LITERACY COACHES: A CASE STUDY OF BEGINNING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF LITERACY COACHING

by

Jennifer Clancy Bambrick

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Approved by:

_____
Dr. Maryann Mraz

_____
Dr. Bruce Taylor

_____
Dr. Colleen Whittingham

_____
Dr. Cindy Gilson

ABSTRACT

JENNIFER CLANCY BAMBRICK. Literacy coaches: A case study of beginning teacher perceptions of literacy coaching. (Under the direction of DR. MARYANN MRAZ)

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their work with literacy coaches. The study took place at two elementary schools in a suburban school district in the Southeastern United States. Six beginning teachers, two principals, and two literacy coaches participated in the study. Data sources included interviews from principals, literacy coaches, and teachers, along with coaching reflection logs completed by the teachers in the study. The data were analyzed using within-case and cross-case analysis which provided insight into teacher perceptions of the support they received through literacy coaching and their perceptions of the impact this support had on their literacy instruction. The data revealed that teachers perceive themselves as receiving varied support through literacy coaching, and that the perceived impact on their literacy instruction also varied across the cases. Four major themes surfaced from the data: teachers receive multiple forms of support through literacy coaching, coaches catering to adult learners increases perceived support, visibility and access can increase or decrease perceived support, and the perceived impact that literacy coaching had on literacy instruction of the teachers in the study was limited due to the lack of consistency and specific feedback provided.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Evidence demonstrates that literacy coaches positively impact student achievement, making the use of literacy coaches a potential solution for beginning teacher knowledge gaps in effective literacy instruction (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen & Zigmond, 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Swartz, 2005). The International Literacy Association (2015) advises that literacy coaches should hold advanced certification, and Frost and Bean (2006) describe the ideal set of standards for literacy coaches as holding a reading specialist certificate, having leadership and coaching skills, and having classroom teaching experience.

The shift from reading specialists to literacy coaches emerged in response to the Reading First Initiative of the No Child Left Behind Act (Al Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt, & Dole, 2008; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). Reading specialists had three main roles: providing expert instruction to struggling readers, guiding the assessment process, and serving as a leader for the school's reading program (ILA, 2000). They spent more than 75% of their day working with students, while the focus for literacy coaches is primarily working with adults (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton & Wallis, 2002). Many schools began using literacy coaches to fulfill the professional development requirements for Reading First grants (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Literacy coaches were expected to influence school reform and improvement (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014) in an informal leadership role (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), serving as leaders in their school (Calo, Sturtevant & Koffman, 2015). This change from literacy specialists to literacy coaches resulted in many former reading specialists moving into coaching roles with little preparation (Bean et al., 2015) and having to learn how to be a coach as they were

working as one (Carroll, 2007). The intent of employing literacy coaches was to improve teacher instruction, and ultimately student achievement, but due to the lack of preparation for the role, the impact was likely minimized.

Sixty-one percent of literacy coaches identify their main job as providing support to teachers (Hathaway, Martin, & Mraz, 2016). Literacy coaches commonly support instruction, address teacher concerns and issues, make decisions, analyze data, provide resources, and support instructional assistants and paraprofessionals (Calo et al., 2015). Coaches believe it is important for them to have a strong knowledge and skill base, build relationships, and to be able to build trust and work well with others (Calo et al., 2015). They lead teachers and administrators in analyzing and using data (Calo et al., 2015).

According to Darling-Hammond (2010), factors related to individual teachers such as academic background, preparation for teaching, certification, and experience impact students' achievement. Research on teacher effectiveness has found that it impacts student outcomes (Allington, 2005; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Ferguson, 1991). Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) found that differences in student gains were attributed to which teachers students were assigned to, with the variance being as high as 33.68%. Due to these differences, ongoing professional development is needed for teachers (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Literacy coaches can serve as a way to improve beginning teacher effectiveness and reduce gaps that they may have in effective literacy instruction. However, there is a clear lack of research that identifies the actions that literacy coaches take that teachers attribute to their improvement in teaching literacy.

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that literacy coaches positively impact student achievement, making literacy coaches an important part of the solution for teacher gaps in effective literacy instruction (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Swartz, 2005). However, there is not enough information about how coaches support beginning teachers in improving their literacy instruction and which coaching actions are perceived by teachers as contributing to teacher improvements in teaching reading. This results in a lack of consistency of what the work of literacy coaches looks like across different districts and even schools within a district (Calo et al., 2015; Hathaway et al., 2016; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008). In many cases, the roles of literacy coaches are not clearly defined and are shaped by the vision that teachers, coaches, and principals have for their work (Mraz et al., 2008). While literacy coaches should not be evaluative (Shanklin, 2006), some principals view them as additional administrators and expect them to assist with evaluating teachers (Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, 2011). Principals often expect literacy coaches to serve as managers of the reading curriculum and encourage them to report what they hear and see throughout the school (Mraz et al., 2008). Research demonstrates that greater achievement gains occur when coaches spend more time working with teachers (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010) but the ILA found that almost 45% of coaches spent only two to four hours a week observing, modeling and talking with teachers (Roller, 2006). Due to the large amount of variation in what literacy coaches spend their time doing (Mraz et al., 2008; Roller, 2006), this study seeks to determine how literacy coaches support beginning teachers in improving

their literacy instruction and what coaching actions teachers attribute to their improvements in teaching literacy.

Research on teacher perceptions of literacy coaches has indicated that teachers appreciate the collaborative space that coaches create along with their support and teaching of instructional strategies (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). Teachers report the highest level of satisfaction when their coach focuses on assessment results, due to the high level of importance placed on data (Scott, Cortina & Carlisle, 2012). They prefer when coaches meet with them in a group setting versus one-on-one (Scott et al., 2012). Scott et al. (2012) did not find a correlation between teacher satisfaction with coaches and their years of experience but did find a correlation between teacher satisfaction with their coach and the number of years that coaches taught first grade. Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) found that teachers try new approaches to teaching, use more authentic assessments, use professional literature for making decisions, and teach more student-centered as a result of working with a literacy coach. Teachers find it beneficial when coaches model lessons (Mraz et al., 2008). Strong interpersonal skills can facilitate a positive coaching climate (Poglinco et al., 2003), and it is important that teachers view literacy coaches as supportive instead of authoritative (Kissel et al., 2011). Teachers feel supported when coaches are easily accessible and willing to help with a variety of tasks (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010).

While there is research regarding teacher perceptions of literacy coaches, there is little research that describes the specific forms of support that beginning teachers (teachers who are in their first through third year) receive through literacy coaching and

the impact they believe it has on their literacy instruction. More insight is needed in this area so that coaching can be a more effective form of professional development.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their work with literacy coaches. While literacy coaches are a common professional development tool used to improve teacher performance, the majority of the research in this field has focused on what literacy coaches spend their time doing and the impact that literacy coaches have on student achievement. This study seeks to identify the support that beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching and their perceptions of the impact that coaching has on their literacy instruction.

The ILA (2015) provides recommendations for the work of literacy coaches but their roles vary greatly because it is often up to the principal to decide how they will utilize these positions (Hathaway, Martin & Mraz, 2016). Research demonstrates that greater achievement gains occur when coaches spend more time working with teachers (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Teachers, coaches, and principals believe that assessment has a large part in coaches' roles and all three groups view this negatively (Mraz et al., 2008). Spending a large amount of time on assessment means less time for coaches to work directly with teachers.

There are many different opinions of what literacy coaches should spend their time doing. This study seeks to explore the coaching actions that beginning teachers believe are beneficial to their literacy instruction to help advise how literacy coaches should spend their time. It is important that literacy coaches are able to positively impact the literacy instruction of the teachers that they work with because research

demonstrates that teacher quality impacts students' academic success (Allington, 2005; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Ferguson, 1991). As the research indicates, the focus of literacy coaches varies depending on an assortment of factors including district expectations and principal guidelines. The intent of this study was to explore the support that beginning teachers receive and their beliefs in regard to the coaching actions that they attribute to their improvement in teaching reading.

Research Questions

This study sought to determine how literacy coaches support beginning teachers in improving their literacy instruction. The research was an exploratory study to obtain valuable data to better understand what literacy coaches do during coaching and was guided by the following questions:

1. What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?
2. How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?

Impact has many different definitions. For the purpose of this study, impact is the changes that were made to literacy instruction due to the beginning teachers' work with their literacy coach.

Significance

The use of literacy coaches is a potential way to improve teacher quality (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Swartz, 2005). To make coaching most effective, it is essential to know what aspects of coaching teachers attribute to their ability to implement effective literacy instruction because adults have a range of needs related to

learning that coaches must accommodate (Cox, 2015). The findings of this study have the potential to add to the body of knowledge about effective literacy coaching practices by providing information about the support that beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching and how they perceive that support impacting their literacy instruction. There is limited research on teacher perspectives regarding literacy coaches (Kissel et al., 2011; Mraz et al., 2008; Poglinco et al., 2003; Scott et al., 2012; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010) and the insights gained from interviewing teachers may provide informative guidance for more effective literacy coaching practices. The intent of literacy coaching is to serve as a form of professional development. This study sought to determine how literacy coaches support teachers in improving their literacy instruction.

Subjectivity Statement

This subjectivity statement is included to disclose all related experiences of the researcher. This qualitative research study allowed me to determine the perspective of beginning career teachers regarding their experiences working with literacy coaches. I have a vested interest in this topic because I have worked as a literacy coach for the past five years. I want to ensure that I am using strategies that result in teacher improvement, and I want to contribute to the coaching field. Due to my role as a literacy coach, I hold the belief that literacy coaches are an important part of improving student achievement. Due to this belief, I hold high expectations of literacy coaches. For the purposes of this study, I was focused on teacher perceptions of literacy coaching. Therefore, I did not include or focus on my opinions of the literacy coaching practices that the teachers experienced. As a strategy to keep my focus on the teacher interview data, I used memos

to record thoughts that I had during the research process that do not relate to my research questions and are not be included in the study.

I approached this work from a constructivist paradigm. According to Mertens (2015), qualitative research can involve a constructivist approach by recognizing multiple socially constructed realities of participants. The insight and actions of the teachers that I interviewed varied from teacher to teacher. Their perceptions of literacy depended on multiple factors. Through this research, I did not find one definitive answer. I found out the opinions of the teachers I interviewed which provides information about working with literacy coaches that can guide the field.

Definition of Terms

Beginning Teachers

The state of North Carolina defines beginning teachers as teachers who are in their first three years of teaching.

Professional Development

Professional Development is the learning opportunities designed in order to improve teacher practices.

Literacy Coach

Literacy coaches are school professionals who provide job-embedded professional development to teachers.

Reading Specialist

Reading specialists are school-based professionals who work with struggling readers, guide assessment efforts, and provide leadership for the school's reading program (ILA, 2000).

Specialized Literacy Professional

The ILA (2015) defines specialized literacy professionals as educators who support student learning and work as a reading/literacy specialist, literacy coach, or literacy coordinator/supervisor.

Summary

This study examined beginning teacher perspectives of literacy coaches related to the coaching actions that teachers attribute to their improvement in teaching reading. Chapter one provided the basis for this qualitative study that examined teacher perceptions of literacy coaches. While there is literature on a variety of components related to literacy coaches, the field is lacking information about the actions literacy coaches take to improve the literacy instruction of beginning teachers. Chapter one describes the problem, purpose, significance, and theoretical framework of this study. Chapter two examines literature related to the field of literacy coaches. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the emergence of literacy coaches. Next, research is presented on teacher and coach perceptions of the literacy coach role. The chapter concludes with challenges in literacy coaching and the impact of literacy coaches. Chapter three describes the methodology and research design for the study. Chapter four includes the context of literacy coaching, within-case analysis for the teachers, across-case analysis and the themes developed from the analysis. Lastly, chapter five discusses the findings and implications.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs of beginning teachers regarding their work with literacy coaches. This chapter offers a comprehensive review of the most prevalent research to date related to literacy coaches. The chapter begins with a background of the emergence of literacy coaches. This leads to a discussion of the perceptions that teachers and coaches have of literacy coaching. Next, there will be a description of the reasons why literacy coaches are needed. Finally, the chapter discusses challenges for literacy coaches and the impact that literacy coaches have.

Emergence of Literacy Coaches

Prior to the emergence of literacy coaches, reading specialists provided literacy support in schools. Reading specialists emerged as a result of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Mraz et al., 2008). According to the ILA (2000), the three main roles for reading specialists were to provide expert instruction to struggling readers, guide assessment efforts, and provide leadership for the school's reading program. Reading specialists spent more than 75% of their day instructing students, along with serving as a resource to teachers (Bean et al., 2002).

As a result of the Reading First Initiative of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), the number of reading coaches grew exponentially (Al Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt & Dole, 2008). Reading First provided funding to help high poverty, chronically underachieving schools improve early reading achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) and emphasized the use of professional development to improve early elementary reading instruction, with literacy coaches serving as an important component of the professional development (Scott et al., 2012). Almost all of schools that received

Reading First grants employed literacy coaches to fulfill professional development requirements even though there was no published research looking at the relationship between literacy coaches and student achievement prior to this mandate (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). As a result of the shift from literacy specialists to literacy coaches, many former reading specialists became literacy coaches with little training (Bean et al., 2015), having to learn how to serve as coaches while working as one (Carroll, 2007). The quick rise in the popularity of employing literacy coaches led to a wide range in what literacy coaching looked like from school to school.

Challenges for Literacy Coaches

Literacy coaches face a variety of challenges that impact their work. These challenges include unclear expectations of the role of literacy coaches (Calo et al., 2015; Hathaway, Martin & Mraz, 2016), lack of time to work with the teachers on their caseload (Al Otaiba et al., 2008), and a lack of preparation for the role (Calo et al., 2015). The challenges in literacy coaching may negatively impact the success of this form of professional development.

Varying Job Expectations

Reading specialists' job roles changed when the shift towards coaching teachers began over working with students (Al Otaiba et al., 2008). This shift resulted in a variety of perceptions of what literacy coaches should spend their time doing (Mraz et al., 2008), resulting in a lack of alignment of job expectations from principals, teachers, and specialized literacy professionals (Hathaway et al., 2016). This lack of alignment can

lead to dissatisfaction for multiple stakeholders and makes it difficult to pinpoint the coaching actions that contribute to teacher improvement in teaching reading.

Literacy Coaches' Perceptions of Their Role

Literacy coaches' perceptions of their roles may not match the perceptions of other school stakeholders. Differing expectations between principals, coaches, and teachers can cause tension. As noted by Hathaway et al. (2016), additional challenges can arise if there is a mismatch between what the coach considers to be their primary responsibility and what they believe the principal considers their primary responsibility.

The determination of the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches is often made by the principal and central office, without receiving input from the coach or the teachers with whom they work (Calo et al.,2015). Walpole and Blamey (2008) found that principals in their study identified literacy coaches as being a mentor or being a director. Contrastingly, the literacy coaches in the study viewed themselves as an assessor, formative observer, modeler, teacher and trainer (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Only 19% of coaches believe that supervising is part of their role (Calo et al., 2015), demonstrating a contrast between principal and literacy coach beliefs. The majority of literacy coaches view their main responsibility as supporting teachers (Calo et al., 2015; Hathaway et al., 2016). This support includes instructional support, addressing teacher concerns and issues, making decisions, and analyzing data and providing resources (Calo et al., 2015). Some coaches believe there is a disconnect between what they and their principal consider to be their primary responsibility (Hathaway et al., 2016). Gaps between beliefs of the role of literacy coaches can lead to dissatisfaction with the role.

Literacy coaches often support instructional assistants and paraprofessionals, serve as leaders in their school and help teachers and administrators analyze and use data (Calo et al., 2015). The ILA (2015) provides recommendations for literacy coaches but it is often ultimately up to the principal how these positions are utilized (Hathaway et al., 2016). While diversity is one of the included standards for reading professionals (ILA, 2010), many coaches were unclear about actions they needed to take to support this standard and their survey responses indicated that they perceived their standard as the least likely to be part of their role as a literacy coach (Hathaway et al., 2016). Even though there are guidelines to help streamline the goals for literacy coaches, the flexibility that schools have with these positions can result in a lack of adherence to these guidelines.

Teacher Perceptions of Literacy Coaches

A mismatch between teacher perceptions of literacy coaches and the perceptions that coaches have for themselves can cause conflict. The shift from a direct-service model where reading specialists worked primarily with students to a coaching model can cause challenges when teachers expect a direct-service model and are unclear of the literacy coach's role in the school (Al Otaiba et al., 2008). Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) found that teachers appreciate the collaborative space that coaches create, their ongoing support, and their teachings of research-based instructional strategies. Teachers enjoy the collaboration that the coaches facilitate because it allows them to learn about each other and what the other teachers were doing in their classrooms, share thoughts and strategies, and learn about students (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). Similarly, Scott et al. (2012) found that teachers felt more positive about coaches when they held weekly

grade-level meetings and they preferred meeting with the coaches in a group setting over meeting one-on-one with them. Teachers attributed their work with coaches to trying new teaching practices, using more authentic assessments, using professional literature to make curriculum decisions and teaching in a more student-centered way (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). The teachers identified that the coach supports them by serving as an encourager, facilitator, and demonstrator, and that the coaches were easily accessible and helped them with a variety of tasks (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010).

Scott et al. (2012) found that teachers appreciate feedback about their literacy instruction and are more satisfied when their coaches focused on their DIBELS assessment data. On the other hand, the coaches in this study who cited resistance from the teachers at their school were rated less favorably than other coaches (Scott et al., 2012). Additionally, the coaches who believed that not all stakeholders were on board with their efforts to introduce change had lower teacher satisfaction (Scott et al., 2012). Lastly, while teacher satisfaction with their coach did not correlate with the coaches' experience, there was a relationship between teacher satisfaction and the number of years coaches taught first grade (Scott et al., 2012).

Literacy Coach Preparation

Principals are often able to use their own discretion for what qualifications they will require when hiring for these professionals (Hathaway et al., 2016). This can lead to coaching challenges if literacy coaches are hired that do not have the foundational background needed to effectively lead the school literacy program. The ideal qualifications for literacy coaches are a reading specialist certificate, leadership and coaching skills, and classroom experience (Frost & Bean, 2006). L'Allier, Elish-Piper,

and Bean (2010) identified seven principles for literacy coaches that lead to instructional improvement and student achievement: 1) specialized knowledge, 2) focus on working with teachers, 3) collaborative relationships, 4) focus on a set of core activities, 5) intentional and opportunistic, 6) coaches serves as literacy leaders, and 7) coaching evolves over time. Coaches need specialized knowledge because one of the major responsibilities involves professional development activities such as large group presentations, small teacher-study groups, team meetings and individual meetings with teachers (L'Allier et al., 2010).

Coaches believe it is very important for them to have a strong knowledge and skill base, be skilled at building relationships, and have the character needed to build trust and work well with others (Calo et al., 2015). The percentage of literacy coaches with reading specialist certification has dropped since the survey completed by Bean et al. in 2002. At that time 90% of the respondents held reading specialist certification while in the present survey only 53% held this certification (Bean et al., 2015). Amongst the professionals in the survey who were classified as reading/literacy coaches, only 19% had specialist certification. This decrease in literacy coaches with certification may mean that the effectiveness of literacy coaches has decreased.

Literacy coach preparation impacts academic results. In a study with five literacy coaches and sixty-five teachers, the highest reading gains occurred in the classrooms of the teachers who were supported by reading coaches who held a Reading Teacher endorsement and the lowest reading gains occurred in the classrooms supported by a coach who did not hold an advanced degree in reading or a Reading Teacher endorsement (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). In a following study, the data of 121 teachers who

worked with 12 literacy coaches was analyzed. They found that significant reading gains were made by students whose teachers worked with literacy coaches who had a Reading Teacher endorsement or Reading Specialist certificate (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010).

As a result of the shift from a direct-service model to a coaching model, there is more of a need for leadership preparation for literacy coaches. Calo et al. (2015) found that many of the coaches were uncomfortable with working with veteran teachers, which suggests that the coaches need instruction in adult learning principles so that they can appropriately differentiate their support. Similarly, Bean et al. (2015) found that the majority of the literacy coaches in their study needed a wide variety of experiences that would have better prepared them for their leadership role. The respondents desired more learning about working with adults and leadership and would have felt better prepared for their position if they had advanced degrees in literacy, participated in a supervised field experience, and had coaching experiences in schools (Bean et al., 2015). Additionally, the literacy coaches wanted professional development that would help them improve their ability to work with teachers and help them to better understand adult learning theory (Bean et al., 2015). Literacy coaches need training in adult learning principles along with ongoing professional development to ensure that they are able to effectively teach up-to-date research to the teachers with whom they work (L'Allier et al., 2010). In order for literacy coaching to be an effective form of professional development, literacy coaches need to be prepared to lead adults.

Time

A common concern amongst coaches was not having enough time to work with the teachers on their caseload (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Calo et al., 2015). Hathaway et al.

(2016) found that only 10% of the 104 literacy coaches that they surveyed worked with 15 or fewer teachers, 40% of the coaches worked with between 16 and 30 teachers, and 36% worked with 31 to 45 teachers. In addition to large caseloads, coaches may find that their time is pulled into different directions. Even if they have created a schedule for their day, unexpected situations may arise that take away from their ability to support teachers (L'Allier, Elish-Piper & Bean, 2010). This can negatively impact student achievement because Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) found that the assessment data was highest for coaches who had the most interactions with the teachers that they worked with and lowest for the coach who had the least interactions.

Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) defined the five types of coaches as data-oriented, student-oriented, managerial, teacher-oriented who work mainly with individual teachers, and teacher-oriented who work mainly with groups. In their study, 32% of coaches fell into the teacher-oriented category, meaning that they spent between 41% and 52% of their time working with teachers. Literacy coaches should spend the majority of their time working directly with teachers because this can lead to the greatest student reading achievement gains (Bean et al, 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010).

While the amount of time that coaches work with teachers improves teacher perceptions of coaches and student achievement, literacy coaches report spending an average of five hours per week engaged in work related to assessments and instructional planning and nearly 45% of coaches only spent two to four hours a week observing, modeling, and talking with teachers (Roller, 2006). In another study, coaches were directed to spend between 60% and 80% of their time working directly with teachers but only spent 28% of their time doing so (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson & Autio, 2007).

Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) found that the coaches in their study spent 53% percent of their time directly working with teachers; 22% of that time was spent modeling, observing, and conferencing. Teacher viewpoints of coaches were more positive when coaches spent more time working with teachers (Bean et al., 2002).

Impact of Literacy Coaches

The impact of literacy coaches can vary depending on the time they spend working directly with teachers and the preparation that they have received for their job (Bean et al., 2015; Calo et al, 2015; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). School districts and building level leadership can use this research to improve the quality of their coaching program by improving their hiring decisions and paying close attention to the schedules of their literacy coaches.

Impact on Instruction

Literacy coaches are expected to be an important part of professional development for teachers in schools in an effort to improve reading achievement for students who struggle with reading (Al Otaiba et al., 2008). This type of professional development is job-embedded, meaning that teachers receive feedback based on their current teaching practices (International Reading Association [IRA], 2004). Coaches can help teachers with challenges they are experiencing in their classroom (Deussen et al., 2007) and increase their knowledge about reading (Al Otaiba et al., 2008).

Coaching can lead to significant changes for teachers (Teemant, 2013), Weekly coaching can help teachers make statistically significant improvements in the structural environment of their classrooms (Neuman & Wright, 2010) and working with a coach who has teaching experience can help teachers improve their reading instruction

(Nielson, Barry, & Staab, 2008). Students of teachers who were coached made greater gains in word decoding than the teachers without a coach (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011). Specific coaching actions such as conferencing, administering assessments, modeling and observing are significant predictors of student reading gains at one or more grade levels (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011).

Literacy coaches contribute to student achievement gains more than a prescriptive reading program or a traditional professional development program for reading in grades kindergarten through fourth (Swartz, 2005). Additionally, 86% of the teachers with a coach in Carlisle and Berbitsky's (2011) survey study agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*the professional development deepened my understanding of subject matter,*" compared to 70% of the teachers who did not have a coach. Contrastingly, Garet et al. (2008) compared a professional development model with teachers who worked with a coach and other teachers who did not work with a coach and found that both groups of teachers in the study did not make significant changes in their instruction or improvements in their students' academic outcomes.

Why Literacy Coaches are Needed

There is evidence that literacy coaches positively impact student achievement (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Swartz, 2005) and lead to positive changes in instruction for the teachers on their caseload (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Duessan et al., 2007; Neuman & Wright, 2010; Nielson et al., 2008; Teemant, 2013). Therefore, literacy coaches are a potential solution to issues like low levels of reading proficiency, high teacher turnover, and teacher quality gaps.

Moore and Lewis (2012) assert that teacher shortages and high turnover rates across the nation and particularly in urban locations suggest that teachers are not adequately trained or supported for the demands of teaching. According to Darling-Hammond, "Studies at the state, district, school, and individual level have found that teachers' academic background, preparation for teaching, and certification status, as well as their experience, significantly affect their students' achievement" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 43).

Teacher effectiveness has been cited as a leading factor impacting student outcomes (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Ferguson, 1991). According to Allington (2005), the best way to improve student reading achievement is by improving the quality of instruction in the classroom. Students who had the lowest abilities but who were taught by exemplary teachers scored as well as the students who had average abilities but were taught by less skilled teachers (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block & Morrow, 2001)

In their study on literacy coaches and reading achievement, Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) found that differences in student gain could be attributed to teacher differences with 33.68% of the variance in kindergarten and 19.80% in first grade being attributed to their assigned teacher (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). This demonstrates the need for ongoing professional development for teachers (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Teacher differences in student achievement data suggest that coaching should be targeted towards the teachers who need it most in their instructional areas of weakness (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010).

Beginning Teachers

Research indicates that beginning teachers have common areas of struggle. According to Veenman (1984), the most frequently identified problems of new teachers were discipline, motivating students, attending to student differences, assessing work, parent relationships, organization, lack of materials, and handling student problems. One common area of struggle is classroom management (Johnson, Sullivan, & Williams, 2009; Robertson, 2006). Beginning teachers are often surprised if they encounter parents who are less supportive than they would have expected (Robertson, 2006). Additionally, in many cases beginning teachers do not receive a strong source of support and are left to "sink or swim" on their own (Howe, 2006). New teachers desire administrative support that assists them with teaching basics such as classroom management, personal time management, and completing paperwork (Robertson, 2006). When schools do not have a coaching structure in place, school leaders may not have the time or skills to help beginning teachers (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007; Quinn & Andrews, 2004). Beginning teachers also struggle with the mismatch of their vision of what teaching is like and the realities of their job (Robertson, 2006). When beginning teachers are left to navigate teaching on their own, their effectiveness is reduced.

Half of teachers choose to leave teaching within their first five years (Ingersoll, 2004; Johnson, 2003). Johnson et al. (2014) determined positive conditions that fall across five themes that can help to promote beginning teacher resilience: 1) local action that builds on the strengths of the new teachers, 2) professional learning opportunities and support systems to assist beginning teachers with the overwhelming aspects of their job, 3) positive school cultures, 4) relationships and a sense of belonging and connectedness,

and 5) encouragement to engage in self-reflection. All of these areas can be addressed by working with a coach.

Hoffman et al. (2005) referenced six reviews of literature on teacher education that have been published in recent years (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pearson, 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) and asserted that there are four points of consensus across these reviews. The first is that teachers need support and professional development in their beginning years of teaching and that the focus on learning how to be a teacher will continue after teachers begin their career. Second, teachers must be prepared to be responsive to their students' needs in reading. They need a strong knowledge base of how to teach reading but must also realize that their teaching will have to be adapted for individual students. Third, a strong field-based experience is essential for developing effective teachers. Lastly, the authors agreed that it is not always clear if teachers are able to apply what they learn to their teaching (Hoffman et al., 2005). When beginning teachers do not have the support system of a coach, they may not have opportunities to learn after they begin their career. Even if they know that they need to adapt their teaching for individual students, they may not know how to apply this to their teaching.

First year teachers often gravitate towards teacher-centered instructional practices in lieu of the learner-centered teaching approaches that they learn in their preservice programs (Strom, 2015). Strom completed a case study that explored the way a first-year teacher, Mauro, integrated what he learned in his preservice program into his teaching. She found that while Mauro held strong, unwavering beliefs about teaching, his actual

practices varied greatly between his ninth-grade class and his eleventh/twelve grade class. He was able to apply what he had learned in his preservice program, including inquiry-based learning, with his eleventh/twelve class but was unable to do so with the ninth-grade class. When beginning career teachers struggle with implementing what they have learned in their preservice program, a coach can help to resolve that issue for them.

Adult Learning Theory

This study examined the perceptions of teachers who work with a literacy coach through the lens of adult learning theory. According to Cox (2015), self-determination and self-direction must have a role in the learning process for adults. Effective literacy coaches must be able to facilitate reflection and goal-setting (Kissel et al., 2011). While adults are usually self-directed, sometimes they need to be pushed into learning (Cox, 2015). For literacy coaches to be an effective form of professional development, coaches must attend to the range of needs that teachers have related to their learning (Cox, 2015). Coaches must also know how to facilitate learning (Kissel et al., 2011). Adult learners must have a known need for learning, be ready to learn because of that need, see the usefulness of what they are learning and be able to apply it to their lives, and be intrinsically motivated (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). Coaches should keep in mind that the life and work experiences of adults can inspire but can also hinder their learning (Knowles et al., 2011). In order to best meet the needs of adult learners, coaches must spend time learning about teacher perspectives in regard to what they are struggling with so that they are more likely to have a desire to learn what the coach is trying to teach them.

Mezirow's (1990, 1997, 2000) theory of transformative learning centers on stimulating shifts in thinking (Cox, 2015). According to Cox (2015),

> The majority of learners are not ready for coaching until the easiness and familiarity of their everyday life is interrupted in some way; they are generally not open to being coached prior to this because their accustomed or habitual approach to events does not require significant thought or explanation. It is not until there is a disjunction between expectation and actuality and some form of disorienting dilemma occurs that the learner becomes "coachable" and the potential for some form of change or transformation becomes apparent. (p. 33)

It is important that coaches observe the teachers they work with and listen to what they say because many times the teachers will identify what they need to work on (Burkins, 2007). Additionally, for learning to take place between the coach and the teacher, there must be trust and rapport in the relationship so that they both feel safe to learn from the other (Kissel et al., 2011).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their work with literacy coaches. The literature in chapter two summarizes the emergence of literacy coaches and explains some of the challenges in this field including lack of preparation for the job and misalignment between principals, literacy coaches, and teachers about what literacy coaches should spend their time doing. The literature provides support for the use of literacy coaches based on evidence that literacy coaches positively impact student achievement (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Swartz, 2005). Studying beginning teacher perspectives of their work with literacy

coaches will add to this field by providing guidance about what the role of a literacy coach should look like, based on what actions beginning teachers describe as helping them improve their literacy instruction. This is necessary in order to enhance coaching practices so that they best meet the needs of beginning teachers. Chapter three provides the methodology of the study that was conducted.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study sought to examine beginning teachers' experiences with literacy coaching through the lens of adult learning theory. The study examined the support that beginning teachers received through literacy coaching and their perceived impact that this coaching had on their literacy instruction. This study synthesized what previous studies have presented regarding literacy coaching in addition to contributing new findings to the field using an exploratory case study. The research questions for this study were:

1. What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?
2. How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?

This chapter begins with the methodology and research design that was used to examine beginning teacher perspectives regarding literacy coaching. The next section explains the research design and data analysis strategies. The chapter concludes with sections on trustworthiness, anticipated ethical issues, and limitations.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative case study design, which examined the experiences that beginning teachers had with literacy coaching and their description of the impact that literacy coaching has had on their literacy instruction. Qualitative research is used in studies that seek to provide an in-depth description of the concept being studied (Mertens, 2015). The focus of qualitative research is meaning and understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study was approached from a constructivist paradigm because each teacher has different realities, and constructivism

recognizes that there are multiple, socially constructed realities (Mertens, 2015). This study sought to understand the teachers' experiences with literacy coaching and the aspects of coaching that they attribute to their improvement in teaching literacy. It is important to examine the teachers' perceptions as separate cases because adults have a range of learning needs that coaches must attend to in order to successfully improve their practice (Cox, 2015). I served as the data collection instrument which means that it was important for me to consider the values, assumptions, and beliefs that I brought to the study (Mertens, 2015).

Qualitative research was most appropriate for this study because the data collected from interviews and documents allowed me to develop themes about the impact that literacy coaching has on the literacy instruction of beginning teachers. The study focused on beginning teachers' perspectives of literacy coaching because this viewpoint can provide rich data of their experiences. The life and work experiences of adults impacts this learning which means that each teacher may have very different experiences working with their coach (Knowles et al., 2011). Additionally, the relationship between each teacher and their coach will impact their learning (Kissel et al., 2011).

For this qualitative study, a case study design was used in order to better understand the coaching actions that beginning teachers attribute to their improvement in teaching literacy. The remainder of this chapter describes the case study design, research context, and the data methods used for this study.

Case Study Design

Case study research is descriptive and nonexperimental (Merriam, 1988) and allows the exploration of a phenomenon within its context (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "A *case study* is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37). Case study research is a method that allows the researcher to describe complex phenomena through an investigative approach (Moore, Lapan, & Quartaroli, 2012). A case study was appropriate for this study because the research questions explored how a phenomenon occurred in a situation where conditions were not manipulated by the researcher (Mertens, 2015). Case studies rely on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). Teachers were interviewed to determine their perceptions of the literacy coaching that they have received along with principals and literacy coaches to determine the support that they intended to provide. Additionally, logs with reflections were analyzed. The research study did not impact the context of coaching at the schools in the study in any way.

Stake (2000) describes the three purposes of case study research as intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case study. The purpose of this study was a collective case study, or multiple case study, because there were six different teachers who participated in the study and who may have their own distinct opinions about literacy coaching. In a multiple case study, the researcher first analyzes each case by itself and then begins analyzing across the cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Even though the initial interview questions are the same for each participant, the content of the interview may result in additional questions. Each participant may have completely different opinions on what aspects of literacy coaching has contributed to their improvement in teaching literacy. By initially analyzing each person separately, they are not forced to fit into categories that might not apply. In case study research it is important to avoid losing the uniqueness of each case in order to determine the similarities across the cases (Stake, 2005).

Research Context

Research Setting

This study took place in two elementary schools: Central Elementary and Lincoln Elementary (all pseudonyms). Both schools serve grades kindergarten through fifth and are Title 1 schools, meaning that they have a high percentage of children from low-income families. They are located adjacent to a city in the Southeastern United States. Literacy coaching is used at these schools to raise academic performance. The schools were selected because they implement literacy coaching with beginning teachers. The coaches at both schools work with all general education teachers in the school.

Research Participants

There was a total of six teachers participating, with two at Central Elementary and four at Lincoln Elementary. One coach at each school participated for a total of two coaches. Purposeful sampling was used to choose participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The criteria were that the participants work with a literacy coach and have taught between one and three years. In order to choose the participants, information was provided about the research to all of the beginning teachers who work with a coach in the two schools. The principals at each school provided the names and contact information for these teachers. At Central Elementary there were three teachers who were eligible for the study but only two agreed to participate. At Lincoln Elementary there were four teachers who were eligible, and all agreed to participate.

The participants in the study were beginning teachers (fewer than three full years of experience) who work with a coach in the area of the literacy. There were six teachers who participated in the study and they teach kindergarten, first-grade, second-grade, fifth-

grade and two teach fourth-grade. The two coaches in the study have worked as literacy coaches for a minimum of four years. At both schools, the coaches were referred to as literacy coaches by their principals. The official title for the coach at Central Elementary is instructional coach. The principal defined her main responsibility as coaching in the area of literacy, but she does assist with other content area. The official title for the coach at Lincoln Elementary is literacy coach, but she also assists with other content areas, with her focus being literacy.

Pseudonyms were used for all participants and school locations to protect the privacy of the participants. Identifying information was only available to the researcher. The confidentiality of the participants was protected by not sharing any of the data collected from interviews or logs with anyone else. This information was only be used as part of the study and was protected by using pseudonyms.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the researcher for this study, I served as the principal investigator for this study. I collected the data at the two school sites and analyzed the data from the interviews. I recognized that there could be conflict due to my position as a literacy coach; however, I am not a literacy coach in the district where I conducted my research.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

This study used qualitative data that were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interview data from the principals, literacy coaches, and teachers were used to answer research question 1, “What support for literacy

instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?" Teacher interviews and their reflection logs were used to answer research question 2, "How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?" This chapter provides detailed information on the data collection procedures for the interviews and documents that was used in this study. Additionally, there will be a description of how these items were analyzed. The timeline of the data collection is in the figure below.

Figure 1: Timeline of Data Collection

Timeline of Data Collection	
Interview with principals	September 2018
Interview with literacy coaches	September 2018
First interview with teachers	September 2018
Review of logs and reflections	October 2018
Second interview with teachers	October 2018

Interviews

Six teachers participated in interviews for this study. Each teacher was interviewed twice with the interviews lasting approximately one hour. The interviews were held face-to-face or on the phone, depending on the availability of the teachers. In addition to interviewing the teachers, interviews were conducted with the principals and the literacy coaches in order to determine the support that the schools intended to provide teachers through literacy coaching. While the teachers were the primary informants, the interviews with the literacy coaches and principals provided context for the study.

Interviews are used to allow the researcher to better understand the participants' impressions or experiences (Mertens, 2015). The interviews were semi-structured with

open-ended questions. Many of the questions were formulated before the document analysis, but I used additional questions to provide clarification to what was noted. I digitally recorded the interviews and took notes during the interview. Afterwards, I transcribed the interviews to facilitate analysis.

Documents

The participating teachers were asked to keep a log for two coaching cycles in order to make notes of their interactions with their coach. The log included a reflection portion where teachers recorded their opinions about these interactions. Willingness to maintain a log and reflection for two weeks of coaching meetings was part of the eligibility criteria for participation in this study. These records were collected and reviewed prior to the second round of interviews and were able to be used by the teachers during their interviews and collected at the conclusion of the interviews. The logs were analyzed in order to see if there were additional coaching actions that teachers attribute to their success in teaching literacy that the teachers did not discuss in the interviews. Additionally, they were used to confirm findings from the interviews. Documents are not flexible (Mertens, 2015) but the accompanying interviews allowed me to gather further information.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used an inductive coding process to arrive at major themes across the participants' data. The constant comparative method was used to facilitate this process. According to Mertens (2015), "The constant comparative method calls on the researcher to seek verification for hypotheses that emerge throughout the study (in contrast to other qualitative approaches that might see this as the role of follow-up

research)" (p. 249). Each segment of data was compared with codes or categories that were already established in order to determine how to code them or create a new code. The important tenets of the constant comparative method are: constant interaction with the data, theoretical sampling, systematic coding, and asking questions of the data (Mertens, 2015).

Each interview was recorded and then transcribed. Memos were recorded throughout the data analysis process. First, the interviews were looked at individually in order to identify open codes. In this phase, it was important to remain open, stay close to the data, create simple and precise codes and move quickly (Charmaz, 2006). Open codes are the first level of coding and result from breaking down the raw words into categories. The open codes were classified into categories based on similar characteristics.

A constant comparative analysis was used to create categories that relate the open codes to one another by analyzing the characteristics of the open codes to determine which ones could be grouped together. Next, the axial coding process was used to analyze the categories to determine how they were related to each other and determine which ones could be grouped together based on similarities. According to Roulston (2010), "In this process, the analyst examines each category in detail in order to ascertain and describe both 'properties' and 'dimensions'" (p. 157). Once the categories and any subcategories had been established and after axial coding was completed for each individual teacher, I then looked across the subsumed categories and determined major categories that were found throughout the data, potentially resulting in the creation of themes that better captured the data collected across the teachers, literacy coaches, and

principals. There were three rounds of coding and this information was organized in a table, found in appendix 5. For the first round of coding, I read each interview and then recorded open codes from the individual interviews. I printed out the codebook and cut the codes into individual strips so that I could sort the open codes to make categories. I used the individual strips to put similar codes together. Through this process, nine categories were created: catering to adult learners, one-on-one support, planning, resources, and curriculum, analyzing data, large caseload, lack of consistency, specific feedback, and access. Next, I used axial coding to analyze the categories and determine which could be combined. One-on-one support, planning, resources and curriculum and analyzing data were combined because they each described the different types of support that beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching, creating the multiple forms of support theme. Lack of consistency was combined with lack of specific feedback because both categories centered on the one-on-one feedback meetings that were intended to occur weekly. The other categories became their own themes.

Document analysis was used for the teacher's logs. The steps in this were to skim, read and interpret the document using content and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009). All data sources were analyzed to determine common themes across the interviews and documents.

Trustworthiness

There were several strategies used in order to ensure trustworthiness. The first strategy was members checks, which involved checking with the participants to ensure that they agree with the conclusions made based on the analysis of the data (Mertens, 2015, p. 269). Participants were given the opportunity to review their case study and

provide feedback to ensure that they agreed with the conclusions that were made. A subjectivity statement was included so that the consumers of the research know the background of the researcher and potential bias that may have impacted the research. Lastly, transferability was facilitated through a clear description of the research process (Shenton, 2004). Detailed quotes from the participants were included in the findings so that the reader can determine if the findings can transfer to their particular school situation. For example, the quotes from the coaches and principals demonstrate the dynamics of coaching in their schools, which helps the reader to know if coaching at their school is similar.

Ethical Issues

There was little known risk for this study. All teachers, literacy coaches, principals, and schools were assigned pseudonyms. The participants were asked to participate and could withdraw from the study at any time. I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for this study and all participants provided verbal consent after I read the form aloud for their participation in the study. I secured all materials in a private Google Drive folder. The interview recordings were deleted after the interviews were transcribed.

Limitations

Due to this being a case study with a small sample size, there must be caution with the interpretation of the results. The case study design allows us to look closely at the experiences of several teachers who work with coaches, but their experiences will not necessarily be similar to the experiences of other teachers. Additionally, while the principals consider the coaches in the study to be literacy coaches, they do assist with

other content areas in addition to literacy, although their main focus is literacy instruction.

An additional limitation is researcher bias. As a literacy coach, I believe in the power of literacy coaching to improve teaching. I attempted to not let this experience impact my interpretation of the data in order to present subjective results. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I completed memos in order to record my reflections. This allowed me to separate my thoughts related to my experience as a literacy coach from the data, and keep the conclusions grounded in the teacher perspectives of their experiences with literacy coaching.

Delimitations

For this study, I chose to include principal and coach interviews as part of my data. The focus of the study is on teacher perceptions of literacy coaching. The interviews from the principals and coaches were used to build context of the coaching programs at the schools.

Additionally, I chose to work with 2nd and 3rd year teachers for this study because coaching can be very different depending on the time of the year and the experience of the teacher. Since this study took place near the beginning of the school year, it was advantageous to work with teachers who had already completed at least one year of coaching so that they had more information to provide about their experiences working with a literacy coach.

Summary

This study utilized qualitative research to examine teacher perceptions of literacy coaching. The participants in the study were beginning teachers who work with a literacy

coach. Qualitative case studies were used to determine how coaching can be improved, based on the perceptions of the teachers in the study. Data collection included interviews with principals, literacy coaches, and the six beginning career teachers in the study. Additionally, logs with reflections were collected from the teachers in the study. The first question of the research study, "What support for literacy instruction do beginning career teachers receive through literacy coaching?" was addressed by the teacher, principal, and coach interviews. The second question of the study, "How do beginning career teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?" was addressed by the teacher interviews and their logs with reflections. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their work with literacy coaches. This study sought to examine the support that beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching and the beginning teachers' perceptions of the impact that this coaching has on their literacy instruction. Teachers, literacy coaches, and principals were interviewed at two schools in the same district and coaching reflection logs from the teachers were collected to answer the following research questions:

1) What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?

2) How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?

Chapter one described the problem, purpose, significance, and theoretical framework of this study. The literature reviewed in chapter two summarized the emergence of literacy coaches and explained some of the challenges in this field, including lack of preparation for the job and misalignment between principals, literacy coaches, and teachers about what literacy coaches should spend their time doing. Chapter three described the methodology and research design that was used to examine beginning teacher perspectives regarding literacy coaching. The research design, data analysis strategies, trustworthiness, anticipated ethical issues, and limitations were also included in chapter three. In chapter four, the context for literacy coaching at each of the schools will be provided using information from the principal and literacy coach interviews. Next, a within-case analysis for each of the teachers is included

followed by an across-case analysis. The chapter will conclude with the themes developed from the analysis.

Context for Literacy Coaching at Participating Schools

The context for literacy coaching for the participating schools was determined through principal and literacy coach interviews. Their descriptions of literacy coaching at their school are below.

Central Elementary School

When asked to describe literacy coaching at his school, the principal of Central Elementary School, Mr. Harris, said:

> At the school level we have an instructional coach that serves in all capacities when it comes to instruction. They support literacy but they do a whole lot of other things including math and writing. We are adding some new stuff with writing. Literacy is a focus of conversation in planning.

At Central Elementary, the school administration determines areas of need within the school based on trends they find through classroom observations, and then the coach focuses on those areas. The principal elaborated: "We find the hotspots that we have. If literacy happens to be one of them then we work on it. If we need to shift focus, then we do." In the past, there was a dedicated position for a literacy coach, but the district shifted the role so that the coach is responsible for multiple areas of instruction. For the observation and feedback meetings, Mr. Harris said: "We all take four to five teachers and the coach supports the beginning teachers and they are formal, but they are informal because they are not summative. We have a follow-up conversation in 24 hours." In addition to meeting with teachers one-on-one, the coach supports teachers in the area of

literacy by attending and participating in collaborative planning. Mr. Harris elaborated, "They can talk about their misunderstandings. Talking about the standards helps them know what they need to teach and shows them that they are able to do that independently. Looking at data they can identify weaknesses. Maybe see long term." He described all of the beginning teachers from the previous year as strong: "They were able to connect dots." He said that the biggest struggle he notices with beginning teachers is the lack of ability to utilize the different materials that the state has given the school, which is one of the top ways that coaches report that they support teachers (Calo et al., 2015).

When asked to describe her day as a literacy coach, the coach at Central Elementary, Mrs. Johnson, said:

> My day is structured around collaborative planning sessions. Eats up the majority of my time. Each grade level plans for 90 minutes. We look at standards and describe the big ideas. Digging in and designing an assessment if needed. Looking at the resources we have and what will best meet needs. They have 45-minute planning sessions another time. I pop in to the 45-minute sessions as well.

In addition to working with teams, she works with individual teachers and provides them with formal and informal feedback, prioritizing the beginning teachers. At the time of the interview she was team teaching and planning outside of the school day with a teacher who was launching Lucy Calkins. In addition to the general education teachers, she meets with the exceptional children's team and the specials team. In reference to her responsibilities, Mrs. Johnson feels "Very busy. It keeps you on your toes but I'm always doing something different."

Before beginning as an instructional coach, Mrs. Johnson taught third and fourth grade. She emphasized that she did not have younger grade teaching experience. In her district, the coaches meet monthly to discuss what is going well, what they are struggling with, and what their goals are. She described this as a nice way to collaborate with others.

When asked about her goals when coaching beginning teachers, Mrs. Johnson said, "To listen. You see all of these things you want to praise them for. Take a backseat and let them tell me what they're struggling with." With beginning teachers, she models lessons, co-teaches, and provides observation support and feedback. Additionally, she goes into the classroom after she provides feedback to support the teachers with the things that they had discussed. She makes sure to make a presence in the classrooms. Mrs. Johnson asks the beginning teachers about their goals, and she says that they usually revolve around management. Johnson stated, "It is important to meet them where they are." Referencing her one-on-one meetings with teachers, she said:

> I ask them general questions. They occasionally see me as an evaluator which is not the case, so you have to break the ice. After that I can ask them, have you ever thought of this? I look at them giving me information and them being able to set the tone.

She believes that beginning teachers struggle with time to fit it all in: "Especially at the beginning of the year. There are a lot of assessments and they have to hit the ground running. They struggle with how to assess and use the data. How to use the data in a timely manner." This relates to what Robertson (2006) found: new teachers desire

support with teaching basics including personal time management and completing paperwork.

Lincoln Elementary School

At Lincoln Elementary School, the principal, Mr. Smith, said there are two levels of literacy coaching: team coaching and individual coaching. Team coaching includes the 90-minute planning block which is held one day a week. The school holds many staff meetings related to literacy which are led by the literacy coach, teacher leaders, and district leaders. In addition to instructional coaching, teachers are coached on their intervention groups. Mr. Smith described their observation and feedback framework:

> We have fifteen-minute conferences where the assistant principal, principal, and literacy coach are all assigned staff members and they go and observe informally. Designed for dialogue instead of evaluations to get feedback. This is so that observations aren't two or three times a year.

The post-observation meetings are weekly and scheduled at the same time each week, although the observations occur at different times. The principal assigns the first-year teachers to the literacy coach because he believes that it might be intimidating for them to receive their feedback from the principal:

> As a first-year teacher to have the assistant principal or principal to come in, that could be very intimidating. Last year we had three first-year teachers. We assigned the literacy coach to be their person. She's a coach. Feedback will feel very different coming from the principal. The first month and month and a half they are getting that relationship. They are matched.

Mr. Smith wants teachers to feel like they are growing instead of being evaluated and he believes that teachers feel less threatened by the observations because of the frequency. The principal and the assistant principal take the majority of the teachers because the coach has many other responsibilities: "We took this off the coach's plate because they do too much."

In early September, Mr. Smith described the focus at the beginning of the year as helping beginning teachers become comfortable with mClass assessments, which are the state-mandated reading assessments given in grades kindergarten through third in North Carolina. Mr. Smith said that while the literacy coach's primary focus is literacy, she serves as an instructional coach: "a big part of what she and the assistant principal do is managing the MTSS process which spans all instructional areas including social emotional. She and the assistant principal manage the warehouse of information."

Mrs. Davis, the literacy coach at Lincoln Elementary, says that she has flexibility in her schedule, especially at the beginning of the year: "Some days I have a set schedule when I meet with a work with teachers. They have access to me in the morning, so I don't have a morning duty. They can ask questions, or I can be in their room." She describes her priority as supporting beginning teachers, "Kind of like another mentor. I am a safe non-evaluative person." As the year progresses, she schedules herself to be in different grade levels. At this time, she is supporting fifth grade during their differentiated block that focuses on Tier 2 students, which are students who are receiving supplemental instruction because they are working below grade level. Mrs. Davis has three teachers that she is assigned to for the feedback meetings. Before the meetings, she goes to their classrooms and observes. These observations may occur during something

new that they are launching, an area of concern, or a student situation on which they have requested feedback. She models lessons for teachers as requested. Mrs. Davis also attends collaborative team meetings each day at 2 p.m. along with attending planning and data analysis meetings.

Before moving into a literacy coaching role, Mrs. Davis taught second grade. When her school district received the federal grant Reading First, the schools were required to employ a literacy coach: "That was something they approached me about and asked me if I wanted to do. I wasn't really ready to leave the classroom, but I was excited. [I] wasn't sure about the coaching role." The literacy coaches in the district received a plethora of professional development on coaching roles and the implementation of federal mandates that were part of the grant. They also had monthly coach meetings with the other coaches along with a coach who visited the school to work with Mrs. Davis. Coaches in her district still get professional development, with the current area of study being academic conversations:

> The district trains us and then we train the teachers. We do book studies. We get training. We get training as we need. We have had a lot of coach turnover. Our role used to just be literacy and now it's instructional and there's a whole math aspect. If we say we need something the district will provide it.

Last year Mrs. Davis' school had four first-year teachers. They were assigned to be her teachers for the feedback meetings because her principal felt that it was more appropriate for new teachers to be assigned to the coach. Those teachers received a lot of modeling, and Mrs. Davis co-taught during one of the first-year teacher's literacy block because she needed more support. With four first-year teachers, Mrs. Davis had to

balance giving those teachers the support they needed and her other duties: "Last year I didn't feel effective when I was in those rooms and then all of other needs arose." Mrs. Davis describes herself as being on the side of the teachers and says that she tries to address needs before they get to the principal. She maintains confidentiality with her teachers unless she has to share something with her principal because it is essential for her to build relationships with the teachers she coaches.

One challenge that Mrs. Davis believes beginning teachers face is that there is so much information that is given to them, especially at the beginning of the year. She said, "We are guilty at the school level. Can you meet with this person, this person, and this person? They are just complying. Are they taking it all in? Are we giving them enough time to take it all in? I can see them overwhelmed. We take all of their planning time to tell them things, but then they don't have time to process."

The information provided from the principal and literacy coach interviews provided a context to the goals of literacy coaching at Central and Lincoln Elementary. Below, the teacher perceptions of literacy coaching as determined through their interviews and coaching reflection logs will be shared.

Within-Case Analysis

In this section, the participants in this research study will be described. To protect their identities, the grade level that they teach and their school is not included in their case study. Additionally, the literacy coaches will not be identified by their names in the case studies. This was an intentional decision because with only six participants, it would be easy at the school-level to identify individual participants if more information was revealed. It was important for the research that the teachers felt comfortable providing

information about their experiences with literacy coaching, even if it was critical of their coach. All of the teachers in the study were interviewed twice and completed a coaching reflection log for two coaching cycles. At the time of the study, one of the schools had not begun feedback meetings, and it was undecided when the meetings would start. Therefore, the teachers at that school recorded information about their interactions with their coach in planning or any other informal communications they had. Due to planning being a large part of the support that the coaches provided, the teachers at the school where feedback meetings had begun also recorded notes from planning sessions.

Teacher 1: Ms. Brown

"It felt good to have someone stop in and see if I was doing okay."

Teacher background. Ms. Brown, a second-year teacher, identified her teaching philosophy as: "All students are capable of learning and it is definitely our job as teachers to provide them with experiences and opportunities to grow as members of their communities and one day be part of society." She described her first year of teaching as a "whirlwind":

> It was hectic and I felt very scattered and I was trying to catch up. The management was very hard because you really are just thrown into it. You look back and think oh my god I should have paid more attention in college when I was actually able to visit classrooms. But you can watch as many classrooms as you want but until you have your own class you don't know what to do. It's just a learning curve. However, even with all of the issues I had, I will never forget those kids. The love that you share with your first class is a big deal.

Ms. Brown believes that future teachers should know about all of the resources that are available for literacy and realize that it will take time for them to find out what works for them. She said, "There's never a perfect lesson or way. You have to find and pull from different things to make it work in your classroom. You can't be handed a curriculum and it works perfectly for you." While Ms. Brown said that her literacy coach has always been a huge help to her, she said she returned for a second year of teaching for herself:

> Obviously, it's a part of you and you can't give up after one try. I think I grew up in a household with a teacher and I have seen the ugly side of education. I expected a lot of what happened my first year. Even though it's discouraging from day to day, overall you are able to find the joy and positive parts. It wasn't even a question about coming back but I liked having the choice to move grade levels. This year is a lot better because I have that year under my belt.

Received support for literacy instruction. Ms. Brown described her coach as very personable and said that she frequently asked her how things were going. Ms. Brown said, "I had a rough group of kids so I would go to her a lot about behavior issues. We would talk through that. She would give me advice on whether I should handle it or go to a teammate." When asked about the support she was receiving through literacy coaching, Ms. Brown replied:

> So, I definitely think the fifteen-minute observations. It was a weekly thing. I would say she came five or six times. That was one way I got support. In planning meetings, she would share things with me or ask me how I was doing or what I needed.

The feedback meetings started in February due to a new initiative in the county, and her coach had a checklist that she used during the observations. If her coach identified something as an area of improvement, then she would provide resources to assist with that area. As described above, Ms. Brown found these meetings to be very helpful which suggests that it would have been beneficial for them to occur more than five or six times throughout the school year. To further support this, when asked about her most meaningful experience with her literacy coach she said, "Probably again the feedback after the observation. Sitting down and talking afterwards. They have not started with one-on-one meetings this year."

Another area that Ms. Brown described as support she received through literacy coaching was receiving resources:

> Making sure that I had all of the resources upfront. Our grade level switched from four teachers to five teachers. My coach did a really good job making sure that the new teachers had the materials. The veteran teachers had to wait a little bit. She didn't want me to share or look on someone else's.

In her coaching log, Ms. Brown said that her coach also assisted during planning by offering resources to help her plan an integrated arts lesson. Receiving resources was important to Ms. Brown because she felt like it was challenging as a new teacher to know about all of the resources available to her.

Ms. Brown described communication as an additional type of support that she received through literacy coaching. Her coach also provided support by regularly communicating with her including texting her on the weekends. She described in her coaching log an occasion when her coach stopped in her room to check and see if she

needed any math manipulatives or any other materials to support her in being prepared. She noted, "It felt good to have someone stop in and see if I was doing okay." Even though her official feedback meetings did not occur consistently throughout the school year, Ms. Brown felt positively about the support for literacy instruction that she received through literacy coaching because she had someone who checked in with her frequently and whom she was able to access easily when she needed assistance. The main areas of support for literacy instruction that Ms. Brown identified herself receiving through literacy coaching in her interviews and coaching log were feedback meetings, resources, and frequent check-ins.

Perceived impact on literacy instruction. One area that Ms. Brown remembers receiving feedback for her literacy instruction was when she was reading a story to the class. Ms. Brown said,

> I was doing a lesson where we were reading a story. In my grade level, there are many different levels of readers. It's hard to call on people and have them read. If they don't read fluently then it's hard for the rest of the class to follow along. I think I read the story actually. She sent me some articles of ways to prep kids for the text that you are reading so that they are prepared, and they can read it aloud. Choral reading. Letting the kids see the text the day before so that it's not fresh. If you call on them to read, then they will be able to read fluently.

When asked if she ended up using any of the strategies, Ms. Brown said,

> I think I did for some text. When I could, I did. You want it to be a cold read where they don't know anything about the text especially when you taught

> predicting and inferencing. I wouldn't say I spent a lot of time trying to make sure that happened.

This gap in implementing the feedback that she was provided may have been due to the lack of consistency in the feedback meetings. For another lesson that Ms. Brown received feedback she stated:

> I think one time maybe I didn't have a certain manipulative or material readily available. We talked about ways that I can I think have a book for everybody. We talked about ways that we can give access to everything. Making copies of something and sharing. Sending out an email and collecting the book.

Even though Ms. Brown did not always implement the feedback that she was provided with, she viewed the feedback meetings as having a positive impact on her literacy instruction. When asked how literacy coaching impacted her instruction, Ms. Brown replied,

> Well, I definitely think she's been supportive. Things have gone better with her helping to prepare me. Honestly, the observations, while they are stressful, if you don't know your coach really well, it was good because it holds you accountable. The first couple of years you kind of get this reprieve from everyone because you are new, but you can create bad habits if you don't watch. I need to be on my A-game every day. It made me a better teacher.

In her coaching reflection log, Ms. Brown said that her coach:

> Facilitated ideas to help myself and a specialist teacher co-teach a lesson on one of my first quarter reading standards. She kept us on task and focused, provided

> feedback as we brainstormed ideas that kept us on track with the standards and helped pick dates for this lesson.

In the following week, her coach observed the co-teaching lesson and provided them with feedback on what she saw. Ms. Brown said, "I felt supported and thankful for help and advice. It also helped me feel confident in things I am doing really well." She also included in her coaching log that her coach helped the team create ability groups for their reading intervention blocks. Additionally, the coach checked in about the grade level's schedule and asked them how their day was flowing. She noted, "She made me feel like ideas were useful and helped me create a standards-aligned assessment to use in the classroom to check for understanding."

One of the challenges with literacy coaching that Ms. Brown described was that it could be time-consuming for the teachers being coached:

> I wouldn't say difficult. I would say time-consuming. I have my literacy coach here and now we have something else, a coach from a university. It's great that they want to help beginning teachers but sometimes it's overwhelming to have a coach, interventionist, mentor, university coach. That's another layer. For some of us it's a little overwhelming to have so many.

Ms. Brown advises that literacy coaches differentiate support based on what different grade levels and teachers need:

> I would say feel out your teachers. I think every grade level is different. Every grade level needs a different type of support. Coaches have norms that they want to set and things coming from higher up. It's important for coaches to find what specific grade level teams need. I personally don't feel like planning with

> coaches should look the same across every grade level. Kindergarten might really need help with one thing where another grade needs help with something else. Third grade might need help with behavior. I think people who get frustrated it's because it's only what the coach has planned to talk about and not necessarily what the teacher needs.

Her advice to a school starting literacy coaching is to give teachers time to digest the information that they are provided with because at this time she spends a lot of time meeting and does not always have time to think about what she is supposed to implement. Lastly, she said that coaches need to pay attention to the personalities of their teachers:

> I know there are schools that are hands off and those teachers quit because they don't have support. There's also something to be said for too much support. Just getting to know the person that you hired and what their style is. I'll probably have a thirty-minute conversation because I'm a talker which can waste a lot of time. Other people might say "I'm fine" and it's not an issue. If I could tell the people I work with something it would be to not always check in with me because I'll waste time.

In summary, the literacy coach actions that Ms. Brown identified as having an impact on her literacy instruction included observations, feedback meetings, assisting the team with ability grouping for their reading intervention block, offering resources during planning and assisting her and another teacher with planning a co-teaching lesson. While some of the official feedback that Ms. Brown was provided by her coach may not have impacted her literacy instruction due to the fact that it was not a priority for Ms. Brown to

make changes based on that feedback, Ms. Brown actually identified the feedback after observations as the most meaningful experience with her literacy coach, suggesting that she generally used this feedback to make changes to her instruction. They only had these meetings five or six times, and this strategy could have made more of an impact on her literacy instruction if the meetings were consistent. By meeting each week, Ms. Brown's literacy coach would be able to follow-up on her previous feedback in order to hold Ms. Brown accountable for what she advised her to do. Based on Ms. Brown's comments, it is important for schools to ensure that beginning teachers have enough time to process the information that they are receiving, and that coaching and other methods of support do not end up causing more harm than good due to the large amount of time that it can take up for teachers. Figure 2 summarizes the data from this case.

Figure 2: Ms. Brown

Received Support for Literacy Instruction	*Perceived Impact on Literacy Instruction*
Found feedback meetings very helpful (occurred 5 or 6 times)	Found feedback meetings helpful but didn't always implement the feedback she received
Received resources	Assistance with ability grouping, receiving resources, assistance with planning
Regular communication (check-ins on weekends and during the day)	Can be time-consuming and hard to implement everything

Teacher 2: Ms. Carter

"I didn't get as much attention as the teacher across the hall. I didn't ask about that."

Teacher background. When asked about her teaching philosophy, Ms. Carter, a second-year teacher, said, "I think that all students are able to learn in their own ways and

with the appropriate activities they can all grow." She believes that prior to beginning teaching, teachers should know that reading is an ongoing process and that it takes a long time to see growth in certain students or many students. "It's taking a skill that they have to ingrain in their own habits. There's not a right or wrong answer to reading, it's developing a skill set." Ms. Carter described her first year of teaching as including many learning opportunities:

> It's a lot of not knowing what you don't know. I had a great education, great background, great support. There's a lot of things that you don't know, and you don't know how to handle it. There's a lot of learning.

Ms. Carter said that in her first year of teaching she struggled with "Knowing what to expect from the kids, knowing their misconceptions, how to meet them at their level. Where I student taught the kids were a lot more homogeneous. Differentiation wasn't needed as much. Keeping track of papers was hard." Ms. Carter returned for a second year of teaching because:

> I've always wanted to be a teacher. I never thought of having another job. I really like being part of a kid's life. When I was a student, I really liked to be right about things which motivated me to learn. I want to foster that in lots of kids, wanting to learn.

Received support for literacy instruction. When asked about the support that she was receiving through literacy coaching, Ms. Carter said: "She helped me to get my English Language Arts set up in the classroom. Mostly trying to focus on Café, Daily 5 and guided reading. Those are the three main areas." Her coach mostly provided feedback for small groups and guided reading, which Ms. Carter believes was the school

focus last year. Additionally, her coach provided her with resources, answered her questions, and modeled for her. "Anytime we met she would make sure to answer questions. Even if I pass her in the hall, she will stop what she's doing and help me out." Sometimes her coach would go in her classroom while she was teaching and provide feedback at a later time, however, this was not consistent throughout the school year. She said:

> At first, she was really good at giving me a lot of resources and answering my questions. She would model for me. She would pop in while I was teaching and observe some teacher things. At a later time, she would give me feedback. I didn't get as much one-on-one attention as the teacher across the hall. I didn't ask about that. Beginning was much more frequent. Once every two weeks or every week. She was always in our planning.

In her interview, Ms. Carter made it clear that while she enjoyed working with her coach, she felt like the support she was provided with was limited. When asked, "What other aspects of working with a literacy coach has been beneficial?" Ms. Carter chose to focus on support received from people other than her coach:

> My principal and assistant principal and their fifteen-minute meetings have been really helpful. Helping me reflect and constantly keeping me in-line with what I'm doing. I couldn't slip under the radar.

Even though Ms. Carter did not feel that she received much support for literacy instruction due to her coach spending more time with another teacher, she still described her literacy coach in a positive way and in her second interview she attributed her as one of the reasons that she returned for a second year of teaching. She said, "My literacy

coach was a fantastic support for me my first year and checked in with me a lot. She helps me find resources this year. I think that she was both a personal support and a professional support." This exemplifies the importance to beginning teachers of having someone that frequently checks in with them.

Ms. Carter believed that the main support she received through literacy coaching was when her coach helped her set up her English Language Arts block with the various components that her school includes at the beginning of the school year. She also said that her literacy coach provided her with resources, answered her questions, and provided her with some feedback. Even though Ms. Carter felt like she did not receive a lot of support, she did not have negative feelings towards her coach and at one point in the interview said, "I really enjoy her, and I think she's fabulous." She noted that another teacher received more attention than she did, but she chose not to inquire about that. Ms. Carter may have felt more supported if it was clear to her how her coach chose to allocate the time she spent working with teachers.

Perceived impact on literacy instruction. When asked how literacy coaching impacted her instruction, Ms. Carter said,

> Checking in with her so regularly even in planning keeps me focused on what the school, district and state wants me to teach. It's a good reminder of how North Carolina wants it to look. Don't just teach it how it's in your head, teacher it how the state wants you to.

Additionally, Ms. Carter described guided reading as an area where her coach had a significant impact on her literacy instruction. She said she initially wasn't sure how to do

guided reading and struggled with running records and that her literacy coach helped her in both areas.

In her coaching reflection log Ms. Carter said that her coach attended collaborative planning with her team where they created assessments aligned to the standards. They made sure to create questions that were similar to End of Grade assessment questions. She elaborated,

> I am focusing more on making sure I am not just seeing inference in a standard and assuming I will teach it the same as last year. I also think I over taught some standards my first year because I did not look to the EOG assessment style.

Her coach also supported her during planning: "It's so helpful to meet with her as a grade level because she can answer our questions as a grade level. She's incredibly helpful during planning to keep us on the same track." She added, "She is really great at using the data we get from our online data and breaking apart groups. Especially at providing resources for our differentiated groups." When asked to describe her most meaningful experience with her coach, Ms. Carter said, "It was a super differentiated lesson towards the middle of the year. She was just happy I was growing in my ability to differentiate. I showed her I was learning." In this interaction that Ms. Carter described, while she did not receive feedback to change her lesson, she enjoyed this experience because it affirmed that she was growing as a teacher and improving her literacy instruction.

One area that has been difficult for Ms. Carter and her team is the different components of a literacy block:

> Sometimes I think that my grade level, we were talking today, it's all the different things that go in a literacy block. We're confused on the schedule of it. We

> haven't gotten enough answers between mini-lessons, vocabulary. We don't know how to fit it in. We haven't nailed down exactly what our English Language Arts block looks like.

By not receiving support with the components of their literacy block, Ms. Carter and her team felt frustrated with their literacy coach. They did not feel confident enough to determine how to schedule their instruction within the English Language Arts block. As a beginning teacher, this type of support could have positively impacted her literacy instruction because she did not have the experience to know what she should teach and for how long. Ms. Carter noted that the administrative team at her school focuses more on their differentiation block and leaves it up to the team how to use the remainder of their time. From her comments, it appears that Ms. Carter and her team would prefer their literacy coach to provide them with a more specific framework for literacy instruction rather them provide them with autonomy to design their literacy block.

One change that Ms. Carter made to her literacy instruction based on her feedback was related to a whole class novel she was doing: "I came in doing a whole group novel. It wasn't exactly differentiated. Based on what my coach said I saw it wasn't working. It wasn't tailored to what my kids needed." Ms. Carter appreciates this kind of feedback and advises that literacy coaches and other people who observe teachers provide constructive criticism:

> One of the things that I've always wanted from people who observe me. Sometimes they don't criticize enough. Not just acting like it's great, that doesn't help me. Having really good, specific criticism. Here's a specific thing you can

change for next time. Sometimes overpraise. Not being afraid being to offend me. Sometimes I want more feedback.

She also believes that it is crucial for coaches to be in the classrooms often, "Make sure whoever is coaching is in the classrooms a lot. They have to see how it's operating in the classrooms. Most beneficial for me and even the veteran teachers."

A summary of the findings for Ms. Carter can be found in Figure 3. Ms. Carter described her literacy instruction as being impacted by the assistance she received with guided reading, a limited amount of feedback, data analysis, and planning with her coach, but she felt like she should have received more constructive criticism than she did. She believed that planning with her coach helped her stay on track with expectations and that her coach helped keep the team on track. Her coach was able to impact her instruction by teaching her how to implement guided reading. While Ms. Carter appreciated the feedback that she received from her coach, she described herself as receiving less attention than other teachers and craved more constructive criticism, which could have further impacted her literacy instruction.

Figure 3: Ms. Carter

Received Support for Literacy Instruction	*Perceived Impact on Literacy Instruction*
Coach helped her set up English Language Arts block	Assistance with guided reading
Provided her with resources, answered her questions, provided some feedback	Team did not receive desired help with components of their literacy block
Did not feel like she received a lot of support but did not have negative feelings toward coach	Appreciated constructive feedback and wants more of it

Teacher 3: Ms. Miller

"The literacy coach spent a lot of time in the classroom beside me, so I didn't have a lot of interaction with her."

Teacher background. Ms. Miller is a second-year teacher who described her teaching philosophy as follows:

> I believe that all students are going to think differently, which means that they are going to learn differently. My goal is that I am teaching in a way that best works for their learning style. And knowing that if it's not working that I need to try new ways.

She believes that prior to beginning teaching, pre-service teachers should know about resources available and how to use them:

> Last year I was given them a lot and it was assumed that I knew how to use them. Most important part is knowing how to use them. Not being afraid of trying new things or reteaching. In literacy sometimes it's hard.

In reference to her first year of teaching, she said, "It was stressful. Knowledgeable. I gained a lot of knowledge. A little overwhelming. In my second year I felt so much more prepared and confident." When asked why she returned for a second year, she said: "Not wanting to give up. The challenge of wanting to try these new things." In response to being asked if her literacy coach contributed to her returning, she said, "No, my coach wasn't super involved with me."

Support received for literacy instruction. When asked about the support she has received from literacy coaching, Ms. Miller said, "At the beginning of the year last year she gave me the resources needed for our reading assessment. That's about the

extent of what I received." Ms. Miller said that the coach spent most of her time in another teacher's classroom which resulted in her not having a lot of interactions with her. Additionally, she felt like her grade level received less support than other grade levels:

> I feel like our grade level got back burnered last year. We got assistance when it was convenient. Other grade levels got most of the support last year. I think they (administration) ended up being aware of that. It seems like they are trying to be more meaningful this year.

Overall, Ms. Miller felt like the support she received through literacy coaching was hindered due to her coach spending more time with another teacher and other grade levels. Unlike the other teachers, Ms. Miller did not feel like she received resources or that she had access to her coach in order to ask questions, stating,

> Coming into teaching I didn't know that a literacy coach was a thing. When I heard that we had one I thought that was someone who would give me resources and support. That they would be that person that guided and helped me.

Ms. Miller had concerns with their literacy instruction and stated,

> I feel like what we do is boring. I don't know how to make literacy not boring. Especially when it comes to nonfiction. They don't want to read nonfiction. I try to read things that interest them like soccer. Last year we had one lead teacher, two new teachers, and one teacher coming back from maternity leave. The lead teacher said, "This is how I did it last year, good luck." I didn't get a lot of support outside of her.

In addition to having concerns with their instruction, Ms. Miller said that she did not receive any assistance with implementing guided reading: "I kind of got thrown into it. We had this after school tutoring and it was just doing guided reading with the kids which made me get better at it. We did not talk about guided reading in planning."

Even though Ms. Miller did not have positive things to say about the support that she received through literacy coaching, she did say that she preferred one-on-one meetings over whole group meetings: "In whole group meetings lots of voices are spoken but not a lot are heard." This suggests that even though she felt disappointed by the lack of support she received, she still had some positive viewpoints of her coach because she was interested in meeting with her one-on-one.

Perceived impact on literacy instruction. It was challenging for Ms. Miller to describe the impact that literacy coaching had on her literacy instruction. In response to a question about the structure of the coaching sessions, Ms. Miller said, "Last year was a little funky. They were trying it. It was the first year. This year seems more consistent. We met fifteen minutes." She said that her coach talked about assessment data with her team and describe her feelings towards it: "Yea we do stuff like that in our large 90-minute meetings. It depends. Sometimes I'm frustrated by it because sometimes she doesn't see it like we do."

When asked to describe changes that she implemented due to literacy coaching, Ms. Miller responded, "My changes weren't based on what she said." The main feedback she remembered from last year was to have a closing to her lessons: "A lot of the things that she would suggest for next time were closing out my lessons. Having a definite closing and not just telling the class we were done with math. That was

common." In response to an interview question about her most meaningful experience with her literacy coach, Ms. Miller said,

> The literacy coach spent a lot of time in the classroom beside me, so I didn't have a lot of interaction with her. The assistant principal gave me a lot of meaningful feedback. With my student teaching cooperating teacher, it was always sunshine and rainbows. It felt like what assistant principal said was helpful.

Ms. Miller's expectations of working with a literacy coach did not match with what occurred, which led to her disappointment. She advises that schools that begin literacy coaching avoid a "guinea pig" year and ensure that they have enough research about what it means to be an effective literacy coach. She also says that it is challenging for literacy coaches because they have too large of a caseload: "I feel like literacy coaches should be separated into grade bands. Like we already do. One for K-2 and one for 3-5. I feel like that's where the support would be best given. She's wonderful but she's spread so thin." This advice was interesting because it was the first time in her interviews that Ms. Miller said something positive about her coach. It appears like her frustrations with literacy coaching were due to a desire to have more support from her coach and that she still had a positive viewpoint of her coach even though she did not receive the supported she wanted.

Ms. Miller's overall experience of working with a literacy coach was that it did not have an impact on her literacy instruction due to a lack of consistency and the challenges of starting a new coaching model. She appeared to be disappointed that she received less attention from her coach than other teachers received. There are many reasons why her coach may have spent more time with another teacher including that the

other teacher may have been struggling more or Ms. Miller may have been less receptive to her support. Ms. Miller would have felt more supported and coaching would have had a greater impact on her instruction if her coaching was more consistent. As a beginning teacher, Ms. Miller desired feedback that would help her improve her literacy instruction, but she did not feel like she received that from her coach. Figure 4 summarizes her experience with literacy coaching.

Figure 4: Ms. Miller

Received Support for Literacy Instruction	*Perceived Impact on Literacy Instruction*
Did not have positive things to say about the support she received	It was challenging for her to describe the impact that literacy coaching had on her instruction
Preferred one-on-one over whole group meetings	Felt frustrated by conservations about data
Did not receive assistance with guided reading and was unsure how to implement it	Did not make changes based on what coach said

Teacher 4: Ms. Taylor

"I feel like without a literacy coach, present and active in the school setting, I would probably feel like my students had gaps in reading and I don't know that as a beginning teacher, especially first and second-year, I would have known where to go for resources and tips and tricks."

Teacher background. Ms. Taylor is a third-year teacher. Her teaching philosophy is as follows:

> All children can learn but maybe not with the same materials and tools and maybe not even on the same day. Really focusing on catering to what each individual

> student needs. I believe that every child has great potential. As an educator, it's my responsibility to believe in that before they do. They will believe what others believe about them.

She thinks that before beginning their careers, teachers should understand that:

> It's important to understand that students can come from similar locations or family makeups, [but] all students are going to have different areas of need and gaps that they come in with. Although the expectations of a certain grade before them ask for a certain thing, maybe they aren't quite there yet.

Ms. Taylor described her first year of teaching as "well-rounded" because she was part of a six-person team which allowed her to work with teachers who had a lot of experience and others who were also in their first year of teaching. "It was a rich experience to have all of us coming together every week and on a daily basis. Talking and supporting each other." Ms. Taylor returned for a second year of teaching because:

> I was asked to move schools due to a district reconfiguration. I was going through my first year knowing that I was going to a new school. That was a random scenario that doesn't always happen. I returned because this was a new opportunity in a new two-person team and would allow me to develop my leadership qualities. I didn't have a ton of responsibilities on a six-person team.

Support received for literacy instruction. Ms. Taylor said that she was impressed with the support for literacy instruction that she received as a beginning teacher:

> This year and last year our coach has observed our classrooms. She has come in and seen the dynamics we have going on and offered strategies based on what

> she's seen. That impressed me right off the bat. She gave me legitimate and constructive feedback based on what she saw.

Additionally, Ms. Taylor said that her coach attends team planning each week and she coaches the teachers as they plan lessons and helps them when they look at data by providing strategies and materials. When asked to describe the structure of the feedback meetings, Ms. Taylor said,

> Our one-to-one was not on a weekly basis. We are just getting things rolling now. Last year she and I met. She would observe and give me written and verbal feedback. It was not consistent. That was the goal, but it seems bi-weekly. At least monthly check-ins. The structure is conversation-based. She asked me if there was anything I needed more of, comment on things she had seen or trends she was noticing in my data. Conversation on how things are going which would lead me to ask questions about things that were going on. Then she would go in her closet of resources and find something that would help me or give advice on what she used.

Ms. Taylor remembers receiving feedback based on her Letterland instruction, which is a phonics curriculum that the district had implemented:

> The first time she came in my room we were doing a Letterland lesson. At the time that was one of the things she was really looking into to see how it was going. She gave me some feedback about the strategies I was using as far as attention getters and ways to remember letter sounds that she found impressive that she was excited to see in the classroom.

For this feedback received, Ms. Taylor was not given any advice on changing portions of the lesson, but she remembers this experience fondly because she received affirmation that she was doing a good job with her phonics instruction.

In her coaching reflection log, Ms. Taylor said that her coach discussed the changed expectations for the state reading assessment for this school year. She said she felt "grateful for the support in meeting the testing deadline with new expectations." The next week the team was provided with a progress monitoring schedule that the coach had created for them. Ms. Taylor felt like this would be helpful. Additionally, they discussed the new Fountas and Pinnell guided reading kits they received and how they would implement them in their classrooms.

Ms. Taylor has a positive viewpoint of the amount of literacy support she has received from her literacy coach. The support her literacy coach has provided her includes observations, planning, feedback, and resources. She appreciated the constructive feedback that she received from observations, along with the planning and data analysis support her coach provided. Her positive viewpoint of the feedback she received suggests that it would have been very beneficial for those meetings to be consistent, instead of occurring monthly as she described.

Perceived impact on literacy instruction. When asked about how literacy coaching has impacted her literacy instruction, Ms. Taylor said,

> I think it's greatly impacted my literacy instruction. I'm getting my masters in literacy. I'm having a lot of discussions about the importance of literacy coaching and their role in our school system. I feel like without a literacy coach present and active in the school setting, I would probably feel like my students had gaps

> in reading and I don't know that as a beginning teacher, especially first and second-year, I would have known where to go for resources and tips and tricks. Simply because every student is so different and in your experiences with student teaching and discussions online with colleagues you don't always get to see the myriad of results when you are teaching reading. Things come up even after year three I'm sure that I've never seen before. Having her here is just like a definite resource, go-to person to go to.

Additionally, Ms. Taylor's literacy coach helps her and her teammates analyze data, "If we are looking at data and we see commonalities in gaps amongst students she offers strategies and materials." She elaborated**:**

> We discuss data every other week and sometimes it ends up being more than that. We have carved out data discussions. That makes me feel good simply because being a third-year teacher I've seen some of that progression and how data can change over the course of the year. I haven't seen everything obviously. It's nice to discuss the patterns we are seeing.

Her most meaningful experience with her coach was when they attended a writing professional development together because they were able to learn at the same time, but her coach was also able to help her see why what they were learning was important:

> Our most meaningful experience was outside of our typical setup. Over the summer I was representing our grade level at the writing training for Lucy Calkins. My coach was actually there. Every school was asked to send a literacy coach. She and I were outside of our normal setting and were part of the team there that was learning the new curriculum. I was able to learn alongside of her

> but also get her feedback on why this was important and how writing connected to literacy and how it goes hand in hand. Talking to her was helpful because as we learned together, I was able to see different ideas on ways to connect new writing curriculum to the things we were already doing the classroom. She said we could do this during Daily 5. She connected it and made it come to life.

This helped her to apply what they had learned to her literacy instruction. Ms. Taylor does not find anything about working with a coach difficult and said, "I really value the job. There's a ton of research of why every school should maybe have one. There are also things that contradict that. I don't see any downfalls to having her here." She recommends that literacy coaches who aspire to improve their effectiveness,

> Actually get in the classrooms at every opportunity. I know sometimes they can be behind the scenes people and they are doing all kinds of things to amp up our reading instruction. Sitting in on a lesson or during testing to just give teachers that meaningful and relative feedback on what's happening in the classroom.

Ms. Taylor says that the best way for a school to begin a literacy coaching model is to see the literacy coach as a teammate, stating:

> I would say that the whole school has to have the mindset that the literacy coach is not there to call you out on things or tell you that would you are doing is right or wrong, but to be an asset to your team and to help you plan, find resources, help with students. See them as a teammate instead of an outside body.

When asked about specific changes that she had made due to the feedback she had received, the only example Ms. Taylor had was,

> Again, kind of going off discussions we've had. Some of them being informal as we pass each other in the hall checking in on different things. One of the conversations at the end of last year but then also at beginning of year this year is talking about the ways that we can enhance Letterland instruction. The specific games or activities that are in our curriculum and manual that are really important. I've made it a point to dive into it deeper. She's provided some really good tips on that.

Ms. Taylor appreciated this support, but it appeared like she did not receive much specific feedback throughout the school year, as she was only able to come up with one general example.

Due to having a literacy coach, Ms. Taylor has been able to receive assistance in areas of literacy where she was not sure how to help her students. She believes literacy coaching has greatly impacted her literacy instruction and specifically described the impact on her writing instruction, help with data analysis, and the feedback she has received based on her coach's observations of her teaching. While Ms. Taylor believes coaching has greatly impacted her literacy instruction, it is possible that this impact has not been as great as it could be. Her description of the data analysis that her coach conducted with the team suggested that they focused on the positives of the data and did not allude to any analysis that would benefit their instruction. Additionally, the feedback she received about using games and activities from the curriculum seem more like a helpful suggestion during planning and is not directly related to improving her literacy instruction. A summary Ms. Taylor's case study is found in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Ms. Taylor

Received Support for Literacy Instruction	*Perceived Impact on Literacy Instruction*
Was impressed with the support she received	Data analysis
Observations, strategies, constructive feedback, planning	Was challenging for her to describe specific changes she made due to literacy coaching
Affirmation	Writing instruction improved due to attending a professional development with her coach

Teacher 5: Ms. Williams

"I had a lot of questions and she was very gracious to answer whatever questions I had."

Teacher background. Ms. Williams is a second-year teacher and her teaching philosophy is that "Every student can learn. If they have received the right support, they can be successful." She believes that all teachers should know how to administer reading assessments before they begin teaching because it takes up a lot of their time and in college she was only given the opportunity to practice it on paper, while reading assessments are now commonly administered electronically. When asked about her first year of teaching, Ms. Williams said,

> Honestly it was incredibly difficult. I had a lot of extreme behaviors in my class last year. I was having a hard time giving instruction because of people throwing things or screaming. I feel a lot more successful this year versus last year. I'm able to give instruction based on what the kids know. Last year I struggled the most knowing where they were because I was unable to sit with my small groups. Instructionally I grew a ton. I definitely feel like closing out the year I had grown

> the most in my knowledge of math strategies, standards, all of the components of math. In reading I learned a lot of strategies, but I spent a lot of time learning about guided reading. It was very difficult. It was a brand-new school, brand new team, no one had taught second grade except one teacher.

Ms. Williams said she returned for a second year of teaching due to her principal but that her literacy coach was also very helpful:

> 100% my principal. He's incredibly supportive. He was really encouraging last year for me to step up in leadership positions. Because of his leadership I want to step up. He is the main reason I came back. My literacy coach is also incredible. She is my go-to person for answering questions whether it's about curriculum or how to do something. She was always willing to help. My mentor was not very helpful so my coach was like my mentor.

Support received for literacy instruction. Ms. Williams says that her coach has been supportive and answered her questions whenever she needed her to: "I had a lot of questions and she was very gracious to answer whatever questions I had." If her coach does not know the answer to her problem, then she takes the time to find the answer. She also said that her coach provides her with resources and advises that schools beginning a literacy coaching model should "Talk to our coach because she's amazing. It goes back to have those resources available. She spent an entire summer making a reading room. If they have time, get those resources ready."

In her coaching reflection log, Ms. Williams described her coach as helping keep the team focused during planning. "She helped us get started and stay on track during our planning. If we started to get off topic, she was able to bring us back to what we

were there to accomplish." She further elaborated that her coach is always very respectful and allows the teachers to share their thoughts. She also said that her coach is skilled at bringing them back together if their conversation is off-topic.

The support that Ms. Williams has received through literacy coaching centers on having a person to answer her questions, being provided with resources, and receiving support during grade-level planning. She felt supported because she knew that she always had a person that she could go to when she needed assistance with something. The resources she received and planning support her coach provided her with made her feel supported. Her coach attended to adult learning needs by being respectful and seeking input from the teachers.

Perceived impact on literacy instruction. Ms. Williams said that her coach conducted about four or five fifteen-minute observations throughout the school year, "Fifteen-minute observations, she usually came during the same time. During Letterland. I guess we talked a lot more about goals. She was encouraging me to focus on integrating arts during that time." When asked about changes she made due to the feedback, Ms. Williams said, "It's only thirty minutes so I was more focused on active engagement like using dance, using movement to engage the students instead of visual arts. There was a lot of positive feedback. Pointed out things I was doing well." She said that her coach is very encouraging and that there are no difficulties working with her coach because she is amazing. Due to not receiving ideas for growth during her feedback meetings, this strategy likely had a very limited impact on Ms. Williams' literacy instruction.

In reference to how her coach impacted her literacy instruction, Ms. Williams said, "I think she is very willing to help in anything I'm lacking in. She will take her time to find a resource. If it's a question that she doesn't know the answer to she will find it." When asked about the most meaningful experience with her literacy coach, Ms. Williams responded, "She's very encouraging, as a professional. In one-on-one conservations she encouraged me to speak up more and encourage my team more. I'm the instructional lead for our grade level this year so I'm working with her more this year." Ms. Williams believes that schools should have more than one coach because: "It puts her in a tough spot. I think it is way too much. She works incredibly hard, but she has the same 24 hours that everyone else does."

In her coaching reflection log, Ms. Williams described an interaction with her coach that she believed made an impact on her literacy instruction. Her coach answered her questions about flexible grouping and provided an idea for the best way to group them. She said, "She was able to help me see the reasoning behind grouping students in this way. It also helped me to understand ways to look at data in a new light." Ms. Williams was reluctant to group students in this way but when she heard the rationale from her coach, she was able to support this initiative.

The main impact on literacy instruction that Ms. Williams had due to literacy coaching was affirmation in her teaching and a person who could provide the rationale for instructional decisions at the school level. Her coach also assisted with planning. Ms. Williams believed that her coach had a large impact on her literacy instruction, and that belief appears to be due to how well her coach catered to the needs of adult learners. She had many positive things to say about her coach. With only four or five feedback

meetings throughout the school year and an inability to describe any specific feedback that she implemented, it is unlikely that this strategy had a significant impact on her literacy instruction. Figure 6 summarizes Ms. Williams's experience with literacy coaching.

Figure 6: Ms. Williams

Received Support for Literacy Instruction	*Perceived Impact on Literacy Instruction*
Focused the team during planning	Had four or five fifteen-minute observations from coach throughout school year
Always had a person to answer her questions	Was unable to describe changes she made due to received feedback
Receiving resources	Affirmation in her teaching

Teacher 6: Ms. Wilson

"I think she's just really spread thin. I feel like especially in the older grades we get the short end of the stick. Because phonics skills and things like that are really important in the K-2 level."

Teacher background. Ms. Wilson's teaching philosophy is "To engage all students creatively. Through whatever means necessary to engage them in their learning. That's the biggest thing that I believe. Using multiple intelligences to help them learn and keep it fun." Now in her second year of teaching, Ms. Wilson said that in her first year of teaching, "I was keeping my head above water, barely. I felt behind constantly. Everything was new. I didn't know what acronyms meant. Just chaotic." Although she had a difficult year, Ms. Wilson couldn't think of anything that would have made her first year easier: "I'm not sure. I did receive a pretty good amount of guidance. It's just one of those things that you have to do." When she began teaching, she had seen guided

reading being taught but never had the chance to implement it, which would have been helpful prior to her first year of teaching. Ms. Wilson returned for her second year because: "I really enjoyed seeing where the kids started and where they ended up. I looked at all the pretests and the diagnostics and noticed they really grew. And the relationships." She said that her literacy coach did not contribute in any way to her returning.

Support received for literacy instruction. Ms. Wilson describes her literacy coach as becoming more hands-off towards March. "There were a lot of things going on towards the end of the year in March. Me and the other beginning teachers were put on the back burner." When asked about the support she received through literacy coaching, Ms. Wilson responded,

> From a beginning teacher standpoint, she was in our rooms about once a week for a good fifteen minutes each time during literacy instruction until mid to end of October. She gave feedback or assisted. She did co-teach with me a few times. It was like an informal observation.

They did not have a set time to discuss the observations; sometimes her coach would leave a note on her desk and other times they would talk right then. She also co-taught with Ms. Wilson a few times and helped her with her students who had intervention plans:

> She also helped out with my tiered students. She helped a lot by providing the instruction that I used with them. At one point she modeled, especially for one of my Tier 3 students because I wasn't familiar with the program to use with them. I got to watch her.

This impacted her instruction because she was able to effectively provide interventions for her students using a program that was previously unfamiliar to her.

While Ms. Wilson felt like she received support in the beginning of the school year, she described that support as not sustaining throughout the school year. The support she received included receiving feedback, assistance in her class, and help with intervention plans. Not only did Ms. Wilson feel like she received less attention, she described herself and the other beginning teachers as "being put on the back burner." This reduced her perception of the support that she received. At the beginning of the year she received support via co-teaching, modeling, feedback, and assistance in her classroom. Ms. Wilson appeared to be satisfied with the support she received for her students with interventions plans because this taught her how to complete their interventions.

Perceived impact on literacy instruction. The support that stood out the most to Ms. Wilson was the help that her coach provided her during planning. She helped her and the teachers on her team with guided reading and a reading intervention by modeling it for them and helping them to understand how it worked. Ms. Wilson said:

> Now I feel really comfortable with guided reading. Last year no one had told me how to do it. I had seen it but never implemented it. My literacy coach watched me and knew I wasn't doing guided reading. So, she gave me and another teacher a crash course on it.

While she identified her coach attending planning meetings as helpful, she also said:

> She's there three out of four meetings that we have a month for planning. When she's there she's not in charge. She seems very distracted because there's a lot

> going on in the school. We don't get as much attention (as other grade levels). 50% of the time we have her attention. She's out of lot for instructional meetings. Our assistant principal has seemed to take the reins.

Ms. Wilson could not identify any other aspects of working with a coach that she found beneficial. She said, "I think she's just really spread thin. I feel like especially in the older grades we get the short end of the stick. Because phonics skills and things like that are really important in the K-2 level." She believes that literacy coaches who aspire to improve their effectiveness should have a set time for each grade level so that certain grade levels do not end up getting a greater amount of time with them, and Wilson supported this idea by saying, "I think kindergarten and first grade get the majority of her attention." She described her grade level as getting frustrated with their coach because "We were trying to get novel studies up and running. We felt like there was a lack of support. We needed help differentiating the novel study." Ms. Wilson had an additional concern with the curriculum at her school:

> The biggest thing I've noticed is that there are so many research-based methods and strategies that they want us to implement. But I feel like it's very static right now. You have to use CAFÉ but you also have to do blended learning and also guided reading and also do Leveled Literacy Intervention. If feel very overwhelmed by them and it feels very rigid right now. There's no room for multiple intelligences in literacy instruction.

Ms. Wilson also felt disappointed with the data analysis that her coach led because she felt like her coach focused on the numbers in lieu of strategies to improve the data.

In her coaching reflection log, Ms. Wilson described a one-on-one meeting with her coach where they met to discuss one of her Tier 3 students. Her coach modeled how to use the intervention that the student would receive. Ms. Wilson said,

> As a result of that meeting, I was able to use corrective reading for two of my tiered students successfully. It felt great to get that support and help that I had asked for. It impacted my instruction with those students drastically because I was able to use corrective reading correctly. I appreciated the one-on-one time she was able to provide.

When Ms. Wilson had one-on-one time with her coach, she viewed it in a very positive light.

While the support that Ms. Wilson received through literacy coaching resulted in changes in her literacy instruction by teaching her how to implement guided reading and interventions, she felt like it could have had a larger impact if her coach had more time to work with her. Her case study is summarized in Figure 7 below. Ms. Wilson believed that her grade level received less attention than the lower elementary school grades, which led to her dissatisfaction with literacy coaching. Her literacy coach did not help her to use data to inform instruction and Ms. Wilson believed that she was not always attentive during planning meetings, which also limited the impact that the coach could have on literacy instruction. Lastly, Ms. Wilson felt like their curriculum could be improved but that she did not receive support from her coach to do that.

Figure 7: Ms. Wilson

Received Support for Literacy Instruction	*Perceived Impact on Literacy Instruction*
Observed in classroom once a week until mid to end of October: gave feedback or assisted, co-taught	Coach assisted with guided reading and reading interventions during planning
No set time to discuss observations	Coach attended 3 out of 4 meetings a month but was distracted during them
Assisted with tiered intervention groups	Grade level wanted support with implementing novel studies but did not receive it

Summary of Within-Case Analysis

The purpose of this section is to summarize the within-case analysis. The themes of each case will be discussed.

In the first case study, Ms. Brown described a variety of ways that her literacy coach supported and impacted her literacy instruction. The themes for Ms. Brown were: (a) feedback: Ms. Brown felt like the feedback that she received was very helpful but described it as inconsistent which limited the impact it could have; (b) multiple forms of support: she described herself as receiving support via receiving resources, planning and one-on-one support; and (c) visibility and access: Ms. Brown was able to interact with her coach often and ask her any questions that she needed which made her feel supported.

In the second case study, Ms. Carter described her literacy coach as someone who provided her with a large amount of support. The themes for Ms. Carter were: (a) catering to adult learners: even though Ms. Carter would have preferred more support, she still viewed her coach in a positive way; (b) multiple forms of support: she described herself as receiving support via receiving resources, although this support did not sustain

throughout the year and through planning and feedback; and (c) visibility and access: Ms. Carter felt like she received less attention than other teachers which reduced the support she perceived herself as receiving.

Ms. Miller was disappointed in the support she received from her literacy coach. The themes for her case study were: (a) catering to adult learners: even though it was difficult for Ms. Miller to describe the support she received and the impact it had on her literacy instruction, she still described her literacy coach positively; (b) providing resources and curriculum: Ms. Miller did not feel like her coach provided her with enough resources and she felt like her team needed more help with the curriculum than they were provided; and (c) visibility and access: Ms. Miller felt like other teachers received more support than she did.

The fourth case study, Ms. Taylor, was impressed with the support she received from her literacy coach. The themes for her case study were: (a) lack of consistency with feedback: Ms. Taylor received some feedback but it was not consistent and it did not always include action items which limited the impact it had on her literacy instruction; (b) multiple forms of support: planning, one-on-one, data analysis, and receiving resources; and (c) visibility and access: Ms. Taylor felt supported because she was able to go to her coach whenever she needed help with something.

Ms. Williams considered her coach to be very helpful and viewed her like a mentor. The themes for her case study were: (a) lack of consistency with feedback meetings: Ms. Williams described herself as having four or five observations throughout the school year and from her descriptions it appeared that she mostly received positive feedback in lieu of ideas for growth; (b) multiple forms of support: she described herself

as receiving support through planning, one-on-one meetings, providing resources, analyzing data; and (c) visibility and access: she was able to go to her coach whenever she needed help with something

The final case study, Ms. Wilson, felt like she did not receive much support from her literacy coach after the beginning of the school year. The themes for her case study were: (a) data analysis: Ms. Wilson was concerned that the focus was on the numbers and not on strategies for improvement; (b) multiple forms of support: even though Ms. Wilson did not feel very supported, she still described many ways that her coach supported her including through planning, assistance with students who were in the intervention process and receiving feedback; and (c) visibility and access: Ms. Wilson felt like her coach had too many other teachers to work with which limited the support she received.

In this section, the within-in case analysis was summarized. The data demonstrated that there were similar themes across the cases but that some of the teachers were satisfied with the support that they received through literacy coaching while others were not. The next section is an analysis across the cases.

Analysis Across Cases

The themes that emerged from the data collected in the study are multiple forms of support, catering to adult learners, visibility and access, and lack of specific feedback and consistency. In order to answer research question 1, "What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?" the literacy coaches, principals, and teachers were interviewed. The teachers also completed a coaching reflection log. The support that the teachers in the study described as receiving

was impacted by the visibility and access that they had to their literacy coach along with their coach's ability to cater to adult learning. Additionally, the teachers had multiple forms of support for literacy instruction through literacy coaching.

Teacher interviews and coaching logs were used in order to answer research question 2, "How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?" The major theme for this question was that there was a lack of specific feedback and consistency with coaching which limited the perceived impact that coaching had on their literacy instruction. Most of the teachers had positive things to say about the impact of coaching on their literacy instruction although they were unable to identify specific areas that had improved due to literacy coaching.

Multiple Forms of Support

The teachers in this study received multiple forms of support for literacy instruction through literacy coaching, including one-on-one coaching, planning, resources, and analyzing data. The literacy coaches in this study, like the majority of literacy coaches, view their main responsibility as supporting teachers (Calo et al., 2015; Hathaway et al., 2016).

One-on-one support. All of the teachers in the study preferred one-on-one meetings with their coach over planning meetings with the team, although they still found planning meetings beneficial. In another study, the researchers found the opposite to be true; the teachers preferred meeting with the coaches in a group setting over meeting one-on-one with them (Scott et al., 2012). Ms. Taylor said:

> There are benefits to both. We meet as a whole group and I like that because we can all hear the same thing and then we are on the same page. I benefit from the

> group conversation. One-on-one is nice because she can answer specific questions that I have about a student that I might not want to ask in a group setting.

Similarly, Ms. Carter felt that as a beginning teacher, many of her questions were more appropriate during her one-on-one meetings and Ms. Brown prefers one-on-one meetings "if I had specific things to talk about. I think it's easier for me to express opinions directly if I don't want to do something a teammate wants to." Ms. Williams also felt like one-on-one was better because many of her questions were "not for the good of the group." Ms. Wilson prefers one-on-one meetings because she likes the attention that she receives in them. Lastly, Ms. Miller said, "One-on-one. Lots of voices spoken during planning but not a lot are heard." The literacy coaches also described the importance of these one-on-one meetings with Mrs. Johnson at Central Elementary prioritizing meeting with the beginning teachers: "I meet individually with teachers for formal and informal feedback. I look at beginning teachers first and add on any others. That's on a weekly basis." Similarly, Mrs. Davis said, "First priority is supporting those beginning teachers. Kind of like another mentor. Helping them analyze assessments. I was a safe, non-evaluative person."

The one-on-one support that the teachers received included formal feedback meetings but were primarily informal support and check-ins based on what the teachers needed. When asked about the support she received through literacy coaching, Ms. Brown said, "I think regular communication was one thing. She would text me on the weekends and ask if I needed anything or how it was going." Ms. Williams also benefited from frequent communication with her coach: "My coach at my school has

been very supportive, answering any questions I needed. Day to day she answered questions, I had a lot of questions and she was very gracious to answer whatever questions I had." Having a person that they could go to in order to receive answers to their questions was very important to the teachers in the study, and when they had that access to their literacy coach, they felt supported.

Planning as a form of support. At both of the schools, planning was considered to be part of literacy coaching, and this was most consistent type of support for literacy instruction that beginning teachers described themselves as receiving, with both of the coaches attending planning sessions regularly. According to Vanderburg and Stephens (2010), teachers enjoy the collaboration that coaches facilitate because it allows them to learn about each other and what the other teachers are doing in their classrooms, share thoughts and strategies, and learn about students. The principal at Central Elementary said, "Collaborative planning helps the beginning teachers immensely with their literacy teaching." His vision is that the teachers facilitate the planning sessions and the coach attends and assists. All of the teachers described their literacy coach as someone who attended, and for the most part, assisted with planning. Planning is one area that took up a lot of the literacy coaches' time. Mrs. Johnson said, "My day is structured around collaborative planning sessions. Eats up the majority of my time."

The teachers said their literacy coach helped them to look at data, answered questions, and provided resources at planning meetings. The coaches also modeled different portions of instruction as needed, as Ms. Wilson noted, "She sat down with us at our planning session,that really stuck. She modeled guided reading and LLI for us, helped us understand." Ms. Taylor said that her coach helped them during planning by

offering strategies and materials. On the other end of the spectrum, Ms. Wilson felt like her coach was very distracted during planning sessions and did not feel like she contributed much to the meetings.

The principal at Lincoln said that the literacy coach is responsible for coaching teachers on meeting the needs of their intervention groups and managing the intervention process. Several of the teachers described their literacy coach as assisting with their intervention plans, specifically helping teachers understand the interventions that they needed to administer with their students who were in Tier 2 and Tier 3: "She also helped out with my tiered students. She helped a lot by providing the instruction that I use with them. At one point modeled, especially for one of my Tier 3 students because I unfamiliar with the program to use with them. I got to watch her." Ms. Miller said that her coach "leads the tiered children."

Providing resources and curriculum. Another way that the beginning teachers described themselves as receiving support was through being provided resources, which was a common area of need amongst the teachers. Ms. Miller felt disappointed by the lack of support they received from their literacy coach, "I thought that the literacy coach would guide and help me and provide me with resources and support." She said that she received the resources for the reading assessment at the beginning of the year, but that was the extent of the resources that she received. Another teacher felt like it was important for the literacy coach to have a pool of resources readily available to share with teachers, as she and other teachers in the study identified a lack of resources as a weakness in their school district. Ms. Williams said, "In our county we don't have the best literacy resources. She's willing to help us where she can." Several of the teachers

shared that their literacy coach provided them with resources. Ms. Williams felt like her coach did a good job of having a pool of resources to provide teachers with and she advised that all literacy coaches make sure that they do that. According to Ms. Carter, her literacy coach provided them with resources for their differentiated groups. Ms. Williams said that her district does not have a lot of resources and that her coach is willing to help where she can. She said that they can make choices with what their instruction looks like, with guided reading being one of the choices:

> I personally took it upon myself to learn more about what true guided reading looks like. I think that would have been helpful. I think technically we're supposed to have true guided reading, but I don't think everyone is doing it.

Ms. Wilson said that her grade level wanted help with getting novel studies started but that they did not receive the support they desired. Ms. Carter felt like it was up to the teachers how to schedule their literacy block and she and her team did not know how to do it.

According to the ILA (2018), one of the components of the standards for literacy coach preparation is that "Candidates understand the research and literature about comprehensive literacy programs, curricula, and instruction, pre-K through grade 12" (p. 45). While some of the teachers expressed appreciation for the resources that they were provided with, it appeared that there was a lack of set resources, curriculum, and schedule for literacy. The teachers expressed a desire for a specific schedule for English Language Arts along with a lack of satisfaction with the materials that they had for instruction.

Analyzing data. All of the teachers said that their coaches discussed data in their planning meetings. Ms. Wilson said:

> That's usually what I hear her talk about. Sometimes it can be a little much. If we're being honest, we talk about the scores but that doesn't tell me much. I want to know how to help them out, but she just tells us they're low and we don't talk about strategies. I would like to brainstorm together what we can do to make it better. It makes me annoyed that we don't.

Ms. Williams had a similar complaint, stating, "I think the only negative for me is that we spend tons of time looking at data, but we don't really come up with a solution for the deficits that students are experiencing." Ms. Miller also had negative feelings associated with the discussion of the data, expressing that "Sometimes I'm frustrated by it because she doesn't see it like we do." While teachers report the highest level of satisfaction when their coach focuses on assessment data because of the high level of importance placed on data (Scott, Cortina & Carlisle, 2012), it is important to consider what the impact that this focus has on teachers and determine if it needs to be adjusted in order to be beneficial. Multiple teachers in this study had negative feelings associated with the discussion of data because they found that the discussions were not solution-oriented and that they focused on the numbers in lieu of strategies they could use to improve the data. Assessment data should be used to inform instruction, with Mraz, Algozzine, and Kissel (2009) describing this action as "one of the most important factors in successful teaching."

Ms. Taylor and Ms. Brown described positive experiences related to discussing data with their literacy coach. Ms. Taylor said,

> We discuss data every other week and sometimes it ends up being more than that. We have carved out data discussions. That makes me feel good simply because

> being a third-year teacher I've seen some of that progression and how data can change over the course of the year. It's nice to discuss the patterns we are seeing.

Ms. Brown said,

> Yes, she's pretty good about not putting it back on the teacher. Even the principal knows that some of our data is out of our control. They help us reflect and use it and not just put it away. They want us to be intentional with our grouping.

Ms. Carter said, "Our school and grade level are very open with assessment data. Even if the scores aren't where I want them to be it helps to talk about it." The ILA standards for literacy coach candidates includes a standard for assessment and evaluation and advises the following:

> Candidates use assessment data to assist classroom teachers in identifying students' literacy strengths and areas of need. Candidates collaborate with teachers to develop classroom and intervention plans based on students' literacy profiles. Candidates collaborate with teachers to develop schoolwide action plans for carefully analyzing the effectiveness of instruction and/or intervention, using ongoing data analysis procedures.

While some of the teachers had negative viewpoints of discussing data with their literacy coach, others had positive viewpoints. However, even the teachers who had positive experiences discussing data with their coaches did not allude to using the data to inform instruction. Ms. Taylor enjoyed data discussions because she liked seeing the growth that her students were making and Ms. Brown was not upset about data discussions because she felt like even if her students performed poorly on an assessment, her coach and administration would not put the blame on her.

Catering to Adult Learners

Other than a few of the teachers sharing that they had received less support than other teachers in the building and feeling like they did not get much out of data discussion, the teachers did not have any complaints to share about working with a literacy coach. From the teacher interviews, it appears that both of the coaches in the study have strong interpersonal skills, which can facilitate a positive coaching climate (Poglinco et al., 2003). It also appears like the coaches were effective in appealing to the adult learning needs of the teachers they coached. Mrs. Johnson said that her goal when she coaches beginning teachers is "To listen. You see all these things you want to praise them for. Take a backseat and let them tell me what they are struggling with." This is important because adults have a range of needs related to learning (Cox, 2015). She makes it a point to ask the teachers who she works with about their goals and help them to accomplish them. She also said, "They occasionally see me as an evaluator which is not the case, so you have to break the ice." She wants her teachers to give her information and set the tone of the coaching meetings, relating to one of the seven principles for literacy coaches that leads to instructional improvement and student achievement: collaborative relationships (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). The coaches at both of the schools also described the importance of trust in the coaching relationship, which is needed along with rapport so that the coach and teacher both feel safe to learn from the other (Kissel et al., 2011). Mrs. Davis said that she is on the side of the teachers. "My principal knows that I have confidentiality with the teachers, and I don't cross that line unless I need to. I have to build those relationships." Additionally, she said,

> I have a good rapport with my teachers, so I try not to be formal with them. That's just not my nature. I float through rooms, not when I'm doing observations. I'm very visible and non-threatening. I have a very open relationship. Yes, I have a structure. I don't take my notebook in with me when I go in for the fifteen minutes and then I go write it down in my office. I don't want it to an observation, I want it be a visit.

The principal at Lincoln strategically pairs the beginning teachers with the literacy coach because he feels like they will be more comfortable receiving feedback from the coach than the principals and so that they feel like they are growing instead of being evaluated. Both Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Johnson described themselves as working hard to build strong relationships with their teachers, and it was evident across the teacher interviews that they were effectively catering to the diverse needs of adult learners.

Visibility and Access

Literacy coach visibility and access can increase the amount of support that the teachers perceive themselves as receiving. When coaches are easily accessible and willing to help with a variety of tasks, teachers feel supported (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). Additionally, a focus on working with teachers is one of the principles for literacy coaches that leads to instructional improvement and student achievement (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Several of the teachers described the importance of literacy coaches going into the classrooms frequently. Ms. Taylor said, "Get in the classrooms at every opportunity. I know that sometimes they can be behind the scenes people because they are doing all kinds of things to amp up our reading instruction." Similarly, Ms. Carter said that literacy coaches have to see how things are operating in the classrooms.

Many of the teachers said that they had an open line of communication with their literacy coach. Ms. Brown felt very supported by her literacy coach because she did a really good job of checking in on her, including checking in on her during the weekend. Ms. Carter said she was able to ask her coach any questions that she needed help with. Additionally, Ms. Williams said, "My coach at my school has been very supportive, answering any questions I needed. I had a lot of questions, and she was very gracious to answer whatever questions I had." Based on the comments from the coaches and teachers, both of the coaches in the study would be defined as teacher-oriented coaches that worked equally with individual teachers and groups (Deussen et al, 2007).

Too large of a caseload. The coaches at both of the schools work with a large number of teachers, which can decrease their visibility and access along with limit the support and the perceived impact of literacy coaching. Not having enough time to work with the teachers on their caseload is a common concern amongst coaches (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Calo et al., 2015). The teachers in this study overwhelmingly described their coach as having too many responsibilities and teachers to coach. At both schools, there is only one coach in the building. At Central Elementary there are 29 teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth and at Lincoln Elementary there are 17. Forty percent of literacy coaches work with between 16 and 30 teachers (Hathaway et al., 2016). Some teachers felt like other teachers or grade levels received an unfair amount of help while others felt like their literacy coach did the best she could considering the number of things that she had to do.

One teacher said, "I think she's just really spread thin. I feel like especially in the older grades we get the short end of the stick. Because phonics skills and things like that

are really important in the kindergarten through second-grade level." Another teacher said, "I think it's way too much. She works incredibly hard. She has the same twenty-four hours that everyone else does." One teacher advised that literacy coaches create a set time for each grade level so that they can avoid neglecting some grade levels for the benefit of others. Ms. Carter felt like the teacher across the hall received more support than she did and that at the beginning of the year her feedback meetings were much more frequent, once every week or every two weeks. Ms. Miller also described her coach as spending more time with another teacher, causing her literacy coach to spend less time with her. The amount of time that coaches work with teachers improves teacher perceptions of literacy coaching (Roller, 2006).

Lack of Consistency and Specific Feedback

According to the teachers in this study, there was a lack of consistency with their feedback meetings which may have reduced the perceived support through literacy coaching that teachers received along with reducing the perceived impact of literacy coaching. Encouragement to engage in self-reflection is a strategy that can help promote beginning teacher resilience (Johnson et. al., 2014) and can be incorporated in consistent feedback meetings. Ms. Miller suggested that the inconsistency of the feedback meetings may have been because last year was the first year that her school implemented them. She also said that it seemed like the meetings would be more consistent this year. While one teacher described these meetings as bi-weekly or monthly, another teacher said that their coach came into her classroom five or six times throughout the school year. Ms. Brown said that the meetings began in February. In some cases, the coaching was more consistent towards the beginning of the year, and then the support decreased as the year

progressed. Ms. Taylor said that the goal was for the meetings to be regular but that they were generally bi-weekly and at the least monthly.

Even though many of the teachers did not have consistent feedback meetings with their literacy coach, several of them described the importance of regular contact with their coach, which provides them with a support system to help with the overwhelming aspects of their job (Johnson et. al, 2014). Ms. Carter said that feedback meetings help her to reflect and keep her in line, making it so that she does not slip under the radar. Ms. Brown said that the observations helped her to make sure she was on her A-game every day. While weekly coaching can help teachers make statistically significant improvements in the structural environment of their classroom (Neuman & Wright, 2010), none of the teachers in this study received weekly coaching throughout the school year.

It was difficult for the teachers to describe the impact that coaching had on their literacy instruction, perhaps due to the lack of specific feedback, which many of the teachers stated was important for literacy coaches to provide. Ms. Carter said, "People who observe me don't criticize enough. It doesn't help me if they just act like it's great. I would like good, specific criticism: here's a specific thing you can change for next time. Don't be afraid to offend me." Another teacher said that coaches need to observe lessons so that they can provide meaningful and relative feedback on what's happening in the classroom. Ms. Miller found that it was more helpful to receive meaningful feedback than just hearing positive things about her teaching. Several of the teachers had a difficult time identifying specific feedback they had received, and many of them described the feedback as positive and a way to point out that they were doing a good job.

One example of this was Ms. Williams who said that there was a lot of positive feedback with her coach pointing out what she was doing well.

Those who were able to describe the feedback did not necessarily implement the feedback that they received. In response to the feedback she had received, Ms. Brown said, "I wouldn't say I spent a lot of time trying to make sure that happened." Ms. Carter described her most meaningful experience with her coach as positive feedback she received after a lesson because her coach was happy that she was growing in her ability to differentiate. Ms. Miller said that while she made changes in her literacy instruction the previous year, none of the changes were made based on what her literacy coach said.

Summary

The interviews with the principals and the literacy coaches at the participating schools provided context for the literacy coaching structures at Central and Lincoln Elementary Schools. The within-case analysis and across-case analysis for the six participating teachers at these schools provided insight for the research questions, "What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?" and "How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?" Additionally, the coaching reflection logs allowed the teachers to provide their immediate reflections on their interactions with their literacy coaches. This collection of data describes the experiences that the teachers at Central and Lincoln Elementary have had with literacy coaching.

The main themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were that (a) teachers receive multiples forms of support through literacy coaching including one-on-one, planning, receiving resources and curriculum, and data analysis; (b) catering to adult

learners increased the perceived support that teachers described; (c) visibility and access can increase or decrease the perceived impact that coaching has on their literacy instruction; and (d) a lack of consistency in meetings and specific feedback decreases the impact that teachers perceive coaching has on their literacy instruction.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

In 2002, the field of literacy coaching increased rapidly, due to the Reading First initiative of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). One component of Reading First was an emphasis on the use of professional development in order to improve early reading achievement (US Department of Education, 2002). The majority of schools chose to employ literacy coaches as a way to fulfill that requirement (Scott et al., 2012). Many of the literacy coaches had previously been employed as reading specialists, who worked primarily with students, and they entered their new position as a reading coach with little training (Bean et al., 2015).

One of the challenges for literacy coaches is that there is a variety of perceptions of what literacy coaches should spend their time doing (Mraz et al., 2008). This lack of consistency in perceptions of the role can lead to dissatisfaction for multiple stakeholders because principals, teachers, and literacy coaches often have differing ideas of what the priorities of a literacy coach should be. It is generally the responsibility of the principal and central office to determine the roles and responsibilities for literacy coaches, and those decisions are often made without input from teachers and literacy coaches (Calo et al., 2015). Most literacy coaches believe that their main responsibility is supporting teachers (Calo et al., 2015; Hathaway et al., 2016). An additional challenge for literacy coaches is that many believe that they do not have enough time to work with the teachers on their caseload (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Calo et al., 2015). Coaches also often have other responsibilities besides working directly with teachers, which can take away from their ability to support teachers (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Research shows

that literacy coaches should spend the majority of their time working directly with teachers because this can lead to the greatest student reading achievement gains, but this is often not what is able to happen (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Additionally, time spent working directly with teachers is important because teacher viewpoints of literacy coaches are more positive when their coach spends more time working with teachers (Bean et al., 2002).

Research indicates that literacy coaches positively impact student achievement (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Swartz, 2005) and lead to positive changes in instruction for the teachers on their caseload (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Duessan et al., 2007; Neuman & Wright, 2010; Nielson et al., 2008; Teemant, 2013). There is not enough information about how coaches support beginning teachers in improving their literacy instruction and which coaching actions contribute to teacher improvements in teaching reading.

The purpose of this study was to examine beginning teachers' experiences with literacy coaching. Interviews with second and third-year teachers and their coaching reflection logs were used to determine the support that the participating teachers had received through literacy coaching and the perceived impact that this support had on their literacy instruction. Interviews with the principals and literacy coaches at the participating schools provided insight into the type of support the schools intended to provide. The following questions guided this study:

1) What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?

2) How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?

Chapter four described the context for literacy coaching at both of the participating schools and then included a within-case analysis for the six teachers in the study. It concluded with an across-case analysis and the themes developed from the analysis. Chapter five presents a summary of the data gathered on beginning teachers' experiences with literacy coaching. The data is used to draw conclusions. This chapter also provides a discussion of the implications for practice and research related to literacy coaching.

Findings

The primary focus of this study was to determine beginning teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching. All second and third-year teachers at the participating schools were invited to participate in this study along with the principal and literacy coach at each participating school. All principals and literacy coaches chose to participate in the study. Two out of the three eligible candidates at Central Elementary and all four of the eligible candidates at Lincoln Elementary chose to participate. Teachers were interviewed a second time after they completed their coaching reflection log. Upon analysis of the data, several themes emerged: multiple forms of support, catering to adult learners, visibility and access, and lack of consistent meetings and specific feedback.

Multiple Forms of Support

The teachers in this study received multiple forms of support through literacy coaching. They described receiving support from their literacy coaches through one-on-on interactions, planning, receiving resources and curriculum, and data analysis. Even

when teachers felt like they did not receive much support, they still described themselves as participating in most of the support items listed above. From the interviews with the teachers, it was apparent that they were receiving help in many areas, with some teachers describing more extensive help than others.

The teachers preferred one-on-one meetings over planning because they appreciated the attention, and as beginning teachers, they often felt like their questions might not be appropriate for a group setting. Scott et al. (2012) found that teachers preferred meeting with their coach as a group over meeting one-on-one, and this difference may be due to the fact that all of the teachers in this study are beginning teachers. By having a person to meet with to discuss difficulties they were having, they were able to avoid some of the common challenges that beginning teachers face. It is important for literacy coaches to prioritize one-on-one meetings with their beginning teachers, because this was described as a very beneficial method of support by all of the teachers in the study. Additionally, this allowed the teachers to address the areas where they needed help with, which can positively impact their literacy instruction.

Most of the teachers also appreciated the support their teams received in planning from their literacy coach, citing her ability to keep them on track. Similarly to what Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) found, many of the teachers in this study appreciated the collaborative environment that their coach created. By being an integral part of planning, the literacy coaches were able to work with all of the teachers at their school, instead of only having time for the beginning teachers. It was important for the teachers to feel like their coach was attentive during the planning sessions, likely because they preferred when their coach contributed ideas to their discussions.

Receiving resources was also very important to the teachers in this study and it made them feel supported. The teachers who felt like they did not receive enough resources from their literacy coach were disappointed by this because they believed it was part of the role of a literacy coach. Curriculum was an area where teachers felt their district was lacking, but most believed that their literacy coach did a good job of providing them with what they needed. In some cases, it appeared like the teachers wished for more guidance in the structure of English Language Arts block. Especially when working with beginning teachers, it is important for literacy coaches to have an instructional framework for teachers, along with resources and possibly curriculum for them to use. When teachers in the study felt like they lacked curriculum and resources, they did not feel supported. They also did not feel like they were equipped to make decisions related to curriculum and instructional framework, which likely negatively impacted literacy instruction. From the teachers' comments, it appears that the literacy coaches focused on the students who were receiving additional support due to not being on grade level. Several of the teachers desired help with their core instruction. The coaches would be able to have a more significant impact if they provided more assistance with the instruction that all students receive, versus instruction for a small percentage of students.

The last form of support that was described by the teachers was analyzing data. While a few of the teachers appreciated this form of support, many of teachers had negative viewpoints of the data analysis support their literacy coach provided them with, because they wished for more assistance in how to use the data to inform their instruction, instead of simply focusing on the numbers. It is important that assessments

are used to inform instruction, and many times beginning teachers struggle with how to do this. The teachers in this study desired more help in this area and were frustrated with the focus on scores and the lack of time spent learning how to use the data to make changes in their instruction.

Catering to Adult Learners

Both of the literacy coaches in the study described an approach to coaching that was centered on the needs of the teachers. This made the majority of the teachers feel very supported and even the teachers who were not completely satisfied with the support they received still had positive things to say about their literacy coach. According to Burkins (2007), it is important that coaches observe the teachers that they work with and listen to what they say because many times the teachers will identify what they need to address. This was apparent with Mrs. Johnson, who said that her goal when she coaches beginning teachers is "To listen. You see all these things you want to praise them for. Take a backseat and let them tell me what they are struggling with." The coaches at both of the schools also described the importance of trust in the coaching relationship, which is needed along with rapport so that the coach and teacher both feel safe to learn from the other (Kissel et al., 2011). Catering to adult learners is the first step that literacy coaches must make in order to be able to effectively support teachers and to have the opportunity to positively impact their instruction. The coaches in this study were very intentional about creating trusting relationships with the teachers at their schools, and it showed through their comments and the comments of the teachers. The main disappointment that teachers had was that they did not have the opportunity to spend as much time with their coaches as they would have liked.

Visibility and Access

According to Vanderburg and Stephens (2010), teachers feel supported when coaches are easily accessible and willing to help with a variety of tasks. The majority of the teachers in this study felt supported and described their literacy coach as someone they could go to for any questions that they had. This is contrary to the experiences of many beginning teachers, who are left to "sink or swim" on their own (Howe, 2006). The teachers in the study had more positive perceptions of their coach the more often they saw them and when they were able to ask them for assistance with the questions they had. In addition to creating more positive teacher viewpoints of literacy coaching (Bean et al., 2002), when coaches spend the majority of their time working directly with teachers, this can lead to the greatest student reading achievement gains (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Deussen et al. (2007) found that 32% of coaches fell into the teacher-oriented category, meaning that they spent between 41% and 52% of their time working with teachers.

A commonly cited concern for literacy coaches is not having enough time to work with the teachers on their caseload (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Calo et al., 2015). At Central Elementary there are twenty-nine classroom teachers, and at Lincoln Elementary there are seventeen. Hathaway et al. (2016) found that 40% of coaches work with between 16 and 30 teachers. Several of the teachers in the study discussed the number of teachers that their literacy coach worked with and believed it was too many. Additionally, some of the teachers felt like they got less attention than other grade levels or teachers, possibly demonstrating that the literacy coach had to choose how to allocate her time. Teacher viewpoints of coaches are more favorable when coaches spend more time working with

teachers (Bean et al., 2002), which explains why the two teachers in the study who had more negative viewpoints of the literacy coaches also felt like their literacy coach gave other teachers and grade levels more attention. This may have been due to weaknesses perceived by the principal or literacy coach which can be an effective strategy because teacher differences in student achievement data suggest that coaching should be targeted towards the teachers who need it most (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). However, since all of the teachers in the study are beginning teachers, it is likely that their literacy instruction would have benefited from additional support as well. The goal at both of the schools was to hold one-on-one meetings weekly and doing so would have increased the support that teachers perceived themselves as receiving and would have provided them with greater visibility of and access to their coaches.

Lack of Consistency and Specific Feedback

Coaching is a strategy that can lead to significant changes for teachers (Teemant, 2013). One common theme across the interviews was that the feedback meetings were not held as consistently as the principal intended them to be. This is unfortunate because weekly coaching can help teachers make statistically significant improvements in the structural environment of their classroom (Neuman & Wright, 2010). The teachers in the study had a difficult time identifying specific changes they made in their classrooms due to literacy coaching.

Based on the teacher perceptions of their feedback meetings, the majority of the feedback they received was not specific. Most of the teachers could remember many positive things that their coach shared with them at their feedback meetings, but the majority of them could not describe specific action steps. Furthermore, the ones who

were able to describe specific feedback did not hold much value in ensuring that they implemented the changes that their coach suggested. This appeared to limit the teachers' responses to the research question, "How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?" The teachers in the study generally felt supported in the areas that they had questions on, but there were few examples of the literacy coach intervening in areas that they may not have been effectively teaching. The teachers in the study would have felt more supported and the impact on their literacy instruction would have been more apparent if the one-on-one meetings were held consistently. Schools who are using a literacy coaching model should ensure that the time of coaches is protected so that they can hold weekly one-on-one meetings with the teachers on their caseload. It is also important for the coach and the teacher to record the feedback that is delivered during coaching sessions so that teachers are held accountable to the instructional improvements they are directed to make. Since completing observations and providing feedback was a new initiative at both of the schools, the literacy coaches would have benefited from collaborating with their administrative team and with other coaches in the district to work on providing specific feedback that their teachers could easily implement in their instruction. Much of the feedback that the teachers described did not provide them with specific action steps to improve their instruction. By calibrating with other leaders in their district in regard to providing feedback, literacy coaches can have a stronger impact on literacy instruction.

Implications for Practice

Several themes emerged from this study that could be beneficial for districts or schools who are using literacy coaching as a way to support beginning teachers. A major

theme for this study was visibility and access, with the teachers feeling more supported when they were able to interact with their coach frequently. Regular communication such as informal check-ins on the weekend or during the school day made teachers feel like they could easily find a solution to any of the questions they had. One problem that the teachers described was that their coach had a large caseload which decreased the amount of support they received. Based on that, districts and schools may choose to look at options for reducing the coach to teacher ratio. One common suggestion amongst the teachers was to have one coach for kindergarten through second grade and another for third through fifth grade. Districts and schools should also examine their coaches' schedules in order to determine how they are using their time. Teacher viewpoints of coaches are more favorable when coaches spend more time working with teachers (Bean et al., 2002), but Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) found that the coaches in their study only spent 53% of time working directly with teachers. The teachers in this study had favorable viewpoints of their coaches, and their descriptions of their coaches made it seem like the coaches spent the majority of their time working directly with teachers. It is important that districts and school-based leadership teams carefully consider the responsibilities that they assign to coaches to ensure that they are still able to do the most important part of their job, which is to support teachers.

An additional theme that emerged was that the feedback meetings were helpful but also inconsistent. Due to the large amount of needs that beginning teachers face such as discipline, motivating students, attending to student differences, assessing work, parent relationships, organization, lack of materials, and knowing how to handle student problems (Veenam, 1984), it would be beneficial if schools ensured that literacy coaches

were able to have consistent weekly meetings with the beginning teachers that they are coaching. In order to have this consistency, the administration may need to look at the responsibilities delegated to literacy coaches and reduce them as needed. All of the teachers in the study described the feedback meetings as a positive form of support and the principals and literacy coaches also described them as an important form of professional development. Therefore, it is essential that the principals and literacy coaches collaborate in order to make the feedback meetings a non-negotiable part of their schedule. While the district and school describe themselves as participating in an initiative where there are weekly feedback meetings in order to continuously grow teachers, the interviews with the teachers made it clear that the frequency of the meetings was much less often than weekly. Therefore, in order for the school to meet this mandate and determine the effectiveness of it, the feedback meetings should be treated as a reoccurring calendar event.

The teachers in this study had a difficult time describing the feedback that they received in their feedback meetings. When they did receive specific feedback, it was not always a priority for them to implement that feedback. The district that Central and Lincoln Elementary are located in has mandated the observations and feedback meetings based on the practices described in the book *Leverage Leadership* (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). This book explains the importance of providing bite-sized, measurable feedback to teachers that they can implement before their next feedback meeting. After providing the feedback, coaches are supposed to ensure that teachers implement the feedback by visiting the classroom to see it in action. If teachers struggle with implementing their feedback, then coaches should work with them to figure out how to ensure that are able to

successfully incorporate it into their teaching. The district may need to consider the training that they have provided principals and literacy coaches on this protocol and the follow-up actions required after the initial training. The district may see an improved implementation of this framework if they monitor the feedback given to teachers, along with the frequency of the meetings. The vision for the feedback meetings is that all teachers receive weekly feedback. The principal, assistant principal, and literacy coach each have a caseload of teachers to provide feedback to. Since multiple school leaders are providing feedback, it would be helpful to have them collaborate and conduct walkthroughs together in order to ensure that the team is aligned on what bite-sized, measurable feedback looks like. Since this is a district initiative, there should be involvement from district leadership in order to provide professional development in providing feedback if needed. Multiple teachers in the study said that they would prefer to hear constructive criticism versus feedback that was all positive, but it was difficult for all of the teachers in the study to describe specific feedback that they received which resulted in changes in their literacy instruction.

Lastly, this study may help to inform school leadership teams when determining the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches. There are a variety of perceptions of what literacy coaches should spend their time doing (Mraz et al., 2008). The beginning teachers in this study shared the benefits of literacy coaching and the areas where literacy coaching fell short. Their opinions can be used to improve literacy coaching programs and to encourage schools to survey their teachers to ensure that literacy coaching at their school is providing the support intended. The teachers in this study expressed many ideas that could be used to make changes in the coaching program at their schools. By

eliciting feedback from the teachers being coached, schools can determine how they can improve their literacy coaching model.

Future Research Recommendations

This study examined the experiences that six beginning teachers at two elementary schools have had with literacy coaching through interviews and document analysis. An expanded version of this study including participants from all of the schools in the district could help to identify if there are any trends in how beginning teachers across the district perceive the support they are receiving through literacy coaching. This type of study could inform district leadership about next steps needed in their coaching program. In addition, it would be helpful to interview district leadership to determine their vision for literacy coaching, since the feedback meetings were something that was mandated by the district. The present study utilized the principal and literacy coach interviews in order to determine their vision for coaching, and it would be interesting to see if the district leadership vision aligns with the school-based vision.

Another research study that could benefit the coaching field would be a mixed methods study where the perceptions of beginning teachers were explored through interviews along with analyzing their reading assessment data from the previous year. The coaches in the study could be asked about the amount of support they provided the specific teachers in the study. This information could help to explain the impact that literacy coaching has on reading achievement and demonstrate the impact that coaching decisions such as time spent working with individual teachers has on beginning teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching.

Since planning was the primary way that beginning teachers received support through literacy coaching, a study on the content of planning sessions would help to determine the impact that literacy coaching has on literacy instruction. This type of study could include planning observations, document analysis of planning agendas, and interviews that occur soon after planning to determine what changes teachers made to their instruction based on the content their coach covered in planning. Additionally, lesson plans could be analyzed to determine what changes, if any, were made by teachers as a result of literacy coaching. The teachers in the study appreciated the support that their literacy coach provided through planning, but it was less clear through the interview data what occurred during planning.

Lastly, a study on the feedback that coaches provide in feedback meetings would give further insight into how literacy coaching changes literacy instruction. Coaches could share information about what they saw in their observation and then explain the feedback they provided to their teacher based on the observation. This feedback could be compared to common areas of struggle that beginning teachers have with literacy instruction. Another research study could look at the feedback provided and compare it to the actions that teachers take in their classroom, to determine how they are utilizing the feedback that they received.

Summary

The teachers, principals, and coaches in this study described a variety of ways in which literacy coaching provided support to beginning teachers. Less evident through their interviews and document analysis was the perceived impact that this coaching had on the literacy instruction of the beginning teachers. This study identified four areas that

are important to consider for schools using a literacy coaching model: multiple forms of support, catering to adult learners, visibility and access, and consistency in meetings and specific feedback. Therefore, schools that aim to make beginning teachers feel supported through literacy coaching and believe that it has an impact on their literacy instruction should consider these four areas when designing their coaching role.

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APPENDIX A: TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

1. Introduce self. Describe the research study.
2. What is your name?

Research Question #1:

What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?

Interview questions related to research question #1:

1. From your perspective, what kind of support are you receiving through literacy coaching?
2. Tell me about the structure of your coaching sessions. Follow up: How often and how long do you meet with your coach?
3. What feedback have you received your literacy coach?

Research Question #2:

How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?

Interview questions related to research question #2:

1. How has literacy coaching impacted your literacy instruction?
2. What has been your most meaningful experience with your literacy coach?
3. What has been difficult about working with a literacy coach?
4. Describe changes in your literacy instruction that you may have implemented due to literacy coaching.
5. What advice do you have for literacy coaches who aspire to improve their effectiveness?

6. What would you recommend to a school beginning a literacy coaching model?

APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

Teacher background questions:

1. What is your teaching philosophy?
2. What type of professional development have you received since you began teaching?
3. How would you describe your first year of teaching? Follow-up: What could have made it better?
4. What caused you to return for a second year? Follow-up: Did your literacy coach contribute in any way to you returning or not returning?
5. What do you think teachers should know about teaching literacy before they begin their teaching career?

Research Question #1:

What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?

Interview questions related to research question #1:

1. Do you prefer meeting with your coach in a 1:1 setting or with your grade level? Why?
2. Does your coach talk about assessment data? How does that make you feel?

Research Question #2:

How do beginning teachers describe the impact of this coaching on their literacy instruction?

Interview questions related to research question #2:

1. If you received a student with no prior literacy experiences, how comfortable would you feel instructing them? Follow-up: What would be your next steps?
2. Ask follow-up questions as needed related to coaching reflection log.
3. What actions has your literacy coach taken in the weeks since you completed your coaching reflection log? Follow-up: What did you do as a result of the coaching meeting? How did you feel? How did this meeting impact your literacy instruction?

APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Introduce self. Describe the research study.
2. What is your name?

Research Question #1:

1. What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?

Interview questions related to research question #1:

1. Describe literacy coaching at your school.
2. How does literacy coaching support beginning teachers?
3. In what ways has literacy coaching impacted student achievement at your school?
4. Tell me about the structure of coaching at your school. Follow up: How often and how long do coaches meet with teachers?

APPENDIX D: LITERACY COACH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Introduce self. Describe the research study.
2. What is your name?
3. Is there anything that you would like to ask or share before we get started?

Research Question #1:

1. What support for literacy instruction do beginning teachers receive through literacy coaching?

Interview questions related to research question #1:

1. Tell about your day as a literacy coach.
2. What preparation have you had for your role as a literacy coach?
3. Think about a time when you supported a beginning teacher. What did that look like?
4. What challenges do beginning teachers face?
5. How does your preparation for coaching differ for beginning teachers versus veteran teachers?
6. What goals do you have when coaching beginning teachers?
7. Tell me about the structure of your coaching sessions. Follow up: How often and how long do you meet with your teachers?

APPENDIX E: COACHING REFLECTION LOG

	Coach Actions (what did coach say and do during coaching meeting?)	**Teacher Reflection** (guiding questions below) What did you do as a result of coaching meeting? How did you feel? How did this meeting impact your literacy instruction?
Week of _____		
Week of _____		

APPENDIX F: CODEBOOK

Open Codes

Ms. Brown	personable frequent check-ins fifteen-minute observations very helpful (started in February) planning meetings – "on task and focused" receiving resources regular communication implementing feedback "when I could I did" coaching is time consuming
Ms. Carter	ELA block set up feedback for small groups and guided reading receiving resources answering questions feedback inconsistent less one-on-one attention than teacher across hall received limited support regular check-ins collaborative planning – "keeps us on the same track" hasn't received guidance on components of literacy block received helpful feedback on whole class novel wants more constructive criticism believes coaches should go in classrooms often
Ms. Miller	received resources at beginning of year – "that's about the extent of what I received" coach spent most of her time in another teacher's classroom grade level received less support than other grade levels thought coach would provide her with resources and support thrown into guided reading preferred one-on-one meetings over whole group did not make changes based on what coach said could not describe impact on her literacy instruction too large of a caseload: "She's wonderful but she's spread so thin"
Ms. Taylor	impressed with received support observations strategies attends planning provides strategies and materials when they look at data one-on-one not on a weekly basis feedback did not include things she should change felt like coaching had a big impact on her literacy instruction

	offers strategies and materials when looking at data attended professional development with coach
Ms. Williams	supportive answered questions found answer if she didn't know it provided resources she's amazing keep team focused during planning four or five fifteen-minute observations throughout year lots of positive feedback coach is encouraging looking at data for flexible grouping
Ms. Wilson	became hands-off in March beginning teachers "put on the back burner" weekly fifteen-minute observations until mid to end of October helped with interventions for tiered students support during planning helpful but attendance inconsistent and attention often elsewhere spread thin lack of support with starting novel studies beginning grades get majority of attention data analysis focused on numbers

Categories with Open Codes

catering to adult learners	supportive she's amazing lots of positive feedback coach is encouraging impressed with received support too large of a caseload: "She's wonderful but she's spread so thin" personable
one-on-one support	helped with interventions for tiered students strategies felt like coaching had a big impact on her literacy instruction attended professional development with coach thought coach would provide her with resources and support preferred one-on-one meetings over whole group
planning	support during planning helpful but attendance inconsistent and attention often elsewhere keep team focused during planning attends planning collaborative planning – "keep us on the same track"

	planning meetings – "on task and focused"
resources and curriculum	lack of support with starting novel studies provided resources received resources at beginning of year – "that's about the extent of what I received thrown into guided reading ELA block set up feedback for small groups and guided reading receiving resources haven't received guidance on components of literacy block receiving resources
analyzing data	data analysis focused on numbers looking at data for flexible grouping provides strategies and materials when they look at data offers strategies and materials when looking at data
large caseload	spread thin beginning grades get majority of attention coach spent most of her time in another teacher's classroom grade level received less support than other grade levels too large of a caseload: "She's wonderful but she's spread so thin"
lack of consistency	became hands-off in March beginning teachers "put on the back burner" weekly fifteen-minute observations until mid to end of October four or five fifteen-minute observations throughout year observations one-on-one not on a weekly basis feedback inconsistent less one-on-one attention than teacher across hall received limited support fifteen-minute observations very helpful (started in February)
specific feedback	lots of positive feedback feedback did not include things she should change did not make changes based on what coach said could not describe impact on her literacy instruction received helpful feedback on whole class novel wants more constructive criticism implementing feedback "when I could I did"

access	answered questions found answer if she didn't know it answering questions regular check-ins believes coaches should go in classrooms often frequent check-ins regular communication

Major Categories/Themes

Multiple forms of support	analyzing data providing resources planning one-on-one support
Catering to adult learning	
Visibility and access	access large caseload
Lack of consistency and specific feedback	specific feedback lack of consistency