adults need to know why we have to learn something
- Adults want agency in their learning
- Adults need practice to internalize learning
- Adults have a problem-centered orientation to learning
- Adults want to learn

7

ANDRAGOGY & COACHING: WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

- Participants will participate in a group dialogue using the following prompts:
 - *How does andragogy apply to the work of a coach?*
 - *What are the implications of this theory in your practice?*
 - *Have your coaching practices been aligned with andragogy?*
 - *Which of these principles presents a barrier?*

8

A LETTER TO YOUR CLIENT...

- *Dear client...*
- Write a letter to your client explaining what you now know about how they need to learn. Share how you will support that learning. Use details and examples to show your understanding of andragogy.

9



HOW COACHING WORKS

- *Directions: View the video, use the viewing guide to jot down 1-3 word phrases that capture your thinking/connection for each stage presented in the video*

- How Coaching Works

Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY76MQte4BU>

11

HOW COACHING WORKS

Setting a Goal	Planning a course of action	Reflecting on progress
<i>Informally observe teaching practices</i>	<i>Identify pathway to change</i>	<i>Regularly provide feedback</i>
<i>Meet with teacher to share observations</i>	<i>Determine instructional strategies to implement</i>	<i>At the end of 6-week period meet to collaboratively share growth</i>
<i>Determine a goal to accomplish within a 6-week time period</i>	<i>Provide coaching support and monitor progress</i>	<i>Determine next steps</i>

12

APPLYING COACHING PROCESS: SCENARIOS

What will be the goal and course of action?

- Ms. Blush, a veteran teacher, relies heavily on direct instruction with learning activities that are mostly rote. She is hesitant to change her practice, citing extensive teaching experience. She constantly talks about how low the students are and how they need the skills she provides students. The majority of her students are failing her class.

What will be the goal and course of action?

- Mr. English, a first year teacher, has struggled with classroom management. At the end of each day he comes to your office to seek advice on the latest debacle in his classroom. Although you have provided plenty of advice, he hasn't implemented on suggestion.

13

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK?

What Feedback is?

- Descriptive about performance
- Information about the effect of something towards a goal
- Clear and specific
- Guides person to learn from the results
- On-time

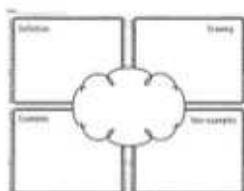
What Feedback isn't?

- Vague like "good job!"
- Opinionated
- Given too far after observation
- Arbitrary

14

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK?

- In your table groups, create a Frayer Model for FEEDBACK
 - Definition
 - Characteristics
 - Examples
 - Non-examples



15

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

- Specific praise - based on evidence
- Summary
- Probe
- Action step

16

WRITTEN FEEDBACK CAROUSEL

Directions: There are 4 charts placed around the room with feedback attached. Read the feedback and answer the questions on the chart about the feedback. At the sound of the timer, rotate to a new chart to answer questions.

17



CRITICAL REFLECTION: IMPLEMENTATION GAP

- Take a moment to think about the feedback you've provided to teachers.
 - *Does it align with the components we've discussed?*
 - *What changes might you make?*
 - *Why does feedback matter?*

18



PRECISE AND VAGUE ACTION STEPS:

Directions: Read each scenario, with your partners develop a precise action step that clarifies for the teacher how to implement the change.

Scenario 1: Students talk while the teacher is talking.

Vague step: Don't allow students to talk when you are talking

Scenario 3: A student in the guided reading group that jumps in and dominates every conversation.

Vague step: Provide opportunities for other students to participate in the conversation.

Scenario 2: Students are rowdy as they come into class

Vague step: Keep students calm when they enter the classroom.

Scenario 4: Teacher continuously runs out of time in the lesson.

Vague step: Use a timer to keep pace

19

VERBAL FEEDBACK ROLE-PLAY

- Select one of the scenarios to practice and present.
- *Teacher yells at students to shut up during class.*
- *Teacher allows students to talk while he talks; no one pays attention.*
- *Teacher sits at the desk during the entire lesson.*
- *Teacher uses direct instruction and talks during the whole lesson.*

20

KEY SUMMARIES FOR TODAY: AHA! OR OH NO!



21



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & ATTENTION



22



Day 2 Training Notes

- Slide 3 review and address feedback provided from Day 1. Provide clarifying information and answer any questions that were unresolved.
- For slide 5 develop playlist of songs that can play during the huddle activity. Call for 4 huddles – 3, 5, 2, 6. Share responses from each huddle out loud.
- Slide 6 prompt participants by asking if they have heard of andragogy. Using popcorn strategy, call on 5 participants to share.
- Slide 7 facilitate discussion by using probing questions to stimulate authentic discussion.
- Slide 11 may need to play the video twice. Have participants share their words and reasons for their choices. Ask why it might be important to drill down the actions of a coach into single words. Highlight how goal setting, planning a course of action, and reflecting on progress are a part of the coaching behaviors.
- Slide 12 review each part of coaching. Discuss how these are the parts of the Teacher Academy cycle. Allow participants to share experiences, if any, with these components.
- Slide 13 split group into 4 and assign 2 groups to each scenario. Provide opportunity for each group to share.
- Slide 14 discuss how one of the major aspects of a coach's role is feedback. Ask preliminary questions about feedback.
- Slide 15 provide space for participants to share responses.

- Slide 17 remind participants that feedback should always answer the question “how.” It should be observable and able to implement immediately.
- Slide 18 allow participants the space to share, if they choose.
- Slide 21 have participants write as many as necessary. Share that an “Oh NO” is something that may have been a part of their practice that will need revision or something they are unclear on.
- Slide 22 ensure that each participant completes the feedback form.

Day 3 Power Point Presentation

LEARNING TO LEAD: IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY THROUGH COACHING

Day Three

Presenter: Maryam Thomas



1

NORMS

- Be mentally present
- Disagree with ideas, not people
- Assume positive intentions
- Ground statements in evidence



2



DAY TWO FOLLOW UP

3



DAY THREE: THINGS WE WILL ACCOMPLISH

- Objectives:
 - Identify ways to provide differentiated coaching
 - Explain the process for unpacking data and utilizing data to determine instructional implications
 - Describe the proficient and distinguished descriptors for Domains 1, 2, and 3 of the Framework for Teaching

4

DIFFERENTIATED COACHING: SKILL VS. WILL

SKILL

- "An individual's capabilities based on his or her experience with the task, training, knowledge, and natural ability."

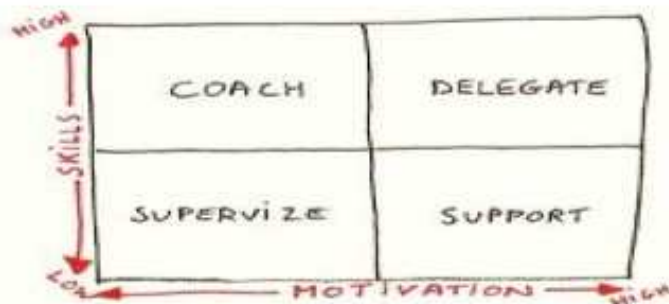
WILL

- "An individual's desire to complete a particular task based on attitude, confidence, and personal feelings about completing the task."

Retrieved from: <http://thepeakperformancecenter.com/business/coaching/skill-will-matrix/>

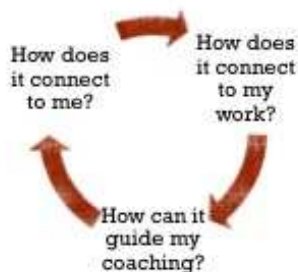
5

THE SKILL WILL MATRIX



6

SKILL/WILL MATRIX



7

“DATA IS IMPORTANT, BUT IT DOESN’T TELL YOU WHAT TO DO” – PEDRO NOGUERA

- How do you use data in your role?
- How do you support teacher’s use of data?

8

UNPACKING DATA: DRIVING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

- Directions: Take a look in the folder at your table. Review the sets of data. Record your thoughts on the QTE chart provided at your table.

9

UNPACKING DATA: DRIVING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

▪Directions: Take a look in the folder at your table. Review the sets of data. Record your thoughts on the QTE chart provided at your table.

9



APPLYING DATA PROTOCOLS

1. Look at the data, only record what you see. *What information is being reported on the data set/chart?*
2. What is the data revealing? *What are the trends? Areas for growth? Positive points?*
3. What additional information is needed? *What else could illuminate this data?*

10



TRY IT OUT

▪Directions: Your teachers have just completed the Cycle I benchmark assessment. You have been charged with leading a data meeting with your team of teachers. Prepare an agenda and presentation to unpack the data and determine instructional next steps.

11



TEACHER EVALUATION: THE FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING (FFT)



12

DIGGING INTO DOMAINS

- Count off into pairs.
- You will be the lead expert on your component
- Take a look at the proficient and distinguished descriptors.
- Complete the 4 square chart for proficient practice: *description, what it looks like in practice, what it sounds like in practice, how to move to distinguished*

13

REFLECTION: HOW DOES THIS KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT YOUR WORK?



14

KEY SUMMARIES FOR TODAY: DEAR ILT

Write a letter to an ILT about the learning for today. What were the biggest take-aways? What might he/she need to be mindful of?

15



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & ATTENTION



16



Day 3 Training Notes

- Slide 3 address prior learning from Day 2. Clarify information or provide questions to any questions.
- Slide 4 explain that coaching requires different approaches because each client is different. Ask how do you know what each teacher needs to improve? Have participants share responses.
- Slide 5 review the matrix. Discuss how, when, why you would use the matrix. Ask for examples from coaches about prior clients (no names) who they now see fell within the matrix. Probe how they approach the client and if they would do so differently using the matrix.
- Slide 6 open discussion on the questions. What are some thoughts on the matrix? How will it empower them in their work?
- Slide 7 explain how coaches must have a multitude of skills at their disposal. They must be able to provide wraparound support services for teachers and one such skills is the use of data.
- Slide 8 provide district achievement data set for different middle schools. Have participants do raw notes capture using Questions, Thoughts, Epiphanies form. Have participants share thoughts. Facilitator should note inferences that participants begin to make.
- Slide 9 Take participants through one set of data using the protocol. Have them share why and how the protocol helped to frame the conversation. What was the difference between the raw capture and the use of the protocol?

- Slide 11 Explain that as a coach it is imperative to understand the teacher evaluation system. This knowledge is critical in ensuring that the support a coach provides aligns with the observation and evaluation instrument. Have participants complete the “K” and “W” that is posted around the room. They should write on sticky notes and place on charts.
- Slide 12 distribute FfT books to each participant. Most should be loosely familiar. Review the “K” and “W” that was posted and facilitate a brief discussion to provide opportunity to identify the collective expertise on the topic.
- Slide 13 Have participants use sticky notes to post what they learned. Read aloud and clarify as necessary.

Learning to Lead Evaluation (Sessions 1 and 2)

Date:

Session:

Directions: Place an X in the box that represents your thoughts about today's learning.

Question	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The learning objectives were clearly stated and relevant to my needs as an ILT				
The presenter was knowledgeable about the topics and presented in a clear and engaging manner				
The learning objectives were met for today's sessions				
I gained information that will further my understanding of the role and activities of an ILT				
I learned skills that will be enhance my effectiveness as an ILT				

What is your biggest take-away after today's session?

What questions do you still have after today's session?

Please share anything that may need to change in order to enhance the experience of participants?

Learning to Lead Evaluation (Session 3)

Date:

Session:

Directions: Place an X in the box that represents your thoughts about today's learning.

Question	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The learning objectives were clearly stated and relevant to my needs as an ILT				
The presenter was knowledgeable about the topics and presented in a clear and engaging manner				
The learning objectives were met for today's sessions				
I gained information that will further my understanding of the role and activities of an ILT				
I learned skills that will be enhance my effectiveness as an ILT				
The overall 3-day learning series was relevant and effective to my role as an ILT				

How will you implement learning from this series into practice once you are back at your school site? *Provide two specific examples.*

How has this 3-day PD series enhanced your professional growth?

What additional topics/skills should be covered in future learning opportunities?

In what ways did the activities and materials (scenario, discussion, reflection) enhance your learning?

What suggestions do you have to improve this professional learning series?

What additional comments do you have?

Appendix B: ILT Interview Questions

Researcher Name: _____

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Length of interview: 45-60min

Interview Opening Script

Hello, my name is (insert researcher's name) and I want to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. The purpose of today's interview is to go deeper into your perspective as an Instructional Lead Teacher as you are the expert. As a researcher, I am here only to collect information that represents your thoughts. As I have previously shared I am conducting a study on the perspectives of Instructional Lead Teachers, specifically, regarding the perceptions of their roles and how they support teachers in improving instructional practices. This study is not connected with the XYZ School District; however, the results could inform and shape how the Instructional Lead Teacher role is enacted across the district. Your voice as an ILT is critically important.

Before beginning, I just want to inform you of your rights as a participant. At any time during this interview you can withdraw participation. There are no perceived risks by participating, however, there are some benefits. Results of this study could be used to positively impact the role of Instructional Lead Teacher's, as it will inform the district of how to better support the role. Please be assured that I as the researcher am the only person that will have access to the information collected today. To ensure confidentiality, I will use a pseudonym to identify you within the study. In order to ensure that I have accurately gathered your thoughts, I am requesting an audio recording of today's interview. Is that ok? Further, a transcribed, copy of the interview will be provided to you for your review. Ok, since I have your permission, we will proceed.

Opening Questions

1. Why did you decide to become an educator?
2. What made you apply for the Instructional Lead Teacher position?

3. Is the position what you anticipated?
4. What do you enjoy most about the position?

Interview Questions

Role of an ILT

1. What is your role as an instructional lead teacher?
2. How do your daily activities as an instructional lead teacher compare to your written job description?
3. How does your role in working with teachers influence student achievement?
4. Describe your typical day as an instructional lead teacher.
5. What are some of the challenges you face as an instructional lead teacher?

Section III. Teacher Support

6. How do you work with teachers to build their instructional capacity? Please provide detailed examples.
7. How has lessons you modeled influenced teachers' instruction? Please provide detailed examples.
8. What types of coaching activities (goal setting, modeling, observing, providing feedback, co-planning, etc.) do you utilize when supporting teachers?
9. What coaching model or coaching cycle do you use in the XYZ School District to guide your work?
10. During times of interactive feedback with the teacher, describe how teachers used goal setting to change instructional practice.

11. What have you observed in teachers' lessons that indicated a change in classroom instruction?

Section IV. ILT Training

11. What skills are necessary to be effective in this position?

12. What types of training have you received to fulfill your coaching responsibilities?

How often do you receive training?

13. What training and/or support do you need to fulfill your responsibilities as an instructional lead teacher?

Sample Probes

Can you tell me more about that?

Can you give an example?

Last week I interviewed, ILT X, they stated...what do you think about that?

Can you share what you mean by?

Post Interview Script

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Before I close out the interview, I wanted to ask: (1) is there something related to your experiences as an ILT that I did not cover that you would like to add? Ok. As I shared earlier the transcribed interview will be emailed to you within the next 48hrs. If you could review the transcript to ensure that it accurately represents your thoughts and email me back with any feedback that would be greatly appreciated. Thank you again and have a great day.

Appendix C: ILT Coaching Observation Instrument

Coaching Behaviors	Example of Behaviors from Observation
Identify	
Learn	
Improve	

Adapted from 3 Steps to Great Coaching, by (Knight et al., 2015)

Appendix D: Sample Codes from Interviews and Observations

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Data Source	Excerpt from interview/observation notes	Theme alignment
<p>Increase teacher capacity; Improve teachers' instruction; Better teachers; Changing teacher mindsets; Fixed to growth mindset; Better quality instruction</p>	<p>Coaching helps teachers improve to increase student achievement</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“I’m that one little push that pushes teachers...” (ILT I) “I believe that by building teacher capacity and understanding of the standards and the curriculum, our students receive better quality instruction...” (ILT J) “I feel like, if I can coach a teacher out of a fixed mindset into a growth mindset then that can move a student from a fixed mindset into a growth mindset...” (ILT I) “...my guidance helps them with their instruction, which then helps the student be successful...” (ILT F)</p>	<p>Theme 1: ILTs influence student achievement</p>
<p>Bigger impact on instruction and student achievement; Help kids reach goals; Use data to plan better; Student-centered</p>	<p>Coaching focuses on student achievement</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“...more of an impact on education and student achievement from outside the</p>	<p>Theme 1: ILTs influence student achievement</p>

<p>instruction; Data decisions; Look at student needs; Increase student academics</p>			<p>classroom.” (ILT A) “...so like during our collaborative planning we do things like examine student work... we discuss ways to improve, using data to make decisions about instruction” (ILT B) “seeing the impact of my work...seeing a small group of students get it because the work I put in with their teacher...” (ILT J) “coaching if done right works...you can definitely see it in their SLOs and in their work samples.” (ILT C)</p>	
<p>Guide on the side; Model for teachers; Questioning to elicit teacher thinking; Knowledgeable about curriculum; Model data use; Modifications for specialty learners; Resource</p>	<p>Instructional authority</p>	<p>Observations</p>	<p>ILT B conducts 6th grade classroom visit. ILT supports teacher with student data conversations.</p> <p>Teacher calls ILT C to request clarity on resource for classroom instruction</p> <p>ILT A reiterates foci to grade level teaching pairs; ILT A questions</p>	<p>Theme 2: ILT as an instructional authority and teacher support.</p>

			6 th grade teaching pairs about culminating task and teacher's decision for the activity	
<p>Knowledgeable; Model for instruction; Know pedagogy; Expert on instruction; Problem solve; Instructional toolkit of strategies; Resourceful</p>	<p>ILTs descriptors as an instructional authority</p>	Interviews	<p>"...you have to know pedagogy from different perspectives, not just textbook stuff..." (ILT C) "I would say I am maybe not necessarily the content expert, but I am the expert on how you can deliver instruction, how you handle or deliver instruction..." (ILT F) "I...create a collaborative culture where teachers are looking at data, coming up with resources, lesson plans..." (ILT E)</p>	<p>Theme 2: ILT as an instructional authority and teacher support.</p>
<p>Growing teacher capacity; Share information; Collaborate with teachers; Being a partner; Help to improve instruction; Nurture learning;</p>	<p>ILTs duties as an instructional authority</p>	Interviews	<p>"I love it when we can kind of collaborate and figure things out." (ILT C) "drop little nuggets and plant little seeds to</p>	<p>Theme 2: ILT as an instructional authority and teacher support.</p>

<p>Advocate for teacher needs; Support teachers; Give knowledge to teachers</p>			<p>come back to water” (ILT I) “what I do absorbs the shock so that when things get tense...you can make it work” (ILT G) “Each individual teacher needs to provide the best instruction that they can. It’s my job to ensure that that happens.” (ILT J)</p>	
<p>Relationship different from admin; ILTs develop trust, provide teacher support and encouragement, establish relationships, exhibit non-punitive judgement, serve as a sounding board</p>	<p>Establish relationships for teacher support</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“I have that insightful relationship...when you know where they’re coming from you can support them differently...” (ILT H) “...you have to establish relationships with the teachers you’re supporting and it doesn’t mean you have to be in their business...but they have to see you as real and genuinely concerned” (ILT G) “...it’s all about building relationships and trust with teachers...” (ILT E)</p>	<p>Theme 2: ILT as an instructional authority and teacher support.</p>

			<p>“You have to understand where a teacher is coming from...be empathetic I guess.” (ILT A)</p>	
<p>Substitute wherever needed; Lack of time for ILT duties</p>	<p>Barriers to coaching</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“...pick up the slack as far as handling discipline or clearing hallways or responding to radio calls...most of the year I was working on either the literacy tasks or scheduling.” (ILT I)</p> <p>“I was in the front office a lot and that is a challenge...” (ILT E)</p> <p>“I’m being spread real thin...I’m all over the place and I don’t feel I’ve got time to accomplish certain goals” (ILT H)</p> <p>“...they’re pulling you for that, it just takes away from doing what you need to do.” (ILT C)</p>	<p>Theme 3: Noninstructional responsibilities pose a challenge to the role</p>

<p>Substitute teacher; Answers radio calls; Classroom teacher; Testing coordinator; Backup positions; Member of school improvement team; Lunch duties; Unexpected responsibilities</p>	<p>Barriers to coaching</p>	<p>Observations</p>	<p>ILT C expected to conduct feedback rounds but is conducting make up testing. Logs in two students to test. ILT solicits assistance with testing. Explains testing procedure to teacher. [ILT is testing coordinator]</p> <p>ILT D teaches an 8th grade Reading/English language arts class</p> <p>ILT B organizes textbooks for end of year collection</p> <p>ILT A called to cover class for testing. ILT A attends school improvement meeting</p>	<p>Theme 3: Noninstructional responsibilities pose a challenge to the role</p>
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<p>Strategies for mgmt.; Self-awareness with mgmt.; Classroom behaviors; Wait time; Managing procedures; Responding to students; Troubleshooting behaviors</p>	<p>Improvement in classroom management</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“...I just made note of everything that was not supposed to be happening and whether or not he responded to it...we went through little coaching sessions...I go back every now and again” (ILT G) “...she is becoming more self-aware...I’ve now seen her pull students aside and address them individually rather than yelling at them...” (ILT J) “...I came in and did tally marks every time a student was off task...I was able to show her it was decreasing...” (ILT E)</p>	<p>Theme 4: Classroom management is the main instructional change.</p>
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<p>Set goals; Give feedback; Class visits; Identify area for improvement; Face to face feedback; Model lessons; Observations; Peer observations</p>	<p>Types of coaching activities</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“One of her goals was implementing and really trying to differentiate and create small groups within her classroom...we did co-planning each week to show that every lesson should have at least one way in which a small group instruction is being done...she really improved...” (ILT D)</p> <p>“...I came in, I modeled and then we were collecting specific data...” (ILT E)</p> <p>“...So we come up with a plan or goals surrounding whatever area of need is...” (ILT F)</p> <p>“I go in and observe, just get a general idea for areas of growth, send feedback, then meet one on one with them...” (ILT A)</p>	<p>Theme 5: Coaching practices used by ILTs</p>
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<p>Positive model as an administrator; Provided ILT support</p>	<p>Demonstrated positive support from administration</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“They’re very supportive. They’re not territorial, they’re not micromanaging, they’re not intrusive.” (ILT G) “ That Tuesday and Thursday schedule is something that she stands for...and she fights for it. Teachers try to wiggle their way out of it, but she’s like No...” (ILT E) “I know she’s the type of leader that I want to be an ILT for because I knew I wouldn’t be going to administer make up tests and making copies of all the SLOs or whatever.” (ILT A)</p>	<p>Theme 6: Administration support for the ILT position</p>
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<p>Share expectations/vision for ILTs; Mediate teachers' pushback</p>	<p>Negative support from administration</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>"I think if leadership is not there and not supportive...you can't do your job." (ILT C) "An administrator's vision of how an ILT should be used translates directly into how they support us." (ILT J) "...It really depends on administration. With our previous administrator, my job was to work with teachers, help them improve their practice, perform informal observation." (ILT B) "...when I express a concern and that concern is never addressed...it undermines anything that I do. And it's almost like...it's almost meaningless without [administrator's] support." (ILT F)</p>	<p>Theme 6: Administration support for the ILT position</p>
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<p>Need clear communication/description of ILT positions, expectations, standards for position</p>	<p>Need for structure for instructional coaching</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“it varies from building to building and it’s kind of like they just make it up as you go along” (ILT F) “I feel like it’s a really grey area as far as how I’m supposed to go” (ILT I) “can we have like a precise description of the role, what is expected...” (ILT D) “...every week being like; how do I start? Do I just go into rooms and like, then what? personally I have to have some kind of structure...” (ILT A)</p>	<p>Theme 7: Clarity in structure and training for instructional coaching</p>
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<p>Position open to interpretation; ILTs developed their training, learned duties on the job, received no formal training</p>	<p>Lack of preparation as an instructional coach</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“most of the training I received for this role is when I was an instructional coach.” (ILT H) “Things that I’ve been learning like on my own through Pinterest or reading books...” (ILT A)</p>	<p>Theme 7: Clarity in structure and training for instructional coaching</p>
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<p>Data & data protocols; Feedback to teachers; Prioritizing teacher needs; Teacher evaluation system; Coaching best practices</p>	<p>Training needed</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“I definitely need more training on different ways in which to provide oral and written feedback...different data protocols” (ILT D) “...how to know what to focus on so that you can be able to actually help that teacher...” (ILT H) “If you don’t understand the framework for teaching and part of your job is to improve teacher practice, how can you help someone else improve when you truly don’t understand yourself?” (ILT B) “Knowing data is a must...” (ILT E) “I need like the best practices, what does it mean...train us how to be coaches. Pinterest shouldn’t have to be training me.” (ILT A) “...being able to look at assessments and determine what the next steps are...” (ILT I)</p>	<p>Theme 7: Clarity in structure and training for instructional coaching.</p>
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