Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Principal Support in a K-12 Public School Division in Virginia

Angela Lyn Stewart

Doctoral dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Ted S. Price, Chair
Carol S. Cash
Jodie L. Brinkmann
Jonathan D. Russ

December 6, 2021
Richmond, VA

Keywords: autonomy, culture, educational leadership, instructional coaching, professional learning, principal support, reflection

Copyright (optional – © or Creative Commons, see last page of template for information)
https://guides.lib.vt.edu/c.php?g=547528&p=3756998

Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Principal Support in a K-12 Public School Division

Angela Lyn Stewart

ABSTRACT

Administrative support of the instructional coach is critical to the success of instructional coaches in each building (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Knight, 2011; Sweeney, 2018). Effective instructional coaches support the transfer of new skills into practice to positively impact student learning outcomes (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Knight & Cornett, 2007; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2019; Showers & Joyce, 1996). The purpose of this study was to identify instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and the factors that contribute to those perceptions. The study aimed to address the following research questions: 1) What do instructional coaches perceive as principals' knowledge of the role of the instructional coach? 2) How do instructional coaches perceive the actions of principals in support of their work? This descriptive study examined instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support given to instructional coaches in one large, suburban school division in Virginia. Data were collected through an online survey and optional participation in focus groups.

Findings included a misalignment between the instructional coaches' knowledge of the role of an instructional coach and that of the principal. Findings indicated the instructional coaches perceived support from the principal as including a shared knowledge of the role of the instructional coach, including the instructional coach in the vision for the school, maintaining regular communication and meetings, following up with teachers after a professional development led by the coach, providing professional development opportunities for the instructional coach, providing access to instructional resources, providing feedback on the work of the instructional coach, and building a relationship with the instructional coach. Implications outlined in the study identify specific actions principals can take to positively impact the instructional coaching in schools.

Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Principal Support in a K-12 Public School Division

Angela Lyn Stewart

GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Instructional coaching is a growing method for building the capacity of teachers in schools. Administrative knowledge of the role of an instructional coach and principal support of the work of the instructional coach is critical to the success of the role of the instructional coach. Actions taken by the principal directly impact the perception of support for the work of the instructional coach and either negatively or positively impact the potential for the instructional coach to build capacity in the school. The work of instructional coaches is often interrupted by task assignments by the principal that engage instructional coaches in activities that detract from the instructional coach's role as instructional support. The purpose of this study was to identify instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and the factors that contribute to those perceptions. Instructional coaches from one school division in Virginia participated in the study.

The study yielded eight findings and eight implications for principal actions that improve the instructional coaches' perception of principal support for the role of the instructional coach. Findings from the study indicated the instructional coaches perceived support from the principal as including a shared knowledge of the role of the instructional coach, including the instructional coach in the vision for the school, maintaining regular communication and meetings, following up with teachers after a professional development led by the coach, providing professional development opportunities for the instructional coach, providing access to instructional resources, providing feedback on the work of the instructional coach, and building a relationship with the instructional coach. Implications outlined in the study identify specific actions principals can take to positively impact the instructional coaching in schools. Future researchers may want to consider completing this study with instructional coaches from various school divisions. Additionally, future researchers may also want to compare instructional coaches' perception of principal support with principals' perception of the actions of support given to the instructional coaches.

Dedication

The journey to the completion of this doctoral program would not have been possible with the support of my family.

To my husband, Corey, I fully appreciate your guidance through the bumps on the road of this dissertation and all the extra time and attention you showered on our children while I was researching, studying, and writing. Thank you.

To my children, McKenna, Cole, and Liam, I am still in awe of the patience and understanding you showed for my absence from daily activities throughout this process. Your encouragement and cheerleading smoothed the terrain of this journey. My hope is that when you look back on this time, you will be reminded that nothing worth having is easy, but with goals, focus, guides, and hard work you can reach your destination.

To my parents, Dennis and Sally Clark, who instilled in me the work ethic that made this journey possible and who have always been supporters of my many journeys.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Ted Price for his faith in me and for serving as my chair throughout this process. I also with to express gratitude to Dr. Carol Cash, Dr. Jodie Brinkmann, and Dr. Jonathan Russ for their guidance as my dissertation committee members throughout this journey.

I would like to thank my doctoral cohort members with whom I navigated this journey. We kept each other sane and focused on the destination. I want to extent a big thank you to Dr. David Ferguson for supporting and encouraging all of us as an unofficial cohort captain.

Additionally, I would like to thank my work colleagues, Dr. Tracie Weston, Dr. Angie Thompson, and Dr. Drew Baker who tolerated my incessant questions and requests for directions in navigating this journey.

Table of Contents

Abstract ..... **ii**

General Audience Abstract ..... **iii**

Dedication ..... **iv**

Acknowledgements ..... **v**

List of Figures ..... **ix**

List of Tables ..... **x**

Chapter 1 Introduction **1**

Statement of the Problem 2
Purpose of the Study 4
Research Questions 4
Overview of the Study 4
Conceptual Framework 5
Limitations/Delimitations 8
Organization of the Study 8

Chapter 2 Review of Literature **9**

Search Process 9
Education in American Schools 10
Evolving Role of Educational Leadership 11
Role of the Principal 12
Professional Development and Professional Learning 14
Andragogy 16
Reflective Practice 16
Autonomy 18
Instructional Coaching 19
Instructional Coaches and Professional Learning 22
Coaching Cycles 24
Roles of the Instructional Coach 25
Approaches to Coaching 27
Skills and Practices of an Instructional Coach 30
Principal and Coach Partnerships 32
Supporting Instructional Coaches 32
Conclusion 33

Chapter 3 Methodology **35**

Purpose of the Study 35
Research Questions 35
Research Design - Methodology 35
Instrument Design 36
Instrument Validation (and Reliability) 37
Population and Sampling 37
Data Collection Procedures 40

Data Gathering Procedures 42
Data Treatment 43
Data Management 43
Data Analysis Techniques 44
Timeline 44
Methodology Summary 44

Chapter 4 Presentation and Analysis of Data 45

Population 45
Data Analysis 47
Research Question 1 48
Survey Question 8 48
Survey Question 11 49
Survey Question 8 54
Interview Question 3 55
Interview Question 3b 56
Research Question 2 57
Survey Question 9 57
Survey Question 10 59
Survey Question 12 64
Survey Question 13 68
Survey Question 14 70
Survey Question 15 72
Survey Question 16 74
Summary 78

Chapter 5 Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations 80

Summary of Findings 80
Finding 1 80
Finding 2 82
Finding 3 82
Finding 4 83
Finding 5 84
Finding 6 85
Finding 7 86
Finding 8 86
Implications of Findings 88
Implication 1 88
Implication 2 88
Implication 3 88
Implication 4 89
Implication 5 89
Implication 6 89
Implication 7 90
Implication 8 90
Suggestions for Future Research 90
Summary 91
Reflections 91

References **93**
Appendix A Survey Questions **103**
Appendix B Focus Group Protocol **105**
Appendix C Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certificate **107**
Appendix D School Division Approval of Research **108**
Appendix E Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Approval of Research **109**
Appendix F Survey Participant Introduction Email **110**
Appendix G Consent Form **111**

List of Figures

Figure 1 *Perceptions of Building Principal Support that Impact the Role of an Instructional Coach* **6**

Figure 2 *PDSA Cycle and Model for Improvement 1991, 1994* **17**

Figure 3 *Multidisciplinary Framework of Instructional Coaching* **26**

List of Tables

Table 1 *Five Typical Coaching Approaches* 29

Table 2 *Self-Reflection Statements* 31

Table 3 *Breakdown of Instructional Coaches Surveyed* 39

Table 4 *Survey Questions* 41

Table 5 *Years of Experience in Education and Instructional Coaching Indicated by Participants in the Online Survey* 46

Table 6 *School Context of Online Survey Respondents* 46

Table 7 *Themes of Instructional Coaches Perceptions of their and their Principals' Knowledge of the Role* 48

Table 8 *Themes of Instructional Coaches Descriptions of a Day in the Role* 49

Table 9 *How Instructional Coaches in the Online Survey Spend their Day* 50

Table 10 *How Participants in the Focus Group Interview Spend their Day* 51

Table 11 *Instructional Coaches' Description of Role on Online Survey* 52

Table 12 *Instructional Coaches' Description of Role in Focus Group Interviews* 53

Table 13 *Themes of Instructional Coaches Perception of Principals' Descriptions of the Role of an Instructional Coach* 54

Table 14 *Description of Perceived Principal's Knowledge of the Role in the Online Survey* 55

Table 15 *Description of Perceived Principals' Knowledge of the Role in the Focus Group Interview* 56

Table 16 *Description of Perceived Principal's Knowledge of the Role in the Focus Group Interviews* 57

Table 17 *Themes of Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Contributions to the Vision of the School* 58

Table 18 *Instructional Coaches' Description of Contributions to the Vision of the School* 58

Table 19 *Scheduled Meetings with the Principal* 60

Table 20 *Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Frequency of Meetings with the Principal on the Online Survey* 60

Table 21 *Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Frequency of Meetings with the Principal During the Focus Group Interview* 61

Table 22 *Themes of Topics Discussed During Meetings with the Principal* 62

Table 23 *Topics Discussed in Meetings Between the Principal and the Instructional coach on the Online Survey* 63

Table 24 *Topics Discussed in Meetings Between the Principal and the Instructional Coach in the Focus Group Interview* 64

Table 25 *Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Extent of Principal's Requests for Professional Development* 65

Table 26 *Principal Requests for Professional Development According to Instructional Coaches on the Online Survey* 65

Table 27 *Themes from Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Principals' Expectations for Follow-up* 67

Table 28 *Principal Expectations for Follow-Up According to Instructional Coaches on the Online Survey* 67

Table 29 *Themes from Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of Coaching Professional Development Provided by Principals* 68

Table 30 *Amount of Principal Provided Professional Development for Instructional Coaching* 69

Table 31 *Amount of Principal Provided Professional Development for Instructional Coaching* 70

Table 32 *Themes Regarding Access to Instructional Resources for Online Survey Participants* 71

Table 33 *Access to Instructional Resources Provided by Principals* 71

Table 34 *Access to Instructional Resources for Focus Group Interview Participants* 72

Table 35 *Themes of Feedback from Principals Described by Instructional Coaches Participating in the Online Survey* 73

Table 36 *Themes of Feedback from Principals Described by Instructional Coaches Participating in the Online Survey* 73

Table 37 *Feedback from Principals Described by Focus Group Interview Participants* 74

Table 38 *Themes from Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of Principals' Actions Contributing to a Perception of Support* 75

Table 39 *Principals' Actions that Positively Impact Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Support from the Principal* 76

Table 40 *Actions Negatively Impact Perceived Support from the Building Principal* 77

Table 41 *Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of Principals' Actions that Impact Perceived Support from Principals During the Focus Group Interview* 78

Chapter 1
Introduction

According to the *Performance Standards for Educational Leader*s *(PSEL)* building level principals have a multitude of responsibilities in the school building (2015). These responsibilities require that principals set the tone for everything from safety and culture of the school to instructional practice, including the attitudes and practices around professional learning (Aas, 2017; Dempster, Lovett, & Fluckiger, 2011; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2011). Seminal work focused on effective professional development identifies instructional coaching as an opportunity to provide targeted and job-embedded professional development with meaningful support of the application of learning in the classroom (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Guiney, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Instructional coaches support teachers in transferring new skills and practices in praxis (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Knight & Cornett, 2007; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Recent research including work from Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan (2019), Knight (2019), Knight and Knight (2021), support instructional coaching as a tool for principals to support teachers with meaningful professional development of teachers that applies learning to classroom practices. In addition to supporting the learning of teachers within the school building, the work of instructional coaches positively impacts student learning outcomes (Kraft et al., 2019).

The roles and outcomes of coaches within school buildings focus on improving the use of instructional practices to ensure that students participate in optimal learning experiences. Killion and Harrison (2018) identify ten roles that instructional coaches should perform at both the school and district level. These roles of instructional coaches include resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner (Killion & Harrison, 2018). A study completed by Kurz, Reddy, and Glover (2017) examined the roles of coaches and the actions utilized by coaches across various career paths including such arenas as business, sports, and education. Kurz et al. (2017) found the outcomes of the work of coaching to focus on performance enhancement, environmental improvements, promotion of autonomy, enhancement of cognition, and community development (p.74). In addition to coaching, coaches also support the implementation of curriculum and related programs in classrooms, serve as mentors for new and experienced teachers, support the sharpening and refinement of instructional skills and

delivery techniques, and lead professional learning (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Poglinco et al., 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Due to the multiple roles held by instructional coaches, it is imperative that coaches and principals maximize the impact of coaching through careful and intentional partnership (Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Knight, 2011; Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018; Thomas, Knight, Harris, & Hoffman, 2022). Within the principal and instructional coach partnership, principals are responsible for partnering with instructional coaches to develop a focused plan for professional development, establishing the guidelines for the work of the coach and providing feedback regarding the progress of the work of the instructional coach (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Principals are critical to ensuring that everyone in the school building clearly understands the role of the coach (Foltos, 2015; Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Knight, 2011; Sweeney, 2018). Principals set the tone for the culture of learning in the building. Principals must have clear knowledge of the roles of a coach, set the expectations regarding teachers' work with the instructional coach, preserve the time of the instructional coach, protect confidentiality of teachers who work with the instructional coach, and support the work of the coach by observing in classrooms (Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Knight, 2018). This clarity increases the potential for coaches to maximize the impact on instructional practice and promotes job satisfaction among coaches.

Statement of the Problem

Challenges uncovered through virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed needs for improvement in areas of instructional best practices not in focus prior to the shift toward online education (Arnett, 2021; Klein, 2021). Instructional coaching is effective in improving teaching and learning and could address instructional challenges in any environment, yet many coaches find themselves serving in quasi-administrative roles, communicating compliance expectations, technology supports, and curriculum writing positions rather than working with teachers in coaching cycles and other supports focused on instructional practice (DeWitt, 2015; Knight, 2020). This shift to roles outside of the normal roles and responsibilities of a coach prompted coaches to wonder about the support from the principals who supervise them and the ability to be effective.

Despite clearly defined roles, principals often assign instructional coaches to roles and activities that restrict the coaches' time and ability to work with teachers in a coaching capacity (Knight, 2011; Thomas et al., 2022). Due to the constraints of the recent COVID-19 pandemic,

coaches have increasingly found themselves serving in capacities outside of the realm of instructional coaching. Knight and Knight (2020) distributed a survey via Twitter at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to determine where instructional coaches were spending most of their time. The survey was completed by 177 instructional coaches from around the world. Results of the survey indicated that nearly 40% of the respondents' time was spent in curriculum planning and meetings, while only 6% of their time was spent in coaching cycles (Knight & Knight, 2020). Prior to the recent pandemic, instructional coaches indicated that their time was largely spent on activities outside of coaching cycles (Knight, 2020). An earlier study of 190 instructional coaches working with teachers in grades K-3 under the Reading First initiative across five states found that "on average, coaches spent 26% of their workweek actually coaching K–3 teachers: observing K–3 teachers, providing feedback, demonstrating lessons, or training groups of teachers" (Deussen, Coksi, Robinson, & Autio, 2007). While the span of time between these two studies is significant, the decreased percentage of time instructional coaches spent in coaching cycles with teachers is dramatic. The results of the study conducted by Deussen, Coksi, Robinson, and Autio (2007), and those of the study conducted by Knight and Knight (2020) do not align to the recommendation that instructional coaches spend 60-70% of their time engaged in coaching cycles with teachers (Knight, 2020). The fundamental roles of instructional coaches remain the same whether in-person or in a virtual environment; however, instructional coaches have struggled to maintain any momentum they may have had with teachers prior to school closures one year ago (Knight & Knight, 2020).

Administrative support of the instructional coach as professional development, both in the building and at the division level, is critical to the success of instructional coaches in each building (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Knight, 2011; Sweeney, 2018). Even when partnerships are established between the principal and the instructional coach, administrators "often lack experience or background on how to utilize this professional development model effectively" (Johnson, 2016, p.39). When building level principals engage coaches in roles that compromise time with teachers, instructional coaches are prevented from focusing on impacting teacher and student performance in a school (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Johnson, 2016; Knight 2020). While research indicates the importance of principal support in the work of an instructional coach, there is little or no research that examines the instructional coaches' perception of principal support and the actions of the principal that precipitate instructional coaches' perception of support.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and the principal actions that contribute to those perceptions. The researcher sought to determine the extent to which instructional coaches perceived support from the building level principal in the responsibilities of their role. Additionally, this researcher aimed to determine the factors impacting the coach's perception of administrative support. Findings from the study identified actionable practices that principals can employ to ensure that instructional coaches perceive that their work is supported within school buildings.

Research Questions

The study aimed to address the following questions:

1) What do instructional coaches perceive as principals' knowledge of the role of the instructional coach?
2) How do instructional coaches perceive the actions of principals in support of their work?

Overview of the Study

Through a qualitative approach in a nonexperimental phenomenological design, this descriptive study sought to determine the support instructional coaches perceive from the building principal (McMillan & Wergin, 2010). Additionally, the study examined the contributing factors that impact the instructional coaches' perception of principals' support. To measure the perceptions of principal support held by instructional coaches, a qualitative survey was used to gather the instructional coaches' perceptions of support for their role provided by principals in the building in which they work. The survey included an option for respondents to voluntarily participate in a focus group to further investigate the factors that influence the instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support. The surveys and focus groups focused on instructional coaches from 72 schools within a large suburban school division located in central Virginia. The school division was selected because each school in the school division has at least one instructional coach assigned to work with teachers in the school building on a weekly basis. Additionally, the division has implemented a consistent coaching model of over the last three years.

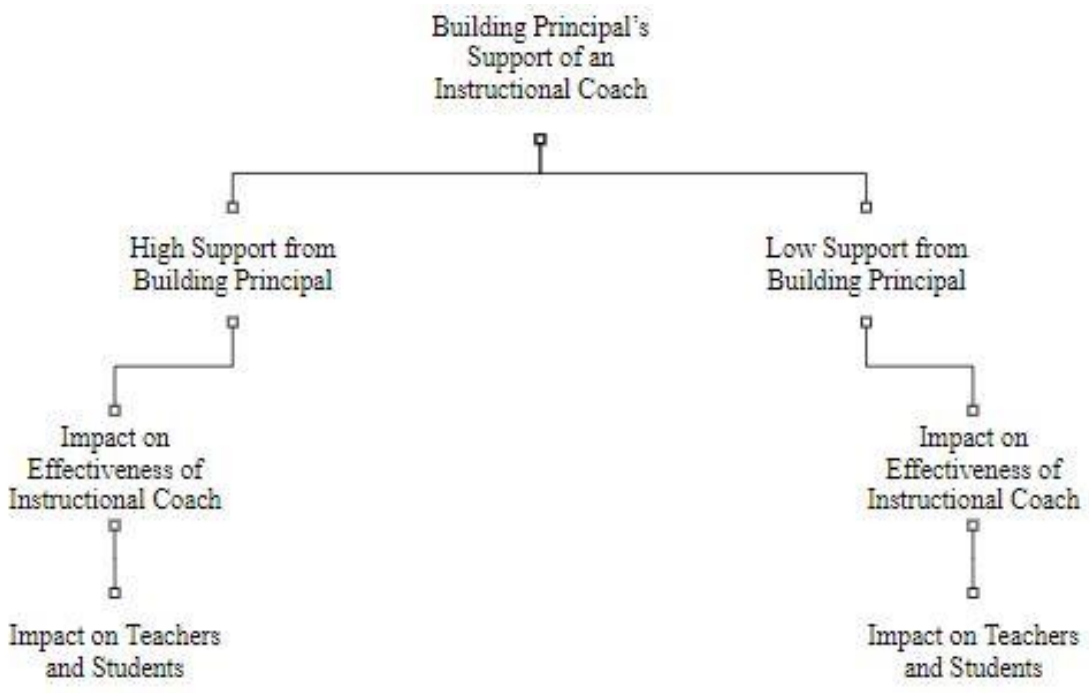
Conceptual Framework

While instructional coaches have defined roles and activities that support the professional development of teachers within a school building, if the principal is not visibly supportive of the work of the instructional coach, teachers will respond accordingly (Johnson, 2016). The researcher sought to describe how instructional coaches experience and perceive administrative support. A visual of this relationship is shown in Figure 1.

As described in the literature review, the role and activities of the instructional coach are specific to engaging with the professional development of teachers within the school building (Deussen et al., 2007; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2000; Kho, Saeed, & Mohamed, 2019; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018). The building principal is responsible for establishing the culture of learning within the building as well as the expectations for teachers in working with an instructional coach (Foltos, 2015; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Knight, 2020; Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018). The framework shows that the perception of principal support from the perspective of the instructional coach impacts the role of the instructional coach. As shown in Figure 1, when the instructional coach perceives high amounts of support from the principal, the instructional coach is more effective has an impact on teachers and students in the building. Conversely, when the instructional coach perceives low amounts of support from the principal, the instructional coach is less effective and has lower impact on the teachers and students in the building. In addition to determining how instructional coaches perceive the support from the principal, the researcher also aimed to identify the actions of the principal that contribute to the instructional coaches' perception of principal support.

Figure 1

Perceptions of Building Principal Support that Impact the Role of an Instructional Coach



Definition of Terms

Throughout this study, specific terms are utilized in relation to the professional growth of teachers and instructional coaching. The following terms and definitions have been included below to provide clarity of knowledge.

Andragogy. The study of adult learning theory, characterized as learning opportunities that provide adults with 1) an understanding of the reason for learning something, 2) the ability to relate learning to previous experience, 3) the chance for adults to identify their readiness to learn, 4) acknowledgement of orientation to learning, 5) motivation for learning, and 6) self-concept (Knowles, 1973). This term is also used synonymously with adult learning (Kearsley, 2010).

Autonomy. The defining characteristic of effective learning experiences that afford adults some level of control over the learning experience in which they are participating and central to motivation for learning in adults (Davenport, 2005; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Knight, 2019, Pink, 2009, Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018).

Coaching Cycles. The process that instructional coaches engage in with teachers for professional learning. Coaching cycles include analyzing the current reality in their classroom, identifying a challenge and possible solution, naming a goal of implementation, implementing the solution, monitoring the effectiveness of the solution, and reflecting on whether the goal was achieved (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2007, 2017, 2019; Moen & Norman, 2010; Sweeney, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2020).

Instructional Coaching. A vehicle for professional learning that improves culture within a school building, supports the professional practice of teachers, and positively impacts student achievement (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Guiney, 2001; Knight, 2009; Kraft et al., 2019; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Plan Do Study Act (PDSA). A model for monitoring on-going progress of improvement outcomes. Developed initially for the area of engineering, this model includes identifying a problem, planning for intervention to address the problem, implementing the plan, determining the effectiveness of the intervention in addressing the problem, and identifying changes that need to be made before engaging in the cycle again (Deming, 1986; Marion & Gonzales, 2014; Moen & Norman, 2010; Shewhart, 1939).

Professional Development. Learning opportunities that are largely passive in nature and occur intermittently. These learning opportunities depend on teachers to implement presented concepts in instructional practice without support (Knight, 2000; Sawyer & Stuckey, 2019; Stewart, 2014).

Professional Learning. High-quality learning opportunities that are collaborative and active in nature, allow teachers to target specific needs within their classrooms, and offer opportunities for continued support during implementation (Fraser et al., 2007; Knight, 2020; Stewart, 2014; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

Reflection. Critical to learning, reflection is the cyclical process of revisiting decisions made, actions taken, outcomes of decisions or actions, and the impact on the situation at hand that has a high effects size on learning (Dempster et al., 2011; Fullan, 2011; Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; Hattie, 2009; Knight, 2017; Lipton, 1993; Schon, 1983). Reflection can occur before, during, and after the decisions are made and actions are taken in the process of implementing new learning (Killion & Todnem, 1991; Knight, 2011; Reagan, 1993).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT). A theory of motivation stating that the innate

human needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness must be met for individuals to be motivated to engage in learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dyer & Fontaine, 1995)

Limitations/Delimitations

Limitations, factors over which the researcher has no control, exist in the completion of every study. During this study, the researcher could not directly influence the number of instructional coaches that will complete the surveys or participate in the voluntary interviews, the number of instructional coaches assigned to the same school who will participate, or how the respondents will interpret the survey and focus group questions during the study. Additionally, the study took place during the opening of a school year following 18-months of virtual instruction resulting from school building closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Distribution of the study at the beginning of such an unprecedented school year may have impacted the number of responses gathered through the online survey and the number of participants in the focus group interviews.

The delimitations, factors controlled by the researcher that placed boundaries on the study, also influence the outcomes of the study. Delimitations for this study include the focus on schools in one school division, and the wording of the questions presented in the surveys may limit the responses.

Organization of the Study

In chapter one, an overview of the study was provided, including the purpose statement, research questions, and the specific concept framework that undergirds the study. Chapter two includes a literature review of prior empirical data focused on the role of a principal in supporting professional development, the role of an instructional coach in the professional development of teachers, and how instructional coaches should be supported by principles to maximize the impact on student learning. Chapter three shares the methodology, the design of the study, the intended sample selection, and includes specific components of data collection throughout the study. Chapter four describes the results of the online survey and focus group interview. Chapter five discusses the findings, and associated implication of the results, as well as the summary of the study and the researcher's reflections.

Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Across the country, teachers and administrators are bound to national and state-level performance standards that outline the responsibilities of each role and serve as a starting point for personal professional learning paths (Arnold et al., 2011; National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). Each year, educators and school leaders participate in professional learning experiences as part of school division expectations or initiatives, self-identified learning needs, or as part of licensure requirements for recertification of a teaching license. In recent years, traditional forms of professional learning have been scrutinized and deemed ineffective due to a lack of evidence that the professional learning impacts student achievement (Hattie, 2009). A study in 2015 estimated that some of the larger school divisions in the United States spend nearly eight billion dollars annually providing professional learning experiences for educators, particularly those focused on one or more initiatives (Jacob & McGovern, 2015). These learning experiences often produce a low return on investment because the structure of the learning experience does not include support in the implementation process or time for extended learning. Frequently, the transition of new knowledge and skills into instructional practices is not supported following a professional development experience and consequently, does not necessarily impact student achievement (Knight, 2012; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Wei et al., 2009).

Search Process

To investigate the topic of instructional coaching as professional development, articles and studies were located through search engines using the keywords identified earlier. Most articles read for this literature review were collected from various scholarly journals through the Virginia Tech online library collection. Others were located based on suggested readings from Mendeley, as well as retrieved from various locations including Google Scholar, periodicals from education organizations such as *Learning Forward* and *ASCD*, while a few articles were received directly from one of the authors. Additional pieces of information were also taken from books or collected from interviews. It is important to note that much of the current information and research regarding instructional coaching is based on the work of early researchers prior to 2010. For this reason, many sources used in the study reference these early researchers of instructional coaching.

Education in American Schools

In a commentary on educational policy recently published in Educational Leadership, the senior director of advocacy and government relations for the periodical wrote that "America's public schools are central to the vibrancy of the communities in which they reside" (Griffith, 2020, p. 91). Acknowledging that communities are ever-changing and that schools are constantly trying to accommodate the ever-changing needs of society, Griffith noted the recent school closures due to COVID-19 have identified schools as central to "family life and to daily life of society at large" (p. 91). In addition to instructional responsibilities, schools have become places where "students are nourished, nurtured, and cared for", not just prepared for life after school (p. 91). This distinction between the previous academic focus of schools and the current focus caring for the whole child is an important one. The ever-changing landscape of public education in America perpetuates the need for continuous learning for educators (Klein, 2021). As a result, public schools have transitioned from the role of an institution of knowledge to that of a learning organization.

While organizations outside of education have utilized the concept of organizational learning for some time, schools are still in the beginning stages of growing in this capacity. Leithwood and Aitken (1995) defined a learning organization as

> a group of people pursuing common purposes (individual purposes as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes. (p. 63)

This shift from the original intention of public education establishes the need for educational leaders to provide the structures and opportunities that support not only the academic and emotional needs of the students, but that of professional growth of teachers as well (Griffith, 2020). In a study focused on examining the variation of responses to government restructuring policies and the status of the conditions related to organizational learning: school vision, culture, structure, strategies, and resources, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1995) identified three factors as "being likely to influence learning directly and indirectly: history, environment and leadership" (p. 235). The findings of their study clearly targeted leadership as playing an important role in turning a school into a learning organization.

Evolving Role of Educational Leadership

One key role that educational leaders play in establishing schools as learning organizations is through the selection and support of the professional learning experiences of the principals and teachers they serve. Often school leaders divide their time between various responsibilities including student achievement, instructional practice, community engagement, supporting changes in the building, utilizing human capital effectively, discipline, school safety, professional learning, and other various tasks or practices daily. Currently, the role of educational leaders hinges heavily on compliance, teacher evaluation, and student achievement (Nolan & Hoover, 2011). With the number of varied responsibilities dependent on educational leaders, prioritization of tasks is paramount (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

Decisions made by educational leaders at the division level regarding everything from instruction to safety measures and report deadlines also designate the workflow of principals and ultimately the teachers and students. In a study examining the role of school principals, Leithwood et al (1995) found that "school principals are significantly influenced by district-level decision making" (p. 250). In an article outlining the role of principals in supporting a school culture, Senge et al (2000) quoted a former superintendent who suggested that the 'most critical role' of leaders at the division level "is to support learning about learning, especially among principals-- who will then do the same among teachers in their schools" (p. 431). Additionally, a related study of the impact of a statewide professional learning initiative across three school districts in the state of New Jersey, completed by Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, and Polovsky (2005), revealed that the decisions and actions of district leaders had a profound impact on professional learning offerings for teachers within each district. The researchers clearly stated in their findings "districts are the primary designers and deliverers of formal learning opportunities for teachers" (Firestone et al., 2005, p. 416).

Ultimately, division-level decisions of educational leaders greatly impact the "day-to-day cultures of schools, districts, and the larger system," especially when it comes to the professional learning (Fullan, Hord, & von Frank, 2015, p. 5). In short, principals will follow the lead of the educational leaders at the central office level to guide decision-making in the school buildings they serve. For expectations to be clear and understood, division leaders must model them. "What we expect of principals as they supervise the teachers in their schools should be our

expectation for all district leaders - they supportively and positively guide and monitor everyone's progress toward accomplishing the goals…" (Knight, 2011, p. 12).

Role of the Principal

In a recent article, Aas (2017) maintained that it is the responsibility of school building leaders to lead and help teachers to translate professional learning in practice. This is a difficult task because many traditional principals' training programs were not developed to include learning around supporting professional development, but rather a managerial approach to building leadership. As 'learning leaders' (Dempster et al., 2011) or 'first learners' (Knight, 2011, p. 75), principals set the tone for everything from instructional practice to the culture of the school, including the attitudes and practices around professional learning. As mentioned earlier, schools have been shifting toward organizational learning, which, according to Fiol and Lyles (1985), requires 'four contextual factors' that impact the likelihood that learning can occur within the organization: "...culture conducive to learning, strategy that allows flexibility, an organizational structure that allow both innovativeness and new insights, and the environment" (p. 804). To this end, Dempster et al. (2011) suggested that being a learning leader is not about gathering knowledge; instead, to work toward metacognition and the practice of making sense of what is known. In accordance with this type of leadership, Price (2012) indicated that "principals are central figures in schools whose actions directly shape their school's climate" and punctuates the responsibility of principals to build a learning culture within their school (p. 40). In one study by Leithwood et al. (1995), culture, structure, and strategy were all frequently cited by teachers as having the highest impact on outcomes of organizational learning. The authors summarized a portion of their study with the finding that "among school conditions, culture appears to be the dominant influence in collective learning" (1995, p. 243).

In recent years, principals have grappled with an increase in pressure around facilitating change management and managing the building, while simultaneously pushing to increase student performance and keeping instruction at the forefront of their day (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2015; Fredericks & Brown, 1993; Hallinger, 2011; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinback, 2006). In fact, according to several researchers, building leaders are an 'important resource' for learning communities (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006) and should focus on improving student outcomes while acting as leaders of learning or at least participating in learning experiences alongside their

teachers (Bush, 2009; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). On a national level, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSELs), which outline the role and responsibilities of building principals, include building the "professional capacity of school personnel" and fostering a "professional community for teachers and staff" (2015, p. 14-15). Each of these standards support the establishment and maintenance of a positive culture in a school building and provide the backbone for the evaluation standards of building level principals (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The role of the building principal is multidimensional and requires the ability to create a balance within the dynamics of the school. Sergiovanni (2007) described the main role of the principal as "transforming the school from being an organization of technical functions in pursuit of objective outcomes into an institution" (p. 21). He later defined institutions as "adaptive enterprises that exist not only to get a particular job done but as entities in and of themselves" (p 21). He noted, "the art of balancing the four competing sources of authority [bureaucratic, personal, professional, and moral] in such a way that moral and professional authority flourish without neglecting bureaucratic and personal authority" (p. 27). Balancing these sources of authority in a school building is central to the role of the principal. Malone and Caddell (2000) recognized the demands on the building principal, acknowledging that the principal is "expected to be a manager, instructional leader, motivator, lay psychologist, and public relations expert" (p. 162). Principals should serve in the role of providing the direction for the school and coordinating the support for the professional learning that happens within their school. As noted by Lipton (1993) "a crucial function of school leaders who hope to bring about significant school reform is to improve and support group problem solving" (p. 13). In addition, a more recently published review of research completed by Higgins, Cordingley, Greany, and Coe (2014) indicated that 'effective leaders' are deeply involved in the learning alongside the teachers with whom they work. To lead in such a way

> requires flexibility of thinking which brings a broader range of perspectives to problem interpretation. Flexible school administrators will be most effective in promoting collaborative problem-solving opportunities if they actively seek varied interpretations, while being explicit in their own interpretations; and by placing specific problems within the larger context of the whole school and its overall direction (Lipton, 1993, p. 13).

This emphasis on principals as lead learners is echoed by Knight (2011). Put simply, "if we want students to be learners, then teachers need to be learners...if we want teachers to be learners, then

principals need to be learners" (Knight, 2011, p. 76). The role of principals includes modeling an openness to and an emphasis on learning.

Professional Development and Professional Learning

The practice of continuous learning is critical to maintain effectiveness in the ever-changing climate of education. In a study of more than 300 teachers examining experiences with professional development, interviews with teachers regarding their experience of traditional professional development uncovered that teachers: (a) had low expectations for professional development; (b) did not find that professional development met their needs; (c) complained that professional developers often failed to recognize the expertise that teachers already had; and (d) rarely implemented what they heard about in workshops (Knight, 2019, p. 4). Furthermore, Showers and Joyce (2002) found that fewer than 5% of teachers understand or implement new strategies or skills presented to them during professional development sessions, even when given the opportunity to practice the skill (Johnson, 2016; Joyce and Showers, 2002).

Though these results may not be surprising to those employed by school divisions across America, it is important to note that "the distinction between professional learning and professional development is more than semantics" (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). Traditional professional development is defined by Stewart (2014) as passive, intermittent and dependent on individual teachers to implement into their practices. In contrast to the tenets of professional development, Stewart (2014) defined professional learning as "active learning that allows for teachers to focus on specific needs within their classroom" and noted that these types of learning experiences have been found to improve teaching practices (p. 28). Along the same lines, Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, and Mckinney (2007) defined professional learning as a collaborative process "that, whether intuitive or deliberate, individual or social, result in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs or actions of teachers" (p. 157). Additionally, Knight suggested that there is a specific difference between professional development and professional learning, explaining in a recent conversation that professional development can be delineated as a transfer of knowledge or information whereas professional learning involves the practice of the skills learned, or praxis (J. Knight, personal communication, June 23, 2020). In essence, the movement from professional development to professional learning is imperative in developing and delivering effective learning experiences for teachers (Fraser et al., 2007; Stewart, 2014). As acknowledged by Knight (2019),

> supporting teachers in their implementation of evidence-based practices is much more complex than simply holding a workshop and expecting teachers to implement certain practices…. professional development has to position teachers as partners, and be job-embedded, explicit, and adaptive (p. 115).

Though there are established nuances between professional development and professional learning, there are also levels of quality in professional learning to decipher as well. Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) "define 'high quality' or 'effective' professional development as that which results in improvements in teachers' knowledge and instructional practice, as well as improved student learning outcomes" (p. 3). As outlined previously in this paper, principals are responsible for the professional development as well as the professional learning of teachers, which directly impacts the perception of support and the retention of teachers, and ultimately, student achievement. Noted by Urick (2016), "teachers who view principals as building a positive climate for them through core leadership behaviors, communication of a mission, shared decisions, supportive professional development, a sense of teacher community, and public relations with the broader community, feel more empowered and committed in their position" (p. 435).

When it comes to improving student achievement through professional development, Knight (2019) wrote in a recent article, "When teachers start with a student-focused goal, based on a clear picture of reality, they are often more motivated to hit the goal, and the goal provides an objective standard for assessing effective implementation" (p. 111). One critical action of principals in advancing the growth of instructional practice is supporting the implementation of skills and practices acquired through professional development experiences, or "translating research into practice" (Knight, 2019, p. 101). This is the precursor to professional learning. To circumvent this challenge, "learning opportunities should be aligned to broader initiatives and goals within programs and states that allow connections from research to practice with feedback and reflection" (Stewart, 2014, p. 31). To achieve the tenets of professional learning described by Knight and ensure that the learning impacts student achievement, follow up support should be embedded in the learning plan for teachers and scaffolded implementation of the targeted knowledge and skills.

Andragogy

To provide learning experiences around instructional practices that support implementation in the classroom, school leaders should align professional learning with the tenants of adult learning theory, or *andragogy*. Andragogy supports the needs of adults to have such things as 1) an understanding of why they are learning something, 2) the ability to build on previous experience, 3) an opportunity to identify their readiness to learn, 4) an acknowledgement of their orientation to learning, 5) motivation for learning, and 6) self-concept (Knowles, 1973). Recent studies echoed the importance of considering the needs of adult learners in planning effective professional learning. These studies postulate that in order for professional learning to be impactful, it must: 1) be focused on a specific content or practice, 2) include active learning, 3) employ job-embedded collaboration, 4) align to the participants' professional goals, 5) incorporate coaching expert support, 6) include iterative opportunities for feedback and reflection, and 7) be sustained in duration (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019).

Reflective Practice

One interesting component of adult learning is the presence of intentional reflection opportunities. This brings forth the consideration that for effective learning to occur, the skill of reflection must be developed (Dempster et al., 2011). When discussing the importance of reflection in effective professional learning, it is critical to understand what reflection is and how it is defined. In her study of structured reflection, Lipton (1993) defined reflection "as the reconstruction of experience which involves recasting the situation as a result of clarifying questions, reconsidering assumptions, and generating a wider range of alternative responses or actions" (p. 2). Another study of reflective practice completed by Michael Fullan (2011) acknowledged the fact that reflective practice ensures job-embedded professional learning. In the article, he explained that leaders begin with examining what is working in practice and turn to theory or research to improve the practice or other factors (Fullan, 2011). This supports the idea of Dempster et al. (2011) in which reflection is defined as being more than learning new information or skills, but spending time considering the information and how it relates to existing knowledge.

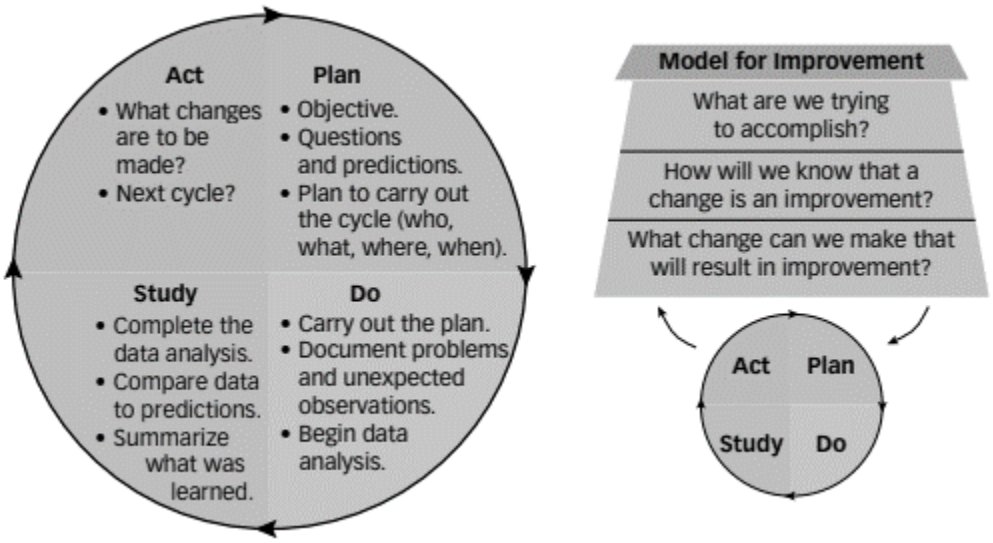
Killion and Todnem (1991) first noted three types of reflection: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action (p. 15). Reagan (1993) defined the three, explaining

> As the terms suggest, reflection-in-action takes place during an activity, such as instructing a lesson, and reflection-on-action occurs following a given event. Reflection-for-action, though, is when "[w]e undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing (both noble reasons in themselves), but to guide future action (the more practical purpose)" (p.190).

Knight (2011) adhered to a similar understanding of reflection but referred to the three types of reflection as: “looking back, looking at, and looking ahead” (p. 37). The practice of reflection is described as an interactive, cyclical process that requires educators to identify challenges, utilize previous experiences to draw determine a course of action, test the course of action, and examine the outcomes of the action steps to determine if the action was successful (Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; Knight, 2017; Schon, 1983). This cyclical process of reflection aligns to the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle and model of improvement developed by Walter Shewhart (1939) and Edward Deming (1986), shown in Figure 1 (Moen & Norman, 2010, p. 27).

Figure 2

PDSA Cycle and Model for Improvement 1991, 1994[1]



[1] From “Circling Back: Clearing up myths about the Deming cycle and seeing how it keeps evolving,” by R. Moen and C. Norman, 2010, *Quality Progress*, 43(11), p.22-28. 2010 by ASQ. Reprinted with permission.

Originally designed as means of quality control in business, specifically in the field of engineering, the Deming Model was initially the process introduced through the leadership practice of total quality management (TQM) developed by Deming (Marion & Gonzales, 2014). The purpose for the Deming Model was to ensure continuous improvement, even if systems were working effectively (Marion & Gonzales, 2014). The iterative processes of this model outlined by Moen and Norman (2009) indicate the practice of reflection as an ongoing component of improvement.

In his meta-analysis of more than 800 studies on effective instructional practices, Hattie (2009) identified goal setting and reflection as an integral component of learning that has a high effect size for learning. In conjunction with the effectiveness of reflective practice in professional learning, Aras (2017) also emphasized the value of metacognition in professional growth. Bullough and Gitlin (as cited in Durcharme & Durcharme) found that a "good teacher" utilizes reflection as a tool for exploring his or her own thinking and practice with the goal of improving his or her craft (1996, p. 83).

While reflection and goal setting have been shown to increase learning experiences in the studies discussed earlier, Roberts (2013) noted that all too often, taking time to reflect on learning is seen as something outside of learning and an act to initiate outside of practice, only if time permits. The common link among this and previously mentioned studies emphasizes the critical need for reflection opportunities to be embedded within professional learning experiences. By the accounts of Aras, (2017), Bullough and Gitlin (1996), Hattie (2009), and Roberts (2013), reflection is a critical component to professional growth and is frequently missing in traditional forms of professional development.

Autonomy

In addition to practicing reflection as a means of continued professional growth, another key component to professional learning is autonomy (Davenport, 2005; Knight, 2019). The concept of adult learning theory that focused on affording adults to the opportunity to have a degree of control over what and how they are learning builds on what Deci and Ryan (2000) termed, self-determination theory, which they frame as people having 3 innate human needs: 1) competence, 2) autonomy, and 3) relatedness. Self-determination theory (SDT) ascribes to the concept that people are most motivated when they feel competent, have control over their lives, and are engaged in positive relationships. Dyer and Fontaine (1995) supported the concept of

autonomy as crucial to professional learning along with “independence, self-determinism, collaboration, and mutual trust” (p. 29). The authors stated that “personal professional growth is not defined, imposed, demanded or actualized through external authority" (Dyer & Fontaine, 1995, p. 29). Aligned to Malcom Knowles’ (1984) adult learning theory and the work of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) which postulated that adults are learners who are self-directed and motivated to learn based on the relevance of the learning to their own experiences and current needs, Knight’s definition of autonomy does not suggest that teachers have ‘wild free choice’ about professional learning. Rather, he suggested that autonomy is the opportunity for empowering teachers to analyze their own practice, set their own goals, adapt their own teaching strategies, monitor their own progress, and determine whether the learning goal has been met (Knight, 2019).

The concept of autonomy is not a concept solely belonging to education. Daniel Pink (2009) acknowledged that in any situation having a “sense of autonomy has a powerful effect on individual performance and attitude” (p. 88). Pink notes that “according to a cluster of recent behavioral science studies, autonomous motivation promotes greater conceptual understanding, better grades, enhanced persistence at school and in sporting activities, higher productivity, less burnout, and greater levels of psychological well-being” (p. 89). Intentional inclusion of autonomy within professional learning supports teachers by ensuring that learning is relevant to their individual needs and has proven to be critical to motivating professionals (Knight, 2019).

Instructional Coaching

One vehicle of professional learning that assists in the improvement of school culture and the support of growth in instructional practices is instructional coaching (Guiney, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). "Coaching develops positive interpersonal relationships which are the energy sources for adaptive school cultures and productive organizations" (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p.8). In addition to embedding reflection and a consistent practice of goal setting into job-embedded professional development, instructional coaching simultaneously supports "cohesive school cultures where norms of experimentation and open, honest communication enable everyone to work together in healthy, respectful ways" (p. 8). Costa and Garmston (1994) noted that "human beings operate with a rich variety of cultural, personal, and cognitive style differences, which can be resources for learning" (p.8). The adaptability of instructional coaching and its fundamental focus on building relationships with teachers and meeting

professional growth needs on an individual basis, also contributes to the development of school culture. Costa and Garmston described skilled instructional coach as being able to

> understand the diverse stages [of intellectual, social, moral, and ego] in which each staff member is currently operating; to assist people in understanding their own and others' differences and stages of development; to accept staff members at their present moral, social, cognitive and ego state; and to act in a nonjudgmental manner" (p. 7).

The ability to meet individuals at their level of readiness for learning is at the heart of instructional coaching (p. 21). Well-trained and experienced instructional coaches can "...convey a valued colleague from where he or she is where he or she wants to be" (p. 2). This ability combined with empowering teachers to choose their learning path provides the autonomy required for learning to occur within adults. Seeking to understand the experiences and needs of teachers allows the coach to tailor support to the individuals with whom he or she works. When implemented appropriately by a skilled coach, instructional coaching is helpful in celebrating diversity within a school building. "Coaching develops positive interpersonal relationships which are the energy sources for adaptive school cultures and productive organizations" (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p. 25).

Not only does coaching build culture, facilitate the improvement of instructional practice, and support, value, and honor the diversity within a school by nature, it can positively impact the likelihood that learning will become praxis when included in professional learning. One study by Costa and Garmston (1994) focused on the impact of instructional coaching in professional learning, included a portion of professional development in which teachers were taught to use instructional practice and then provided instructional coaching to support the implementation of the practice. The findings of the study indicated that "when staff development includes coaching in the training design, the level of application increases to 90 percent. With periodic review of both the teaching model and the coaching skills and with continued coaching classroom application of innovations remains at the 90 percent level" (p. 7).

Another study by Knight and Cornett (2017) found that teachers were more likely to utilize strategies introduced during the workshop when participating in follow up support from an instructional coach when compared to teachers who did not work with a coach. The teachers in the study who worked with an instructional coach following the professional development were observed by the researchers and were described as teaching the strategy with greater fidelity. The teachers interviewed reported that they were more likely to continue to use the unit

organizer and indicated that they were likely to use the unit organizer in the future, as compared to teachers in the same study who did not work with an instructional coach. Though stated differently, results of the study completed by Knight and Cornett align with the findings of an earlier study conducted by Showers and Joyce (1996). Showers and Joyce conducted a similar study in which they found that because of the structure of traditional professional development, “as few as 10 percent of the participants implemented what they had learned” during teacher observations following professional learning around strategies for teaching and curriculum resources (p. 12). After the study, the researchers noted in the results that "coaching helped nearly all the teachers implement new teaching strategies” and that “teachers introduced to the new models could coach one another, provided that the teachers continue to receive periodic follow-up in training settings” (p. 14). When initiating professional development, Desimone and Pak (2017) maintained that “one of the great strengths of instructional coaching is that it reflects foundational ideas about what makes teacher learning effective” (p. 4). This closes the gap between professional development and professional learning as defined earlier.

When teachers grow professionally, student performance follows suit. Instructional coaching is important to student achievement as indicated by Kraft et al. (2018). In a recent meta-analysis of research regarding instructional coaching, Kraft et al. (2018) found that ‘critical features’ of effective professional learning programs including “job-embedded practice, intense and sustained durations, a focus on discrete skill sets, and active-learning” are foundational to instructional coaching practices and associated with “improvements in both teachers’ instructional practice and students’ academic achievement” (p. 3). These findings impress the value of implementing new learning while engaging in professional practice.

When studying the impact of instructional coaches, Knight (1999) identified the approach of the traditional professional developers as a potential ‘barrier’ to implementation which indicated that the format of the traditional professional development was not conducive to classroom impact. The participants in the study were members of two professional workshops focused on the appropriate use of a specific instructional strategy. One workshop was structured around the partnership principles that guide instructional coaching: equality, choice, voice, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. The other was organized around a traditional approach to implementing the instructional strategy with fidelity. The findings indicated that participants were more engaged in the workshop utilizing instructional coaching. Participants in the workshop that utilized instructional coaching support acknowledged that they were more likely

to implement the instructional strategy than the participants of the traditional professional development focused on implementation fidelity. In fact, the teachers in this workshop indicated that they would likely implement new instructional practices in the future (Knight, 1999). Summarizing the study in a later article, Knight (2009) suggested that "teachers will implement proven practices with a high degree of quality if skilled instructional coaches support teachers following the one-time workshop" (p. 16). This is supported by additional authors and studies indicating that trained instructional coaches' partner with teachers to build capacity through reflection, and support professional growth in the moment (Knight, 2019; Teemant, 2013).

Instructional Coaches and Professional Learning

Knight (2004) submitted that "an instructional coach's main task is to help teachers see how research-validated practices offer useful solutions to the problems teachers face" (p. 33). In tandem with this claim, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) outlined the role of instructional coaches proposing that "coaches…provide on-site professional development to assist teachers in making changes in their practice in the direction of the policy" (p. 5). Additionally, Thomas, Knight, Harris, and Hoffman (2022) describe instructional coaches as "the key improvement specialists in the building" (p. 19). Working with a highly trained instructional coach includes a process of goal-setting that begins with the analysis of the needs of students, setting goals for students to achieve, putting effective instructional practices in play, and reflecting to see if the goal has been met, while receiving support from the coach throughout the process until the goal is met (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Knight, 2019; Sweeney & Mausback, 2018). One researcher, Moody (2019), simplified the role by explaining that for instructional coaching to be effective, it must be "individualized, intensive, sustained, context-specific, and focused" (p. 31).

The responsiveness of skilled coaches is directly connected to the growth of teaching practices through professional learning - largely in part due to the alignment of instructional coaching to the needs of adult learners. Through coaching experiences, teachers receive the targeted support they need to implement their learning into the classroom. While coaching is different from mentoring in that mentors are associated with early career teachers (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Hargreaves, 2005; Huberman, 1993), instructional coaching provides support in professional growth that is aligned to learning experiences that experienced teachers prefer. Unlike mentoring, instructional coaching flexibly supports teachers at any stage of their

professional career cycle (Fessler & Christensen, 1992). In a study examining the self-identified needs of experienced teachers, Bressman, Winter, and Efron (2018), wrote that

> teachers, specifically experienced teachers, were interested in professional learning experiences in which they were able to: continuously learn and grow under a mentor's guidance, experiment with creative solutions to problems within a safe and supportive environment and become stronger and more intentional in their teaching (p.164).

To maximize the impact of instructional coaching as a vehicle for professional learning, instructional coaches' function in a non-evaluative relationship. "Eliminating appraisal of performance allows both the instructional coach and teacher to have open dialogue and reflection regarding instructional practices." (Johnson, 2016).

Reinforcing the value of instructional coaching in the practice of professional development, Uzat (1998) acknowledged coaching as it relates to professional development. She claimed, "coaching is viewed as having a positive impact on the implementation of skills acquired in training settings and general, continuous professional development" (Abstract, para 1). The value of instructional coaching is worth considering as billions of dollars are spent on professional development each year (Jacob & McGovern, 2015; Knight, 2012). Often professional development sessions scheduled by educational leaders and principal focus on training for the fidelity of the implementation of an instructional practice or program, not necessarily the implementation of the learning into the classroom (Knight, 2020).

An article written by David Knight (2012) suggested that effective methods of professional development, such as instructional coaching, are often cost prohibitive and are eliminated from professional development options for teachers in schools. The author also stated that 'few studies' have examined or compared the cost of various approaches to professional development (p. 53). With respect to the effectiveness of traditional professional development as compared to instructional coaching, Knight determined that instructional coaching would need to be at least 6.5 to 12.5 times as effective as professional development to be considered cost effective. According to studies quoted by Knight, instructional coaching was found to be upwards of 9.5 times more effective than traditional professional development in small scale studies (p. 75). He notes that even though the initial years of utilizing instructional coaches were more costly than subsequent years due to front-end training of the coaching staff, instructional coaching can be a cost-effective, long-term solution for professional learning (2012).

Coaching Cycles

Coaches partner with teachers in reflective practice through iterative coaching cycles (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2007, 2019; Sweeney, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2020). While there are nuances and variations in the structure of these cycles outlined by each of the authors studied, all cycles researched for this review included a similar process to the Shewhart Cycle (Shewhart, 1939), later known as the Deming Model or as it more recently been named, Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) discussed earlier (Deming, 1986; Moen & Norman, 2010). The iterative coaching cycles used by instructional coaches are intent on the same purpose of the Deming Model and the PDSA Model with the goal of continual improvement (Moen & Norman, 2010).

When partnering with teachers, instructional coaches guide teachers through a process of analyzing their current reality, focusing on an existing challenge, identifying a possible solution to the challenge identified, planning for the implementation of the solution selected, monitoring the plan, and reflecting on whether the initial goal was met (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2007, 2017, 2019; Sweeney, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2020). Throughout this process, instructional coaches employ conversation skills and reflective practice strategies that guide practitioners to determine their own areas of growth, personal learning needs, and in turn learn alongside the teachers they support Aguilar, 2013; Blase & Blase, 1999; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Latham, 2014). Though there is a partnership established in a coaching relationship, the teacher is viewed as the 'reflective decision maker' (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993, p. 45). Trained coaches also have skills that enable them to "respond to the context in which coaching occurs, shaping what they do based on students' needs, teachers' insights, and other important factors" (Knight, 2019, p. 108). An important responsibility of instructional coaches is possessing the ability to individualize professional learning for teachers because the learning that a coach support is "co-constructed by each coach and teacher" (Knight, 2019, p. 108).

Instructional coaches dedicate large amounts of time working directly with teachers in coaching cycles and other types of coaching support. To determine how instructional coaches were spending their time and to examine the impact instructional coaching had on student achievement, Deussen, Coksi, Robinson, and Autio (2007) distributed a survey and interviewed instructional coaches working in Reading First schools within Alaska, Arizona, Montana,

Washington, and Wyoming in the spring of 2006. In the study of 190 instructional coaches across the country, Deussen et al. (2007) examined how instructional coaches were used and found that of the instructional coaches responding to the survey, only 26 percent of their time was spent coaching teachers (p. 10). Deussen et al. determined that at least one state held expectations that "coaches should spend 60-80 percent of their time working directly with teachers" (p. 3). As far as coaching cycles are concerned, recent studies investigating the impact of instructional coaching conducted by Knight (2020) implied that instructional coaches should spend 60-70 percent of their time working with teachers in coaching cycles to have an impact on students.

Roles of the Instructional Coach

As explained by Desimone and Pak (2017), "coaching is a multifaceted endeavor that has taken hold in schools across the country as a mechanism for new teacher induction, ongoing teacher learning, assisting in implementation of new initiatives, and most recently, in helping teachers understand and adapt their instruction to new state content standards" (p. 4). Mentioned earlier, flexibility is found to be fundamental in the practice of an instructional coach. In a study examining the roles and considerations of instructional coaches in Malaysian schools, researchers found that coaches essentially served in the roles of implementer, educator, and advocate throughout the coaching cycles, and would often 'role-shift' according to perceived or voiced needs of the teacher(s) with whom they worked (Kho et al., 2019). This concept of role shifting aligned to the three basic tiers of coaching practice: 1) directive coaching, which positions the coach as the 'expert' responding to a felt need for training or implementation support focused on fidelity to skills and/or practices, 2) collaborative or dialogical coaching, positioning the coach as learning partner who collaborates with the teacher to find learning something new, and 3) facilitative coaching in which the coach functions as a reflective partner, guiding the teacher(s) through metacognitive conversations (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2107, 2020; Moody, 2019).

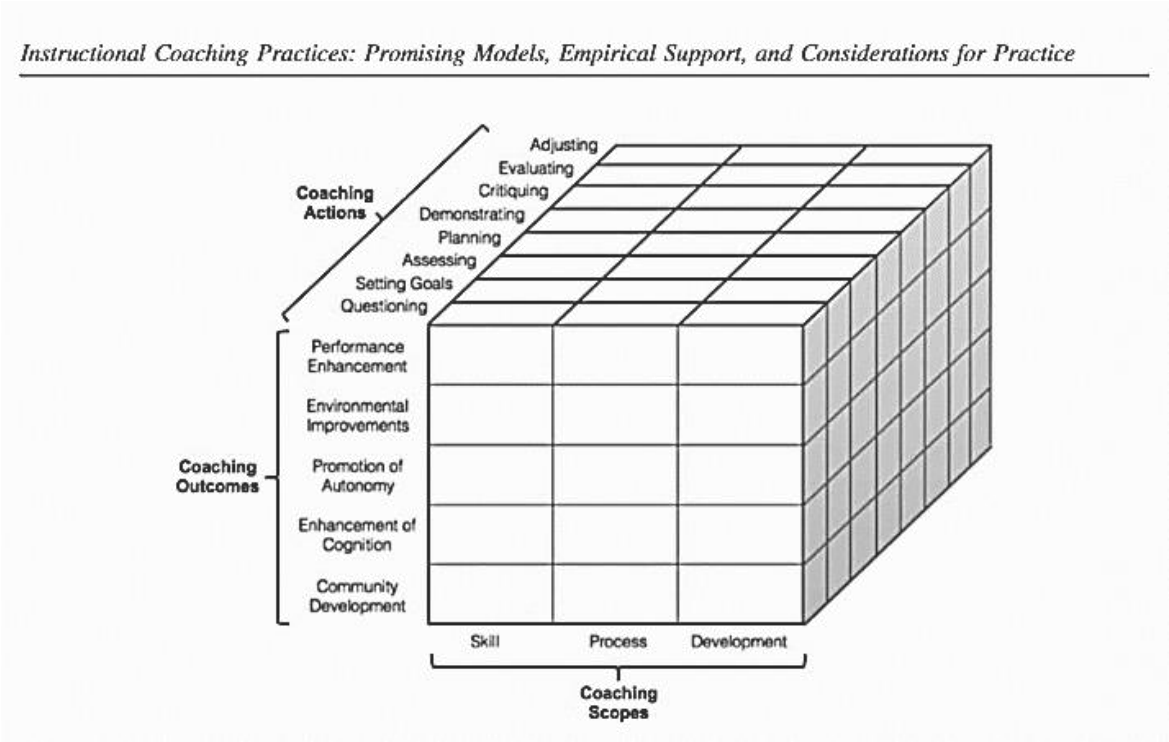
Across these three tiers of coaching, instructional coaches participate in, or guide activities driven by a goal set by the teacher(s) with whom they partner (Knight, 2007, 2019, 2020). Activities completed while working in these tiers included, but are not limited to: modeling, observations, giving feedback using specifically designed tools, elbow teaching, lesson and unit planning support, on-the-spot coaching, field trips to see practice in action,

sharing research, looking at student and teacher data, visualization and guided imagery, role-playing, reflection on recorded lessons, surveys, positive self-talk using positive psychology, writing and journaling, exploring metaphors, and storytelling to gain perspective (Van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019; see also Aguilar, 2013). Depending on the needs of the teachers with whom a coach is working, he or she may need to flexibly shift between these tiers. As one study of 190 instructional coaches completed by Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest concluded, "In practice, the same coach often used both directive and reflective approaches, depending on the situation" (Deussen et al., 2017, p. 20).

A conceptual explanation of how coaching actions, outcomes, and activities support improvement in the areas of skills, processes, development is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows a Multidisciplinary Framework of Instructional Coaching developed by Kurz et al. (2017).

Figure 3

Multidisciplinary Framework of Instructional Coaching[2]



Within each of these actions, outcomes, and scopes, district-level and school-based instructional coaches can assume any combination of ten different lenses within a coaching relationship.

[2] From "A Multidisciplinary Framework of Instructional Coaching ," by A. Kurz, L. Reddy, and T. Glover, 2017, *Theory into Practice*, 56(1), p.66-77. 2010 by ASQ. Reprinted with permission.

These lenses include resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner (Killion & Harrison, 2018).

Due to the collaborative nature of instructional coaching, professional growth, strong professional relationships, and increased student performance are common outcomes of instructional coaching. Highly trained instructional coaches afford teachers the ability to have control over their professional learning experiences, have their competence valued, and find connections to their work. According to Knight (2019), a critical component to successful instructional coaching is autonomy, which leads to the empowerment of teachers to develop professionally in their instructional practice. This notion of autonomy feeds into the motivation of adult learners (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dyer & Fontaine, 1995). In addition to supporting student growth within a school, instructional coaches have also been found to have a correlation to teacher retention. In one instance, De Jong and Campoli (2018) studied curricular coaches across several urban schools to determine their impact on the retention of early-career elementary teachers. The study found that "the presence of a curricular coach was associated with substantial reduction in early-career teacher turnover" (De Jong & Campoli, 2018). It is important to note that in addition to strong relationships with teachers, successful coaches also harbor a strong, positive relationship with the building principal (Aguilar, 2013; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Knight, 2011; Sweeney, 2018).

Approaches to Coaching

When implementing instructional coaching in a school building, there are several approaches that may be employed: peer coaching, cognitive coaching, technical coaching, problem-solving coaching, and reform coaching (American Institutes of Research, 2005; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007; Kurz et al., 2017; Marsh et al., 2008; Neufield & Roper, 2003). These coaching approaches can be categorized or grouped based on the ultimate outcomes and fall into two main branches. Technical coaching, and peer coaching or team coaching, comprise the first branch of coaching approaches which are described as being focused "on innovations in curriculum and instruction" and are "designed to improve teacher's skills and increase the fidelity of implementation" (Kurz et al., 2017, p. 67). The second branch which encompasses the approaches of cognitive coaching and problem-solving coaching with the intended outcome of promoting self-directed reflection on and thus improvement in instructional

practice (Kurz et al., 2017; Showers & Joyce, 1996). The remaining coaching approach, reform coaching, intended to "bring about schoolwide improvement" pulls from both branches in that it develops skills and problem-solving abilities in instructional practice (Kurz et al., 2017, p. 68). Each approach to coaching identified in the work of Costa and Garmston (2002), Glover et al. (2015), Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), Kurz et al., (2017), and Poglinco et al. (2003) is further described and in Table 1.

Table 1

Five Typical Coaching Approaches

Coaching Approach	Purpose	Key Elements
Technical Coaching	improve teachers' skills and increase the fidelity of implementation of instructional programs or interventions	modeling, teacher practice, and observation with feedback; guidance of teachers through the process
Peer Coaching	enhance staff development and offer support for teachers in implementing strategies schoolwide	collective ownership of the change process; mutual support and development of goals, plans and materials; exchange of roles; provision of opportunities to learn in collaboration with peers
Cognitive Coaching	promote reflective, self-directed teacher practice	mediating teachers' metacognition; conversations to prepare; reflection on experiences; problem-solving to find forward direction
Problem-solving Coaching	identify and address concerns with student performance; apply a collaborative problem-solving approach	support for data-based identification of students' needs, goal setting, instructional planning, and progress monitoring
Reform Coaching	bring about schoolwide improvement	support for teacher and principal participation in school leadership; shared decision making, time management, and classroom observations with feedback

Adapted from Costa, A.L., and Garmston, R.J. (2002). *Cognitive Coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*, 2nd Edition. Norwood, Mass.: Christopher Gordon Publishing. Glover, T. A., Ihlo, T., Martin, S.D., Howell Smith, M.C., Wu, C., McCormick, C. & Bovaird, J. A. (2015, February). *Professional development with coaching in RTI reading: A randomized study*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Orlando, FL. Denton, C., and Hasbrouck, J. (2009). A description of instructional coaching and its relationship to consultation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 19, 150-190. Kurz, A., Reddy, L. A., & Glover, T.A. (2017) A Multidisciplinary Framework of Instructional Coaching, *Theory into Practice*, 56:1, 66-77, doi: 10.1080/00405841.2016.1260404; Poglinco, S.M, Bach, A.J., Hovde, K., Rosenblum, S., Saunders, M., & Supovitz, J.A. (2003). *The heart of the matter: The coaching model in America's Choice Schools.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED498335.pdf

Skills and Practices of an Instructional Coach

Regardless of the role of the coach or the approach to instructional coaching that is utilized, successful coaches have specific characteristics and skills that enable them to effectively impact the professional growth of teachers. Instructional coaches need to be "disciplined, organized, and professional" and must also "be flexible, likeable, good listeners with great people skills, and committed to learning" (Knight, 2004, p. 35). Gavriel and Keynes (2014) insisted that effective coaches "need to be skilled listeners and questioners" and that "they must be empathetic, understanding and open-minded without becoming overly emotionally involved" (p. 168). Kurz et al. (2017) added that "coaches utilize communication skills such as paraphrasing, probing for specificity, and open-ended inquiry to guide their interaction with teachers" (p. 67). Though they acknowledged that coaching is "a complex craft", Van Nieuwerburgh and Love (2019) suggested that "at its core, coaching is based on a set of relatively straightforward and easily learned skills" (p. 1).

One of the most important skills is that coaches must be able to quickly build trust with the teachers they coach, as this is the basis of any successful relationship. Results from "The Great Coach Study", which examined the traits and practices of effective coaches, indicated that "the best coaching happens when teachers trust coaches" (Knight, 2016, p.188). According to Knight (2016, p.189), Megan Tschannen-Moran (2014) defined trust as having 'five facets': (a) benevolence, "the confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will not be harmed by the person in whom one has placed one's trust" (p. 21-22); (b) honesty, the belief that "the statements [someone] makes are truthful and conform to 'what really happened'" (p. 25); (c) openness, the "process by which people make themselves vulnerable to others by sharing information, influence, and control" (p. 28); (d) reliability, "the sense that one can depend on another consistently" (p. 33); and (e) competence, "the ability to perform a task as expected, according to appropriate standards" (p. 35).

While reflection has been identified as important in the professional growth of teachers, it is also a skill used by instructional coaches to hone their coaching practice. Howley, Dudek, Rittenberg, and Larson (2014) focused a study on the development of a self-reflection instrument to measure comfort with 'intrusive' and 'non-intrusive' instructional coaching skills (p. 795). Initially, the research team narrowed their study on the utilized coaching skills and practices identified across the body of coaching research. The instrument they developed hinged on

coaches self-evaluating in the areas of providing directive and non-directive feedback to improve capacity, the ability to facilitate others' learning, "developing collegial relationships", modeling practices, determining learning gaps for others, facilitating meetings, demonstrating flexibility "in the face of ambiguity", and "translating the concerns of teachers to administrators and vice versa" (p. 788). The study consisted of three pilots including responses from 102, 242, and 160 volunteers respectively (p. 789, 791 & 793). The reflective statements used in the instrument are included in Table 2.

Table 2

Self-Reflection Statements

Background
I feel comfortable developing collegial relationships with new people
I feel comfortable structuring time in meetings for both agenda items and relationship-building
I feel comfortable playing a leadership role in team meetings
I feel comfortable taking responsibility for modeling new instructional practices
I feel comfortable approaching an administrator with a team concern that may involve conflict or require negotiation
I feel comfortable providing non-directive feedback to colleagues
I feel comfortable helping colleagues identify gaps in their knowledge, and develop plans for addressing gaps in knowledge or practice
I feel comfortable providing directive feedback to colleagues

Adapted from Howley, A.A, Dudek, M.H., Rittenberg, R., and Larson, W. (2014) The development of a valid and reliable instrument for measuring instructional coaching skills, *Professional Development in Education*, 40 (5), 779-801, doi: 10.1080/19415257.2014.919342

While the authors acknowledged that respondents' answers skewed high, they determined that the skills and practices identified on the instrument were aligned to the basic skills and practices of instructional coaches (p. 795). Howley et al. (2014) acknowledged that more studies would clarify the reliability of the instrument, the practices identified on the instrument. Utilizing instruments such as this provide instructional coaches the ability to model the cyclical process of reflective practice that leads to effective professional learning.

Principal and Coach Partnerships

A partnership between the principal and the instructional coach ensures the alignment of the work of the instructional coach to the goals and expectations set established by the principal (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Thomas et al., 2022). Though the effectiveness of instructional coaches is directly related to the characteristics and skills possessed by instructional coaches as discussed earlier in this chapter, the school-wide impact of a highly skilled instructional coach is largely dependent on the support of the building principal (Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Knight, 2020; Thomas et al., 2022). As evidenced in the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, principals are responsible for establishing a culture of learning within their school (National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015). Eisenberg, Eisenberg, Medrick, and Charner (2017) agreed and described the culture of a school as needing to have a "habit of mind and practice" in order to "achieve the mindset that supports coaching" (p. 59). In accordance with this position, Hall and Simeral (2008) focused the responsibility of effective instructional coaching on the principal. They maintained that principals have the responsibility for partnering with coaches to determine a plan for the professional development of teachers and for coordinating logistics and monitoring progress (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

In establishing a school culture in which the impact of instructional coaching can be maximized, principals must structure the culture and coaching program intentionally and nurture a "nonthreatening environment" (Jaquith, 2005; Johnson, 2016). To lay the foundation for such a learning culture, principals must ensure there is a strong focus on best practices of teaching and learning (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Johnson, 2016; National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2015;).

Supporting Instructional Coaches

Principals must have knowledge of the role of the instructional coach because principals play a critical role in ensuring that everyone in the school building clearly understands the role of the coach (Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2011; Sweeney, 2018). This clarity increases the potential for coaches to maximize the impact on instructional practice and promotes job satisfaction among coaches (Knight, 2011). When the principal assigns tasks outside of the role of the instructional coach, such as those perceived by teachers as administrative or evaluative in nature, the effectiveness of the instructional coach is compromised (DeWitt, 2005; Hall & Simeral, 2008; Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2007; Knight, 2011; Knight, 2020). In these

situations, the impact of instructional coaches is greatly reduced and “a sea of negativity surrounds the coach” (DeWitt, 2005, para 1). DeWitt described how principals often mistakenly utilize instructional coaches as “compliance managers”, focusing the role of the coach toward functioning as a district initiative monitor (2005, para 9).

Additionally, principals with successful coaching programs, work in tandem with the instructional coach to achieve the goals for the school. As described by Foltos (2015), "Successful coaching is a result of an interdependent relationship between the principal and coaches" (p. 48). In the summary of a 2019 study completed by Ippolito & Bean, the researchers wrote:

> What is evident, whether we are working with a small cadre of coaches in a single district or involved in evaluating a large coaching initiative, is that coaches view the principal as critical to supporting coaching success and fostering a wider culture of coaching (p. 73).

Some principal supports that help to ensure successful instructional coaching were described by Shanklin (2007) and Ippolito and Bean (2019). The supports that instructional coaches need from principals include clarity of role and job description, development and communication of a shared vision for learning, protected time to meet with teachers, assistance planning professional development for teachers, focus on student learning, holding regularly scheduled meetings with instructional coaches, access to instructional resources, opportunities for professional development in coaching, and feedback on their work (Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Shanklin, 2015).

Conclusion

Professional learning is a challenging component to the work of educational leaders and building level principals. For professional learning to be effective, "administrators must support conditions in their schools that enable teachers to learn from others in a nonthreatening environment" quoted (Jaquith, 2013; Johnson, 2016). Implemented and scaffold appropriately, professional learning plays a critical role in retaining teachers across various levels of experience as well as motivating them to grow professionally in an established learning environment.

When teachers partner with highly trained instructional coaches in professional learning focused on goals for students to achieve, teachers become more engaged with the learning experience and more likely to implement what they have learned (Knight, 2007), thus improving instructional practices and the learning experiences of students. Johnson (2016) stated, “For administrators to effectively implement and hire instructional coaches, they must first have a

deep understanding of instruction coaching" (p. 37). In contrast, Johnson also noted of instructional coaching that "administrators often lack experience or background on how to utilize this professional development model effectively" (p. 39). Though instructional coaching is not the only solution to challenges in professional learning, the growing body of research presents it as a viable option for educational leaders and building level principals to consider in supporting the professional growth of the teachers they serve.

The key for maximizing the impact of a highly trained instructional coach is the intentional support and partnership provided by the principal. As noted earlier, principals are increasingly assigning responsibilities to instructional coaches that are outside of their role and which take time away from the instructional coaches' work with teachers and ultimately decrease the instructional coaches' impact on student achievement (Knight, 2020). With little research focused on how principals can best support to the role of the instructional coach, this study is needed identify specific actions of principals that provide support to the work of instructional coaches and maximize the instructional coaches' impact on teachers and students.

Chapter 3
Methodology

In this chapter, the purpose of the study is presented, followed by the research questions, the research design and methodology, a description of the population and sampling used in the study, data collection procedures, data gathering procedures, instrument design and validation, data treatment and management, a description of data analysis, and a timeline for the study. Chapter 4 addresses the procedures for data analysis while findings of the study as well as conclusions based on the data analysis is discussed in Chapter 5.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and the actions of principals that contribute to those perceptions. The researcher sought to determine the extent to which instructional coaches indicate they are supported by building level principals in the responsibilities of their role. Findings from the study were intended to help principals identify actionable ways to ensure that instructional coaches perceive that their work is supported within the instructional coaches' school buildings.

Research Questions

The study aimed to address the following questions:

1) What do instructional coaches perceive as principals' knowledge of the role of the instructional coach?
2) How do instructional coaches perceive the actions of principals in support of their work?

Research Design - Methodology

The study was completed using a qualitative approach in a nonexperimental phenomenological design (McMillan & Wergin, 2010). "Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). As such, qualitative research provides information that is largely focused on the past or current experiences of participants and is subject to change depending on the manner in which the studied situation changes. Phenomenology design, as defined by McMillan and Wergin (2010), describes and interprets "the experience of people in order to understand the essence of the

experience as perceived by those studied" (p. 90). The design of this study is intended to examine the instructional coaches' perceptions of support provided by principals. The study was nonexperimental in nature as the study is void of interventions over which the researcher has control or influence over the types of responses collected from participants (McMillan & Wergin, 2010).

In this study, the researcher aimed to examine the support and determine the factors that contribute to that support for instructional coaches. Qualitative data were gathered largely through an online survey including open-ended questions as described later in this chapter. Open-ended questions were included in the survey to gauge the perceptions of instructional coaches and determine the factors that influence those perceptions of support from instructional coaches and extract specific influences on how principal support is perceived by instructional coaches (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Responses to the open-ended questions as well as responses collected during focus group interviews in which respondents opted to participate were analyzed and coded to identify themes to explain the reasons for the perceptions of support in a descriptive manner. These qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions included in the survey. In this study, the researcher sought to determine what perceptions exist and identify themes across the factors that contribute to the perceptions of instructional coaches as far as administrator support is concerned. Online survey responses were used to describe the findings.

Instrument Design

The researcher utilized a survey and focus groups to gather information regarding instructional coaches' perceptions of administrative support and factors that influence those perceptions. Open-ended questions included on the survey were created by the researcher based on the expectations of instructional coaching within the school division included in the study. The questions were shared with three instructional coaches prior to initiating the study to ensure that the researcher extrapolated responses from participants that aligned to the purpose of the study. The instructional coaches who responded to the survey questions during the instrument design phase were members of a small advisory group that represent all departments with instructional coaches in the division. The instructional coaches also served within the school division in which the study was held. Responses from the small group of instructional coaches indicated a need for clarity in the phrasing of the questions to ensure that the questions allowed for responses aligned to the research questions. The researcher modified the questions prior to

the completion of the IRB and before submitting the study approval request to the school division. Questions used in the focus groups were the same as those included in the survey. Based on the questions from the online survey that had fewer responses or ambiguous responses, the research modified the focus group questions from the series of questions used in the survey depending on the need to clarify data collected from the qualitative survey.

Instrument Validation (and Reliability)

Qualitative research assumes that "reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 242). Due to the nature of qualitative research, the researcher completing this study had full responsibility for establishing credibility or internal validity of findings of the study. To do this, the researcher established a triangulation of data collected. Triangulation of data requires the use of "two or three measurement points" to establish credible outcomes of a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 244). In this study, triangulation was addressed through the collection of data through a survey with open-ended questions, responses shared during focus group interviews, and the research collected to inform the study. The large number of participants assigned to various departments and school populations provided a wide variety of perspectives from instructional coaches across the school division. This varied group of participants increased validity as it increased “the appropriateness of the inferences made from the data collected” (McMillian & Wergin, 2010, p. 10). The use of triangulation contributed to the reliability of the findings of the study, as well as a journal of the study kept by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher was trained to design and conduct qualitative research interviews through the completion of a course focused on qualitative research offered by Virginia Tech as part of the researcher’s doctoral program. As described in the Population and Sampling section, some of the participating instructional coaches were asked to respond to questions about their immediate supervisor. This could lead the participants to provide socially appropriate answers that may or may not describe the reality of the instructional coaches’ perceptions of support from the principal.

Population and Sampling

The population of the study included a purposive sampling of 154 instructional coaches from a large school division in Virginia. Instructional coaches from this school division were selected purposefully because the division has implemented an instructional coaching model

with consistent expectations for the use of an instructional coaching model over the last three years. Additionally, each of the 73 schools and specialty centers in the large school division is assigned at least one instructional coach.

According to the list of contracted instructional coaches for the 2020-2021 school year, a total of 154 instructional coaches were employed by the school division. The instructional coaches were supported by three different departments at the central office level, with two school-based coaches, and specialize in five different areas of focus: instructional technology, math, reading, Title I math and reading, and the support of new teachers in high turnover schools. Of the 154 instructional coaches, 115 were assigned to work in one school each, while 38 of the instructional coaches were each assigned to multiple schools. Sixty-nine of the 73 schools in the division have more than one coach assigned to work with the teachers in the building. Twenty-six of the schools had five or more instructional coaches as instructional support. Two schools have one instructional coach employed through a full FTE, one of which was responsible for one prep. 43 instructional coaches were assigned the school principal as their immediate supervisor, while the remaining 111 instructional coaches were supervised by specialists and directors as the division level. This variance in assignment provided a wide variety of perspectives and perceptions of principal support. The survey was sent to all 154 instructional coaches. Table 3 outlines the sampling information for instructional coaches surveyed.

Table 3

Breakdown of Instructional Coaches Surveyed

Department	Focus Area	# Instructional Coaches in Focus Area	Level Served	# Instructional Coaches by Level
Teaching and Learning (105 instructional coaches)	Early Learning	4	PreK	4
	Instructional Technology	101	Elementary	44
			Middle	12
			High	10
	Math	15	Elementary	6
			Middle	6
			High	3
	Reading	18	Elementary	12
			Middle	6
	Science	2	Elementary	1
			Middle	1
Title I (39 instructional coaches)	Lead	2	Elementary	2
	Math	11	Elementary	11
	Reading	26	Elementary	26
School Quality (8 instructional coaches)	Exceptional Education	4	Elementary	2
			Middle/High	2
	General Education	4	Elementary	2
		4	Middle	2
School-based (2 instructional coaches)	General Education	2	High	2
Total: 154 instructional coaches				

Data Collection Procedures

To collect the data required for the completion of the study, the researcher utilized an online survey to collect perceptions of principal support and the influential factors from instructional coaches. Survey questions shown in Table 4 were presented in an open-ended format to collect responses to determine the factors that influence the perceptions of instructional coaches (see Appendix A - *Survey Protocol*). As part of the survey, participants volunteered to participate in focus group interviews in groups of no more than five members to elaborate on perceptions of principal support (see Appendix B - *Focus Group Protocol*). Questions for the focus groups were largely taken from the survey protocol, though specific questions were be pulled based on information missing from the surveys. Focus groups were held virtually and recorded using Zoom. Additionally, the researcher recorded the focus groups as a backup if the Zoom meeting did not record properly. The researcher was responsible for developing the transcript of the focus groups for analysis and ensuring that participants utilize pseudonyms during the focus group to further protect responses from being connected to any participant.

Table 4

Survey Questions

Indicate the gender with which you identify. Male Female Non-binary/Gender Fluid
How long have you worked in education? 0-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16-20 yrs 20+ yrs
In which level do you currently work? Elementary Middle High School Other
How long have you worked as an instructional coach? 0-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16-20 yrs
How many schools do you currently serve? 1 2 3 4 5+
Are you assigned to a Title I School? Yes No
What is the title of your immediate supervisor? Principal Specialist Director Other
How would you describe the role of the instructional coach in your building to others?
How would your principal describe the job to others?
To what extent are you asked, by the principal, to contribute to the vision for learning in the building?
How often do you meet with the principal?
What is discussed?
Describe how you spend your day as an instructional coach.
To what extent are you asked to provide professional development for teachers?
What type of follow-up is expected by the building principal?
What types of professional development are you offered by the principal?
Describe your access to instructional resources.
What type of feedback do you receive from the principal regarding your work?
Is there anything that you would like to add regarding how you feel you are supported by building principal?
If you are interested in participating in a brief focus group, please include the email address through which you prefer to be contacted.

Developed using principal supports needed by instructional coaches as identified by Shanklin (2015) and Ippolito & Bean (2019).

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher sought approval to conduct the research study from the school division in Virginia and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (see Appendix C - *CITI Certificate of Completion*, Appendix D - *School Division Request for Research*, & Appendix E - *IRB*). Once the researcher received permission to conduct the study within the school division, the IRB request was submitted to the university via electronic submission. Upon approval, the researcher utilized the instructional coach roster for the school division to invite 154 instructional coaches employed by the division to participate in the survey. An email was sent with an introductory letter explaining the study and inviting instructional coaches to participate in the study (see Appendix F - Introductory Email to Participants). The link to access the electronic survey was included in the introductory email. Informed consent information was provided to participants upon accessing the survey through the link included in the introductory email. Directions included in the survey informed participants that informed consent is obtained upon participation in the survey. Approximately one week after the introductory email is delivered, the researcher asked the research and planning department to send the introductory email to all instructional coaches again as a reminder to encourage instructional coaches to complete the survey. After the second week has passed, the researcher contacted the instructional coaches who indicated interest in participating in the focus group to schedule a focus group with several dates and times. Once a date and time was identified, the researcher sent an invitation to the participants through Zoom.

Data Gathering Procedures

An online survey was used to collect responses regarding perceptions of administrative support and factors that influence those perceptions from instructional coaches. A link to the survey tool was provided to participants in the introductory email. As part of the survey, participants volunteered to participate in a focus group interview. The focus group interview included three participants to elaborate on perceptions of principal support (see Appendix B - *Focus Group Protocol*). If more participants elected to be part of the focus group interviews than needed, the researcher planned to select participants through maximized variation sampling to ensure that instructional coaches from a wide range of schools are represented. The researcher planned to include no more than five participants in each focus group and to schedule a maximum of five focus group interviews. At the request of the school division, the focus group

interviews were facilitated by an individual not employed by the school division and who had completed the Human Subjects Research Determination. Focus group interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the facilitator. After participants in the focus group interviews were identified, the researcher contacted potential participants to schedule the focus group interviews via a Doodle Poll. Once responses to the interview questions were collected, the researcher coded the responses to identify themes and describe the findings of the open-ended questions included in the online survey and the focus group interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher reviewed responses from the online survey and the transcript from the focus group interview to address the research questions. To analyze the responses on the online survey, the researcher downloaded the responses to a spreadsheet, counted responses to multiple choice questions, and color-coded responses from participants to highlight related responses. Finally, the researcher developed categories for related responses and identify themes emerging from those responses. The responses collected in the transcript of the focus group interviews were also color-coded and related responses were categorized to highlight common responses to the questions. Responses from both the online survey and the focus group interview were combined to clarify the responses collected from participating instructional coaches. These themes were used to illuminate findings and guide implications for the findings across all data collected during the study.

Data Treatment

Participants in the study were kept confidential as well as the responses. Fields on the survey did ask for the name of the instructional coach responding to the questions on the online survey or participation in the focus group. Respondents were required to identify the school to which the respondent is assigned. Access to responses collected through the survey were accessible to the researcher and the chairs of the study committee. Focus group participants were asked to select pseudonyms as they begin the Zoom based focus group interview, so that the transcript reflected the coded names. Names of participants were not included as part of the focus group data.

Data Management

Electronic data were stored within the Google Drive provided to the researcher by Virginia Tech. Responses on the survey tool as well as recorded focus group interviews were

maintained in a Google Drive account provided through Virginia Tech and accessed through a password-protected computer. Any files created during the analysis of the data, including informed consent forms, collected through the survey were saved on a password-protected computer. All data were destroyed following a successful defense of the dissertation.

Data Analysis Techniques

Throughout the course of this study, the researcher gathered qualitative data from the free responses to be addressed in the open-ended questions included in the survey and focus groups. Responses gathered through the open-ended questions as part of the survey were coded and thematically analyzed to identify the instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and factors that influence the perceptions of support provided (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Questions utilized in the focus groups were developed based on the themes and patterns uncovered by the researcher through analysis of the survey responses during the vetting process. Analysis of all data collected including the varied assignments and experiences of the participating instructional coaches were triangulated to draw conclusions about perceptions of principal support and the factors that contribute to those perceptions.

Timeline

Following a successful defense of prospectus in Spring 2021, the IRB process was initiated. Upon approval, the online survey was distributed to potential participants in September 2021, followed by data analysis in October 2021. Pending committee approval, a completed analysis of the findings and a discussion of implications for the results of the study was included in the final defense given by the researcher in Fall 2021.

Methodology Summary

This study was completed through a qualitative, phenomenological approach in a nonexperimental design that relies largely on qualitative data to describe the perceptions of principal support from the perspective of instructional coaches. Open-ended survey questions and focus groups were analyzed to describe the perceptions and determine the principal actions that influenced the perceptions of instructional coaches. Chapter 4 presents the data collected and discuss an analysis of the findings of the study.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This chapter describes the results of the data collected in this study. The method of data collection in this study included the completion of an online survey and a focus group interview. The researcher utilized a qualitative approach to the analysis of the data and a descriptive design to explain the findings. The purpose of the study was to examine instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and the principal actions that contribute to those perceptions. The researcher aimed to determine the factors that impacted the coach's perception of administrative support. An overview of the demographics of the instructional coaches who participated in the study is included in this chapter as well as the responses provided by participants in the online survey and focus group interviews.

Population

The population of the study included a purposive sampling of 154 instructional coaches from a large school division in Virginia. Of the 154 instructional coaches invited to participate in the study, 33 (21%) participated in the online survey. Of the 33 responses registered on Qualtrics, only 30 answered questions on the survey. Of those, two (6%) identified as Male, 27 (90%) identified as Female, and one (3%) identified as Non-Binary/Gender Neutral.

Years of Experience. All participants in the online survey indicated working in education for five years or more. Four (13%) participants claimed 6-10 years of working in education, seven (23%) claimed 11-15 years of working in education, seven (23%) claimed 16-20 years of working in education, and 12 (40%) participants claimed to have been working in education for 20 or more years. In contrast to experience in education, 22 (73%) of respondents indicated having worked as an instructional coach for 0-5 years at the time this survey was completed. Seven (23%) participants indicated having worked as an instructional coach for 6-10 years, and only one (3%) indicated working as an instructional coach for 16-20 years. Table 5 illustrates the years of experience in education and in instructional coaching indicated by participants in the online survey.

Table 5

Years of Experience in Education and Instructional Coaching Indicated by Participants in the Online Survey

Years of Experience of Online Survey Respondents	*0-5*	*6-10*	*11-15*	*16-20*	*20+*
Education	0 (0%)	4 (13%)	7 (23%)	7 (23%)	12 (40%)
Role of Instructional Coach	22 (73%)	7 (23%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

Of the instructional coaches who participated in this study, the majority have been working in education for more than 10 years but have been serving as instructional coaches for less than 10 years.

School Context. Responses on the online survey were collected from instructional coaches working in all three levels: elementary school, middle school, and high school. 14 (47%) participants worked at the elementary level, and 11 (37%) worked at the middle school level, while five respondents (17%) worked at the high school level. Of the total responses, 11 instructional coaches (37%) indicated working at a Title I school, while 18 (60%) indicated not working in a Title I school. One (3%) participant entered no response. Over half of the participants, 16 (53%) instructional coaches, acknowledged working at only one school, while the remaining participants in the online survey claimed working between two or more schools. 10 (33%) instructional coaches indicated working at two schools. One instructional coach (3%) claimed to work in three schools, one instructional coach (3%) acknowledged the assignment to four schools, and two instructional coaches (7%) indicated the assignment of five or more schools. Table 6 highlights the school context identified by online survey participants.

Table 6

School Context of Online Survey Respondents

Level	Elementary School 14 (47%)		Middle School 11 (37%)		High School 5 (17%)
Title I	Yes 11 (37%)		No 18 (60%		
Schools Served	1 16 (53%)	2 10 (33%)	3 1 (3%)	4 1 (3%)	5+ 2 (7%)

Most instructional coaches participating in this study indicated that they were assigned to work at the elementary or middle school levels, worked in a non-Title I school, and served two schools or less.

Most instructional coaches, 17 (57%), responding to the online survey identified the principal as their immediate supervisor. 10 instructional coaches (33%) identified a specialist in the central office of the school division as their immediate supervisor, and two (7%) indicated a director in the central office as their immediate supervisor. One instructional coach did not respond to the question.

Three (9%) of the 33 participants on the online survey elected and consented to participate in the focus group interviews. Of the three focus group interview participants, one (33%) acknowledged working as an instructional coach between 5 and 10 years, while another acknowledged working as an instructional coach between 0-5 years. The third participant arrived late and was not present to answer this question.

Data Analysis

Prior to initiating the study or contacting potential study participants, IRB training and study approval were obtained through Virginia Tech. Approval for the completion of the study was obtained from the school division in which the study was intended to be conducted. Once approved, instructional coaches within the school division were invited to complete the online survey. An email was sent to all instructional coaches in the school division including information regarding the purpose of the study, the risks involved when participating, and consent information. Willing participants completed the online survey and indicated whether they were willing to participate in the focus group interviews.

Online survey data were collected during a two-week window. Once completed, participants indicating willingness to participate in the focus group interviews were contacted by the researcher to schedule the focus group interviews through the Zoom platform. Prior to beginning the focus group interviews, the researcher verbally asked for the participants' consent to be recorded during the focus group interview. Consent was obtained from all participants of the focus group interview and the focus group interview was completed. At the conclusion of the focus group interview, the interview was transcribed.

Responses from all participants on the online survey as well as the focus group interviews were reviewed and coded to identify themes. Results from both the online survey and the focus group interviews were organized according to the two research questions posed in this study.

Research Question 1

What do instructional coaches perceive as principals' knowledge of the role of the instructional coach? One question on the online survey and one question in the focus group interview addressed Research Question 1. The questions aimed to identify how instructional coaches described their role and how they perceived the building principal described the role of the instructional coach.

Survey Question 8

How would you describe the role of the instructional coach in your building to others? Themes identified through analysis of the responses to Survey Question 3 and Interview Question 8 from instructional coaches uncovered more differences between the instructional coaches' knowledge of the role of the instructional coach and the perception of the principal's knowledge of the role. Table 7 highlights the themes identified and compares the instructional coaches' perceptions of the knowledge of the role to their perceptions of the principals' knowledge of the role.

Table 7

Themes of Instructional Coaches Perceptions of their and their Principals' Knowledge of the Role

Theme	Instructional Coaches' Knowledge	Principals' Knowledge
Providing Instructional Support	(14) 47%	(9) 30%
Providing Professional Development and Professional Learning	(7) 23%	(4) 13%
Building Relationships	(1) 6%	(0) 0%
Providing Technology Support	(0) 0%	(3) 10%
Supporting School Improvement	(0) 0%	(1) 3%
Completing Data Analysis	(0) 0%	(1) 3%
Supporting Struggling Teachers	(0) 0%	(2) 7%
Supporting Administrative Tasks	(0) 0%	(2) 3%
Acting as a Resource	(0) 0%	(2) 3%

Survey Question 11

Describe how you spend your day as an instructional coach. Instructional coaches who participated in the online survey had related responses. Participants largely indicate that they engaged in general instructional coaching tasks including lesson planning support (37%), modeling lessons (23%), co-teaching (27%), observations (30%), coaching cycles (20%), meetings (33%), developing resources (40%), data analysis (10%), technology support (20%), professional development (17%), relationship building (3%), mentoring or supporting other coaches (7%), remediating students (3%), and assigned duties in the school building (13%). Due to recent challenges related to COVID, securing substitute teachers has become extremely difficult. As a result, three instructional coaches noted serving in the capacity of a classroom teacher at the request of the building principal. Table 8 shows the varied responses by theme given by participants in the online survey.

Table 8

Themes of Instructional Coaches Descriptions of a Day in the Role

Theme	Percent of Responses
Lesson Planning Support	(11) 37%
Modeling Lessons	(7) 30%
Co-teaching	(8) 27%
Observations	(9) 30%
Coaching Cycles	(6) 20%
Meetings	(10) 30%
Developing Resources	(12) 40%
Data Analysis	(3) 30%
Technology Support	(6) 20%
Professional Development Planning and Delivery	(5) 17%
Relationship Building	(1) 3%
Mentoring and Supporting Other Coaches	(2) 7%
Remediating Students	(1) 3%

Table 9 provides examples of instructional coaches' descriptions of how instructional coaches experience a typical day.

Table 9

How Instructional Coaches in the Online Survey Spend their Day

Code	Quote
IC7	Most days included classroom observations, meeting with teachers 1:1, sharing resources, planning mini PLs, attending leadership, team, division meetings, analyzing data -looking for trends, preparing resources to share with teachers, maintaining coaching log and coaching notes.
IC9	We have block scheduling, so within 2 days and 8 blocks, 1 block is teaching, 1-2 blocks are teacher-related duties (grading, planning, calling parents, meetings where I'm a teacher not an IC, etc.), and 1-2 blocks are for research, PD planning, and so forth. 2-3 are talking with teachers in various capacities, from relationship building to brainstorming ideas to coaching cycles, and 1-2 blocks are for secretarial duties such as organizing my calendar, responding to emails, and so forth.
IC11	Bus duty, co-teaching/modelling lessons, attending various planning meetings for grade levels and for [department] related tasks, troubleshooting tech issues as I can, and planning for upcoming units/lessons, etc.
IC20	meet with teachers to plan instruction; Join classrooms to model, co-teach, or support lessons; pull students for remedial lessons.; planning professional development and preparing to meet with teachers for planning meetings
IC28	frequent classrooms providing on-the-spot instructional delivery support; coach teachers in a hands-on method, showing them solutions for what they have indicated is their area of growth/goal(s) focus; meet with collaborative learning teams (also referred to as PLCs) and I keep a tight lens on data, to progress monitor.
IC35	Collaborating with and supporting teachers, creating resources, preparing for, and executing model lessons, collaborative planning with teachers, co-teaching

Participants in the focus group interviews indicated engagement in similar daily tasks. FGR1 added that there is dedicated time to meet with other coaches to support each other and coordinate efforts across the school. One instructional coach specifically noted how the role has changed due to the needs of the school resulting from COVID-19. Table 10 highlights the responses of the instructional coaches participating in the focus group interview.

Table 10

How Participants in the Focus Group Interview Spend their Day

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
I kind of plot out my day to try to see different grade levels and different teachers; I coordinate that with the site-based coach so that we're not you know, spending time in the same room and then we do spend part of the day kind of debriefing about what we saw areas that we feel like we could be supporting; sometimes it's meeting with, um, administration to kind of just look at the school's overarching plan; pretty much like that just kind of scheduling out my day, making sure I'm in there for, um, for classes and to see instruction to support instruction and to support planning	FGR1	140 - 150
I do a lot of classroom observation, where I'm literally just wandering in and out of classes… check in regularly at least once a week with all of my new and second year teachers; having conversations with students how they're seeing their instruction how they're seeing their school, the climate, they their identity as a school; helping out with various tasks anywhere from supporting bus ramp stuff through, helping with technology through the team meetings; meet with, um, administration, when I can find them and have conversations about what they're seeing; I do a lot of conversation having and a lot of listening	FGR2	153 - 172
Pre-COVID… we were talking like about our learner profile, talking lessons different strategies like STEAM or computer science integration. I'd work with teachers individually - a lot of times when they were open to trying to expand how they taught and try something new try. You know, growth mindsets definitely involved in how with the work I do as a coach. During COVID it became very much tech support and I'm trying to break that…I'm still doing a lot of good chunk of tech support and training for teachers… maintaining of clerical work… And so it's tasks that really are kind of more administrative are kind of falling on our plate	FGR3	188 - 207

During the focus group interview, participants were asked to determine whether the expectations for the way the instructional coach spends their day was aligned to the principal's expectations for the daily activities of the instructional coach. As the instructional coach, FGR1 indicated that alignment in vision for the school was perceived, while uncertainty was noted as far as the alignment of goals for the school. FGR2 indicated that alignment between principal and instructional coach expectations were unclear due to a lack of conversation around the topic. FGR3 acknowledged that while instruction was initially the focus for both the instructional

coach and the principal, recent demands resulting from COVID have shifted the focus of the principal. The shift has resulted in a perceived lack of communication and backing, as well as an uncertainty regarding the alignment of expectations between the principal and the instructional coach.

The participating instructional coaches in the online survey agreed on their role of building teacher capacity by serving as instructional support, professional development, and professional learning. Many of the descriptions of the role of the instructional coach provided by participants specifically mentioned engaging in coaching cycles with teachers, supporting the development of lesson planning, co-teaching and modeling, supporting teachers with data analysis, and impacting student achievement. Table 11 highlights the online survey responses regarding the online survey participants' description of the role of instructional coach in building.

Table 11

Instructional Coaches' Description of Role on Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC7	A collaborative partner to support…professional growth and efforts to increase student achievement. sharing resources, assisting teachers…helping teachers align instructional methods/practices… assisting with lesson planning, modeling lesson delivery, co-teaching and analyzing data to target remediation/instruction. In addition, I support the school's School Quality Plan by providing PL and participating in team and leadership meetings.
IC11	Offer support to teachers. Co-teach or model various lessons and strategies. Provide needed district or school specific PD
IC13	Partnering with teachers in numerous ways including, but not limited to, implementation of instructional strategies, development of classroom management plans, and any other instructional needs they might have. I develop and lead professional learning based on the needs articulated by the teachers.
IC20	Support teachers in planning and implementing effective instruction in whole group, small group, and intervention settings
IC25	Work closely with teachers, coaching, co-teaching, training, collaborating, communicating, leading, inspiring creativity, and uplifting the quality of pedagogy one-to-one, in small groups as well as the faculty at large.

(continued)

Table 11 *(cont.)*

Code	Quote
IC27	Help teachers and provide resources, feedback, modeling, and professional development to help building teacher effectiveness
IC29	Supporting the teachers to explain/model/demonstrate best practices
IC33	Support teachers with instructional goals through planning, modeling, co-teaching, reflection, and professional learning.
IC34	Build capacity in teachers which includes guidance on lesson plans, analyzing data, and support with new resources

Like the participants on the online survey, participants in the focus group interview highlighted building teacher capacity through instructional support. Two focus group interview participants, FGR1 and FGR2, also described the role as connected to building relationships and non-evaluative in nature. Table 12 captures the description of the role of instructional coach as described by the instructional coaches participating in the focus group interviews.

Table 12

Instructional Coaches' Description of Role in Focus Group Interviews

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
Someone who builds capacity in teachers…sometimes that comes from the teacher…and sometimes that comes from the building level principal who feels like there's a teacher that needs help with that.	FGR1	24 - 27
Non-evaluative support for all things instructional that happened in the classroom and sidewalks and all relationships between teachers, teachers, teachers, students and teachers and administration	FGR2	31 - 33
I'd like to amend, something I just said, like I'd like to piggyback on what [FGR2] said, with the non-evaluative - I always say that to teachers.	FGR1	35 - 36

The instructional coaches participating in the study provided consistent descriptions of the roles of the instructional coach.

Survey Question 8

How would your principal describe your role to others? Following a description of the role from the instructional coaches' perspective, participants were asked to describe the role as their principal would describe it. Responses from instructional coaches participating in the online survey indicated that their perception of the principal's knowledge of the role was both similar and different in nature. Thirteen (43%) of the 30 participants did not respond to this question. Eight (27%) of participants commonly described instructional support, four (13%) described the role as including professional learning, and three (10%) included technology support as central to the principals' knowledge of the role of an instructional coach. This is directly aligned to many of the descriptions of the role of instructional coaches provided by participants. In some instances, one (3%) participant indicated that the principal would describe the role as focused on instructional planning, one (3%) as data analysis, and two (7%) as support for struggling teachers. In contrast, one (3%) participant acknowledged that the principal would describe the instructional coaching role as including administrative tasks. In one (3%) response, the instructional coach was unsure how the principal would describe the role of the instructional coach. One (3%) participant indicated that the principal would broadly describe the instructional coach as a resource (3%). One (3%) participant indicated that the principal would describe the instructional coach as a resource. Table 13 shows the number of responses from instructional coaches by theme.

Table 13

Themes of Instructional Coaches Perception of Principals' Descriptions of the Role of an Instructional Coach

Theme	Percent of Responses
Instructional Support	(8) 27%
Professional Learning	(4) 13%
Technology Support	(3) 11%
Struggling Teachers	(2) 7%
Instructional Planning	(1) 3%
Data Analysis	(1) 3%
Administrative Tasks	(1) 3%
School Improvement	(1) 3%
General Resource	(1) 3%
Unsure	(1) 3%
No Response	(13) 43%

Table 14 highlights examples of responses from instructional coaches explaining the perceived knowledge of how the assigned principal would describe their role to others.

Table 14

Description of Perceived Principal's Knowledge of the Role in the Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC7	Support…teachers with lesson planning and delivery, classroom management strategies, data analysis, share resources and providing PL.
IC9	I don't know how my principal would describe my role outside of supporting me as an educator and a professional
IC11	Mostly say the same, I think. Would also mention my serving on the leadership team and working on admin.
IC19	Work collaboratively with teachers and administrators to implement evidence-based instructional practices that promote innovation and the purposeful use of technology
IC25	Facilitator, trainer, coach, teacher-leader, and supporter of school quality.
IC27	Works collaboratively with teachers and administrators to improve student achievement.
IC29	Would probably say, 'whatever needs to be done' for the department.
IC33	Support for planning and work with struggling teachers.
IC35	I believe the principal would describe me as a resource.

Participants in the online survey portion of the study suggested that the principal's knowledge of the role of an instructional included instructional support and professional learning.

Interview Question 3

How would you describe the role of the instructional coach in your building to others? Participants in the focus group interview specifically described how they perceived the principal in the building would describe the role on the instructional coach. Both FGR1 and FGR2 mentioned that the principal would describe the role of the instructional coach to include planning and delivering professional development to teachers in the building as well as supporting data interpretation. FGR1 indicated that supporting instructional delivery and planning support would also be included in the principal's description of the role. FGR2 added assessment support, individual teacher support, and support of the school improvement plan as being part of the principal's description of the role of instructional coach. Table 15 provides sample responses to Interview Question 3 of the focus group interview.

Table 15

Description of Perceived Principals' Knowledge of the Role in the Focus Group Interview

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
I think that [the principal] would describe, you know, that I'm there to support teachers in planning… there to support teachers with interpreting their data; help them with their instruction; there to kind of lead the school's vision with professional development and my content area	FGR1	42 - 46
Yeah, you know, to add to that, I think my principal would describe it as a teacher leader; head or be in direct leadership roles within the school based on with professional development, with teams, specifically with data. Intervention strategies process monitoring, a form of assessments and, and the like; be one of the tools of the school at large, as part of a larger school Improvement Plan; One as one intervention services to teachers to help support guide and improve instruction across the board	FGR2	47 - 53

Instructional coaches participating in the focus group interviews also indicated that the principal's view of the role of an instructional coach included instructional support and professional learning.

Interview Question 3b

If those descriptions are different, to what do you contribute those differences? The second part of Interview Question 3 in the focus group interview focused on whether the participants saw the descriptions of the instructional coach role as similar or different. In this response the participants had differing experiences and therefore, different perceptions of support. FGR1 indicated that the descriptions aligned but noted that though semantics might not slightly different. FGR2 indicated that the principal in the building was still learning the role of the instructional coach and did not perceive that the principal would describe the role differently from the description provided by FGR2. Table 16 shows how instructional coaches in the focus group interview perceived the principal's knowledge of the role of an instructional coach.

Table 16

Description of Perceived Principal's Knowledge of the Role in the Focus Group Interviews

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
I don't think [the principal] would use the term build capacity I think [the principal] would use the word support, but I think that we're, we're both in line with what I'm what my job is what my role is	FGR1	56 - 58
My principal that I work with is relatively...hasn't worked with a lot of instructional coaches before, so this year has been about really defining boundaries and borders as to what my area of effect is. My area of influence, and it is a continual negotiation as to where my role is, my effectiveness, and what I can and cannot do as an act of not about what of non-reporting not administrative support for instruction.	FGR2	59 - 64

One participant in the focus group interview indicated that the principal's knowledge of the instructional coach's role was aligned to that of the instructional coach, while the other participant indicated that the understandings were not aligned, citing inexperience in working with coaches as the main reason for the misalignment.

Research Question 2

How do instructional coaches describe the factors they indicate contribute to the principal's support of their work? The remaining questions included in the online survey and in the focus group interviews focused on clarification of the factors that supported the instructional coaches' perceptions of support from the building principal. Overall, participants indicated the following as factors that led to the participants' perceived support from the principal for the role of instructional coach: shared knowledge of the role, aligned expectations, providing time for coaching cycles, providing resources, providing professional growth opportunities, providing reflective feedback for professional growth, regular communication, and having a common vision or goal.

Survey Question 9

To what extent are you asked to contribute to the vision for learning in the school building in which you are assigned? Themes emerging from the responses to Survey Question 9 also varied greatly. Eleven (37%) of the 30 participants in the online survey did not respond to this question. Responses varied greatly from the 19 remaining participants. Five (17%)

participants acknowledged being part of the building of the vision for the school, and nine (30%) indicated being part of supporting the vision of the school. Six (20%) acknowledged that they had no part in contributing to the vision of the school. Two (6%) of the participants acknowledged that they were unsure of their contribution. Table 17 illustrates the themes from responses to Survey Question 9.

Table 17

Themes of Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Contributions to the Vision of the School

Instructional Coaches' Responses				
Building the Vision	Supporting the Vision	No Contributions	Unsure of Contributions	No Response
(5)17%	(9) 30%	(6) 20%	(2) 7%	(11) 37%

Instructional coaches responding to Survey Question 9 clearly explained their experience with contributing to the vision of the school. Table 18 highlights quotes from participants for each of the response types described.

Table 18

Instructional Coaches' Description of Contributions to the Vision of the School

Code	Quote
Building the Vision	
IC13	I feel that I am an important contributor to the vision for learning in our building. I am literally "boots on the ground" gathering data and feedback from teachers and students on what is, and is not, working in teaching and learning in our building. This data informs our vision and our initiatives.
IC28	I am asked often to contribute to the vision for learning in the school building in which I am assigned.
Supporting the Vision	
IC25	I contribute to the vision for learning by providing professional learning opportunities for staff and faculty.
IC16	I am asked often to contribute ideas for our school literacy plan, PLCs, and teaching practices.

(continued)

Table 18 *(cont.)*

Code	Quote
Not Part of the Vision	
IC14	At one point I was part of the discussion and planning for professional learning and vision. Now I have to do things on my own. We don't go deep into any of the work my role requires so all PD is very superficial, and we move on. I don't feel like I am part of the vision.
IC27	Unfortunately, being placed in more than one school does not allow me to fully be able to contribute all my time to the leadership team; therefore, not having the opportunity to contribute to the vision as much as the administration or I would like.
IC15	Very little. I am present at Leadership and SQP meetings as part of the leadership team, however we are not involved in the planning process.
IC19	Not much
IC 35	I was not asked to help contribute
Unsure	
IC35	This varies from school to school and if the principal has confidence and trust in the coach to recognize that person as an instructional leader.
IC20	At one school, I foresee being an equal member of the administrative team and will be encouraged to contribute to the vision for learning. At my other school, while I know I will be asked to contribute to the vision, I am not yet sure to what extent.

Instructional coaches participating in the study indicated that they perceived that their work contributed to supporting the vision of the building to varying levels. Some indicated that they were part of building the vision, while others noted that they did not feel like they were part of the vision or were unsure of their work connecting to the vision of the building.

Survey Question 10

How often do you meet with the principal? What is discussed? Themes emerging from responses to Survey Question 10 illustrated a variance in the experience of instructional coaches' communication with their principal. Ten (33%) participants on the online survey did not respond to this question. Of the instructional coaches who responded, six (20%) indicated meetings to have been scheduled weekly, three (10%) bi-weekly, five (17%) monthly, one (3%) quarterly, three (10%) not regularly scheduled, and four (13%) indicated that meetings with the

principal were held rarely, if ever. Table 19 shows the percentages of responses that related to the themes emerging from Survey Question 10.

Table 19

Scheduled Meetings with the Principal

Responses	Percentage of Responses
Weekly	6 (20%)
Bi-weekly	3 (10%)
Monthly	5 (16%)
Quarterly	1 (3%)
No regular schedule	3 (10%)
Rarely, if ever	4 (13%)
No response	10 (33%)

Of the instructional coaches responding to this question, the majority indicated having a regular weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly meeting scheduled with the principal. Table 20 highlights responses from some of the participating instructional coaches.

Table 20

Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Frequency of Meetings with the Principal on the Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC7	I meet weekly with the leadership team and quarterly 1:1.
IC9	At least once a month for an hour of interrupted conversation.
IC10	We have formal meetings weekly but touch base frequently in between.
IC13	I meet with the principal at least once a month, sometimes as frequently as twice a week as a member of the Instructional Leadership Team, as the New Teacher Coordinator, and to discuss PL.
IC14	I contact my principal, but she does not respond unless it is her personal project. I try to meet with her, but the schedule gets changed often
IC15	[we meet] When one of us needs to ask a question, not regularly
IC34	It is not regularly scheduled. I wish it were.

Instructional coaches noted frequently that the meetings with the principal were either held regularly, scheduled with regularity but often cancelled, or not scheduled at all.

Participants in the focus group interviews acknowledged similar experiences. Both FGR1 and FGR2 indicated that scheduled meetings with the principal vary in the degree of regularity depending on current priorities in the school. In addition, FGR1 and FGR2 noted that though standing meetings were often scheduled in advance, the meetings were frequently cancelled or postponed for other events or situations. Table 21 provides details around the instructional coaches' descriptions of the frequency of meetings scheduled between the instructional coach and the principal.

Table 21

Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Frequency of Meetings with the Principal During the Focus Group Interview

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
That varies, too. I would agree with [FGR2], not enough; most of it would be like at least once a month. But I know some things get, when start things start to get hectic those meetings are kind of rescheduled pushed aside shortened because of other things. That gets put on the back burner, so to speak	FGR1	75 - 79
Usually that varies. Not enough. I go at the beginning of the year and meet with the scheduling secretary who puts me on every month for the entire year and I'm usually one of the first ones that gets bombed for X, Y or Z	FGR2	74; 80 - 83

Instructional coaches participating in the focus group interview indicated that while they begin the year with regularly scheduled meetings with the principal, the meetings are often cancelled when other things take priority.

During the meetings with the principal, five (17%) instructional coaches indicated that they engage in discussions regarding instructional issues in the school, three (10%) acknowledged discussing the work of the coach, and four (13%) noted discussions about meeting agendas or goals. Two (7%) instructional coaches noted discussions with the principal focused on concerns about specific teachers, two (7%) on general instructional performance, and two (7%) administrative tasks. Additionally, one (3%) mentioned discussing upcoming school events during meetings with the principal, one (3%), one (3%) described discussing staff communications, one (3%) noted that progress was celebrated, and one (3%) mentioned

discussions regarding data and planning. Seventeen (57%) of participants did not respond to this portion of the question. Table 22 shows the number of responses according to each theme.

Table 22

Themes of Topics Discussed During Meetings with the Principal

Themes	Percentage of Responses
Instructional issues	5 (17%)
Work of the coach	3 (10%)
Concerns about specific teachers	1 (3%)
General instructional performance	2 (7%)
Meeting agenda and goals	4 (13%)
Administrative tasks	2 (7%)
Staff communications	1 (3%)
Upcoming school events	1 (3%)
Celebration of progress	1 (3%)
Data and planning	1 (3%)
No response	17 (57%)

The open-ended question allowed for instructional coaches to elaborate on the discussions with principals. Table 23 provides details of the topics discussed in the meetings.

Table 23

Topics Discussed in Meetings Between the Principal and the Instructional coach on the Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC9	We discuss current instructional trends, plans and goals, and find solutions to challenges. We also discuss the principal's current vision of the school and how I can keep that vision in mind as I provide support to teachers.
IC11	We would discuss the school as a whole, upcoming events, meetings, PDs. Discuss issues and solutions to those issues.
IC15	Usually, we discuss what tasks I am supposed to accomplish.
IC16	We mainly meet when school quality meetings are coming up, when she has questions about instruction, when she is concerned about us meeting our literacy goals, or something is needed
IC20	We will discuss general administrative issues as well as updates and concerns regarding reading instruction.
IC23	In this meeting all School coaches and admin meet to discuss building goals as well as individual teacher needs/goals.
IC27	We discuss goals, best practices, lesson plans, plc agenda, data, intervention, tasks and lessons, areas of weaknesses
IC29	Sharing what I am doing and who I am working with
IC33	Planning and data
IC35	[School 1] Joint meeting for multiple coaches, professional learning for coaches and teachers, target areas of need, and support. [School 2] Specific concerns.

Responses collected in the focus group interviews were like those gathered in the online survey. Focus group interview participants identified the topics discussed in the meetings with the building principal as including pacing, data concerns, professional development goals, classroom transfer, struggling teachers, and upcoming paperwork. FGR2 noted that the discussion does not focus on specific teachers, but rather overarching goals, progress monitoring, and progress towards goals. Table 24 shows specific statements made by the instructional

coaches who participated in the focus group interview regarding the topics discussed in meetings with principals.

Table 24

Topics Discussed in Meetings Between the Principal and the Instructional Coach in the Focus Group Interview

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
How our teachers doing on pacing, what is the data looking like, are there any areas of concern; if there's a teacher that seems to be struggling for whatever reason, you know with instruction; We discuss PD goals, professional development goals and upcoming professional learning how that's transferring in the classroom; focusing on like school improvement grant goals, we have a lot of like paperwork and things for office of the school quality and just making sure all that information is in there correctly and what we need, you know that we have what we need so sometimes it's very data related	FGR1	92 – 103
I don't really discuss specific or individual teachers; most of our conversations usually have to deal with overarching goals on vision of the school top-down plans; I'm relatively volun-told to do things; conversations about vision of the school what needs to happen, what does success look like within particular departments teams. And how to continue that process continue monitoring and adjusting as we move forward from month to month	FGR2	106 - 116

The instructional coaches participating in the study indicated the topics of the meeting with the principal included instructional trends, data analysis, and professional development requests.

Survey Question 12

To what extent are you asked by the principal to provide professional development for teachers? What type of follow up is expected by the building principal? Themes uncovered from the instructional coaches' responses to Survey Question 12 included a high percentage of requests from the principal for professional development with inconsistent expectations for follow up. Of the 30 participants in the online survey, 10 (33%) did not respond to this question. Eighteen (60%) participants indicated being asked to plan and facilitate professional development at the request of the principal. Thirteen (43%) noted that the professional development they were asked to facilitate with the teachers in the building was

regularly scheduled. Five (17%) of participants indicated acknowledged that there is not a regular schedule for facilitating professional development and/or they are not asked to facilitate professional development in their building. Table 25 summarizes the themes for Survey Question 12 which asked instructional coaches to describe the extent to which the principal requests professional development.

Table 25

Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Extent of Principal's Requests for Professional Development

Theme	Percentage of Responses
Asked to plan and facilitate professional development	18 (60%)
Regular schedule for professional development established by principal	13 (43%)
No regular schedule/Not asked to plan or facilitate professional development	5 (17%)
No response	10 (33%)

Table 25 illustrates that most instructional coaches who participated in the study were asked by the principal to either engage in planning and facilitating professional development for the school or engaged in facilitating professional development on a regular schedule established by the principal.

The themes discussed above were identified by the researcher based on the instructional coaches' descriptions of requests for professional development made by the principal. Table 26 highlights examples of specific statements from online survey participants regarding the extent of professional development facilitated by the instructional coach at the principal's request.

Table 26

Principal Requests for Professional Development According to Instructional Coaches on the Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC9	Leading a school-wide, multi-year initiative in which the principal has asked me to oversee, as well as various presentations to departments and teams
IC13	I co-lead PL in our building.

(continued)

Table 26 *(cont.)*

Code	Quote
IC15	Monthly 15-minute mini sessions for faculty meetings. If I have an idea for a specific PL I will ask and seek approval
IC20	I provide professional development on an as needed basis depending on the needs of each school. At this time, I do not have a regular schedule for PD.
IC25	I am part of the PD team and work collaboratively with the school's designated PD to create purposeful PD learning opportunities for teachers 4 to 5 times during the school year.
IC35	Leaders are different. In some schools executing the professional learning, plan is embedded in the work with the principal and the expectation, so I am not asked to provide PL because there are already plans in place based on needs assessment to support the teachers. Other building leaders do not ask coaches to facilitate professional learning.

Overall, participants in the study indicated that requests from the principal to deliver professional development vary greatly in scope and frequency. Some instructional coaches were asked to plan and facilitate yearlong professional learning programs, while others were not asked to provide professional learning opportunities.

As stated in Chapter 2, professional development is most effective when followed by implementation support and coaching are provided to teachers (Knight, 2004; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019; Showers & Joyce, 1996;). The researcher identified four themes in the instructional coaches' responses to the principals' expectations of follow up after a professional development. Sixteen (53%) of the instructional coaches participating in the online survey did not respond to this question. Five (16%) participants indicated that follow up on professional development was expected to be provided by either the principal or the instructional coach in the building. Eight (26%) indicated that little or no follow up on implementation was expected following a professional development. Table 27 shows the specific breakdown of themes.

Table 27

Themes from Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of the Principals' Expectations for Follow-up

Themes	Percentage of Responses
Principal Follow-up	3 (10%)
Coach Follow-up	2 (6%)
Little Follow-up	2 (6%)
No Follow-up	3 (10%)
Unsure of Follow-up	3 (10%)
No Response	16 (53%)

Of the instructional coaches who responded to this question, the majority indicated that there was either little or no follow up expected by the principal after professional development sessions or that they were unsure of the principal's expectation of follow up. Over 50% of instructional coaches participating in this survey did not respond to this question. Table 28 highlights examples of responses from instructional coaches to Survey Question 12.

Table 28

Principal Expectations for Follow-Up According to Instructional Coaches on the Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC9	No expectations of follow-ups have been indicated (though I still do follow-up to build relationships and foster coaching cycles).
IC11	There hasn't really been much discussion about follow up but that may have been a product of the insane year.
IC14	For follow-up, there isn't much; I try to help teachers then implement what I've covered.; There usually isn't any expectation from above to do what I have trained the teachers on
IC16	I am not expected to follow up, but the admin is supposed to check in and follow up on progress. Our school quality plan has asked us to be more consistent with follow-up this year.
IC31	Follow up is based on the VCSIP plan. It is brought up in action teams as well as VCSIP meetings.
IC32	No follow up.
IC33	Principals look for evidence in walk-throughs.

Instructional coaches indicated inconsistency in principals' expectations for follow-up to professional development.

Survey Question 13

What type of professional development are you offered by the school principal? The overarching theme to the instructional coaches' responses to Survey Question 13 indicated that principals did not provide instructional coaches with professional development in the skills and practices of instructional coaching. Nineteen (63%) participants in the online survey stated that the principal did not provide professional development in instructional coaching. One (3%) participant indicated that while the principal did not offer professional development in instructional coaching practice, the principal provided support in the form of sending the instructional coach to a conference. Two (7%) participants indicated that if professional development was happening in the school, the instructional coach was likely facilitating it. Seven (23%) on online survey participants indicated that the principal encouraged the instructional coach to participate in school-wide professional developments alongside teachers. Many participants in the online survey acknowledged both the school division and the specialist within their content area provided professional development for instructional coaches. Two (6%) participants indicated that they were not sure if the principal provided professional development for instructional coaches and 11 (37%) did not provide a response. Table 29 illustrates themes from the responses to Survey Question 13.

Table 29

Themes from Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of Coaching Professional Development Provided by Principals

Themes	Percentage of Responses
Did not Provide Professional Development in Coaching Skills and Practices	19 (63%)
Sent Instructional Coach to a Conference	1 (3%)
Invited Instructional Coach to School-wide Professional Development	7 (23%)
Unsure if Principal Provided Professional Development	2 (6%)
No Response	11 (37%)

Though instructional coaches indicated that they did not receive professional development from principals in support of coaching skills and practices, instructional coaches did describe their access to general professional development. Table 30 highlights responses from online survey participants to Survey Question 13.

Table 30

Amount of Principal Provided Professional Development for Instructional Coaching

Code	Quote
IC16	I am not offered any by the school principal. My PD is offered by the county and my specialist.
IC19	Not as much as I would like.
IC25	PD by the principal consists of the school's expectations, mission, and vision.
IC28	N/A. I am offered professional development from my division content specialist.
IC34	I am not offered professional learning opportunities. I am sure [the principal] would not care if I joined

While instructional coaches participating in the online acknowledged receiving professional development from outside sources, all noted that the principal did not provide professional development to them.

All three (100%) of the focus group interview participants acknowledged that principals did not provide professional development in instructional coaching. All three (100%) also indicated that the division provided professional development for instructional coaches. Two (66%) of the focus group interview participants stated that the specialist in their content area also professional development in instructional coaching. Table 31 illustrates the responses from the instructional coaches who participated in the focus group interview.

Table 31

Amount of Principal Provided Professional Development for Instructional Coaching

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
We don't have anything from our principal per se…we do receive coaching training with [a division specialist] … but yeah, we do have coaching training. And we also have, you know coaching training with…my department specialist…	FGR1	330 - 334
Zero. Outside of like district wide types of things I very rarely have coaching conversations specific to my craft if there's professional development happening in the school, I'm probably running it	FGR2	349 - 351
Same for me, too. It's through with the work from the county provided like for our work and a specialist… I attend all the PD that she offers school wide and so a lot of, that is, you know based off, like, social emotional learning or. You know, diversity things like that which all the staff are getting so you know I'm kind of a same participant as the teachers in that, but nothing really tailored to coaching.	FGR3	338 - 348

All instructional coaches participating in the study noted that the building level principal did not provide professional development for the instructional coach.

Survey Question 14

Describe your access to instructional resources. Responses to Survey Question 14 from instructional coaches indicated their access to instructional resources was largely provided at the division level. Fourteen (47%) online survey participants stated that they had access to instructional resources provided by the division. Five (17%) acknowledged that the principal provided instructional resources. Six (20%) stated that they relied on their own research for instructional resources. One (3%) participant indicated that the principal does not include the instructional coach when sharing resources. Eleven (37%) did not respond to this question. Table 32 illustrates themes from the instructional coaches' descriptions of access to instructional resources.

Table 32

Themes Regarding Access to Instructional Resources for Online Survey Participants

Themes	Percentage of Responses
Division Provided	14 (47%)
Principal Provided	5 (17%)
Own Research	6 (20%)
No Access	1 (3%)
No Response	11 (37%)

Most instructional coaches participating in this study acknowledged using instructional resources provided by the school division. Table 33 includes sample responses from instructional coaches regrading access to instructional resources provided by principals.

Table 33

Access to Instructional Resources Provided by Principals

Code	Quote
IC9	Access tends to be limited - I don't have a budget. When books are ordered for the admin or instructional team, I am often left out.
IC11	I have access to most of what I need. The [division level] department has done a great job of providing us with lots of resources.
IC13	Unlimited. My principal has never failed to fund any request I have made for materials or resources.
IC16	I have a lot of access to instructional resources provided to me by the county.
IC27	Instructional resources are in buildings, I can network with other coaches to get resources I may need, division curriculum writers and coaches have created and shared a division webpage with resources. I also am part of social media groups that share resources and best practices.
IC31	I have a plethora of resources in google drive, Schoology, and elsewhere online. I would like to get more on the job training on coaching practices--it gets a little lonely sometimes.
IC35	I have access to a wealth of instructional resources from my personal professional library as well as through connections with Content Specialists.

Focus group participants differed slightly from online survey responses. One (3%) indicated that they had access to instructional resources at the division level and another (3%)

indicated that there was no access to instructional resources. All three (100%) focus group interview participants acknowledged relying on other education professionals, including instructional coaches and teachers, as instructional resources. Table 34 shows the focus group interview participants responses to describing their access to instructional resources.

Table 34

Access to Instructional Resources for Focus Group Interview Participants

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
I have a lot of access to instructional materials with my content area. I'm not sure what other instructional resources… certainly helps a lot to have site-based coaches to work with	FGR1	354 - 359
I do not have a budget; I do not have any funding I don't have anything in that regard. That said, actually have a wealth of instructional strategies routines and things like that simply by talking with the other teachers in the school	FGR2	367 - 369
I found that there's a there is a lot of sharing and so, there usually is somebody who's tried something and whether it's, we need to you know come together and try working out, you know, whatever the need is… But yeah, I mean my department, I think, as a as a whole has been good at providing the support and the materials needed to be as successful as we can	FGR3	380 - 399

Though the instructional coaches in the focus groups had answers like those of the online survey participants, the instructional coaches in the focus group indicated relying on other education professionals as sources of instructional resources.

Survey Question 15

What type of feedback do you receive from the principal regarding your work?

Instructional coaches who participated in the online survey described feedback from their principal as varied. Themes that emerged from the instructional coaches' descriptions of the feedback received from the principal regarding their work spanned a continuum from regular and direct feedback to no feedback. Two (7%) described the feedback as regular. Two (7%) described the feedback as direct, while seven (23%) described feedback from their principal as praise. Two (7%) described feedback from the principal as delivered verbally, and three (10%) described feedback from the principal as being delivered in a written form. Four (13%) indicated

that the feedback received from the principal as informal in nature, while two (7%) described the feedback as delivered in a formal format. Eight (27%) stated that they received little, if any feedback from the principal, and one (3%) admitted to receiving no feedback from the principal. Eleven (37%) did not respond to this question. Table 35 shows the themes identified through instructional coaches' descriptions of principal feedback during the online survey.

Table 35

Themes of Feedback from Principals Described by Instructional Coaches Participating in the Online Survey

Themes	Percentage of Responses
Regular	2 (7%)
Direct	2 (7%)
Praise	7 (23%)
Verbal	2 (7%)
Written	3 (10%)
Informal	4 (13%)
Formal	2 (7%)
Little, if any	8 (27%)
None	1 (3%)
No Response	11 (37%)

According to the instructional coaches who responded to this question, only two received regular feedback from the principal regarding their work as an instructional coach. Table 36 provide sample descriptions from instructional coaches in response to Survey Question 15.

Table 36

Themes of Feedback from Principals Described by Instructional Coaches Participating in the Online Survey

Code	Quote
IC9	Very little.
IC11	Mostly just verbal, thank yous and all that.
IC15	My principal has been very complimentary about my work to my specialist, but I do not receive much direct feedback.
IC16	I do not receive much feedback until my end-of-year review usually.
IC25	Although the principal is aware of my work, I haven't reached out to him for feedback. However, I plan to provide a convenient way for him to provide feedback.
IC29	Superficial praise.

While most feedback received by instructional coaches by the principal was given directly, the feedback was largely focused on appreciative statements or praise, but not constructive or specific to the work of the coach.

Participants in the focus group interviews shared a different perspective, though two clearly indicated that they do not get direct feedback from the principal. FGR1 left the focus group interview to attend another meeting. Table 37 highlights focus group interview responses from instructional coaches regarding the type of feedback received from the principal regarding their work.

Table 37

Feedback from Principals Described by Focus Group Interview Participants

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
No response	FGR1	
I really don't get any…I'm not given a lot of feedback, I have to kind of judged based on just comments… that feedback can be either tangential or surface and really doesn't do a lot to help me develop as an instructional coach, as a teacher leader, as non-evaluative support. I get a lot of affirmation in a one-on-one meeting but it's just not consistent, if that makes sense. And …it doesn't feel, sustained. What's the word I'm looking for? Feel helpful. Let's go with that as developing as a professional	FGR2	431 - 455
I feel like I'm respected by [the principal], but I don't necessarily hear it. I do hear it through other, you know, admin. In terms of you know, knowing if [the principal] even recognizes the work; I mean you think [the principal] likes it, but then you don't know so in terms of that reflective conversations I can't say I have that with [the principal]. …trying to get the principal's time for that is very difficult. So, I think I'm respected. I think [the principal] likes what I'm doing, but you know that's a blip sometimes.	FGR3	413 - 430

Both instructional coaches in the focus group interviews noted that they do not receive regular or constructive feedback from the principal.

Survey Question 16

Is there anything you would like to add regarding how you feel you are supported by the building principal? Of the instructional coaches who noted perceived support from the building principal, regular meetings, trust, autonomy, support, aligned knowledge of the role, and

a relationship with the principal emerged as themes in the instructional coaches' descriptions of perceived support from the principal. Fifteen (50%) of participants in the online survey elected not to respond to this question. Table 38 shows the themes that emerged from the instructional coaches' descriptions of principals' actions that contribute to a perception of support from the principal.

Table 38

Themes from Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of Principals' Actions Contributing to a Perception of Support

Theme	Percentage of Responses
Regular meetings and communication	5 (17%)
Reciprocal trust	5 (17%)
Autonomy	1 (3%)
Support with time and resources	7 (23%)
Aligned understanding of the role	6 (20%)
No response	15 (50%)

The themes identified in Table 38 contribute to the instructional coaches' perception of support from the principal. Table 39 highlights some of the responses shared by instructional coaches in their responses to Survey Question 16.

Table 39

Principals' Actions that Positively Impact Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Support from the Principal

Code	Quote
IC7	With having regular scheduled meetings and participating in leadership team meetings, I became a contributing partner to help support the school's vision and growth plan
IC9	I feel trusted by my building principal to enact positive change in the school. …my professionalism and need for confidentiality with my clients are respected.
IC13	I can see how it would be more difficult to be a coach who did not have this kind of relationship with their direct supervisor. My boss trusts me and does not follow behind me looking over my shoulder. This gives me the autonomy needed to do my job free from the perception of being an agent of administration.
IC14	I have found if I put together my plans ahead of time and then present them to the principal, then I have more success accomplishing tasks for my role. I guess it is good to have that autonomy, but sometimes I wish there was a little more interest in what I'm doing.
IC15	I am not sure my principal sees the value in coaching partnerships.
IC23	My current principal really understands the nature of my job and responsibilities.
IC27	My experience has been about building relationships with the administration so that I can be trusted and be used to the highest capacity.

Eight (27%) of the online survey participants added that they did not feel supported by the principal for the following actions taken by the principal: 1) being left out of conversations, 2) lack of interest in the work of the instructional coach, 3) not valuing the principal and instructional coach partnership, 4) lack of regular meetings, 5) lack of knowledge of the role of the instructional coach, 6) lack of recognition and appreciation for the work of the instructional coach; and 7) lack of trust in the instructional coach. Table 40 highlights some of the responses shared by instructional coaches who participated in the online survey regarding actions taken by the principal that negatively impact the instructional coach's perceptions of support.

Table 40

Actions Negatively Impact Perceived Support from the Building Principal

Code	Quote
IC9	I feel left out of many conversations. I don't need to participate in them, I would like to know what the information is sooner so I can better support administrators by maintaining message consistency and support teachers by helping them marry administrative expectations and teachers' comfort, ability, knowledge, time, capacity, and emotional needs.
IC14	I think that the principals in general have the district goals and then their personal goals for a school. There is a lot in play so sometimes our visions don't always sync up. I have found if I put together my plans ahead of time and then present them to the principal, then I have more success accomplishing tasks for my role. I guess it is good to have that autonomy, but sometimes I wish there was a little more interest in what I'm doing.
IC15	I am not sure my principal sees the value in coaching partnerships.
IC16	I wish I had more support regarding my role as a support and not someone who is there to check up on teachers. I wish we had regular meetings.
IC19	I am not sure that current events are putting me in a very "appreciated" mindset, to be completely honest. :(
IC31	I would like the principals to truly understand what is expected of me on a daily basis--sometimes the water gets muddy, and I become an extension of administration
IC35	Every school is different and school leaders run things differently as well. Some are comfortable and trust the professionals in their buildings while others do not have the capacity to use all resources wisely.

Participants in the focus group interviews acknowledged the challenges in the COVID school environment and agreed with the online survey participants about the positive impact on the perception of support that a principal understands the role and purpose of an instructional coach. Focus group interview participants also agreed with one another that increased communication between the principal and the instructional coach was an effective step toward positively influencing the instructional coach’s perception of support from the principal. Additionally, participants indicated the alignment of the goals of the instructional coach and the principal as a means of increasing the instructional coach’s perception of support from the principal. FGR3 further noted that engaging the instructional coach in tasks outside of the role expectations negatively impacted the perception of support from the principal. Table 41

highlights the responses from instructional coaches who participated in the focus group interview.

Table 41

Instructional Coaches' Descriptions of Principals' Actions that Impact Perceived Support from Principals During the Focus Group Interview

Quote	Code	Transcription Line
No response	FGR1	
I feel that if opportunities were available, if more information was presented, and an understanding of the role of the instructional coach could be understood by both administration and coach and others involved, I think a much more streamlined understanding would allow the coaches… to be utilized in a stronger regard and be more effective	FGR2	461 - 465
I do think [the principal] respects the work, like I said before. But, in terms of like a cohesiveness... Sometimes, [the principal] tries to make coaches be evaluative and then we have tried to kind of push back a little bit on that because we don't we don't want to be in that role; there's a blurring of our jobs with admin sometimes in our building, but then on the flip side, sometimes we also I will feel like I'm lucky in the fact that my school is not taking our coaches and made them subs like and I know that some schools have had that issue, especially now with quarantining and COVID and all and they kind of view the quote coaches just another extra body, so my school has been good about not doing that, and so I feel like that does show some respect for our role; in terms of like us all having the same vision moving forward, I think that it's bit disjointed and it may just be a sign of the times	FGR3	491 - 503

Summary

Though responses from instructional coaches participating in the online survey and the focus group interview had varied responses on some of the questions in this study, all participants were aligned in the principal actions that contribute to the instructional coach's perception of principal support. Regardless of whether they had experienced these actions by the principal, the following themes emerged in responses from instructional coaches participating in this study. Instructional coaches perceived the following as positively impacting their perceptions of support from the building principal: 1) the principal and instructional coach have a

shared knowledge of the role and daily expectations of the instructional coach, 2) the principal provides protected time for instructional coaches to engage in coaching cycles with teachers, 3) the principal provides or supports the instructional coach with access to instructional resources, 4) the principal affords the instructional coach access to professional growth opportunities, 5) the principal provides the instructional coach with regular reflective feedback for professional growth, 6) the principal and instructional coach engage in regular communication, 7) the principal should establish the expectations of implementation following a professional development led by the instructional coach, and 8) the principal and the instructional coach have a common vision or goal.

Chapter 5 examines the primary as they related to the findings of the study, as well as the implications and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine instructional coaches' perceptions of principal support and the actions of principals that contribute to those perceptions. The researcher collected data to understand instructional coaches' perceptions related to support in their role from the building level principal. The researcher provided additional insights to the field of instructional coaching with applied research focused on building partnerships between principals and instructional coaches. The research questions that drove the study were: 1) What do instructional coaches perceive as principals' knowledge of the role of the instructional coach? 2) How do instructional coaches perceive the actions of principals in support of their work?

A qualitative approach was utilized for the study as it provided insight into the experiences of instructional coaches working with principals in one K-12 school division. In this case study, a descriptive analysis was utilized to examine the findings of the study and thematic analysis was used to determine potential implications for building level principals who work with instructional coaches. The study included data gathered through an online survey and a focus group interview. Thirty instructional coaches from various level in one K-12 school division participated in the study. The results of the study were compared to the research reviewed in Chapter 2. The research used findings from the study to identify implications for principals in terms of establishing an environment in which the instructional coach perceived principal support for the role of the instruction coach.

Summary of Findings

The findings from this study were based on responses from individual instructional coaches participating in an online survey as well those from instructional coaches who agreed to participate in a focus group interview. Those findings, the related data, and the supporting research follow.

Finding 1

Instructional coaches identified varied perceptions of the principal's and instructional coach's knowledge of the role of the instructional coach. Data gathered in both the online survey and the focus group interviews indicated that a shared knowledge of the role of the instructional coach varied between schools. In some instances, instructional coaches indicated

that the principal's knowledge of the role of an instructional coach aligned with their own, while in others, instructional coaches indicated that the principal did not have enough experience working with instructional coaches to have full knowledge of the role. Survey Question 3 asked instructional coaches to describe the role of the instructional coach to others and to describe how the principal in their building might describe the role to others. Though 47% of the instructional coaches responding to the survey described the role of the instructional coach as providing instructional support, only 30% indicated that they thought the principal would describe the role in the same way (see Table 7). Another description of the role provided by instructional coaches including providing professional development and professional learning. While 23% of instructional coaches responding to the survey identified providing professional development and professional learning as part of the role of the instructional coach, they indicated that only 13% of their principals would include it in the role description (see Table 7). Additionally, 6% of instructional coaches participating in the survey described the role as including building relationships, while none indicated that their principal would include relationship building as part of the role of the instructional coach (see Table 7). Participating instructional coaches also noted that their principal would likely describe the role of the instructional coach as including technology support (10%), school improvement (3%), data analysis (3%), supporting struggling teachers (7%), administrative tasks (3%), and serving as a resource (3%) (see Table 7). Instructional coaches participating in the survey did not indicate any of these as related to their role. Still other participants in the study noted that they were unsure of the principal's knowledge of the role of an instructional coach. One instructional coach who participated in the focus group interview cited the principal's inexperience in working with instructional coaches as the main reason for the misalignment in the understanding of the role (see Table 16). Table 9 and Table 10 highlight a sampling of descriptions from instructional coaches regarding how they spend their day. Table 11, Table 12, Table 14, and Table 15 provide examples from the online survey and the focus group interview of the instructional coaches' descriptions of the knowledge of their role from their perspective as well as the principals' perspective.

Results from this study are supported by research reviewed in Chapter 2. Instructional coaches participating in this study described the role of the instructional coach as including resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner. Killion and Harrison (2018) described these roles as central to the work in instructional coaches in earlier research.

Research supports the finding that instructional coaches need the principal to have clarity for the role and job description of the instructional coach (Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Knight, 2018; Shanklin, 2015). This clarity is important as principal must be able to clearly articulate the role of the instructional coach and ensure that everyone in the building also understands the role of the coach (Knight, 2011; Johnson, 2016; Sweeney, 2018). Similar to the description of the experiences of some of the instructional coaches in this study, Johnson (2016) noted that principals are not equipped with the experience or knowledge to effectively use instructional coaching as a model of professional development in the building.

Finding 2

Instructional coaches described their contributions to the vision of the school as varied across schools. The instructional coaches indicated that the extent to which they are asked to contribute to the vision of the school varied greatly between schools. Responses from participants in both the online survey and the focus group interview implied that the instructional coaches' opportunity to contribute, or lack thereof, either positively or negatively impacted the perception of support from the principal. Instructional coaches in this study indicated their involvement as building the vision of the school (17%), supporting the vision of the school (30%), not being asked to contribute to the vision of the school (20%), or being unsure of how they contribute to the vision of the school (7%) (see Table 17). For examples of the responses provided by instructional coaches, refer to Table 18.

Earlier research supports the finding that instructional coaches need to have a shared vision for learning to feel supported by the principal. Shanklin (2015) and Ippolito and Bean (2019) noted that instructional coaches need development and communication of a shared vision for learning from the building principal. Additionally, a study by Ippolito and Bean (2019) found that coaches view the principal as crucial to supporting the success of coaching in a building and establishing a culture conducive to coaching.

Finding 3

Instructional coaches described meetings with the principal as irregularly scheduled. While some instructional coaches in the study indicated meeting and communicating with the principal occurred weekly (20%) or bi-weekly (10%), most instructional coaches acknowledged frustration when planned meetings between the instructional coach and the principal were often the first to be cancelled in the wake of pressing events or situations (see

Table 19). Still other instructional coaches noted that they rarely meet with the principal (13%), if ever (see Table 19). 10% of instructional coaches who participated in the study indicated that no regular meeting schedule was established between the principal and the instructional coach (see Table 19). Table 20 and Table 21 show examples of the instructional coaches' responses to Survey Question 10, which asked coaches to describe the frequency of the meetings scheduled between the instructional coach and the principal. In response to Question 10, instructional coaches also indicated the topics discussed during meetings between the instructional coach and the principal. These topics included goals for the school, upcoming events, professional development requests, and struggling teachers, among other topics. Tables 23 and Table 24 highlight specific descriptions of the topics discussed during meetings between the instructional coach and the principal.

Earlier research supports these findings. One study found that instructional coaches needed principals to communication during regular meetings between the principal and the instructional coach (Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Shanklin, 2015). Stewart (2014) noted that the communication allowed for alignment between the work of the coach and the broader initiatives as well as reflection and feedback on the connections between research and practice. Still more research noted that "a crucial function of school leaders who hope to bring about significant school reform is to improve and support group problem solving" (Lipton, 1993, p. 13).

Finding 4

Instructional coaches described a continuum of experiences regarding principal requests for professional development and expectations of follow up. Instructional coaches participating in this study indicated that varied amounts of professional development were requested by the principal and expectations for follow up on professional development concepts also varied among principals. In response to Survey Question 12, 18 (60%) of the instructional coaches acknowledged being asked by the principal to plan and facilitate professional development (see Table 25). 43% indicated that they were asked to facilitate professional development on a regular basis (see Table 25), while 17% of instructional coaches participating in the study indicated that the principal either did not ask the instructional coach to plan and facilitate professional development or the principal did not establish a regular schedule for professional development at the school (see Table 25). Examples of instructional coaches'

descriptions of requests for professional development made by principals can be found in Table 26.

In response to Survey Question 12, instructional coaches also described varied expectations from principals with respect to follow up after professional development. Themes that emerged in the descriptions from instructional coaches included expectations of follow-up from the principal (10%), follow-up from the instructional coach (6%), little follow-up (10%), and no follow-up (10%) (see Table 27). 10% of the instructional coaches indicated that they were unsure of the principal's expectations of follow-up (see Table 27). 53% of instructional coaches participating in the survey did not respond to Survey Question 12 (see Table 27). Some instructional coaches described the follow-up actions to include walkthroughs, while others indicated that no follow up was expected by the principal. Sample responses from instructional coaches describing principals' expectations for follow-up are highlighted in Table 28.

Earlier research encouraged principal follow-up to effectively support the work of instructional coaches. Price (2012) described principals as "central figures in schools whose actions directly shape their school's climate" and punctuates the responsibility of principals to build a learning culture within their school (p. 40). Knight (2019) noted that the principal is critical to advancing the praxis of instructional skills learned through professional development experiences. Several studies noted professional development being most effective when followed up implementation support or coaching (Showers & Joyce, 1996; Knight, 2004; Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). In addition to planned follow up, Shanklin (2017) and Ippolito and Bean (2019) found that instructional coaches needed assistance planning professional development for teachers.

Finding 5

Instructional coaches participating in this study stated that the principal did not provide professional development in the skills and practices of instructional coaching. In this study, instructional coaches acknowledged the importance of professional growth in the skills and practices of instructional coaching. While two (7%) instructional coaches noted that the principal encouraged them to attend professional development sessions alongside the teachers in the building, 19 (63%) instructional coaches in the study indicated that the principal did not provide professional development experiences related to the skills and practices of instructional coaching (see Table 29). All instructional coaches who participated in the focus

group interview indicated they do not receive professional development support from their principals in the area of coaching skills and practices. One instructional coach, FGR2, who participated in the focus group interview stated, “Outside of like district wide types of things I very rarely have coaching conversations specific to my craft if there's professional development happening in the school, I'm probably running it” (see Table 31). Table 30 and Table 31 highlight instructional coaches’ responses regarding the extent to which principals provide professional development supporting the skills and practices of instructional coaches.

Though instructional coaches in this study indicated that the principal did not provide professional development in the skills and practice of coaching, research suggests that principals should provide this type of training for instructional coaches. Shanklin (2015) and Ippolito and Bean (2019) found that instructional coaches needed the support of the principal in providing the instructional coaches with opportunities for professional development in coaching skills and practices. Additionally, Hall and Simeral (2008) note that principals have the responsibility of partnering with instructional coaches to identify targets for professional development as well as providing constructive feedback for the instructional coach’s professional growth.

Finding 6

Instructional coaches indicated that access to instructional resources was largely provided by sources other than the principal. Twenty (67%) instructional coaches participating in the online survey indicated that they receive instructional resources from other sources than the principal (see Table 32). Sources for access to instructional resources cited by the instructional coaches included the division (47%) and through research completed on their own (20%) (see Table 32). One (3%) instructional indicated no access to instructional resources was available (see Table 32). Participants noted they could access resources from the division, other teachers, or their own research. Similarly, 100% of instructional coaching participating in the focus group interview indicated that the principal did not provide access to instructional resources for instructional coaches. All the participants in the focus group interview indicated utilizing teachers and other instructional coaches for instructional resources. During the focus group interview, one instructional coach, FGR3, said, “I found that there's a there is a lot of sharing and so, there usually is somebody who's tried something…” (see Table 34). Table 33 and Table 34 highlight specific responses from instructional coaches regarding access to instructional resources.

The researcher found one study that noted the importance of the instructional coach's access to instructional resources as related to perceptions of support. In that study, supports found to impact the perception of support from the principal included the instructional coach having access to instructional resources provided by the principal (Ippolito & Bean, 2019).

Finding 7

Instructional coaches indicated they do not receive regular feedback from the principal regarding their work. Two (7%) instructional coaches who participated in this study indicated receiving regular feedback regarding their work from the building principal (see Table 35). Other instructional coaches described the feedback as direct (7%), while 7(23%) described feedback as focused on praise (see Table 35). With respect to the structure of the feedback, 2 (7%) instructional coaches described the feedback as being delivered formally, and 4 (13%) described feedback from the principal as being delivered in an informal manner (see Table 35). Additionally, 2 (7%) of instructional coaches who responded to Survey Question 15 described the feedback from the principal as delivered verbally, and 3 (10%) described the feedback as delivered in writing (see Table 35). Nine (30%) of instructional coaches indicated receiving little or no feedback from the principal regarding their work. Instructional coaches' descriptions of the type of feedback received from principals are highlighted on Table 36 and Table 37.

Several researchers framed the importance of receiving feedback as related to professional growth. Fullan (2011) acknowledged the need for reflective practice during job-embedded professional practice. Likewise, Stewart (2014) noted that for learning opportunities to meaningful, they should be planned alongside implementation with feedback and reflection. Additionally, Shanklin (2015) and Ippolito and Bean (2019) identified the need for instructional coaches to receive feedback on their work from the principal to perceive support.

Finding 8

Instructional coaches identified that the relationship between the principal and instructional coach contributes to the coach's perception of support from the principal. Instructional coaches who participated in this study described the relationship between themselves and the principal very differently. Actions described by instructional coaches as contributing to their perception of support from the principal included fundamental needs of instructional coaches identified in the research. Five (17%) of instructional coaches described regular meetings and communication between the principal and the instructional coach as

contributing to their perceptions of support (see Table 38). Five (17%) of participating instructional coaches indicated that reciprocated trust was a contributing factor to the instructional coaches' perception of support, and one (3%) noted having autonomy in their work as a contributing factor (see Table 38). Seven (23%) of instructional coaches described an alignment of the knowledge of the role of the instructional coach as contributing to the instructional coaches' perception of support from the principal (see Table 38). Still other instructional coaches identified that principal provided time and resources contributed to the instructional coaches' perception of support from the principal (see Table 38). See Table 39 and Table 41 for examples of the descriptions provided by instructional coaches regarding the actions taken by principals that contribute to a perception of principal support.

Though some instructional coaches described a close working relationship, others described having no relationship with the principal, which negatively impacted the instructional coaches' perception of support. Eight (27%) of the online survey participants added that they did not feel supported by the principal. Reasons for a lack of perception of support described by instructional coaches included lack of meetings and communication, lack of principals' interest in the work of the instructional coach, principals not valuing the partnership with the instructional coach, principals' lack of knowledge of the role of an instructional coach, principals' lack of recognition of the work of the instructional coach, and the principals' lack of trust in the instructional coach. In response to Survey Question 16, one instructional coach directly stated, "I am not sure my principal sees the value in coaching partnerships" (see Table 40). Table 40 includes additional examples of the instructional coaches' descriptions of principals' actions that negatively impact the instructional coaches' perception of principal support.

Research suggests that the relationship between the instructional coach and the principal has implications for the culture of the entire building. Aguilar (2013), Knight (2011), and Sweeney (2018) acknowledge that a positive relationship between the instructional coach and the principal harbors positive relationships between teachers. In a later article, Knight (2020) indicates that having the support of the principal is instrumental in the impact of a skilled coach. This support includes the principal's actions to structure the culture and coaching program with intention, and develop an environment conducive to learning (Johnson, 2016; Jaquith, 2005). In all, successful coaching depends on the relationship between the principal and the instructional coaches (Heineke & Polnick, 2013; Foltos, 2015).

Implications of Findings

Following a review of the findings in this research, implications for principals were identified to support instructional coaches in the building. The implications are outlined below with brief explanations.

Implication 1

School division personnel could provide principals and instructional coaches specific training on the roles and expectations for the work of the instructional coach. To effectively support the work of the instructional coach, principals must completely internalize the roles and expectations of the instructional coaches working in the building. Principals could work with the instructional coach(es) in the building to establish clear expectations for the work of the instructional coach and principal in supporting the goals for the school. Clarity regarding how the instructional coach and the principal work together to support the instructional practices positively impacts the instructional coaches' perceptions of support from the principal. Responses from instructional coaches in this study implied that principals and instructional coaches consistently have varied knowledge of the role of the instructional coach. This implication is a result of *Finding 1*.

Implication 2

The principal could include the instructional coach in the vision of the school and provide clear parameters to guide the instructional coach's contribution to the vision. Participants in this study indicated that they look to the principal to provide the guidelines for how the instructional coach contributes to the achieving the vision for the school. Providing a structure for instructional coaches to work with teachers in a way that is supported by the principal with appropriate expectations for follow up and alignment to the vision for the school positively impacts the instructional coach's perception of support from the principal. This implication is a result of *Finding 2.*

Implication 3

The principal and instructional coach could engage in regular meetings to communicate needs, exchange feedback, and align their efforts in the building. The data gathered during this study implied that regular communication between the principal and the instructional coach is critical to the instructional coach's perceptions of support from the

principal. Principals could plan and attend meetings with the instructional coach throughout the year to maintain a consistent conversation around the needs of the school and how the instructional coach is working to meet the needs. The principal could also work to be responsive to requests for meetings from the instructional coach. For instructional coaches in this study, consistent communication about how their work is aligned to that of the principal and meeting regularly to monitor progress toward the goals of the school positively impacts the instructional coach's perception of support from the principal. This implication is a result of *Finding 3.*

Implication 4

The principal could establish clear expectations for teachers regarding the implementation of the knowledge and skills provided by the instructional coach during building level professional development. Principals are responsible for setting the expectations of learning for the teachers in the building. This study indicated that when principals monitor the use of the skills provided by the instructional coach during building level professional development provided the instructional coach, the instructional coaches' perception of support from the principal could be positively impacted. This implication is a result of *Finding 4*.

Implication 5

The principal could actively support the professional growth of instructional coaches in the building and provide time for instructional coaches to attend learning experiences outside of the building related to the skills and practices of instructional coaching. This study implied that when professional growth of the instructional coach is supported by the principal with time and resources, the instructional coach perceives support as a professional in the building. Principals could also work with instructional coaches to examine learning following the professional development experience. Providing time to focus on the instructional coach's professional growth could positively impact the coach's perception of support from the principal. This implication is a result of *Finding 5*.

Implication 6

Principals could provide instructional coaches access to the resources they need to complete their work with teachers in the building. School divisions typically provide the instructional resources necessary to support the work of the teachers. Instructional coaches utilize the district resources when supporting the teachers. This study implied that when

principals can provide resources to instructional coaches that support the vision of the school and their work as instructional coaches, the perception of principal support could be positively impacted. This implication is a result of *Finding 6*.

Implication 7

Principals could provide protected time for reflective conversations about specific feedback regarding the work of the instructional coach. In accordance with *Implication 3,* instructional coaches in this study indicated that they needed more feedback about their work to perceive support from the principal. Principals could establish regular, protected time to reflect on the work of the instructional coach and provide feedback. Taking the time to provide feedback to the instructional coach could positively impact the coach's perception of support from the principal. This implication is a result of *Finding 3* and *Finding 7.*

Implication 8

The principal could establish a trusting relationship with the instructional coach(es) in the building. Instructional coaches in the study indicated that a trusting relationship between the instructional coach and the principal was central to their perception of support. Principals could make intentional efforts toward developing a strong relationship with instructional coach. When principals build a trusting relationship with the instructional coach, the instructional coach's perception of support could be positively impacted. This implication results from Finding 8

Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of the study was to determine the instructional coaches' perceptions of support from the principal and identify the factors that influence that perception. This study included one K-12 school division in central Virginia. Future researchers may want to consider competing a thematic analysis of replicating the study across multiple school divisions in Virginia to develop more generalized findings and implications. Though an online survey and a focus group interview were utilized to collect data, future researchers may want include more participants for the focus group interviews to provide a balance to the online survey responses.

Future researchers may want to consider comparing how the building principal perceives their support of the instructional coach to the perception of the instructional coaches in their building. While this study focused on the instructional coach's perceptions of support from the

principals, teachers' perceptions of support from the instructional coach would add depth to the understanding of the culture of the school. Additionally, a future study examining the feedback provided to instructional coaches by the immediate supervisor would provide a deeper look into the feedback and professional growth support provided to the instructional coach.

Summary

Chapter 5 provided a summary of the findings in the study, discussed implications resulting from the findings, outlined conclusions, and suggested directions for future studies. In summary, responses to the online survey and the focus group interviews in this study indicated that the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding principal support vary by school. Additionally, the study indicated that principals could engage in intentional actions to positively impact instructional coach's perceptions of support. Participants in this study indicated that to impact the instructional coach's perception of principal support for their work, principals could clarify knowledge of the role of an instructional coach, provide the instructional coach with time and resources to work with teachers, afford access to professional growth opportunities, provides the instructional coach with regular reflective feedback for professional growth, engage in regular communication and meetings with the instructional coach, establish the expectations of implementation following a professional development led by the instructional coach, and include the instruction coach in the vision for the school.

Reflections

In general, there was not an overall agreement among coaches on responses except for the fact that all instructional coaches participating in the study indicated that principals did not provide professional development to instructional coaches in coaching skills and practices, nor did they provide instructional resources to instructional coaches. While the number of responses reached 30 (20%) of those invited to participate, the timeline for the study may have impacted the number of responses to the online survey as it was distributed during the week teachers returned to school. During this time, instructional coaches were busy supporting teachers in preparing for the school year and may not have been as focused on checking email during the weeks the survey was open. In addition, the study was completed during the first month returning to school following an 18-month closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, the instructional coaches were less focused on reflection and more focused on supporting teachers as they readied to welcome students back to school after a year and a half of virtual learning.

Another impact on the data collected included the number of survey respondents who skipped several questions, minimizing the experience of those instructional coaches in the data.

Overall, the study was completed as initially planned. The completion of the study was a positive experience and proved helpful to the researcher in identifying actionable steps for principals in supporting the work of the instructional coach. In most cases, participants openly provided insight into their experiences with principal support. This enabled the researcher to develop manageable action steps in response to each of the findings. Though some responses to the online survey and focus group interview questions showed a lack of a perception of support from the principal, participating instructional coaches generally framed the response in a productive manner.

References

Aas, M. (2017). Leaders as learners: Developing new leadership practices. *Professional Development in Education*, *43*(3) 439–453. doi: 10.1080/19415257.2016.1194878

Abrahamsen, H., & Aas, M. (2015). School leadership for the new time; heroic or distributed? *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, *8*(1), 68–88. doi:10.1080/0220620.2016.1092426

Aguilar, E. (2013). *The art of coaching: Effective strategies for school transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

American Institutes for Research. (2005). *Conceptual overview: Coaching in the professional development impact study*. Washington, DC: Author.

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Ed)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Arnett, T. (2021, February 11). *3 Ideas to Help Teacher Thrive This Year* [Web log comment]. Retrieved from: https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-ideas-help-teachers-thrive-year

Arnold, M., Teacher, E., Governor, M., Bain, M., Baldwin, M., Barrack, R., & Bernard, M. (2015). *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers (2011)*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/regulations/uniform_performance_stds_2011.pdf

Blase, J., & Blase, J. (1999). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *35*(3), 349–378.

Bressman, S., Winter, J. S., & Efron, S. E. (2018). Next generation mentoring: Supporting teachers beyond induction. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, *73*(1), 162-170. Elsevier Ltd. Retrieved November 3, 2021 from https://www.learntechlib.org/p/202405/

Byington, T. (2010). Keys to successful relationships. *Journal of Extension*, *8*(6). Article Number 6TO. Retrieved from http://www.joe.org

Bush, T. (2009). Leadership development and school improvement: contemporary issues in leadership development. *Educational Review*, *61*(4), 375–389. doi:10.1080/00131910 903403956

Coburn, C. E., & Woulfin, S. L. (2012). Reading coaches and the relationship between policy and practice. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *47*(1), 5–30. doi:10.1002/RRQ.008

Colton, A., & Sparks-Langer, G. (1993). A conceptual framework to guide the development of teacher reflection and decision making. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *44*(1) 45–54 doi-org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1177/0022487193044001007

Cornett, J., & Knight, J. (2008). *Research on coaching*. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from https://resources.corwin.com/sites/default/files/Cornett_Knight_2008.pdf

Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (1994). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*, 2nd Edition. Norwood, Mass.: Christopher Gordon Publishing.

Creswell, J. W. (2015). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development in an era of reform.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Davenport, T. H. (2005). *Thinking for a living: How to get better performance and results from knowledge workers.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78.

De Jong, D., & Campoli, A. (2018). Curricular coaches' impact on retention for early career elementary teachers in the USA: Implications for urban schools [Abstract]. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 7(2) doi: 10.1108/IJMCE-09-2017-0064

Denton, C., & Hasbrouck, J. (2009). A description of instructional coaching and its relationship to consultation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 19, 150–190.

Deming, E. (1986). *Out of the crisis*. Cambridge, MASS: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Center for Advanced Engineering Study. p 88.

Dempster, N., Lovett, S., & Fluckiger, B. (2011). *Content and strategies to develop school leadership: A selected literature review*. Report. Melbourne: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

Desimone, L. M., & Pak, K. (2017). Instructional coaching as high-quality professional development. *Theory Into Practice*, 56:1, 3–12, doi:10.1080/00405841.2016.1241947

Desimone, L., Porter, A., Garet, M., Yoon, K., & Birman, B. (2002). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: Results from a three-year longitudinal study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *24*(2), 81–112. Retrieved from http://outlier.uchicago.edu/computerscience/OS4CS/landscapestudy/resources/Desimone-Porter-Garet-Yoon-and-Birman-2002.pdf

Deussen, T., Coksi, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. (2007). *"Coach" can mean many things: Five categories of coaches in Reading First* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007-No. 005). Washington, DC: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, REL Northwest Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497517.pdf

DeWitt, P. (2005, November 15). 3 ways instructional coaches are used as compliance officers. [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/education/opinion-3-ways-instructional-coaches-are-used-as-compliance-officers/2015/11

Drago-Severson, E. (2012). The need for principal renewal: The promise of sustaining principals through principal-to-principal reflective practice. *Teachers College Record, 114*(12), 1–56.

Ducharme, E. R., & Ducharme, M. K. (1996). Reflecting on reflecting. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *47*(2) 83–84.

Dyer, J., & Fountaine, O. (Spring 1995). Can a zebra change its spots? Some reflections on cognitive coaching. *Education Canada, 35*(1), 28–32.

Eisenberg, E., Eisenberg, B., Medrich, E., & Charner, I. (2017). *Instructional coaching in action: An integrated approach that transforms thinking, practice, and schools.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Fessler, R., & Christensen, J. C. (1992). *The teacher career cycle: Understanding and guiding the professional development of teachers.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Fiol, C., & Lyles, M. (1985). Organizational learning. *The Academy of Management Review, 10*(4), 803-813. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/258048

Firestone, W. A., Mangin, M. M., Martinez, M., & Polovsky, T. (2005). Leading coherent professional development: A comparison of three districts. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41(3)*, 413–448. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1177/0013161X04269605

Foltos, L. (2015). Principals boost coaching's impact. *Journal of Staff Development*, 36(1), 48–51,61,75. Retrieved from http://login.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/scholarly-journals/principals-boost-coachings-impact/docview/1655685403/se-2?accountid=14826

Fraser, C., Kennedy, A., Reid, L., & Mckinney, S. (2007). Teachers' continuing professional development: Contest concepts, understandings, and models. *Professional Development in Education, 3*(2), 153–169.

Fredericks, J., & Brown, S. (1993). A look at the literature: School effectiveness and principal productivity. *NASSP Bulletin*, *77*(56), 9–16.

Fullan, M. (2007). *Leading a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M., Hord, S. M., & von Frank, V. (2015). *Reach the highest stand in professional learning: Implementation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin

Gavriel, J., & Keynes, M. (2014). Coaching skills [Abstract]. *Education for Primary Care*, *25*(3), 168–170.

Glover, T. A., Ihlo, T., Martin, S. D., Howell Smith, M. C., Wu, C., McCormick, C., & Bovaird, J. A. (2015, February). *Professional development with coaching in RTI reading: A randomized study.* Paper presented at the meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Orlando, FL.

Griffith, D. (2020). There's no place like school [Special Section]. In A. Rebora, N. Thiers, T. Laskowski, S. McKibbon, & L. Robertson (Eds.). *Educational Leadership*, 77, 90–91.

Guiney, E. (2001). Coaching isn't just for athletes. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *82*(10), 740. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1177/003172170108201006

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge: New York, NY.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2), 125–142.

Hall, P. A., & Simeral, A. (2008). *Building teachers' capacity for success: A collaborative approach for coaches and school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Hargreaves, H. (2005). Educational change takes ages: Life, career, and generational factors in teachers' emotional responses to educational change. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 967–983.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Heineke, S., & Polnick, B. (2013). Pave the way for coaches: Principal's action are key to shaping roles and relationships. *Journal of School Development*, 34, 48–51

Higgins, S., Cordingley, P., Greany, T., & Coe, R. (2014). *Developing great teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development.* London: Teacher Development Trust Retrieved from https://tdtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/DGT-Summary.pdf

Howley, A. A, Dudek, M. H., Rittenberg, R., & Larson, W. (2014). The development of a valid and reliable instrument for measuring instructional coaching skills, *Professional Development in Education*, *40*(5), 779-801, doi: 10.1080/19415257.2014.919342

Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. (2013). *Instructional leadership: A research-based guide to learning in schools,* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Huberman, M. (1993). *The lives of teachers.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ippolito, J., & Bean, R. (2019). A principal's guide to supporting instructional coaching. *Educational Leadership, 77*(3), 68–73 Retrieved from https://www.neisd.net/cms/lib/TX02215002/Centricity/Domain/7376/A%20Principals%20Guide%20to%20Supporting%20Instructional%20Coaching%20Educational%20Leadership.pdf

Jacob, A., & McGovern, K. (2015). *The mirage: Confronting the hard truth about our quest for teacher development*. Brooklyn, NY: TNTP: Reimagine Teaching Retrieved from https://tntp.org/publications/view/the-mirage-confronting-the-truth-about-our-quest-for-teacher-development

Johnson, K. G. (2016). Instructional coaching implementation: Considerations for K-12 administrators. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development, 1*(2), 37–40. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1158169.pdf

Kho, S., Saeed, K. M., & Mohamed, A. R. (2019). Instructional coaching as a tool for professional development: Coaches' roles and considerations. *The Qualitative Report, 24*(5), 1106–1132. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol24/iss5/13

Kearsley, G. (2010). Andragogy (M. Knowles). The theory into practice database. Retrieved from http://tip.psychology.org

Killion, J. P., & Harrison, C. (2018, Winter). Coaches' multiple roles support teaching and learning. Tools for Learning Schools, *Learning Forward*, *21*(1), 1–3 Retrieved from https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/tools-winter-2018.pdf

Killion, J. P., & Todnem, G. R. (1991). A process for personal theory building (Cover story). *Educational Leadership*, *48*(6), 14. Retrieved from: http://login.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9109020745&scope=site

Klein, C. (2021, February 10). *Takeaways from distance learning* [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/article/takeaways-distance-learning

Knight, D. (2012). Assessing the cost of instructional coaching. *Journal of Education Finance, 38*(1), 52-80. Retrieved July 8, 2020 from www.jstor.org/stable/23259121

Knight, J. (1999, April). *Partnership learning: Putting conversation at the heart of professional development*. In Proceedings of the 1999 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, QC, Canada, 19–23.

Knight, J. (2000, April). *Another damn thing we've got to do: Teacher perceptions of professional development.* In Proceedings of the 2000 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, LA.

Knight, J. (2004). Instructional coaches make progress through partnership: Intensive support can improve teaching. *JSD*, National Staff Development Council, *25*(2) 32–37.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Knight, J. (2016). *Better conversations: Coaching ourselves and each other to be more credible, caring, and connected.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Knight, J. (2017). *The impact cycle: What instructional coaches should do to foster powerful improvement in teaching.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Knight, J. (2017, July). *The impact cycle*. Presented at KUCRL Learning Conference, Lawrence, Kansas. Retrieved from: https://www.instructionalcoaching.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Jimknight_Workbook_7_14_KUCRL.pdf

Knight, J. (2019, May 1). Instructional coaching for implementing visible learning: A model for translating research into practice. *Education Sciences*, 9, 101. doi: 10.3390/edusci9020101

Knight, J. (2019, November). Why teacher autonomy is central to coaching success. *Educational leadership: A culture of coaching*, *77*(3), 14–20.

Knight, J. (2020). *The definitive guide to instructional coaching: Seven factors for success.* Manuscript in progress.

Knight, D., & Knight, J. (2021). *Instructional coaching during a global pandemic: Examining survey responses.* Manuscript in progress.

Knight, J., & Cornett, J. (2009). *Studying the Impact of Instructional Coaching*. Kansas Coaching Project at the Center for Research on Learning and Kansas Coaching Project at the Center for Research on Learning and Department of Special Education.

Knowles, M. (1984). *The adult learner: A neglected species* (3rd Ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing.

Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *88*(4), 547–588.

Kurz, A., Reddy, L. A., & Glover, T. A. (2017). *A Multidisciplinary framework of instructional coaching, theory into practice*, 56:1, 66-77, doi: 10.1080/00405841.2016.1260404

Leithwood, K., & Aitken, R. (1995). *Making schools smarter: A system for monitoring school and district progress*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. & Steinbach, R. (1995). An organisational learning perspective on school responses to central policy initiatives. *School Organisation*, *15*(3), 229–252.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. & Steinbach, R. (2006). *Changing leadership for changing times*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Leithwood, K., & Seashore-Louis, K. (2011). *Linking leadership to student learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lipton, L. (1993). *Transforming information into knowledge: Structured reflection in administrative practice*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED361903.pdf

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

Malone, B., & Caddell, T. (2000). A Crisis in leadership: Where are tomorrow's principals? *The Clearing House*, *73*(3), 162–164. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/30189529

Marion, R., & Gonzales, L. (2014). *Leadership in education: Organizational theory for the practitioner* (2nd ed.). Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press.

Marsh, J. A., Sloan McCombs, J., Lockwood, J. R., Martorell, F., Gershwin, D., Naftel, S., Le, V., Shea, M., Barney, H., & Crego, A. (2008). *Supporting literacy across the sunshine state.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG762.pdf

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (*4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Moen, R. D., & Norman, C. L. (2009). *The history of the PDCA cycle.* Paper presented at the Seventh Asian Network for Quality Congress, Tokyo, Japan. Retrieved from https//demin.org/uploads/paper/PDSA_History_Ron_Moen.pdf

Moen, R. D., & Norman, C. L. (2010, November). Circling back: Clearing up myths about the deming cycle and seeing how it keeps evolving. *Quality Progress*, *43*(11), 43. Retrieved from https://apiweb.org/circling-back.pdf

Moody, M. S. (2019). If instructional coaching really works, why isn't it working? *Educational Leadership*, *77*(3) 30–35.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2015). Professional standards for educational leaders. Reston, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity—Promises & practicalities*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute Program on Education and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Retrieved from https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/pubs/Coaching_NeufeldRoper.pdf?_ga=2.44179042.77753632.1593176676-1130760575.1593176676

Pink, D. (2009). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us.* New York: Penguin.

Poglinco, S. M., Bach, A. J., Hovde, K., Rosenblum, S., Saunders, M., & Supovitz, J. A. (2003). *The heart of the matter: The coaching model in America's Choice Schools.* Philadelphia,

PA: University of Pennsylvania, Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED498335.pdf

Price, H. E. (2012). Principal-teacher interactions: How affective relationships shape principal and teacher attitudes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *48*(1), 39–85.

Reagan, T. (1993). Educating the "reflective practitioner": The contribution of philosophy of education. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, *26*(4), 189–196.

Robinson, V. M. J., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why. best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Sawyer, I., & Stukey, M. (2019). *Professional learning redefined: An evidence-based guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, Basic Books.

Schon, D. (1988). Coaching reflective teaching. In P. Grimmett, & G. Erickson, (Eds.) *Reflection in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press. 19–30.

Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Luca, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J., & Kleiner, A. (2000). *Schools that learn.* New York: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2007). *Rethinking leadership: A collection of articles* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press.

Shanklin, N. (2007). What supports do literacy coaches need from administrators in order to succeed? *Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse* Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530330.pdf

Shewhart, W. (1939). *Statistical method from the viewpoint of quality control.* Washington: The Graduate School, The Department of Agriculture.

Showers, B., & Joyce, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Educational Leadership*, *53*(6), 12. Retrieved from: http://login.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=9603172616&scope=site

Stewart, C. (2014). Transforming professional development to professional learning. *Journal of Adult Education*, *43*(1) 28–33.

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: a review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7, 221–258.

Sweeney, D., & Mausbach, A. (2018). *Leading student-centered coaching: Building principal and coach partnerships.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Teemant, A. (2013). A mixed-methods investigation of instructional coaching for teachers of diverse learners. *Urban Education*, 49, 574–604.

Thomas, S., Knight, J., Harris, M., & Hoffman, A. (2022). *Evaluating instructional coaching: People, programs, and partnership*. Lawrence, KS: One Fine Bird Press.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Tschannen-Moran, B. (2020). *Evocative coaching: Transforming schools one conversation at a time* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Urick, A. (2016). The influence of typologies of school leaders on teacher retention A multilevel latent class analysis. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54*(4) 434–468 doi: 10.1108/JEA-08-2014-0090.

Uzat, S. (1998, November 4). *Cognitive coaching and self-reflection: looking in the mirror while looking through the window.* [Abstract]. Paper presented at the 27th Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association. New Orleans: LA. Retrieved from: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED427064.pdf

Van Nieuwerburgh, C., & Love, D. (2019). *Advanced coaching practice: Inspiring change in others.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Virginia Department of Education (2011). *Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*. Richmond, VA: Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/regulations/uniform_performance_stds_2011.pdf

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

Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. Dallas, TX. National Staff Development Council.

Appendix A

Survey Questions

Survey Protocol

[By completing the survey, participants are confirming informed consent.]

Introduction: Thanks for making time to complete the survey. I am interested in understanding how instructional coaches perceive support from building principals as well as identifying the factors that influence those perceptions. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with a question you are free to skip it. If you work in more than one school, please select one school to consider when answering the survey questions. Responses to the questions on the survey are anonymous - please make every effort to omit information about specific people

Background

1. How do you identify?
2. How long have you worked in education?
   0-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16-20 yrs 20+ yrs
3. In which level do you currently work?
   Elementary Middle High School Other
4. How long have you worked as an instructional coach?
   0-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16-20 yrs
5. How many schools do currently you serve?
   1 2 3 4 5+
6. Are you assigned to a Title I school?
   Yes No
7. What is the title of your immediate supervisor?
   Principal Specialist Director Other

Principal Support

8. How would you describe the role of the instructional coach in your building to others?
   a. How would your principal describe the job to others?
9. To what extent are you asked to contribute to the vision for learning in the building?
10. How often do you meet with the principal?
    a. What is discussed?
11. Describe how you spend your day as an instructional coach.
12. To what extent are you asked to provide professional development for teachers?
    a. What type of follow-up is expected by the building principal?
13. What types of professional development are you offered by the principal?
14. Describe your access to instructional resources.
15. What type of feedback do you receive from the principal regarding your work?
16. Is there anything you would like to add regarding how you feel you are supported by the

building principal?

17. If you are interested in participating in a brief focus group, please include the email address through which you prefer to be contacted: _____

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Appendix B

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Protocol - Completed via Zoom

[Take consent form to audio record the session, explain that participants will remain anonymous.]

Introduction: Thanks for making time to talk with me today. I am interested in understanding how the instructional coaches in buildings perceive the support of principals. During our time together, I'd like to discuss your perspective of your role as an instructional coach and in what ways you feel supported by the building level principal. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with a question or where our discussion is going, just let me know. We can stop at any time.

In order to keep your responses confidential, I would like to invite you to create a pseudonym in the name box through Zoom. This will capture your responses but not allow them to be traced back to you. If you are unsure of how to do this, please let me know and I will be happy to walk you through the process. Additionally, please refrain from referring to principals by name.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Background

1. Are you consenting to participating in this focus group interview?

2. How long have you worked in education?
   0-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16-20 yrs 20+ yrs

Principal Support

3. How would you describe the role of the instructional coach in your building to others?
   a. How would your principal describe the job to others?
   b. If those descriptions are different, to what do you contribute those differences?

4. How often do you meet with the principal?
   a. What types of things are discussed in those meetings?
   b. How do those topics and discussions fit into your role as instructional coach?

5. Describe how you spend your day as an instructional coach.
   a. How do the principal's expectations align with your expectations regarding the way you spend your day?
   b. How often do you have time to meet with individual teachers or team of teachers for coaching cycles?

6. What types of professional development are you offered by the principal?

7. Describe your access to instructional resources.

8. What type of feedback do you receive from the principal regarding your work?
9. Is there anything that you would like to add regarding how you feel you are supported by building principal?

Thank you for participating in this study.

Appendix C

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certificate

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 01-Oct-2020
Expiration Date 01-Oct-2023
Record ID 38048424

This is to certify that:

Angela Stewart

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Social & Behavioral Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wc8601955-1c9d-4222-838e-7a9e9904f6c2-38048424

Appendix D

School Division Approval of Research

6/23/2021

Mrs. Angela Stewart

Dear Mrs. Stewart:

The Department of Assessment, Research and Evaluation has reviewed and approved your research study entitled "*Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Principal Support in a K-12 Public School Division*". Your study was approved by the review committee with revisions and/or conditions. Please see the attached document for the revisions. Once the revisions are completed and approved and IRB is on file, you can start your research.

Approval to conduct the study is limited to one year from the time of proposal submission. If the research timeline or any other aspect of your study changes during the time frame, please contact Helen Whitehurst and submit the changes for review prior to proceeding. If you are affiliated with an organization with an Institutional Review Board (IRB), the IRB approval letter must be on file in our office prior to beginning the study. Although your study has been approved, participation by individuals and schools is completely voluntary. Reports and publications generated from this study should not identify the individuals, schools, or the division and all research materials should accurately represent the party conducting the study. It is our expectation that you will submit a final report upon completion of the study to the Department of Assessment, Research and Evaluation.

Once you have IRB approval, please contact Helen Whitehurst at hswhiteh@henrico.k12.va.us or 804-514-1062. She will assist you in the process of beginning your research studies in the schools or offices that you have requested.

Thank you for your interest in Henrico County Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hinton

Tiffany Hinton, Ph.D.

Helen Whitehurst

Helen Whitehurst, Ph.D.

An Equal Opportunity Employer • henrico.k12.va.us

Appendix E

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Approval of Research

VIRGINIA TECH.

Division of Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
http://www.research.vt.edu/sponsp/hrpp

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 23, 2021

TO: Carol S Cash, Ted S Price, Angela Lyn Stewart

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Instructional Coaches’ Perceptions of Principal Support in a K-12 Public School Division

IRB NUMBER: 21-529

Effective August 23, 2021, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category (ies) 2(i),2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(i),2(ii)**
Protocol Determination Date: **August 23, 2021**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix F

Survey Participant Introduction Email

SUBJECT LINE: Instructional Coaches: You are invited to participate in a research study.

Dear Instructional Coach,

You are invited to participate in a research study. You are eligible to participate in this study as you are serving in the role of instructional coach within Henrico County Public Schools. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

My name is Angela Stewart and I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech. This research is being conducted as part of my course work and in accordance with IRB# 21-529. The purpose of this study is to understand how instructional coaches perceive support from building principals as well as to identify factors and actions that influence those perceptions.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a survey and have the opportunity to participate in a focus group interview. You have the option to participate in the survey and opt out of the focus group should you so choose. The survey questions and questions asked in the focus group will investigate your experience of support from the building principal while working as an instructional coach. Should you elect to participate in the focus group interviews, you will do so via Zoom. These focus group interviews will be recorded. The recording will be transcribed for use in analyzing the data.

The survey will take 30 minutes and the focus group will take approximately 30 minutes. If you elect to participate in *both* the online survey and the focus group interviews, the study should take approximately 60 minutes of your time.

Please review additional information regarding this study at this link: *Consent Information*.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please click the link below to begin:
https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5u9znB1JNJscflQ
Password: IC2021

If you would prefer not to participate in the survey, please close this email. Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me, Angela Stewart, angelals@vt.edu.

Thank you, in advance, for your time.

Angela Stewart

Appendix G

Consent Form

Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Carol Cash

IRB #21-529 and Title of Study: *Instructional Coaches' Perceptions of Principal Support in a K-12 Public School Division*

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

My name is Angela Stewart and I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech. This research is being conducted as part of my course work.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a survey and be provided the option to participate in a focus group. As part of the study, you will respond to open-ended questions on the topic and participate in a brief focus group, should you elect to participate in the focus group. You are permitted to participate in the survey and opt out of the focus group should you so choose. The survey questions and questions asked in the focus group will focus on your experience of support from the building principal while working as an instructional coach. Focus groups will be held in a virtual setting and will be recorded in order to be transcribed for use in analyzing the data.

The study should take approximately 60 minutes of your time should you opt to participate in both the survey and the focus group. The survey will take 30 minutes and the focus group will take approximately 30 minutes.

No risks are anticipated from completing this study.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will do my best to protect the confidentiality of the information gathered from you, though I cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality.

Your responses to the online survey are anonymous, so no one can associate your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other identifying information in your responses that can identify you. If you opt into participating in the focus group, you will be asked to provide a preferred email address in order to be contacted for scheduling. During the focus group interview, you will be asked to change your name to a pseudonym on the Zoom platform to protect your identity. All responses will be coded according to the pseudonym used on the Zoom platform during the focus group interview. Your name will not be associated with any responses.

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researcher. Your interview will be audio-recorded in the Zoom platform and then transcribed. The researchers will code the transcripts using a pseudonym (false name). The recordings will be uploaded to a secure password-protected computer in the researcher's office. The researcher will maintain a list that includes a key to the code. The master key and the recordings will be stored for 3 years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Angela Stewart, angelals@vt.edu**.** You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu). ***Please print out a copy of this information sheet for your records.***

If you would like to participate in this survey, click here to begin:

https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5u9znB1JNJscflQ
Password: IC2021

If you would prefer not to participate in the survey, please close this email. Thank you for your time!