Literacy coaching: negotiating roles and realities

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LITERACY COACHING: NEGOTIATING ROLES AND REALITIES

by

Stephanie Affinito

A Dissertation
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LITERACY COACHING: NEGOTIATING ROLES AND REALITIES

by

Stephanie Affinito

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Title: Literacy Coaching: Negotiating Roles and Realities

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School: University at Albany, State University of New York, 2011

Dissertation Chairperson: Dr. Cheryl Dozier, Dr. Sean Walmsley, co-chairs

ABSTRACT

This dissertation sought to understand how literacy coaches enact their coaching conceptualizations in practice, examine influences on coaches’ decision-making, and explore the impact of coaching practices on teachers. My purpose was to extend the research on how coaches examine and articulate coaching understandings to sustain their daily practices, effectively work with teachers, and grapple with the challenges of the position. I sought to contribute to the growing body of evidence that allows us to arrive at “robust conclusions” about coaching (Walpole & McKenna, 2008).

Case study methodology (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009) was chosen given the contextual and descriptive nature of this inquiry. I studied three practicing literacy coaches across two school years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010), utilizing multiple data collection methods. These included interviews (with coaches, coached teachers and administrators), observations and descriptive field notes (of literacy coaches in their school contexts), and reflective memos in a coaching journal. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the research period.

The results of this study offer insight into the realities of literacy coaching in today’s climate to better prepare and support schools, coaches, teachers and, ultimately, students. Literacy coaching is situated within school contexts and realities that require coaches to engage in multiple roles to support teachers and students. While the nature of
coaching is responsive to schools, teachers and students, results from this study demonstrate coaching roles are particularly susceptible to significant shifts and changes over time. In responding to state, school and district structures that influenced their positions over time, coaches changed both their responsibilities and their philosophies of coaching. The continuously shifting nature of the position fragments literacy coaches’ roles and responsibilities and impacts coach and teacher perceptions of the role, as well as its effectiveness. Results from this study provide useful implications for both the theory and practice of literacy coaching.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of the doctoral program, and this dissertation, has been a rewarding and fulfilling journey that would not be possible without the support of many.

Above all, I thank my family for their support and encouragement. My husband constantly reminded me that I was so close and never doubted that I would indeed finish. My children reminded me when it was time to take a break from writing and remember that I was a mother first, yet promised to call me ‘Doctor’ at least once.

I thank my committee members for their insights, support and feedback. Dr. Sean Walmsley, Dr. Cheryl Dozier and Dr. Ginny Goatley supported my learning, pushed me to think differently and challenged me to write to change the field. I am grateful for their mentoring and support throughout the entire process.

I thank my colleagues in the Reading Department. My professors, Dr. Peter Johnston, Dr. Rose-Marie Weber, Dr. Margi Sheehy, Dr. Donna Scanlon and Trudy Walp, among others, inspired me to become the teacher and learner I am today. Mary Unser and Linda Papa were always there for cheerleading and positive thinking when it was needed the most. I am honored to teach, work, and continue to learn, alongside them.

I also thank the literacy coaches who made this study possible. These three women embodied the enthusiasm, dedication and spirit of learning that makes a literacy coaching position successful. I am honored to share your stories with the field.
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Chapter 1: Purpose of the Study

Wide implementation of literacy coaching has preceded research on its efficacy (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007). Recently, there has been a substantial increase (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2006) in the numbers of practicing literacy coaches working to support teachers and students. This may be traced to a shift in conceptualizing professional development for teachers and the inclusion of literacy coaches within federal and state grant programs. Effective professional development provides practical support to teachers and is sustained over time (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Steckel, 2009). This support is situated within teachers’ daily work, responsive to teachers’ needs, and grounded in student performance (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; McKenna & Walpole, 2008). Literacy coaching holds great potential to provide this kind of support.

Teachers’ knowledge, skills and instructional practices influence student achievement (Darling Hammond, 2006; Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005). Therefore, professional development of teachers has become important to improving student performance. In the past, teacher professional development focused on a short-term transmission model where teachers were trained in a particular skill or strategy detached from their actual daily practices, revealing few changes to teachers’ practices and thinking (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002) and therefore, providing minimal impact on student performance.

In contrast, a job-embedded coaching model has the potential for teachers to develop new strategies and substantially increase the amount of time they spend in their own professional development (Learning Point Associates, 2005). Lyons and Pinnell (2001) believe literacy coaching increases teachers knowledge, guides then to become
flexible in their instruction, and enables them to modify their teaching to meet children's learning needs. Recent reading policy and professional literature also advocate the use of literacy coaches to enhance and strengthen school reading programs (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2003; Jay & Strong, 2008; Learning Point Associates, 2005, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Toll, 2005) and to support both teacher development and student achievement (Casey, 2006; Dole, 2004; IRA, 2004; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007; Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

**Defining Literacy Coaching**

The International Reading Association (2004) identifies literacy coaching as a means of providing sustained, ongoing and intensive professional development for teachers in schools. Through modeling and collective problem-solving around specific problems of practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996), literacy coaches ground their work in student performance and provide meaningful, relevant support to teachers. Literacy coaches collaborate with teachers to achieve specific professional development goals (IRA, 2004) involving literacy teaching, assessment and reflection. Literacy coaching models may include reading specialists serving in leadership roles, full time positions dedicated to specific school buildings and coaches working across buildings and/or districts (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011) to enhance teacher and student performance. Literacy coaching has been included in a variety of professional development programs to support teachers and students within the school context. These programs include the Literacy Collaborative (LC), Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy, previously the Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model and the National-Louis University Literacy Coaching Model. When federal funding became available for professional development,
literacy coaching became a central component of recent federal and reading initiatives, particularly Reading First.

The Influence of Reading First on Literacy Coaching

Reading First was a federal reading project resulting from No Child Left Behind legislation aimed at improving reading outcomes for students in low-performing K-3 schools (Duessen et al, 2007) through scientifically proven methods of instruction, valid and reliable classroom assessments, and statewide accountability and leadership structures. Nearly all states required Reading First schools to hire a reading coach to implement the grant program (NRTAC, 2010). This requirement brought national attention to literacy coaching and dramatically increased the number of practicing coaches across the nation. In 2006 alone, Reading First employed over five thousand coaches across the United States (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2006).

The federal government defined a Reading First coach as “one who helps others to recognize their instructional knowledge and strengths and supports them in their learning and application of new knowledge and instructional practices, promoting job-embedded learning and providing ongoing and sustainable support to teachers” (Learning Point Associates, 2005, p.2). Reading First coaches worked under specific federal and state guidelines to implement scientifically based reading research and assessment in kindergarten through third grade. Reading First coaching is consistent with a direct coaching orientation (Deussen et al, 2007) where coaches change teachers’ practices in detailed, required ways designed to elicit changes in student performance. Reading coaches were required to assume the role of an expert and implement required core reading programs and standardized assessments consistent with the philosophy and goals
of the program.

**Situating This Dissertation**

Both research and professional literature (Casey, 2006; Dozier, 2006; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007; Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2008) increasingly support literacy coaching, yet less is known about how the coaching role is created and sustained in each particular context for particular purposes. The coaching model a school chooses, or is required to use, has consequences in shaping the perceptions of the role of the literacy coach and for how coaching is enacted. As a result, “doing coaching” (Deussen, et al, 2007) is enacted differently across schools and coaches.

As a former Reading First coordinator charged with supporting literacy coaches, I wanted to better understand how literacy coaches conceptualized their role and how they enacted their daily practices within Reading First policy in their individual schools. As I engaged with coaches, I saw distinct differences in how their coaching beliefs translated into practice. Coaches navigated conflicting roles, district and state level mandates, and unique contextual considerations. While professional advice emerged to support coaches’ daily work, research explaining how coaches negotiated their daily practices was lacking. Rainville & Jones (2008) state, “the growing empirical research in the field of literacy coaching does not sufficiently explore the complexities that people in such positions must negotiate as they move from classroom to classroom, working with different teachers, students and materials in each place” (p. 440). It is precisely this complex negotiation that provided the impetus for this study.

A pressing need in the research literature on literacy coaching is to document how literacy coaches negotiate their daily practice, taking into consideration how their literacy
philosophies, instructional practices and the contexts in which they operate impact teachers’ instructional beliefs and practices. To address this need, I conducted a study of three case studies of elementary literacy coaches in their school settings. Three major research questions guided the dissertation:

1. What are literacy coaches’ understandings of literacy teaching and coaching?
2. In what ways are coaches’ understandings enacted in daily practice? What accounts for alignments and/or disjunctures?
3. In what ways do coaches’ practices impact teachers?

This dissertation sought to understand how coaches enact their coaching conceptualizations in practice, examine influences on coaches’ decision-making, and explore the impact of coaching practices on teachers. My purpose was to extend the research on literacy coaching and contribute to the growing body of evidence that allows us to arrive at “robust conclusions” about coaching (Walpole & McKenna, 2008).

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This first chapter serves as an introduction to this study. Chapters two and three present the theoretical and methodological frameworks important to this study. In chapters four, five and six, I present three individual case studies, constructing a portrait of each literacy coach. In each of these cases, I examine the coach’s understandings of literacy teaching and coaching, document their observed coaching activities over time, articulate contextual influences impacting coaching roles, discuss changes in their thinking, and highlight the coach’s impact on teachers and students. I then discuss my findings across all three cases in chapter seven. In chapter eight, I discuss the main findings, situate the findings in relation to current research and professional literature, and discuss implications for both theory and practice.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Literacy education is receiving widespread attention with concentrated effort to improve literacy instruction. Recent initiatives highlight the importance of effective teachers in making a difference in literacy instruction and student achievement. In fact, one could argue that the single most important school-based factor in a student’s success is the effectiveness of the teacher (Varlas, 2011). Current research focuses on highly effective teachers who elicit growth in student achievement through comprehensive support across all phases of their career (ASCD, 2011). This support is provided through effective teacher professional development (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000) to improve teachers’ practices to increase student achievement.

Since one-shot professional development sessions are considered ineffective (Joyce & Showers, 2002), teachers need opportunities to practice skills while receiving feedback and to reflect and collaborate with others (Steckel, 2009). Collaborative relationships with teachers drive instructional change and subsequently, increase student achievement (Casey, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Moran, 2007; Toll, 2007). Given this, literacy coaching has emerged as a construct to build teacher expertise (Walpole & McKenna, 2008). Bean et. al. (2010) states, “Coaching puts the focus squarely on improving the quality of classroom instruction with coaches supporting teachers in their instructional efforts” (p. 88). Yet, literacy coaching has been largely unexamined until recently.

Theoretical Framework

Social constructivism is central to understanding the nature of literacy coaching and provides a conceptual framework for this research. Social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) situates thinking and learning within social and cultural contexts and recognizes
the essential relationship between human mental processes and their cultural, historical and institutional settings (Wertsch, 1991). Learning does not occur in isolation. Rather, conceptual understandings are shared, jointly constructed, and shaped by social and cultural contexts (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Social constructivism encompasses Vygotsky’s (1978) sociohistorical theory, as well as more recent contributions from sociolinguistics and psychologists (Bruner, 1990; Wertsch, 1985, 1995).

A general tenet of Vygotsky’s (1978) theory suggests that the acquisition and use of all higher psychological processes have their origins in individual interactions with others (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). Vygotsky (1986) posited all individuals learn on two distinct planes: the social and the psychological. First, learning is mediated within an social plane, between learners and more knowledgeable others. Teachers, other adults and more knowledgeable peers are critical to mediating the learning of individuals (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996). Through interactions with more knowledgeable others, learners acquire the “culturally variable and historically changing higher psychological functions that make possible the intelligence unique to mankind” (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996, p. 184). Learners verbalize their understandings and misunderstandings (Au, 1990) and more knowledgeable others acknowledge, verify and extend current understandings for further development.

Following social interactions and activities with others, learning occurs on the psychological plane through a process of internalization or appropriation (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000), the transformation of social phenomena into psychological phenomena (Wertsch, 1985). Facts are not simply transferred to teachers and teacher candidates. Rather, teachers take those facts and understandings and appropriate their own meanings (Golombek & Johnston, 2004) from them. Learners internalize skills and
strategies negotiated with others into their own repertoire of actions and habits through guided participation (Rogoff, 1990).

A central principle of a Vygotskyan approach is that learning promotes development (Warford, 2011). Learning is best facilitated when more knowledgeable others work within learners’ own zones of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is a social and cultural learning zone encompassing what learners can successfully complete independently through what they can successfully complete with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). It is the distance between a learner’s actual development as determined through independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Wertsch, 1985). This zone is fluid and shifts according to the learner’s particular context (Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000), the content of the learning, and the quality of interactions with others. Just as social constructivism guides’ teachers work with students, so too can the principles underlying this theory guide teaching and learning with teachers.

**Social Constructivism and Teacher Learning**

Teacher learning is holistic, authentic and fundamentally dialogic (Warford, 2011). Teacher knowledge is “inherently situated and mediated (not transmitted) within an emergent and dynamic interaction between a multiplicity of roles, goals and motives (Warford, 2011, p. 256). A Vygotskyian (1986) approach to teacher development views the education of teachers as situated learning. Teachers and more knowledgeable others, in this case, literacy coaches, co-construct pedagogical knowledge through social interactions and activities surrounding teaching practice within teachers’ own zones of proximal development.
The zone of proximal teacher development (ZPTD) “denotes the distance between what teaching candidates can do on their own without assistance and a proximal level they might attain through strategically mediated assistance from more capable others” (Warford, 2011, p. 253). The stages of the zone of proximal development traditionally proceed from expert- to self-assistance and later from internalization to recurrence through earlier stages (Warford, 2011). Yet, the zone of proximal teacher development deviates from the traditional sequence and requires a reversal that starts with teachers’ self-reflection on prior experiences and assumptions (Warford, 2011) to promote choice in the course of their development.

Following this self-reflection, graduated, selected assistance (Tharpe & Gallimore, 1988) is provided as more knowledgeable others respond to a learners’ current level of performance. Literacy coaches work within this shifting zone to meet teachers at their current level of development and provide scaffolding (Bruner, 1990) and support to move teachers forward. Literacy coaches have the potential to shape teachers’ philosophies of literacy, and resulting instructional practices, through discussions, interactions and experiences. Coaches can provide modeling, offer learners behavior for imitation (Bandura, 1977), and provide feedback, or guidance, for the learners’ next try (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). For teachers, this feedback may be from literacy coaches, student performance or test scores. The level of scaffolding shifts and changes over time as more knowledge others abbreviate their help in what Bruner (1983) terms the “handover principle”. Literacy coaches learn about teachers’ beliefs and understandings to “support the ways teachers teach so that a teacher is able to work with increasing flexibility and independence from the coach’s help” (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007, p.18). Over time, teachers become adept in the teaching practices once supported by literacy
coaches and develop self-extending systems (Clay, 1996). Encountering ‘difficult students’ or those who do not follow a predictable learning trajectory often provide opportunities for teachers to revisit their own learning and continue to learn and grow as teachers.

Social constructivism holds important implications for teacher learning and “points the way to a situated, more transformative approach to teacher development, one that respects the fact that formation both precedes and follows study in a teacher education program” (Warford, 2011, p. 257). Using a Vygotskyian approach to teaching teachers involves conversations with teachers to examine prior experiences as learners and tacit beliefs about pedagogy in combination with pedagogical content knowledge and observations of teaching and learning. For substantive teacher development to occur, there must be a blending of and a dialogue between experiential, spontaneous concepts and decontextualized scientific concepts, connecting the scientific discourse of the field with the experiential discourse of the classroom (Warford, 2011). This blending of both theory and practice is needed (Warford, 2011), yet often lacking in teacher preparation programs. Through experience, knowledge and conversations with informed others, teachers develop their own thinking focusing on reorganization and reconstruction of teachers’ theoretical understandings about the learning process (Lyons, Pinnell & DeFord, 1993).

Literacy coaching emerges from the constructs of a social constructivist approach. Rather than training teachers through transmitting predetermined pedagogical content knowledge, more knowledgeable others work alongside teachers, co-constructing knowledge together. This posits teacher learning as a recursive and cyclical process that is facilitated by practice and reflection within specific contexts. Therefore, a review of
related research must encompass an examination of the process of teacher learning and effective professional support. It must also address coaching as a viable method for providing such support and explore literacy coaching and the contexts in which coaches work.

**Related Literature**

Following, I review related literature important to this study. The first section begins by exploring the process of teacher learning, specifically focusing on training versus teaching teachers. Second, I discuss the research on effective professional development for teachers. Finally, I explore literacy coaching definitions and conceptualizations, frameworks and activities, contextual negotiations and the research on the impact of coaching on teachers and students.

**Teacher Learning**

Teaching is complex. Hoffman & Pearson (2000) argue the context for teaching has changed, just as our society has changed, just as the context for literacy practices has changed. Yesterday’s standards for teaching and teacher education do not support the kinds of learning current teachers must nurture. Teachers must continuously engage in learning experiences and constantly evaluate and reevaluate their instructional practices and beliefs about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

Teacher learning is situated and does not happen in isolation (Musanti & Pence, 2010). The learner, the context and the learning are inextricably connected (Walpole, et. al., 2010). Learning occurs in communities where teachers collaborate with others to co-construct knowledge about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shulman & Shulman, 2004) and grapple with the uncertainties that accompany their
teaching and learning roles (Lieberman, 1994). Teacher development involves not only learning new teaching skills and instructional practices, but also involves unlearning beliefs and practices about students and instruction (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996). Over time, researchers have shifted from a training model to a teaching model to better support teacher development. The contrasting views of training versus teaching teachers are presented here.

**Training teachers.** Training refers to the direct actions of a teacher that are “designed to enhance a learner’s ability to do something fluently and efficiently” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 32). Training focuses on the internalization of a discrete set of skills. “If teachers are exposed to carefully presented and understandable research findings, they will recognize the wisdom of the results and immediately employ them in their daily practice” (Tikunoff & Mergendoller, 1983, p. 210–211). In this model, teachers assimilate new practices and change in an outward direction with little to no inner reflection. Often, teacher participation is mandatory and the content of the training session is designed and implemented by people outside of the school, situating knowledge and authority outside of the learner (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). The sessions often are of short duration where the purpose is to enable teachers to learn a particular skill. While teachers may learn a skill, training sessions generally offer few opportunities for teachers to become involved in conversations with each other, engage in reflection, or receive feedback (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Richardson, 2003).

Hoffman and Pearson (2000) contend this training view is insufficient as a model of teacher preparation and support. Transfer from training sessions into actual teacher practice and student achievement is quite limited (Garet et al., 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002). While teachers can be trained in the basic teaching routines needed for classroom
survival, “it will not help teachers develop the personal and professional commitment to lifelong learning required by those teachers who want to confront the complexities and contradictions of teaching” (p. Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 36). McLaughlin and Oberman (1996) suggest a training model resulted from faulty assumptions about how teachers learn, a lack of match between the pedagogy of professional development and desired pedagogy in the classroom, a focus on generic skills that do not map onto the subject specific world in which teachers actually work, and failure to address teachers’ issues and concerns about students. Likewise, Guskey (1986) concluded the majority of training programs fail because they do not take into account two critical factors: what motivates teachers to engage in staff development and the process by which change in teachers typically takes place. Given this, “the problem lies more subtly in common thinking about what teachers need to learn and how they can best do it” (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Therefore, a more constructive (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010) and situated (Walpole et al., 2010) approach to teacher learning has been suggested.

**Teaching teachers.** In contrast to training, teaching teachers derives from social constructivism and focuses on the complex nature of the learning process. Teaching refers to the “intentional actions of a teacher to promote personal control over and responsibility for learning within those who are taught” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 32) and focuses on purposeful actions designed to promote teacher learning. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2003) provide a useful heuristic for understanding the essence of teaching teachers, focusing on three phases of teacher learning: knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice and knowledge-of-practice.

In the knowledge-for-practice phase, teachers work with more knowledgeable others to learn more about teaching and learning. This involves teachers learning the
content of their profession to develop their expertise (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2003). As teachers move into the knowledge-in-practice phase, they move inward and discover the knowledge they need ‘in the field’, while they are actually teaching, as they reflect on and evaluate their own practices. In the third phase, knowledge-of-practice, teachers construct their own knowledge of practice through deliberate inquiry. This knowledge is felt to be critically important, as it is self-constructed and will sustain teachers through their daily realities of classroom teaching.

An emphasis on teaching requires professional support to be situated within teachers’ own contexts and daily teaching and provides teachers with opportunities to engage in inquiry based on daily practice. This leads to what counts as effective professional development and professional support.

**Effective Professional Development and Support for Teachers**

Effective teacher professional development, Ball and Cohen (1999) argue, centers on professional inquiry in practice, opens comparative perspectives on practice, contributes to collective professional inquiry and provides teachers with opportunities to engage in authentic discussions about issues they face every day in their classrooms. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996) state “effective professional development involves teachers both as learners and as teachers and allows them to struggle with the uncertainties that accompany each role” (p. 203). During effective professional development sessions, teachers uncover assumptions, articulate philosophies, and reflect upon past and present experiences.

McKenna & Walpole (2008) define professional support as a “system for enhancing knowledge, skills and attitude of teachers so they can improve student achievement” (p. 75). Consistent with a teaching model, effective professional support
involves teachers as learners, facilitates reflection on teaching practices and develops teachers’ knowledge about teaching and learning. Support for teachers’ learning should provide opportunities for teachers to “examine their own beliefs and practices, consider new ways of thinking about teaching and experiment with new practices” (Richardson, 1994). To make the important connection between theory and practice, or content and classroom application, we need to focus on learning in and from practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Thoughtful discussion and professional discourse around classroom practices and artifacts (Sykes, 1999) ground the conversation in ways that are virtually impossible without them. Teachers learn about practice in practice, integrating the study of content and teaching, theory and practice, helping teachers “negotiate the divide between general propositions about learning development and teaching in the situated realities of subject matter students in classrooms” (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 13). Embedded professional development with opportunities for interaction and reflection (Steckel, 2009) facilitate this kind of teacher learning.

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has developed standards for effective staff development to reach its goal that all teachers will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work. According to the federal government (Learning Point Associates, 2005), the concept of reading coaching is consistent with multiple NSDC (2001, 2011) standards. Coaching has emerged as a promising method to support teacher development that is embedded in their daily work and uses student data to inform instructional practices.

Defining Coaching and Coaching Models

While literacy coaching is a fairly new construct, instructional coaching has been around for quite some time and multiple definitions and models of coaching exist. Each
definition and model supports teacher learning, yet does so in slightly different ways. Neufeld & Roper (2003) define coaching as a “school-based professional development designed in light of the district reform agenda and guided by the goal of meeting schools’ specific instructional learning needs” (p. 4). Poglinco, et. al., (2003) in their study on America’s Choice coaches, define coaching as a “form of inquiry-based learning, characterized by collaboration between individual or groups of teachers and more accomplished peers” (p. 1). Coaching involves ongoing classroom modeling, supportive critiques of practice, and specific observations. Coaching is job-embedded, ongoing, and focused on the needs of schools and teachers.

Multiple coaching models exist and include: peer coaching, collegial and cognitive coaching, instructional coaching, change coaching, and content coaching. There is no single, standard model for coaching. The model chosen varies in particular reforms and contexts (Poglinco, et. al., 2003) depending on the nature and purpose for teacher learning.

Peer coaching and collegial coaching focus on the social aspect of learning and involve learning from peers, rather than experts. In these models, teachers work together to improve their professional knowledge and skills, and implement particular instructional strategies.

Cognitive, instructional and content coaching focus less on learning from peers and more on learning from experts. Cognitive coaching supports the examination of teachers’ professional practice through the self-examination of “familiar patterns of practice and underlying assumptions that guide and direct action” (Sweeney, 2003, p. 5). Sweeney’s instructional coaches (2003) act as more knowledgeable others and bring new strategies into classrooms and provide feedback as teachers implement those new
strategies. Instructional coaches observe teachers, provide feedback, provide demonstration lessons and co-teach. Content coaches focus more exclusively on improving teachers’ instructional strategies in specific content areas. Content coaches are experienced in the classroom and have deep content area knowledge to provide situation specific support customized for each teacher (West & Staub, 2003).

Coaches also work on a school level, in addition to individual work with teachers. Neufeld & Roper (2003) define change coaches as those who address whole school organizational improvement, and develop instructional leadership, knowledge and skill in principals and teachers.

Each of the coaching models discussed serve a particular purpose in facilitating instructional change and teacher learning. Literacy coaches’ work utilizes elements of each, depending on a particular school context and purpose for coaching. An understanding of the various coaching models allows for a more responsive approach to literacy coaching as coaches shift coaching models and practices to support teacher and student needs in individual schools. Yet, literacy coaches may be constrained by particular coaching methods, mandates, and contexts that influence their coaching practices.

**Responsive Literacy Coaching versus Direct Literacy Coaching**

Recently, contrasting conceptions of literacy coaching have emerged (Ippolito, 2008) to guide coaching work: direct and responsive literacy coaching. Direct coaching involves assertive instructional recommendations and coaching actions to change teachers’ practices to impact student achievement more directly (Deussen, et. al., 2007). Coaching arising from reading mandates is an example of direct coaching, where coaches are charged with the task of supporting teachers in their learning and application of new
practices (Learning Point Associates, 2005) under tight mandates and role restrictions. Here, the focus is on student achievement, with coaches responsible for changing teachers’ behaviors to fit the program, presumably leading to increased student performance. Direct coaching operates on the assumption that a teacher must first change her behavior and see changes in student performance before changing her beliefs (Tidwell & Mitchell, 1994). This conception of coaching has been used in recent reading policy mandates, such as Reading First. In most states, coaches were required to hire a full time reading coach to implement the grant program. Rather than focusing on the teaching and learning of teachers, coaches were required to hold teachers accountable to the required policy components, such as use of a core reading program and particular assessments.

In contrast, responsive coaching relies on the needs of the teachers and students to guide the work (Dozier, 2006; Ippolio, 2008; Killion, 2008; Toll, 2007). In a responsive coaching orientation, coaches work alongside teachers, disrupt and extend learning histories, assess and represent learning, build learning communities, engage in joint-productive activities, and develop reflective teaching (Dozier, Johnston & Rogers, 2006). Dozier’s (2006) model of responsive coaching frames coaching as a support structure for teachers that parallels the structure teachers provide for their own students. Dozier (2006) states, “Responsive coaching is about learning- learning together, collaborating with colleagues, reflecting and creating spaces for inquiry” (p. 139). Coaching is embedded within relationships and coaches learn about the teachers they work alongside, as well as learn about themselves. Coaches become co-learners (Cambourne, 1995), “engaging in the change process as knowledgeable others, rather than experts” (Dozier, 2006, p. 9). As co-learners, coaches invite collaborative intellectual inquiry, engaging in the change
process as knowledgeable others, rather than as experts. Literacy coaches help teachers become more analytical about their work and support teachers’ application of knowledge, develop skills, polish technique, and deepen his or her understanding (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001) through joint productive activities.

The joint-productive activities coaches and teachers engage in result in the collaborative production of new learning. This collaboration “extends the learning and thinking of everyone involved as coaches and teachers come to see teaching and learning with new eyes” (Dozier, 2006, p.35). Language is the chief means for generating understanding, exploring, inquiring and learning together through the articulation of literacy and literacy development, facilitating the development of teachers’ self-extending systems. These systems are “developed and continuously redeveloped through collaboration, inquiry and conversation” (Dozier, 2006, p. 67). Dozier (2006) states, “Continuous inquiry leads to substantive, rather than superficial changes, but we need to remain mindful that change occurs at different times, in different ways, for different people” (p. 141). Englert, Raphael & Mirage (1998) found the change process varies across different learning communities, different models of teaching and learning, and different models of collaboration. Therefore, literacy coaching must be flexible to meet the needs of teachers and students over time.

**Literacy Coaching Frameworks and Activities**

Literacy coaches engage in a variety of activities, both formal and informal, as part of their positions. The International Reading Association (2004) has outlined three levels of coaching activities, which vary in intensity for both teachers and coaches. Coaching activities may range from “activities that help teachers develop or increase their knowledge about a specific issue to activities that focus on implementation issues” (IRA,
Activities vary according to the context within which the coach practices as coaches respond to particular teacher and student needs to impact teachers and students.

**Level 1.** Coaching activities within Level 1 are considered informal with the primary goal of developing relationships with teachers and colleagues. These informal activities consist of conversations with colleagues, developing and providing materials and resources for teachers, developing literacy curriculum and participating in various professional development structures, such as study groups. In this level, coaches provide useful support and interaction across the school, but do not engage in more specific coaching work with teachers in the classroom.

**Level 2.** Coaching activities within Level 2 increase are more formal and somewhat intense, allowing coaches to learn about teachers’ areas of strengths. These activities involve co-planning lessons, facilitating team meetings, analyzing student work, interpreting assessment data, engaging in individual discussions with colleagues about teaching and learning and making professional development presentations for teachers. In this level, coaches move beyond providing informal support and begin to work with individual teachers and grade levels on literacy curriculum and instructional practices.

**Level 3.** Level 3 coaching activities are formal, more intense and may create some anxiety on the part of the teacher or coach involved in the process. These activities require a higher level of comfort and willingness to explore and learn about literacy teaching within the actual teaching context. These activities consist of modeling and discussing lessons, co-teaching lessons, visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers, analyzing videotaped lessons of teachers and doing lesson study with teachers. This level builds on the previous coaching activities and focuses on intensive 1:1 coaching with teachers to build specific teacher expertise to benefit students.
Similar to the IRA’s framework of coaching activities increasing in complexity, Moran (2007) proposes a continuum of customized learning opportunities based on the fundamentals of adult learning theory to meet the varied needs of teachers. The continuum consists of eight differentiated learning formats: collaborative resource management, literacy content presentations, focused classroom visits, co-planning, study groups, demonstration lessons, peer coaching and co-teaching. The intensity of the coaching work and involvement within actual classroom teaching increases across the continuum to facilitate reflective practice. Moran (2007) recommends coaches, teachers and school leaders decide the best fit for their professional learning needs that emerged from a thorough review of student data.

While coaches spend their time engaging in activities that are strongly connected to classrooms, teachers and students, coaches also engage in other activities outside of core coaching activities. Deussen, et al. (2007) found coaches only spent approximately 28% of their time working with teachers and Roller (2006) found nearly 45% of coaches surveyed only spent 2 – 4 hours per week observing, modeling and talking with teachers about their instruction. Bean et al.’s (2008) research confirmed these findings, noting great variability between schools in the amount of time working with teachers and groups of teachers, a result of various contextual influences within individual schools, which I will explore next.

**Contexts of Literacy Coaching**

Literacy coaches are impacted by social, cultural and political environments that shape their positions and their interactions with teachers. Therefore, the role of the literacy coach is open to much interpretation on the part of principals, teachers and coaches (Mraz, Algozzine & Watson, 2008) and the enactment of that role is influenced
by multiple factors. These factors include organizational and social factors (Allington, 2006; Frost & Bean, 2006; Roller, 2006), the interpretation of the coaching position (Duessen, et.al., 2007; Rivera, Burley & Sass, 2004) norms for teacher learning within the school (Stoelinga, 2008) and principal leadership (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Mangin, 2007, 2009; Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel & Garnier, 2009). These variations in contexts, as well as state and national reform initiatives, finances, student performance data and existing roles and programs, influence literacy coaching work (Ippolito, 2010) and lead to differences in the implementation of literacy coaching roles (Mangin, 2009).

Gee’s (1999) research on situated identities provides insight into how coaches navigate multiple contexts within their particular school settings. Gee (1999) defines situated identities as “different identities or social positions we enact and recognize in different settings” (p. 12). Each of us has multiple identities across multiple contexts, each appropriate for the particular time, place and location we find ourselves. As literacy coaching is socially situated, coaches engage in particular practices with particular teachers in particular situations. In their research, Rainville and Jones (2008) found literacy coaches “enact various identities based upon the situations in which they find themselves” (Rainville & Jones, 2008, p. 440). Coaching was far more complex than teaching and learning in literacy classrooms and involved “deep understanding about situational enactments and how one’s position will affect what happens in particular contexts” (p. 12).

Shifts in literacy coaching identity are dependent on social, cultural and political demands on the particular context. These shifts may be across classrooms, across schools and even across policies. While Rainville and Jones’s (2008) construct of situated literacy coaching identities is useful to explore how coaches navigate between contexts and
classrooms, literacy coaches also navigate contexts on a broader level, such as policy mandates, district and school level structures.

In reviewing the research on the impact of reading policy and practice on districts, schools and classrooms, Wixson and Yochum (2004) present a framework to explain how multiple contexts, or filters, influence the implementation of reading policy on its way to the classroom to impact teachers and students. As a large number of literacy coaches practice within *Reading First*, an examination of these filters is critical.

Wixson and Yochum (2004) identified events, conditions, and players inside and outside of the classroom that have the potential to support or undermine reading policy goals and resulting teaching and learning. These filters include the national, state, district and school contexts, as well as policy environments. Each filter impacts the implementation of policy initiatives in varying ways and is “shaped by the events, conditions and players inside and outside of the classroom” (p.222). Each filter also contributes to the creation and sustainability of a coaching position in combination with the knowledge, experiences and visions each coach brings to the role, crafting a position unique to each coach.

A few studies (Kersten & Pardo, 2006; Kersten, 2006) have shown how teachers negotiate their teaching practices within mandated reading policy. As teachers navigated their changing teaching contexts in response to reading mandates, they accepted new practices, rejected some and bridged policy and practice together. While focusing on classroom teachers, the same concept can easily be applied to how literacy coaches navigate policy and practice within competing discourses on a daily basis. This is particularly important for *Reading First* coaches. *Reading First* primarily operated under a direct coaching orientation focusing on implementing components of the grant program.
Yet, coaches themselves may have had more responsive coaching orientations with balanced literacy philosophies of teaching and learning. *Reading First* coaches must navigate both contexts and work to make the positions fit with their personal understandings, beliefs and practices in competing contexts.

Katherine Casey, a practicing literacy coach, notes the role is “a complex one that shifts and changes in response to the culture of your school, your teachers’ needs and your continually evolving knowledge and skills (2006, p. 22). The coaching role varies not only in terms of coaches’ experience and requirements, but also on the ‘readiness’ of the teachers a coach works with as well (Bean, 2004). Toll (2005) states “the nature of literacy coaching is that it is responsive to teacher’s needs and strengths and to the efforts of teachers to respond to students’ needs” (p.74). Each teacher approaches meeting student's needs differently, requiring literacy coaches to respond accordingly. Coaches also engage in the learning process as they move forward in their own development. Through this process, coaches learn and teach effective decision-making, learn and teach literacy content and pedagogical knowledge, build teaching and leadership capacity and embrace the teaching and learning process.

The coaching role is ever evolving over time (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Walpole & Blamey, 2008) and contexts. An evolving coaching role can support the varied needs of local schools, yet the lack of a clear job description can create confusion and result in difficulties for both coaches and school staff (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Poglinco et al., 2003). Yet, few have researched how coaches’ roles are negotiated and sustained within situated daily practices. Rainville & Jones (2008) state:

> the growing empirical research in the field of literacy coaching does not sufficiently explore the complexities that people in such positions must negotiate
as they move from classroom to classroom, working with different teachers, students and materials in each place (p. 440).

As the contexts for coaching change, classroom, school, district and policy level contexts impact the effectiveness of literacy coaching. It is necessary to explore these contextual influences when examining literacy coaching.

**Impact of Literacy Coaching**

Ultimately, literacy coaching relies on the assumption that coaching practices lead to changes in teacher knowledge and practice, resulting in positive changes in student performance (Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010). The sustained professional development provided through coaching should yield changes in teacher knowledge, instructional practices and student achievement, yet empirical evidence as to coaching’s effectiveness is minimal and the coaching literature yields mixed evidence of efficacy (Walpole, et. al., 2010).

As Sailors and Shanklin (2010) found, recent research provides a small, yet promising, evidence base that coaching has positive impacts on teaching and learning. These include craft knowledge (Zwart, Wubbels, Bolhuis & Bergen, 2008), domain knowledge of teachers (Brady, et. al., 2009), teacher efficacy (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Lovett et al., 2008). Studies have also found improved practices within special education (Gersten, Morvant & Brengelman, 1995), early literacy (Neuman & Wright, 2010), and writing and math instruction (Frey & Kelly, 2002; Staub & Stern, 2002). Vanderburg & Stephens (2010) found teachers valued how coaches “created a space for collaboration, providing ongoing support and taught about research based information” (p. 141). Teachers felt their coaches helped them try new instructional practices, utilize authentic assessments and create student-centered curriculum.
However, while teachers valued their work with coaches, a review of the literature reveals mixed or no effects on student outcomes (Garet et al., 2008; Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010; Marsh, et al., 2008). Yet, as Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh (2010) and Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter (2010) discuss, there are plausible explanations for the lack of effects, including a limited time implementing the coaching model at the time of the research, possible inadequacies with the experiences and qualifications of the literacy coaches and idiosyncrasies of schools. Given coaches make decisions about how they spend their time based on complex and challenging school structures, evaluating the effectiveness of coaching as a whole becomes quite complicated (Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel & Garnier, 2009). Citing Bean & Carroll (2006), Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter (2010) explain coaching as a “relational practice whose efficacy presumably depends on the quality of the relationship that a coach is able to establish with each individual teacher” (p. 29). Variations in the quality of these relationships, as well as the shorter duration and intensity of the interactions between teachers and coaches, might also account for the variability in effects on student learning. L’Allier, Elish-Piper & Bean (2010) stress coaches need to spend at least half of their time working directly with teachers to yield positive results in teacher practice and student learning. In their research, Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter (2010) found significant gains in student performance with the gains growing larger in subsequent years of implementing a coaching model. Yet, as discussed, the literacy coaching role is impacted by a range various contextual and structural factors, all of which impact the implementation, and resulting effectiveness of literacy coaching. Studies on the variations within and between coaching models (Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010) and coaches would help clarify the ways in which coaching can be effective.
The potential impact of literacy coaching provides impetus for additional research on role clarifications, actual enactments into daily practice and the various influences on the coaching role that practicing literacy coaching negotiate on a daily basis. The information from this research holds critical importance in creating, sustaining and supporting literacy coaching positions.
Chapter 3: Methodology

For this study, I conducted a case study of three literacy coaches to examine how they enacted their roles and navigated their contexts and coaching responsibilities. Three major research questions guided the dissertation:

1. What are literacy coaches’ understandings of literacy teaching and coaching?
2. In what ways are coaches’ understandings enacted in daily practice? What accounts for alignments and/or disjunctures?
3. In what ways do literacy coaches’ practices impact teachers?

Case study methodology (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009) was chosen given the contextual and descriptive nature of this inquiry. Qualitative methodology allows for rich understanding of practicing coaches’ daily work across contexts and best addresses my chosen research questions. Stake asserts, “Qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situations” (p. 2). To do so, I worked with three practicing literacy coaches across two school years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010), utilizing multiple data sources, including interviews (with coaches, coached teachers and administrators), observations, and descriptive field notes (of literacy coaches in their school contexts), and reflective memos in a coaching journal. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the research period.

Selection of Participants

A purposive sample (Frankel & Wallen, 2003) of elementary literacy coaches was used in this study. I wanted to work with coaches who worked within the Reading First program for varying amounts of time, coached in different contexts and represented clear contrasts in each of the case studies. I identified practicing elementary literacy coaches through The Eastern NY Regional School Support Center (ENYRSSC), The New York
State Reading Association (NYSRA) and personal contacts with local school districts. After emailing interested coaches and explaining the parameters of the study, five coaches expressed interest and I selected three coaches to participate. All participants, their schools, and school districts are identified with pseudonyms.

**Participants**

All three literacy coaches were European American and ranged in age from late 20’s to mid 50’s. Each coach brought a range of teaching and coaching experiences to the research. While I use the term ‘literacy coach’ for the purposes of this research, each coach held a different title in her building. Following, I briefly introduce each coach, her professional title, and school context.

**Kim.** Kim, A European American woman in her late 20’s, holds permanent New York State certification in preK – 6 Elementary Education and professional certification in Literacy B - 6. She earned a Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education and a Masters in Literacy B - 6. After teaching primary elementary grades in the private sector for three years, Kim began her coaching career at Clinton Elementary (a pseudonym) as a Reading First coach in 2006. When funding for the program ended in 2009, Kim’s district retained the literacy coaching position. Kim’s current title within her building is the K – 5 Reading Coach.

Clinton Elementary, one of five elementary schools in an urban district, is a magnet school in a residential neighborhood. Serving approximately 450 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, Clinton Elementary averages about 23 students within each class. Approximately 50% of the students are Caucasian, 50% are Hispanic and about 10% are African American. Eight percent of the students are Limited English Proficient students. There are 33 teachers on staff and 80% of the teachers have at least 3
years of experience.

In 2004, Clinton Elementary initially qualified for Reading First funding under New York State guidelines combining poverty statistics and English Language Arts performance. As stated on the 2007-2008 school report card, 56% of Clinton Elementary students receive free lunch and 7% receive reduced lunch. This school continued to receive funding, qualifying for additional rounds of Reading First funding until their grant period ended in 2009. Elements of the program, including a comprehensive core program and the use of DIBELS, are still evident in the building.

Jennifer. Jennifer, a European American woman in her mid-40’s, holds permanent certifications in both preK-6 Elementary Education and Reading K – 12. She has a Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education and a Masters in Reading from a local University. Jennifer began her career as a classroom teacher in a rural elementary school. After three years, Jennifer left to accept a position close by and has been teaching at Lincoln School for over 20 years, first as a primary classroom teacher and then as a reading specialist. She started her coaching career in 2002 as a Reading for Results building coach. Over the past eight years, Jennifer has worked within the Reading for Results, Reading First and Response to Intervention grant programs. Jennifer’s current titles are the Reading First Tier II reading coach, Response to Intervention literacy coach and Teacher-in-Charge for one of the two elementary buildings.

While seemingly one school, Lincoln Elementary actually consists of two separate buildings, yet is supervised by one principal. The first building houses grades K-1, while the second building houses grades 2-5. Serving approximately 470 students pre-kindergarten through grade 5, Lincoln averages 23 students within each class. Approximately 90% of the students are Caucasian with the remaining 10% Hispanic or
African American. There are no students identified as limited English proficient students as outlined by the New York State 2007 – 2008 school report card. With approximately 33 teachers on staff across both buildings, around 97% have at least 3 years of experience.

In 2004, Lincoln Elementary initially qualified for Reading First funding under New York State guidelines, combining poverty statistics and English Language Arts performance. As stated on the 2007-2008 school report card, 54% of Lincoln’s students receive free lunch and 16% receive reduced lunch. Lincoln continues to receive modified Reading First funding and is also currently operating under a New York State Response to Intervention (RTI) grant. Reading First elements in place include implementation of a comprehensive core program and the use of DIBELS. The RTI grant focuses on grade level meetings centering on student data.

Meg. Meg, a European American woman in her mid-50’s, holds permanent certification in preK-6 Elementary Education and Reading K-12. She has a Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education and a Masters in Reading from a local university. After teaching in the classroom for over 20 years, Meg began her coaching career as a Reading First Tier II building coach in 2005. When the Reading First grant ended in 2008, Meg transitioned into a coaching role funded solely by her district. Her current title at Washington Elementary school is K-6 Literacy/Writing coach.

Washington Elementary school is one of two elementary schools in the district. Serving approximately 230 students in kindergarten through grade 6, this rural school averages about 15 students within each class. Approximately 98% of the students are Caucasian with no Limited English Proficient students. With approximately 23 teachers on staff, over 90% are teachers with at least 3 years in their position.
In 2004, Washington Elementary school initially qualified for *Reading First* funding under New York State guidelines combining poverty statistics and English Language Arts performance. As stated on the 2007-2008 school report card, 21% of students receive free lunch and 10% receive reduced lunch. After a grant period of four years, Washington Elementary School made sufficient gains and did not qualify for continued assistance in later funding years. However, elements of the program, such as a comprehensive core program and the use of DIBELS, are still evident and are used in grades K – 6.

**My Role Within This Inquiry.** As a previous *Reading First* Regional Coordinator, I worked with a number of literacy coaches across different districts to implement mandated grant requirements. I also had the opportunity to work as a literacy coach in a program setting with fewer mandates and more freedom to coach as I deemed appropriate. Currently, I implement literacy coaching practices in my role as a teacher educator. Given my unique situation of working across a variety of coaching contexts, I have experienced the complexities of literacy coaching position and have worked in both direct and responsive coaching models.

I realize my very presence as a researcher in the building might cause coaches to act in ways different than their normal daily activities. In my initial meeting with Kim, she asked if she should schedule certain coaching visits and do anything specific that I would like to observe. I stressed to her, and to the other two coaches, that my intent was to capture the daily realities of coaching and to not change her coaching work in any way. I often asked coaches how ‘typical’ the observed day was in reference to the days I had not observed and documented their comments.
My own understandings and visions of literacy coaching influence both how I collected and analyzed data. In chapter 2, I presented a theoretical framing and review of the literature for this study. However, my own understandings and coaching experiences also contributed to an understanding of the many roles and responsibilities I might observe. As such, I needed to be careful to acknowledge my own perspectives throughout and examine how they influenced the data collected. I used two-column descriptive field notes to document my daily observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), describing my observations and interactions on one side and recording my comments, questions and initial analysis on the other.

Throughout the study, I continually read and reread my research questions, immersed myself in literature from the field and acknowledged my own evolving understandings of literacy coaching as the study continued. I documented my understandings in my research journal and created reflective memos (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) after almost every observation to capture my changing thinking. I used these reflective memos and journal entries to tentatively analyze data and create future interview protocols with coaches to gain feedback about tentative, working hypotheses. While I had a broad base of knowledge and experience of literacy coaching to draw from, I was careful to remain open to the understandings and experiences of the literacy coaches.

**Phases of Research**

This research proceeded in six phases. Table 1 outlines the study’s data collection and analysis.
Table 1

*Phases of Research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Phases</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Analysis Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1: Initial interviews with literacy coach, coached teachers and administrators</td>
<td>What are literacy coaches’ understandings of literacy teaching and coaching? In what ways do coaches’ practices impact teachers?</td>
<td>Individual interviews with coaches Interviews with coached teachers and administrators Descriptive field notes</td>
<td>Transcribe interviews and begin reflective memos in research journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2: School observations</td>
<td>In what ways are coaches’ understandings enacted in daily practice? What accounts for alignments and/or disjunctures?</td>
<td>School observations Descriptive field notes</td>
<td>Recorded daily observations in a two-column journal and continued reflective memos in research journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3: Analysis of interviews for initial literacy coach and coached teachers and administrators</td>
<td>What are literacy coaches’ understandings of literacy teaching and coaching?</td>
<td>Read, reread and analyze interview data</td>
<td>Eight broad categories emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4: Analysis of school observations</td>
<td>In what ways are coaches’ understandings enacted in daily practice? What accounts for alignments and/or disjunctures?</td>
<td>Coding observations</td>
<td>Thirty one distinct activities were noted. e.g: DIBELS assessments, professional reading, classroom coaching and bus duty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

**Phases of Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Phases</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Analysis Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5:</td>
<td>All research questions are addressed</td>
<td>Individual interviews with coaches</td>
<td>Further refinement of categories: subcategories within interview data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing collection and analysis of interviews and through the 2009 – 2010 school year</td>
<td>Interviews with coached teachers and administrators</td>
<td>School observations</td>
<td>31 activities observed collapsed to 11 categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive field notes</td>
<td>Analysis and presentation of individual cases and cross-case analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 6:</td>
<td>All research questions are addressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued data analysis and presentation of results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Sources and Collection

Data for this study were collected across two school years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010). Table 2 outlines the progression of data collection.

Table 2

Progression of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Methods and Times</th>
<th>2008 – 2009 School Year</th>
<th>2009 – 2010 School Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple data sources were used to elicit in-depth information and to facilitate triangulation of the data. These included literacy coach interviews, literacy coach observations and descriptive field notes, reflective memos in a coaching journal, and interviews with coached teachers and administrators.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy Coach Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the research period, coaches engaged in five semi-structured interviews (Fontana &amp; Frey, 2008; LeCompte &amp; Preissle, 2003) to explore coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
conceptualizations, coaches’ daily practices, contextual factors impacting those practices and perceived impact on teachers. Each interview was completed at the coach’s school.

While the initial interviews were semi-structured in nature (see Appendices A - D), with specific prompts to guide the conversations, later interviews were generative, building on previous questions and responses. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed for later analysis.

**Literacy Coach Observations and Descriptive Field Notes**

Following the completion of the initial interview, I observed each coach for a total of eight school days across the research period to document each literacy coach’s daily roles and activities. At first, I was a non-participant observer (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; LeCompte & Preissle, 2003), ‘shadowing’ the coaches as they completed their normal activities and duties. Over the course of the study, depending on the coach and the school context, my role shifted and became more interactive in terms of sharing conversations with coaches and listening to coaches’ narratives about their daily activities. I did not involve myself in the professional conversations coaches had with their faculty unless invited by the coach.

Throughout each daily visit, I wrote descriptive field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) to record the days’ events. Those field notes consisted of two columns. The first described the events and interactions taking place. In the second column, I noted personal comments and observations about the recorded events, specifically noting how coaches negotiated various contextual factors. Table 3 provides an excerpt of a typical daily log.

During, or after, each daily observation, I briefly met with each coach to discuss the day’s events. During these conversations, I took notes, scribing quotes from the coach. I placed these conversations on the “comments and observations’ portion of my
Table 3

*Excerpt of Typical Daily Log*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events and Interactions</th>
<th>Comments and Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:15: Walked to 3rd grade classroom to discuss changes in testing for the day.</td>
<td>Meg commented that this should not be her role, it should be her principal’s role. Teachers did the same, asking where the principal was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:20: Back in office. AIS TA stopped to ask questions about Terra Nova testing that day.</td>
<td>This seems to be a general role taken on by coaches. Meg dislikes it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:25: Began gathering testing materials for the day</td>
<td>Jennifer takes it on without complaint- because of her administrative liaison role? Who is right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:40: Another AIS TA stopped in to check on make-ups for absent students</td>
<td>Articulation of roles is needed. Ask coaches who decides these roles- schools? Districts? Mandates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45: 3rd grade student comes to office to get rulers for the assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:47: Meg walks to Joe’s room to check on schedule for absent kids and returns to office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50: Phone call- 3rd grade teacher lost TN manual and needs another.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

daily logs. For example, when observing Meg in March 2010, she was preparing *Handwriting Without Tears* materials for the kindergarten teachers during her planning time. Since the room was empty and we were nearing the end of the day, I asked her how she thought the day went, with the recent changes in her coaching schedule. Table 4 provides an excerpt of my research journal, capturing these statements and ideas, typical of a daily log.
## Excerpt of Research Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events and Interactions</th>
<th>Comments and Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 11:55: Setting with HWT materials in both K classrooms</td>
<td>Asked about the day and new teaching duties:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“indirect way of coaching”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“not a bad thing to have some aspect of teaching”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“theory into practice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“when coaches get totally removed from teaching, they can’t do the ‘prove it’ method”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frog sight word ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses her intervention groups as a way to model new strategies to teachers. Does Jennifer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“being open, being flexible”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Instead of dwelling, how can I take this situation and give it the best that I can give?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Bottom line- it’s about the kids”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Come back to this in interviews</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I used these notes to reflect on the day’s events over the course of the research period, generating future interview prompts and beginning tentative data analysis.

**Reflective Memos in a Coaching Journal**

Bogdan & Biklen (1992) recommend researchers utilize reflective memos throughout the research period to capture reflections on data analysis and method, ethical dilemmas and conflicts, the observer’s frame of mind, and points of clarification. I captured my personal observations and interpretations with reflective memos (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) in a coaching journal. Here is an excerpted portion of a typical entry written throughout the research period: *Today, Kim brought up an amazing point. People have different coaching philosophies. Her administration has a ‘coaching broad’ philosophy (school level, overall literacy work, task oriented). Kim is ‘coaching personal’ (getting into classrooms, building relationships, etc.). As Kim points out, she cannot do both- so what does she do?* (Coaching Journal 1/26/2010). A full journal entry can be found in Appendix E.

**Interviews with Coached Teachers and Administrators**

I also engaged classroom teachers and district administrators (to whom the selected coaches were assigned or to whom they reported) in semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008; LeCompte & Preissle, 2003) to explore literacy coaching roles, contexts and impact of literacy coaching from their perspectives. Coaches initially selected three teachers for the interviews: an individual the coach worked intensively with, an individual the coached worked with less intensively and an individual the coached engaged minimally with. As the research continued, I asked coaches to select additional teachers to interview, regardless of the level of coaching. This was possible in two of the buildings, while in the third, additional teachers declined to participate based
on recommendations from their union representative. Most participating teachers engaged in a single interview, yet the interview was split for two of the teachers. Administrators engaged in two interviews. While the protocols remained the same for the duration of the research, the semi-structured nature allowed for flexibility to explore pertinent areas, such as changes in the coaching position or comparison of previous coaches (see Appendix A - D). Each interview was completed in either the teachers’ classrooms or the principal’s office and was audio-taped and transcribed for later analysis.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to explore literacy coaches’ understanding of literacy teaching and coaching, document their daily practices, and examine the impact of coaches on teachers. Analysis followed a grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) meant to illuminate themes as they emerged from the collected data. In a grounded theory study, researchers first begin with a particular area of study and allow relevant information and theories to emerge as data are collected and analyzed. My intent was to make sense of data from the multiple sources and subsequently propose hypotheses about literacy coaching that were grounded in the data.

The constant comparative method was used to draw out themes on how coaches, teachers and administrators conceptualized coaching roles and document the contextual influences impacting coaching. In this approach, there is a continual interplay between the researcher, the data and the developing understandings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Data are compared to determine similarities and differences and seek patterns. These patterns are then arranged in relationship to each other. This inductive process is ongoing. As data are collected and organized, a hypothesis is proposed that propels the researcher
to collect additional data and further develop, clarify and revise developing understandings over time. Gradually, the researcher develops hypotheses that are grounded in data.

Initial analysis and interpretation began in the field. Following the initial three week data collection period in May of 2009, data analysis occurred in distinct phases.

**Analyzing Interview Data**

Initially, I focused on analyzing the interviews with coaches, teachers and administrators. My intent was to explore coaching conceptualizations, coaching practices, contextual factors impacting those practices and the perceived impact on teachers.

I utilized the process Merriam (1998) recommends for analyzing interview data. First, I read through each interview, underlined key portions of the data relevant to my research questions, and made comments in the margins. I then reread the entire interview, completing the same process and further reflecting on the data. Following these readings, I focused my attention on coding the highlighted data. I chose a word or phrase that captured the ideas of each and compiled them within each individual interview. An example of a completed interview page can be found in Appendix F.

After completing all initial interviews in this manner, I created a tentative list of interview codes that characterized participants’ thinking about the coaching positions, which included their philosophies, practices, and perceived impacts. As I reread and reviewed these codes, I developed broad categories that were connected to my research questions. Eight broad categories emerged. Table 5 outlines and defines these categories.

Following this initial analysis over the Summer of 2009, I analyzed the remaining interviews throughout the following 2009 – 2010 school year. For each interview, I engaged in the same process described above, completing multiple readings of each.
Table 5

*Eight Broad Categories Emerging From Interview Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Learning Understandings</td>
<td>Understanding and philosophies about literacy teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Coaching Understandings</td>
<td>Understanding and philosophies about literacy coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Coaching Roles</td>
<td>Roles coaches felt were important to a literacy coaching position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Coaching Roles</td>
<td>Roles coaches actually engaged in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Influences</td>
<td>Influences that impacted literacy coaching roles and daily practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Shifts</td>
<td>Changes in the literacy coaching roles and thinking over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Teachers</td>
<td>Impact literacy coaching has on teachers’ practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Students</td>
<td>Impact literacy coaching has on students’ performance and access to instructional practices and content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6

**Broad Categories and Subcategories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Category</th>
<th>Sub-Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Learning Understandings</td>
<td>Content: literacy content coaches found important Instructional practices: practices used to teach content Teacher practices: professional activities engaged in outside of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Coaching Understandings</td>
<td>Attributes: personal characteristics of coaches Knowledge: content understandings the coach found important Practices: particular activities coaches engaged in Assessment: thoughts on how the coaching role could be evaluated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Coaching Roles</td>
<td>Classroom level: roles within, or supporting, the classroom School level: roles within, or supporting, the broader school context Content: the topics coaches hoped to focus on Process: things the coaches hoped to do and build on as coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Coaching Roles</td>
<td>Communication, Assessment, Planning, Paperwork, Activities within the classroom, Activities within the school, Professional development, Searching for and providing resources, Direct teaching of students, Meetings and Unrelated activities. (Derived from daily observations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Influences</td>
<td>Outside the school: e.g.- union influences, reading mandate influences and district level influences Inside the school, e.g.- specifically principals, teachers, students and the coaches themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Shifts</td>
<td>Roles: changes in roles such as additional teaching duties or changes in professional development practices Thinking: changes in thinking such as shifts in the content coaches’ focus on or the feelings coaches have toward their role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 (continued)

Broad Categories and Subcategories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher practice in classrooms: changes that impacted the classroom, such as increases in the use of differentiated teaching or the use of assessment data to guide instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School level: changes that impacted the school, such as aligning curriculum and developing a common language of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support felt: changes in the support teachers felt they had within the schools, such as increased collaboration and communication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance: changes in student data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective practices: teacher practices that enabled teachers to better meet student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content: increased information about particular literacy content areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this analysis, I added to the developing list of interview codes found. I then returned to look at each individual broad category and the respective codes. Within each category, I further divided each into sub-categories. Table 6 outlines these sub-categories.

Analyzing Observational Data

Following the analysis of the initial interviews, I focused on analyzing over 150 hours of school observations and related descriptive field notes to explore coaches’ daily practices. Using observation logs and descriptive field notes, I kept a running list of the daily activities each coach engaged in. Over the research period, I documented 31 distinct activities across the three coaches. Every time a coach engaged in a new activity, I noted it and took observational notes. I then expressed the frequency of activities in percentages. As I continued my observations, I analyzed the 31 recorded activities and developed 11 broad roles. As I continued, I utilized these roles to guide the analysis of the interview data as well. The data clearly demonstrated the wide variety of roles coaches engaged in, both related and unrelated to coaching. Table 7 outlines the 11 broad
Table 7

**Broad Coaching Roles from Distinct Activities Recorded**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Roles</th>
<th>Distinct Activities Recorded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>communication with teachers, administrators and other coaches, emails, parent discussions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>DIBELS assessment, focused discussions, assessment inputting, assessment conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>planning, professional reading, co-planning, planning for outside professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>paperwork,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities within the Classroom</td>
<td>classroom coaching, classroom observations, classroom support,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities within the School</td>
<td>Kindergarten round-up, 1000 book club,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>professional development,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing</td>
<td>teacher resource, examining curriculum,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of Students</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>faculty meetings, meetings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>bus duty, behavior management, morning program, travel, school plays, breakfast duty, library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>duties, administrative tasks,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

roles and 31 distinct activities across them.

In the case studies, the discussions of each coach's daily practices were based on scheduled observations throughout the research period. As I observed and analyzed the data, I returned to each participant to discuss findings and to receive feedback. These member checks took place regularly throughout the research period to ensure accuracy of
the observations and resulting discussion of the results. During our conversations, the coaches clarified the amount of time they spent in particular activities, such as planning, AIS teaching and behavior management.

In addition to continuously defining my categories and verifying with coaches, I utilized the International Reading Association’s (2004) three-level framework of coaching activities to support my analysis. Table 8 outlines these levels.

Table 8

*International Reading Association’s Levels of Coaching Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IRA (2004) Coaching Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Level 1                   | Informal activities to develop coaching relationships  
- Conversations with colleagues  
- Developing and providing materials for/with colleagues  
- Developing curriculum with colleagues  
- Participating in professional development activities with colleagues  
- Leading or participating in Study Groups  
- Assisting with assessing students  
- Instructing students to learn |
| Level 2                   | Activities to learn more about teachers’ strengths and needs  
- Co-planning lessons  
- Holding team meetings  
- Analyzing student work  
- Interpreting assessment data  
- Individual discussions with colleagues about teaching and learning  
- Making professional development presentations for teachers |
| Level 3                   | Formal and intense coaching work  
- Modeling and discussing lessons  
- Co-teaching lessons  
- Visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers  
- Analyzing videotape lessons of teachers  
- Doing lesson study with teachers |
After analyzing the daily activities and roles of each coach, I coded each as level 1, level 2 or level 3. I then computed each as percentages of coach’s daily activities and roles. An excerpt of this analysis can be found in Appendix G.

**Reliability and Validity**

For research to have an effect on both theory and practice, the study needs to be rigorously conducted and present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, educators and other researchers (Merriam, 1998). To ensure trustworthiness, careful attention needs to be given to the study’s conceptualization, the way data is collected, analyzed and interpreted and the manner in which findings are presented. Interviews must be reliably and validly constructed, the content properly analyzed, and the conclusions found rest upon the data.

Utilizing Merriam’s (1998) recommendations, I previously situated my own role and thinking in relation to the research and openly acknowledged my researcher biases. I also ensured triangulation of the data and collected data from multiple sources, including interviews, observations and descriptive field notes. As this was a dissertation study, I regularly conferred and worked with my dissertation committee. While my committee did not separately analyze the data, each provided feedback and support throughout the research period. Throughout the study, I maintained open contact with all focal participants. I periodically ‘checked-in’ through conversation and emails with each coach as we engaged in all aspects of data collection to clarify procedures, answer questions and ensure and accuracy. Within the interviews, I often shared my learning with coaches and asked for feedback. These strategies enhanced the study to ensure trustworthiness and allow readers to feel confident in applying the results to their thinking and daily practices.
Summary

I undertook this qualitative case study of three practicing literacy coaches to learn about their understandings, their practices and their impact on teachers. As I described in this chapter, I utilized multiple data sources to explore my research questions: interviews (with coaches, coached teachers and administrators), observations and descriptive field notes (of literacy coaches in their school contexts) and reflective memos in a coaching journal. Analysis of the data began in the field and continued over the course of the research. This analysis led me to understand coaches’ understandings of literacy teaching and coaching, their daily practices and the contextual influences that impact their positions over time. I also learned how these varied practices impact teachers and students in multiple ways. As a result, I gained new understandings of the coaching role and implications for the field. These understandings follow in the remaining chapters.
Chapter 4: Kim

Kim initially started her teaching career as an elementary school teacher in a private school. For three years, she worked as a classroom teacher in the early primary grades. When Kim applied for a reading specialist position in her current district, she was asked by district administration to interview for the Reading First Coach position instead and was offered the job. While acknowledging her fear of losing her connection to the classroom, Kim accepted the K – 3 Reading Coach position. For three years, Kim worked as a Reading First Tier II Reading Coach under the guidelines of the state-funded position. In her fourth year, with Reading First restrictions removed, Kim had a bit more flexibility with the position now funded solely by her school district. Kim coached grades K – 5.

Kim’s Understandings of Literacy Teaching and Coaching

Kim’s literacy teaching philosophy evolved over her three years in the classroom and in her role as reading coach. She felt her coaching role helped her reflect on her beliefs and learn more about literacy teaching and learning: “I’ve learned a lot through this job” (Interview, May 2009). The following describes Kim’s understandings of literacy teaching and coaching.

Understandings of Literacy Teaching

Kim’s literacy teaching focused on a balanced literacy program, including phonics, comprehension, writing instruction, and differentiated small group instruction guided by the informal use of assessment data.

Balanced literacy program. When asked about her philosophy, Kim said, “I believe in a balanced literacy program and I’ve always believed that way.” (Interview, May 2009)

1 As noted earlier, all names of participants, schools, and school districts are represented by pseudonyms.
March 2010). While phonics skills are needed in an overall instructional program, Kim felt reading connected text with a focus on making meaning was lacking in their current reading program:

That was one of the problems I had when I first came here is that there was so much focus on phonics and it was not making sense to me. The teachers were spending 20 – 25 minutes on phonics and then squeezing a story in, in five minutes, and then going to centers. That was one of the things that I’ve really-we’ve changed and I think we got far with that. And I do believe in phonics, at least phonics is important, but the whole purpose is connection to the reading (Interview, May 2009).

Kim also felt a focus on wide reading on students’ instructional levels was lacking in the Scott Foresman core reading program so she focused on this content with her teachers. Kim stated, “The problem with the core [program], just the core, there’s not enough wide reading and not enough of that, getting their level to read” (Interview, March 2010). Kim felt these two elements were critical in moving students forward and connected it to the student assessment data:

Because data is not going to improve until…there’s small pockets of things we can improve on, but we’re at the point where if we don’t start doing bigger changes, our data is not going to improve because our kids, they can’t, they can’t get the bigger point of stuff. They can’t read and they don’t get the bigger comprehension and they don’t do enough reading at home, we don’t have enough reading going on in the classroom and enough talking about reading and getting the bigger point. (Interview, March 2010)
Kim felt a strong focus on comprehension would better facilitate students’ learning.

Another important element of Kim’s balanced teaching philosophy focused on writing. Frustrated with Reading First’s exclusion of writing, Kim noted the importance of connecting reading and writing: “I feel the writing has lacked somewhat and I would like that to be more strongly incorporated” (Interview, May 2009). Over the course of the study, Kim joined the district’s English Language Arts committee and designed a more flexible reading block that included writing instruction. The committee also worked to include a stronger focus on blending the Scott Foresman core program with a Reading Workshop model to better incorporate comprehension, wide reading, and matching books to readers, aspects Kim felt were also missing from the core program. The addition of these elements balanced the instruction and better matched Kim’s philosophy.

**Use of assessment data to differentiate instruction.** Kim also discussed informal assessment as part of her philosophy of literacy teaching and learning. Kim valued information learned from informal and observational assessment, such as running records and observing reading behaviors, over standardized measures, particularly DIBELS (Interview, May 2009). Kim used informal assessments to modify instruction and ensure student success: matching books to readers, forming small reading groups in the classroom and creating literacy center activities. For example, in a third grade classroom, Kim demonstrated small group instruction activities after observing students’ participation in and understanding of whole group classroom instruction. While teaching in a second grade classroom, Kim modified her lesson on literature circles based on her own observations and student responses within the classroom.
Kim struggled with the more formal, standardized measurements of assessment, such as DIBELS, and did not feel they helped her adjust her teaching, which she believed was the main role of assessment. Kim did not explicitly use DIBELS, or other assessment results, in her grade level meetings or in her coaching work. She felt teachers already knew what the data would confirm, that their students were struggling, and time would be better spent looking at instruction and interventions. This aspect of her philosophy developed over her years working as a literacy coach and will be further described later on in this case study (p. 61).

Overall, Kim’s literacy teaching philosophy focused on wide reading, comprehension, writing and meeting students’ needs through differentiated small group instruction. This balanced focus, and her beliefs, can be seen within her literacy coaching philosophy as well.

**Understandings of Literacy Coaching**

Kim’s philosophy of literacy coaching was “teacher oriented” (Interview, May 2009). From lesson planning and emails to paperwork and communication with stakeholders, Kim worked to stay grounded to the realities of teachers and students. She avoided becoming too involved with tasks outside of her direct work with teachers, “A lot of what I do is teacher oriented, even if I am not in the classroom” (Interview, May 2009). Her focus on teachers was evident through building professional relationships, relating to and respecting teachers, planning and preparation and remaining accountable to teachers. Consistent with her focus on teachers, Kim believed coaching was best evaluated by looking at how coaching impacts teachers, rather than looking solely at student performance data.
Building professional relationships. Throughout each interview and daily observation, the professional relationships Kim developed with teachers were evident. Kim worked to cultivate a climate of communication and trust. Teachers I interviewed indicated they trusted Kim and could rely on her support, as well as her discretion about classroom practices and events. Kim’s district had worked with several literacy coaches over two years; teachers said the former coaches’ practices were quite different than Kim’s and not always well-received. When Kim began coaching, she had to first help them revise their expectations for coaching. She shifted their perceptions of a coach from one who enters data and moves teachers through online professional development to one who works alongside teachers to improve literacy instruction. Early in her coaching career, Kim purposely avoided developing personal relationships as she tried to define her role. She acknowledged potential difficulties could arise if the lines between friend and colleague crossed. Therefore, Kim maintained a professional distance (Interview, May 2009) with teachers as she defined her new role.

Relating to and respecting teachers. One of Kim’s primary coaching beliefs is to listen to her teachers. Kim still viewed herself as a teacher and articulated the various challenges teachers face on a daily basis, including working with their specific students, facing a lack of administrative support and balancing professional and personal demands. As a coach, Kim stressed her non-evaluative and non-judgmental role: “You can’t really judge people and the amount of work they do” (Interview, May 2009). Instead, she validated teachers’ efforts and worked to provide the support she felt they deserved: “They know I stick up for them. They want to do the right things, they’re just stressed and there are other feelings that get in the way sometimes” (Interview, December 2009). Kim trusted teachers and valued their work.
**Planning and preparation.** For Kim, classroom coaching and teaching had the most impact on teacher practice and student learning: “Teachers are not going to make as much teaching changes from data than they are if you’re going to show them something different” (Interview, December 2009). Given her beliefs, Kim thoughtfully prepared and delivered modeled lessons and instructional strategies within the classroom, “If you want coaching to work, you have to be informed and prepared…I can’t just do a good enough lesson, I have to do, like, a good lesson. I have to sell people on it” (Interview, May 2009). She placed a great deal of emphasis on this aspect of her work. Kim stated “modeling is the best” (Interview, May 2009) to support teachers’ new thinking and engaged in hours of extensive planning to do so.

**Accountability to teachers.** Originally, Kim’s coaching position focused on grades K – 3 through *Reading First*. During the course of this study, *Reading First* ended and Kim gained additional responsibilities within her position, which included coaching grades K – 5. Kim attempted to maintain a presence throughout all of the grade levels she coached, “Because right now, I’m kind of in a good place with everybody, like administrators, teachers, and sometimes, it’s hard to keep all that balanced” (Interview, May 2009). Admitting to a great deal of guilt and nervousness surrounding her additional responsibilities, Kim worried about maintaining the professional relationships and trust she had earned over the last 4 years, “I don’t want them to stop trusting me as much because they feel less supported”(Interview, May 2009). Kim avoided canceling classroom visits for other task oriented activities, such as last minute meetings with administration and realized, “You can get into that bad habit and then they stop trusting you” (Interview, May 2009). Her strong classroom presence, coupled with her preparedness for classroom teaching and support, embodied her teacher-oriented focus.
Kim listened and responded to teacher feedback. In the 2008 – 2009 school year, Kim developed a Reading First Strengthening Team consisting of representatives from each grade level to solicit input from teachers and try out content, concepts and ideas to gauge practicality and effectiveness. When Kim had a new idea, she first implemented the strategy/approach with selected teachers and then asked for feedback. Once she and the teachers felt comfortable, she brought the idea to a grade level meeting. This method gave Kim the confidence to encourage teachers to try the techniques. Since she felt she needed to “sell the lesson” (Interview, May 2009), this team was quite important to her. Kim used this group as an outlet to share ideas, try new techniques in the classroom and gain greater teacher feedback and proclaimed the team “changed things completely” (Interview, May 2009) for her coaching.

**Evaluating the impacts of coaching.** When asked how to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy coaching, Kim reported teacher measures were a critical feature. Kim cited the slow process of teacher change and application of new content to the classroom as primary considerations. Kim stated:

> Because coaching is a very slow process...sometimes you don’t even see it as a coach. Sometimes you do wonder, there are certain days where I’m like why do that? What is my point here? Student achievement is about what the teacher takes and actually implements because a lot of ideas I’ve worked and modeled that have gone nowhere and people have not really been taking it on. They have to kind of like take a risk and try it. So, I think it [coaching] will help student achievement obviously but for those that transfer it to their own teaching. (Interview, March 2010)
Confirming that an important indicator of effectiveness would be the application of coached practices into the classroom, Kim elaborated further, believing measures of teacher knowledge were needed. She commented:

I think it would come to teacher knowledge if they had some sort of way they can show their understanding throughout the years because it’s -- that’s the problem with coaching, application is the teacher’s responsibility because -- even if you work with them consistently for a week to two weeks trying to implement it, you can only work with them so long and -- that’s the problem, a lot of people don’t take ownership of the ideas. Some do-- but then it’s like kind of their prerogative too then they have to -- And then maybe they don’t like it. Maybe that’s not what they see and you have to kind of be okay with that too. (Interview, March 2010)

Kim focused on her teachers’ ownership of new ideas and the application of practices in the classroom as her main indicators of effectiveness over student performance data and worked to ensure teachers sustained coached practices.

Kim’s coaching philosophy was teacher oriented. Her daily actions demonstrated her strong focus on building relationships to help teachers understand and practice effective literacy practices. Kim grappled with teachers reluctant to sustain coached practices within the classroom. She wondered how far to respect teachers’ wishes for her classroom coaching and still hold them accountable to try and sustain new instructional practices. Kim also grappled with the role student assessment data had in her coaching decisions. Both of these tensions are seen in observations of her daily work.

**Kim’s Daily Practices, Alignments and Disjunctures**

During this study, I spent eight full school days totaling over 50 hours with Kim to capture what a typical day might look like in her role as a Reading First Reading
Coach. In this section, I describe and analyze observations of Kim across several periods (May, 2009; October, 2009; February, 2010). First, I discuss the results from each observation period. The discussion of Kim’s daily practices was based on scheduled observations throughout the research period. As I observed and analyzed the data, I returned to Kim to discuss my main findings and receive feedback. These member checks took place regularly throughout the research period to ensure accuracy of the observations and resulting discussion of the results.

Kim reported the observations were typical for her role as coach in many ways, yet were atypical in others. As discussed, Kim’s planning time increased over the research period. Kim indicated the increased planning was typical of her daily activities as her coaching position changed. Yet, she was also stated that she was present in classrooms with more intensity on days that I was not in the building. Kim also indicated she led after-school professional study groups, yet I did not observe any instances of them throughout the research period.

Second, I examine the results across all three periods, utilizing the International Reading Association’s (2005) framework of coaching activities to guide my analysis. Third, I examine shifts in Kim’s position, identifying specific factors that influenced the role. Finally, I discuss shifts in Kim’s thinking about literacy coaching over time.

**Building Relationships and Coaching Teachers**

My first 3-day observation period took place in late Spring of the 2009 school year. During this first observation period, Kim primarily focused on communication, planning, and classroom coaching. A chart documenting my findings can be found in Appendix H. Kim communicated with teachers and remained visible in classrooms, elements that were part of her coaching beliefs.
Kim stated there was a constant flow of communication through hallways visits, drop-ins to the classroom, phone calls and emails and formal, arranged meeting times (Conversation, May 2009). During this observation period, the school began receiving elements of the new core reading program, Scott Foresman. Frustrated with the lack of consistency in these materials, Kim went to each teacher over the course of three days to take an inventory of program materials received. She felt taking the time to verify what teachers had and still needed showed them she cared and was invested in the process of learning the new program right along with them, ensuring its success (Conversation, May 2009). Kim scheduled meetings with teachers, answered questions about the new program, and discussed the assessments with teachers throughout the day, although she later commented, “This is the stuff I was saying is crazy and can take me away from things [classroom coaching]” (Conversation, May 2009).

Kim believed her activities within the classroom, through modeling lessons or providing classroom support, had the most impact on teachers over any of her other teacher oriented activities. Within this observational period, Kim modeled lessons in multiple classrooms. In second grade, she focused on how-to and personal narrative writing lessons. In first grade, she modeled a phonics lesson and provided a small group demonstration for a third grade teacher. Kim was quite at ease in the classroom and had a rapport with both teachers and students. She successfully implemented her coaching philosophy within the classrooms.

Kim also planned for upcoming classroom lessons and grade level meetings. She tried to keep planning outside of her day to leave more time for classroom coaching. Kim repeatedly apologized while planning in her office throughout all observation periods, especially as her planning activities increased in later observations. Yet, with a young
child at home, she found herself increasingly spending time planning within the school hours, against her personal judgment and philosophy. Kim equated ‘coaching’ with ‘classroom’ and struggled with feelings of guilt when she could not enact her philosophy into daily practice.

Yet, the activities that took Kim away from her desired classroom time were nevertheless “teacher oriented”. Kim’s focus on teachers was evident throughout the observations as she planned for sessions, met with teachers and spent time communicating across the school and district level. Kim’s focus on teachers was evident throughout the observations.

**An Emerging Focus on Assessment**

The 2009 – 2010 school year signaled a shift in Kim’s coaching responsibilities. The school’s *Reading First* grant period ended in May of 2009. While Kim’s district chose to sustain the coaching role, they extended her job responsibilities from K – 3 to K – 5. Kim was hesitant over her ability to balance her new responsibilities and focused on how to make it work, “I do a lot of the same things, but it’s different what I focus on”. A chart documenting my findings from the observations during this time can be found in Appendix I.

After the shift in responsibilities, Kim maintained her focus on communication (23%) and planning (20%), yet now engaged in a higher percentage of meetings (20%) and had a stronger focus on assessment (17%). When Kim gained new responsibilities for coaching grades 4 and 5, she wanted to begin developing relationships with the teachers. To do so, Kim ‘made the rounds’ (Conversation, September 2009) and sought out each teacher to set up a classroom visit or informal time to talk and make plans. At these brief, informal meetings, Kim met each teacher in his or her classroom requesting a day and
time to visit within the reading block. She described the purpose of the visit to meet the class and see the grade level in action and followed up each conversation with the questions, ‘How can I help you?’ or ‘What would you like me to do?’. Kim tried to balance both types of support during these initial visits:

   Doing modeled lessons in the beginning is so hard. I like to come and observe first to get a feel for the room and the kids- do I guide the whole lesson or give them more independent practice? Most teachers want me to do something first, then they let me come and watch. So, it’s hard. (Conversation, October 2010).

   During the second observation period, teachers completed DIBELS benchmark testing and a greater number of Kim’s activities focused on supporting that work. Kim covered classrooms so teachers would have uninterrupted time to assess their own students, completed DIBELS assessments for teachers, and analyzed the results. While Kim understood the importance of this data, she admitted she did not rely heavily on it to guide her work with teachers in the classroom or for upcoming grade level meetings. Kim focused on classroom coaching based on student and teacher needs over explicitly analyzing data in grade level meetings since she believed classroom modeling and practical new learning leads to changes in teacher practice over assessment data, particularly DIBELS data.

   Kim’s emphasis on teacher support was again evident throughout the second observation period. She maintained communication with a greater number of teachers, briefly meeting with upper elementary teachers to begin the coaching relationship. Kim also supported teachers as they administered assessments.
Planning Versus Coaching

I visited Kim again for two full school days in February of 2010. A chart documenting my findings from the observations can be found in Appendix J. Across the two days, Kim maintained her focus on assessment (16%) and modeled lessons within the classroom (16%). A continued increasing focus on planning (42%) emerged within this time period.

Kim spent a large percentage of her time planning in her office. Upon my arrival one day, Kim stated, “Yesterday, I was in five classrooms. Today, just one and planning for grade level meetings, so this might be a boring day for you” (Conversation, February 2010). She indicated days filled with classroom coaching were more typical of her daily work, yet these lessons required additional planning. She indicated she had a lot of work to do in her office, primarily planning for upcoming modeled lessons. Kim created detailed plans for each coaching session, which she left with each teacher, “If someone lets you into their room, you have to prove it can be done with their grade and their kids” (Conversation, February 2010). Her current planning focused on upcoming modeled lessons and how to embed test preparation into everyday literacy activities. Kim had earlier conducted the lessons with second grade and was now working with upper elementary teachers. Kim said she spent more time planning for these grade levels because she was less familiar with the content in the upper grades. Increased planning and preparation gave Kim confidence to work with the teachers.

A focus on working with assessment data remained consistent from the second observation period. Across these two days, Kim engaged with the reading specialists more than on previous occasions, possibly because of the additional time spent in her office planning, which she shared with the reading specialists, or because of the
benchmark assessment period. Teachers had recently completed benchmark assessment and the AIS specialists were working with the data to rearrange AIS groups to bring new students into intervention programs and arrange for more detailed diagnostic assessments for select students. Kim spent time informally discussing this data with the specialists, answering questions about the assessments, and thinking about curriculum for those students who needed additional support.

On one occasion, a reading specialist asked Kim if she had a minute during her lesson planning. This specialist shared concerns about a particular second grade student. She asked Kim for insight on his most recent DIBELS scores and asked what she might focus on in her intervention lessons. The specialist was confused by DIBELS scores and the proposed intervention program. Kim quickly asked, “What do you think? What do you feel?” (Observation, February 2010). Kim validated the specialist’s concerns and asked the specialist for her opinion first before offering her own. The specialist responded immediately and started talking about the anecdotal records on the student and her own thoughts about teaching strategies. Kim encouraged the specialist to try her ideas during the intervention to see how the student responded. They then agreed to meet on Monday to discuss the results.

Kim grappled with using student data in more formal ways. At a recent district level coaches meeting, she said she came to an important realization about the differences in coaching roles, specifically focusing on student data:

We’re all doing completely different things at each building and I’m confused because I’m not sure should I be doing more what they’re doing, should they be doing more what I’m doing…” (Interview, March 2010)
Kim reported the other coaches were much more focused on analyzing and presenting student data, while Kim focused more on classroom coaching and professional development. Kim stated, “The whole point of data is that they go do something with that information” (Interview, March 2010). She felt teachers already knew their students and what the data would tell them. Instead, she thought teachers needed to know what to do with that information to guide instruction:

People don’t change unless you give them an idea on how to change because either they don’t know how to or they just get used to certain things. Data is an important thing nowadays and I’m not against it….it’s just I don’t know. I think modeling helps them [teachers] more, but maybe they need a little data to make them see. (Interview, March 2010)

Kim worked to define the role of data in her overall coaching philosophy and daily activities and stated, “I have to figure out what my role is with the data” (Interview, March 2010). She indicated she might work to make explicit use of assessment data more integrated into her daily coaching activities.

Over the three observation periods, Kim initiated and maintained professional coaching relationships, conducted model lessons within classrooms, conducted / analyzed assessments, and planned for her increased coaching responsibilities. Over the course of the study, Kim’s coaching role and her thinking shifted in several ways. These shifts, as well as the contextual factors that impacted them, will be discussed next.

**Shifts in the Coaching Role**

Across the three observation periods, Kim experienced a shift in her coaching roles and responsibilities. In September of 2010, Kim moved from a K – 3 Reading First Coach to a K – 5 Reading Coach within her building. Throughout the observation
periods, Kim engaged in a variety of activities. These activities varied according to the shifts in her role, the timing of the observations within the school year and Kim’s overall coaching purpose. Table 9 outlines changes in coaching activities across the three observation periods.

Table 9

Kim’s Observed Activities Across Each Observation Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Activities</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kim’s planning time during the school day steadily increased across the three observational periods. Communication, paperwork, and teaching of students steadily decreased over time. Other activities varied, namely, assessment, activities within the classroom and school, and attending meetings. Throughout the observations, Kim did not
engage in any professional development or searching for and providing resources, yet Kim reported she did complete these tasks as part of her coaching role.

**Steadily increasing activities.** Planning steadily increased over the three observation periods moving from nearly 20% to almost 50% of her time. Kim placed a high value on being prepared for her classroom activities. She wrote and left detailed lesson plans with teachers and carefully planned for grade level meetings. In September 2009, when Kim’s position changed to include additional upper elementary grade levels, Kim spent more time preparing for classroom visits and grade level meetings with these teachers.

**Steadily decreasing activities.** Communication, paperwork and teaching of students steadily decreased over the observation periods. While communication always remained a daily activity, it steadily decreased from nearly half to 10% of her time as Kim’s planning and preparation increased. Kim confirmed these changes, stating she kept in contact with teachers, but an increased amount of planning and additional coaching duties impacted her visibility with teachers, something Kim was quite concerned about. Kim stated thoughtful preparation for her upper elementary coaching was essential, yet this placed her in her office more than she felt comfortable with at this juncture, even if the planning was meant to support teachers.

Paperwork decreased slightly over the research period. The *Reading First* grant ended in May of 2009. As a result, Kim no longer had to complete documentation of her coaching roles and frequent status reports. These changes decreased the amount of paperwork Kim had to complete.

While initially Kim engaged in teaching students as a pilot for sharing new intervention strategies with kindergarten teachers, this teaching did not continue through
the other observation periods. Instead, Kim shared the information she learned from the experience with kindergarten teachers to use in their daily work with students.

**Activities varying in consistency.** Several activities fluctuated: assessment, activities within the classroom and school, and attending meetings. Assessment activities initially increased and then remained steady over the observation period. The second and third visits occurred during benchmark testing times, which explained the increased focus. As the study progressed, Kim grappled with the increased role assessment played in their daily activities.

Activities within the school varied. In the first observation period, Kim participated in the Kindergarten round-up presentation to parents. Within the third observation, she held a parent gathering for the 1000 Book Club program.

Participation in meetings varied as well over the course of the observations. The spike in the second observation period was a result of increased meetings with upper elementary teachers, the building principal and reading specialists. This percentage dropped in the final observation period because the initial coaching meetings with upper elementary teachers were completed and the AIS schedule was finalized.

**Activities not observed.** Instances of professional development and searching for and providing resources were not observed, yet Kim engaged in those tasks at other times as part of her coaching role. Through *Reading First*, Kim primarily facilitated professional development sessions as part of the *Reading First* program, holding grade level meetings within the school day. When *Reading First* ended, these meetings were shifted to voluntary after-school meetings, which were not observed.

While I did not document Kim searching for and providing resources to teachers specifically, she sought professional resources, such as Scott Foresman program
resources and professional books to plan for her grade level meetings and modeled lessons.

Changes in Coaching Intensity

Table 10 outlines shifts in Kim’s coaching roles according to the International Reading Association’s (2005) framework of coaching activities. Kim maintained communication and build relationships with teachers as part of level 1 coaching activities. Within level 2, Kim administered and analyzed various literacy assessments. Within level 3 activities, Kim modeled lessons for teachers within the classroom.

Table 10

Kim’s Observational Analysis Using the International Reading Association’s (2005) Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Level</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: Informal activities</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to develop coaching relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Activities to learn more about teachers’ strengths and needs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: Formal and intense coaching work</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (not included in IRA levels)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First observation period. Within the first set of observations in May, 2009, Kim spent 37% of her daily activities in level 1. These activities consisted of maintaining communication with teachers, administrators and coaches and attending faculty, and other, meetings. Only 2% of her daily activities were spent in level 2, which focused on
assessment, specifically reviewing DIBELS data. Kim focused about 19% of her activities within level 3, completing classroom observations and coaching within classroom walls. Outside of the IRA’s three levels, approximately 42% of Kim’s activities could be classified as ‘other’, activities not outlined on the IRA’s levels of coaching, consisting mainly of paperwork, planning, and teaching.

Second observation period. Within the second set of observations in October, 2009, Kim’s focus in activities shifted. Kim spent an increased about of time in level 1 activities (60%) focusing on paperwork, administering assessments and attending meetings. Level 2 rose to approximately 7% of her activities, which included meeting with reading specialists and the building principal to discuss assessment data. Level 3 now accounted for only 3% of her daily activities. The sole instance of classroom coaching observed took place in December and focused on a modeled lesson on teaching sight words within authentic reading. This decrease in level 3 activities may have resulted from a larger focus on assessment early in the school year, leaving less time for coaching. Kim noted her increased focus on building relationships during this time. Combined with a stronger focus on assessment, Kim had less time to coach within the classroom overall. Yet, Kim indicated she was in classrooms throughout the week and my observation days did not capture this focus.

Third observation period. Kim’s shift in focus during the third set of observations was also reflected in an analysis of the IRA’s level of coaching. Level 1 activities, consisting primarily of communication, informal teacher contact and meetings were reduced to approximately 15% of Kim’s time. As noted, Kim’s planning steadily increased over the three observation periods. As she spent additional time in her office, the unscheduled, informal communication decreased. Level 2 rose to about 16%,
primarily consisting of focused discussions with AIS specialists. Kim spent time with the reading specialists, clarifying questions about assessments and supporting their thinking about the intervention programs. Level 3 activities rose to 16% of Kim’s activities. Kim modeled lessons in teachers’ classrooms. Activities considered ‘other’ consisted of 52% of the activities observed. These activities primarily consisted of planning in her office for upcoming classroom coaching and grade level meetings.

**Three levels of coaching.** While Kim engaged in activities across all three levels of the coaching framework over the course of this study, approximately one third to a half of her day focused on activities not explicitly stated on the coaching framework. Within the first and second observation periods, Kim primarily focused on level 1 coaching activities, building new coaching relationships with upper elementary teachers through informal communication and meetings. Kim also planned for upcoming lessons and meetings with these teachers newer to coaching. Over time, Kim increased her focus on level 2 activities, primarily engaging in more assessment-related activities. During the third observation period, Kim shifted her focus back to classroom coaching revealing an increased focus in level 3 activities, yet her planning time increased significantly to prepare for these lessons, increasing the amount of time spent in the ‘other’ category. Overall, Kim engaged in coaching activities across all three levels of coaching intensity, as outlined by the IRA (2005).

**Other coaching activities.** Kim’s case study aligned with and also complicated the IRA’s (2004) framework of coaching activities. While Kim engaged in activities considered typical to a literacy coaching role, she also spent a significant amount of time on activities not explicitly stated in the IRA’s framework. Kim’s engaged in extensive amounts of planning for her coaching sessions and this accounted for the high
percentages in the ‘other’ category.

**Tensions of Practice**

Three areas of tension were evident throughout Kim’s case study: classroom coaching versus planning, working with reluctant teachers, and the role of student assessment in daily activities.

**Classroom coaching versus planning.** Kim grappled with the increasing amounts of planning she completed during the school day. She equated ‘coaching’ with ‘classroom’ and felt the majority of her planning should take place at home, just as classroom teachers were expected to do. As Kim shifted to coaching 4th and 5th grade teachers, she found herself planning more extensively during the school day for these sessions than she normally would. Since she was less familiar and confident with the content in these grades, extensive planning gave her confidence over the literacy content explored in these grades. Yet, this imbalance frustrated Kim as she struggled to continue to work with teachers in the classroom and accommodate this new level of planning required to do so.

**Working with reluctant teachers.** Kim put a great deal of effort and planning into her classroom coaching to ensure a successful lesson in the classroom and to show teachers how instructional practices could work successfully in their classrooms. When teachers did not sustain those practices in the classroom, Kim followed-up with teachers and offered to continue coaching in the classroom. Kim struggled with this aspect of her work and questioned whose responsibility it was to sustain instructional practices, the teachers’ or her own:

You have to ask yourself as a coach: How much of this is my responsibility and how much is not my responsibility?...Whatever I did didn’t make him improve at
that level, but at the same time, did he make a choice or did he not understand? Did he get confused or did it just seem too overwhelming for him? Are you only supposed to work with the people who really want to? It gets very, like, gray areas. (Interview, May 2009)

Kim turned her focus toward the students to help guide this aspect of her work. She looked at the needs of the students within the classroom and continued working to better support instruction within the classroom. Kim continued to model lessons, even if she was not certain the teacher would assume responsibility for them, because the students in the classroom benefitted from the experience.

**Role of student assessment data.** Kim’s engagement in assessment activities increased throughout this study. Primarily in response to the school’s benchmark assessment calendar, Kim administered assessments, provided classroom coverage for teachers to complete their own assessments, and informally analyzed the data. Kim struggled with her feelings toward these assessments as they increased in intensity and questioned how they fit into her coaching philosophy. Kim believed that teachers made changes as a result of seeing new practices in the classroom, not from the information that assessment data provided. She felt teachers already knew their students from their daily work in the classroom - data verified what they already knew, but did not necessarily tell them anything different, or more importantly, what to do with that information.

**Contextual Factors and Negotiations**

Kim was affected by contextual factors that required her to negotiate her literacy coaching positions over time. After *Reading First* funding was discontinued, building and district level administrators, with conflicting philosophies and assumptions, impacted
Kim’s roles and responsibilities. The relationships Kim developed with teachers also impacted how Kim coached on a daily basis.

**Administrative level negotiations.** Throughout the interviews and observations, Kim focused on changes prompted by district administration. Over her time as a coach, Kim worked with multiple administrators, including one building principal, two superintendents, two assistant superintendents, one coach supervisor, and a *Response to Intervention* coordinator:

> This is the problem...we get money, they spend money and then they get a person in and then the person leaves...we get these people coming in and then they leave so quick we get a lot of confusion and teachers you get the teachers who want to make the changes confused and then you get the teachers who don’t want to do anything and this idea of well they’ll be here for two years and then…. (Interview, January, 2010)

As a result of changing administrators, communication and consistency within the district were problematic: “Administrators mess up coaching so bad, you know...they just make their own decisions based on their own…” (Interview, March, 2010).

Newer district level administrators held a tighter rein on the reading coaches than Kim had previously experienced. Kim stated her new administrator wanted coaches to not only coach, but also had to become more involved in school and district level activities. Kim was fearful “administrators are trying to make it [the coaching role] more task oriented [tasks outside of classroom coaching] and I think that’s a problem”. Since Kim equated ‘coaching’ with ‘classroom’ these tasks kept her out of the classroom more than she would prefer. Combined with the additional teachers she began coaching in the Fall of 2009, these tasks left Kim feeling “a little thrown off half the time” (Conversation,
Adding to Kim’s frustration, there were administrators with conflicting personalities. When asked how she negotiated these conflicts, Kim explained she got to know her administrators’ personalities and learned who was strong, yet inflexible, strong and flexible, or not a risk-taker, and then responded accordingly. Acknowledging the friction between teachers and administration, Kim stated she had “administration on one side who have a completely different view about things and the teachers on the other side who have a completely different view. It’s like a bump all the time” (Conversation, March 2010). When asked what she did when things “bumped”, or which aspect guided her work, Kim said she considered her teachers’ perspectives. The teachers’ needs influenced the daily coaching decisions she made.

**Teacher level negotiations.** When asked about her classroom coaching and how she met teachers’ needs, Kim explained that her modeled lessons were designed to fit within the current instructional climate of the classroom, even if the lesson was not exactly what she would have chosen. After completing a modeled lesson on May 9, 2009, Kim felt the lesson was too long, but did not want to leave without completing it, knowing the teacher had a particular method of running her small writing groups. Similarly, while completing a read aloud in a Kindergarten classroom, Kim followed the classroom teacher’s disciplinary method of writing names of misbehaving students on the board. While it was not a practice she would employ in her own classroom, Kim believed she needed to follow the lead of the classroom teacher. Referring to both of those teachers, and others, she stated, “You have to do what they would” (Conversation, May 2009). Yet, Kim also modeled alternatives to the lessons, such as using a ‘Star Board’ for behavior management, rewarding positive behavior rather than highlighting misbehaving
students.

**Shifts in Thinking**

Over the research period, in addition to the observable changes in roles and responsibilities, Kim’s thinking shifted.

Initially, Kim supported teachers through classroom modeling, provided classroom support, found resources and planned for relevant grade level meetings. Kim developed the *Reading First* Strengthening Team in the last year of the *Reading First* grant. As part of this team, she worked with a small group of teachers to discuss and pilot new ideas and instructional techniques before sharing new ways of thinking with the entire faculty.

While Kim was confident in her coaching, when she added additional grade levels in September 2009, she experienced guilt and nervousness. As the school year continued, Kim felt she regained her confidence and started to question the overall coaching practices in her district. When other literacy coaches in the district discussed their heavy focus on data, which gained approval from district administration, Kim asked why this was a critical coaching activity and asked for clarification as to its purpose:

I can’t just shut up and be like hee hee about everything because I’ve been here four years now, I’ve been through changes and I’ve been through different things and I’ve been through different philosophies…I know with the data, I did it with *Reading First*. Data is good, it does give information, but it doesn’t really change anything. It says your data drives instruction, people don’t know how to drive their instruction. You don’t tell a person well half your class is failing and expect them to know what to do with that. They know half their class is failing. Putting those scores in and itemizing which questions are getting wrong it doesn’t really -
- you might see somewhat of a pattern but…they don’t know what to do about that….you don’t ever tell them anything new with data……We already know which questions our kids struggle with. (Interview, March 2010)

One administrator, the new RTI coordinator, presented a particular challenge for Kim. Kim noted that this particular administrator had strong personal views and did not communicate with coaches before communicating with teachers. As the school continued to move forward with a more flexible reading block, Kim wanted to include more authentic literature for wide reading, focus on matching books to readers and facilitate discussion and higher level thinking (Interview, March 2010). The RTI coordinator suggested Kim, along with the other coaches in the district, read Mosaic of Thought and facilitate a study group with teachers. This administrator also started investigating Fountas and Pinnell’s Benchmark Assessment System for the district to ensure a stronger focus on matching books to readers. Kim was pleased given her literacy philosophy and her desire to change the focus of the reading block to include portions of a reading workshop model and felt these changes were supported. While initially their views were similar, at subsequent meetings, the coordinator contradicted this information and disagreed over the language used to describe the approach. Kim complained the Coordinator’s focus was the same model as reading workshop, but was using different language to describe it and stated “so it’s like why don’t you promote it and don’t get caught up in the stupid wording here” (Interview, March 2010). Kim felt strongly that district administrators lacked responsibility for their thinking and for their actions.

Shifts in Kim’s thinking were also evident on a teacher-level: “this year was a learning year” (Interview, Match 2010). Kim’s initial interviews and conversations focused on supporting teachers with whatever they needed, primarily through classroom
coaching. One of Kim’s primary concerns focused on sustaining new instructional practices in the classroom. She reported struggling with teachers who did not use the strategies modeled or integrate new resources Kim provided. During our interview in March, there was a noticeable shift in her thinking. Instead of struggling over whose responsibility it was to apply new learning to the classroom, she focused on what she needed to do as a coach to get particular teachers moving forward. Kim stating she needed to “push more” (Interview, March 2010), and focused on coaching interactions to move hesitant or resistant teachers. Using a Kindergarten teacher who resisted implementing more complex literacy tasks in literacy stations as an example, she said:

I’m kind of pushing, it’s like my goal, you know...It’s [literacy station] more challenging but they need to be doing that because by first grade they need to start reading longer tasks so they have to be able to read these little phrases in kindergarten and it’s -- there’s a big difference -- you can have a philosophical debate about whether or not curriculum is going too fast but the fact is in the meantime it is going fast and you just have to you know you have to start going with that you know you can’t just keep saying that and they go into second grade and they can’t read. (Interview, March 2010)

As a result, Kim reported she planned to focus on pushing teachers harder in relation to trying new techniques and applying new learning to the classroom. Kim once again felt confident in her coaching focus and techniques and was now ready to work with her teachers in a more confident manner.

Throughout the course of this research, I observed Kim implement her coaching philosophy into her daily work. Her role was clearly teacher oriented and her daily activities connected to teachers and students in some manner.
Kim’s Impact on Teachers

During this study, I interviewed five classroom teachers (kindergarten, first, second and fifth grade teachers), one building principal and one assistant superintendent, to explore the impact of Kim’s coaching practices on teachers. Each provided insight into the coaching role in the building and the impact of Kim’s coaching on their teaching and their students.

Teachers in the building worked with multiple coaches and reported Kim’s coaching impacted their own learning and that of their students. In this section, I discuss the climate for coaching in the building and the impact Kim’s coaching had on her teachers, namely, increased support in the classroom, increased support for their daily work and varied impacts on student performance.

Kim was the third literacy coach in her building. Previous coaches stayed in the position for only one year, leaving the building with an inconsistent coaching presence. Kim not only had to learn her position, but the teachers had to learn about Kim’s method of coaching as well. Three of the five interviewed teachers had worked with all three literacy coaches. Each of these teachers reported the need for a clear job description of literacy coaching to better envision the role and discussed the differences between each of the three coaches. Ashley, a first grade teacher, reported, “When we first had the coach, no one knew really what it meant to be a coach” (Interview, May 2009). Ann, another first grade teacher, said, “Consistency is important because by the time we got to Kim, it was like, ‘okay, here we go again’ and everybody’s trying to figure it out” (Interview, February 2010). Teachers reported previous coaches held meetings, facilitated online professional development or collected and presented data, rarely, if ever, coming into the classroom. All three teachers found Kim’s practices more effective. Ashley
stated, “And then we got to Kim, and that was number three, and she really took it above and beyond” (Interview, May 2009).

Each teacher noted Kim’s accommodating personality and classroom support as key differences in Kim’s coaching. Terri, a second grade teacher, believed schools should “let teachers know what the role of a literacy coach is. Let them know they’re there to help you. You know, that they’re meant to come into your classroom, they’re meant to find strengths, but you know, they are here to help find some weaknesses too, to help you become a better teacher” (Interview, May 2009). This was a newer view of coaching for these teachers, yet all five teachers and the building principal indicated positive benefits as a result of Kim’s coaching. All five interviewed teachers reported increased trust and support in the classroom, and increased support for their daily work. Two teachers reported an impact on student performance.

**Increased Trust and Support in the Classroom**

Kim’s personality and accommodating nature, along with her new vision for coaching, facilitated a connection with faculty. Cara, the building principal, stated, “They [teachers] liked her right off the rip because she is non-threatening. She is accommodating, very quiet, soft, kind, positive and pleasing” (Interview, May 2009). Cara believed Kim’s personality allowed teachers to accept her into the position and work with her within their classrooms. She reported the most noticeable impact of Kim’s coaching was the risk-taking her teachers began to take in trying new instructional practices. She stated, “They wouldn’t take the risk with me in the room, but they would risk it with her in the room” (Interview, May 2009). She noted that this risk-taking allowed some teachers to “try new strategies they hadn’t seen before” (Interview, May 2009). While the building principal viewed this as a clear benefit, Kim was unsure these
changes in instruction were sustained in particular classrooms.

All five teachers indicated Kim’s professionalism and manner helped them to trust and respect her. Ann, a first grade teacher, stated, “She’s been here long enough, she’s built a rapport with people, she’s earned our trust” (Interview, February 2010). During an interview, Ann discussed a particularly difficult lesson Kim observed. Ann did not worry about Kim discussing the experience with others. Ann stated, “I knew it didn’t go anywhere else. You can trust her” (Interview, March 2010). Sarah, a 5th grade teacher who recently starting working with Kim, also felt this trust and level of comfort. She stated, “She makes it comfortable. Like, if she came into watch you, you wouldn’t feel like she was going to judge you, you do feel like she’s going to give you positive and, you know, constructive criticism, to benefit the program” (Sarah Interview, March 2010). Kim connected with teachers and supported them within their classrooms. Despite Kim’s unease with her increased responsibilities, she clearly succeeded in building relationships with teachers early on in the coaching process.

**Increased Support for Teachers’ Daily Work**

All five interviewed teachers reported Kim supported their daily work. Terri, a second grade teacher stated, “Kim basically says ‘you tell me what you need’ and she’ll do whatever she can to, you know, do it for us or get it for us” (Interview, May 2009). Donna, a kindergarten teacher, stated Kim is “always available” (Interview, September 2009) and Ashley stated, “She’ll support you whenever you ask her as long as her schedule is free” (Interview, May 2009). Specifically citing Kim’s help in finding resources and providing guidance, teachers discussed Kim’s role in supporting classroom instruction. Donna noted she was “a tremendous help” (Interview, September 2009) with both classroom literacy centers and modeling lessons. Donna appreciated the information
Kim first presented at grade level meetings and then followed up with offers of support within their classroom. Sarah, the fifth grade teacher, also felt this support in the classroom, stating, “She’s teaching different instructional methods too that are helpful. Like instead of doing round robin to do choral reading and partner reading, just giving different instruction to that, how to teach different lessons with the best theories behind it, I guess” (Interview, March 2010). Terri, the second grade teacher, noted, “She’s there to support you to take the risks” (Interview, May 2009). Ann, a first grade teacher, stated, “I like that, while I haven’t taken her up on it, she’s available to model lessons or groups” (Interview, March 2010). Throughout my observations, Ann eventually did accept Kim’s invitation to model a week long sequence of lessons supporting the new core program and reported positive results.

Overall, teachers felt Kim’s support impacted their teaching. Ann, the first grade teacher, stated Kim was “helping to make us better teachers” (Interview, March 2010) through her informative grade level meetings and classroom support. Donna reported coaching was a “great asset to any school” (Interview, September 2009) and Kim helped her successfully begin, and sustain, her teaching career.

**Impact on Student Performance**

While the building principal reported there was “absolutely an impact” (Interview, May 2009) on student achievement, only two out of the five teachers interviewed indicated positive results in overall student performance as a direct result of coaching. Ashley, the first grade teacher, was very clear about the results coaching had on her student’s performance and stated all of her DIBELS scores increased with Kim’s support. Ann, another first grade teacher, reported an indirect impact on student performance as a result of the learning and support Kim provided. She stated Kim’s
support makes her a better teacher, which in turn impacts her students.

The remaining teachers held a more limited view of Kim’s impact on student performance. They reported Kim impacted student performance, but only those that she worked with directly. For example, Kim implemented a new reading intervention with a small group of Kindergarten students in Donna’s classroom. Donna reported increased performance with those particular students in the classroom. Terri, the second grade teacher, worked closely with Kim on a new writing instructional strategy. She reported Kim’s hands-on support in the classroom provided her students with additional feedback and more teacher-student contact time, which led to increased student achievement within the lessons. The teachers’ responses demonstrated the need for clarification on the purpose of coaching and the potential impact on student performance as a result of supporting classroom teachers.

All five interviewed teachers indicated they would like additional time with Kim as a coach. Cara, the building principal, noted, “It’s [coaching] really polished those that are good teachers and it has gotten people who did not really know how to teach reading to become really good reading teachers” (Interview, May 2009). Yet, Ashley admitted that these changes came because of Kim’s philosophy of coaching and coaching practices, stating, “You know, it’s really hard for the other buildings to know what a coach is because they don’t have a Kim” (Interview, May 2009). Kim’s coaching clearly impacted teachers.

**Conclusion**

Kim worked to build professional relationships. Kim felt a critical aspect was to support teachers directly within the classroom through modeling lessons to support classroom instruction.
Observations documented her teacher oriented focus. Kim worked within classrooms modeling lessons and supporting instruction across the observation period. She used teacher needs and informal assessment data to guide her work over explicit examination and use of formal assessment data.

Kim’s role shifted as funded reading mandates ended. When the district changed her position, Kim coached additional grade levels. As her role changed, Kim met the challenges of planning for and balancing a larger number of teachers to coach. She worked with a number of administrators who held differing views on literacy teaching, learning and coaching. Kim struggled to negotiate her role as she interacted with each administrator. As a result, Kim worked to respond more to teacher level concerns, following the lead of the teacher to guide her daily work and coaching support.

Throughout the study, Kim sustained her teacher-oriented focus. She grappled with the influence of student assessment data and her role working with unresponsive teachers. Originally, Kim grappled with how to best support and respond to teachers who didn’t transfer new learning and modeled instructional techniques to the classroom. Over time, Kim felt she needed to take more responsibility for her role and teachers’ ownership of instructional practices and “push more” (Interview, March 2010) to better impact teachers’ practices and students’ learning. These changes in thinking were when Kim began to “push more” with district administration as well, questioning coaching practices across the district, particularly those that took her away from the classroom and her teacher oriented focus. Kim continued to refine her coaching philosophy and strengthen her beliefs, becoming more confident in and reflective of her literacy coaching practices.
Chapter 5: Jennifer

For the past 20 years, Jennifer worked as a reading teacher and reading coach at Lincoln Elementary School. Initially teaching grades 4 and 5, Jennifer moved to the primary grades as an early intervention teacher, becoming one of the district’s first specialists. Years after starting the early intervention program, the district was awarded a New York State *Reading for Results* grant. As part of this grant, Lincoln received funds to hire a school-based Reading Coach to support the program. The principal approached Jennifer and asked if she would consider the position. A self-proclaimed lifelong learner, Jennifer was excited about the opportunity to focus on professional development and learning. She accepted the position.

After two years of *Reading for Results*, Lincoln remained eligible for funding under *Reading First*. Jennifer continued as a Tier II Reading Coach and coached for over eight years. In the last year of *Reading First* funding, Jennifer wrote and received a five year grant under New York State’s *Response to Intervention* pilot program. She remained as Reading Coach, working under the auspices of both programs. However, union-driven changes at both the district and school level influenced her current coaching role.

Beginning in September of 2009 Jennifer was required to teach Academic Intervention Services for 51% of her time as part of her coaching position. She was also assigned two additional professional titles, Teacher-in-Charge and library supervisor. As part of her Teacher-in-Charge role, Jennifer handled various administrative duties at building 1, specifically focusing on behavior management. As library supervisor, Jennifer supervised a Teacher Assistant and led library sessions at building 2. These changes brought new roles and responsibilities, as well as conflicted feelings to the literacy coaching position.

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2 As noted earlier, all names of participants, schools, and school districts are represented by pseudonyms.
Jennifer’s Understandings of Literacy Teaching and Coaching

Jennifer developed her teaching and coaching understandings over her years of experience as a classroom teacher, intervention teacher, and reading coach. Her understandings of literacy teaching and coaching are presented here.

Understandings of Literacy Teaching

Jennifer’s teaching philosophy focused on differentiated instruction and authentic literacy practices using books and materials at students’ individual reading levels. Jennifer strengthened her beliefs on literacy teaching through her work as a coach, stating she learned how to be a better teacher from it.

Differentiated instruction. Jennifer felt strongly about meeting students’ individual needs, “I believe kids need to be taken from where they are and you need to look at what kids can do and what they still need to accomplish on the continuum of being a competent reader” (Interview, May 2009). Differentiating instruction was always a strong focus for Jennifer, even in her initial years of teaching:

And I did differentiation even then, not the same kind of differentiating instruction, but it was more like, you know, staying there until 5:30 – 6:00 at night and deciding which level kids were on and giving them appropriate reinforcement work, you know, which was not having some stations so much as having a teaching station and then differentiated work and then like a listening station and a writing station. (Interview, May 2009)

Jennifer used assessment data, both formal and informal, to guide her literacy instruction and worked to find methods that work best for each student:

I believe in looking at individual children to figure out what they need, no two kids are alike. No two ways- every kid is motivated by something different and I
think the kids basically want to learn. I found that in working with AIS. Even
fourth and fifth graders who are hard core and difficult, and they have this outer
crusty exterior, it’s because they built that wall around themselves because they’re
not successful at reading. (Interview, May 2009)

**Authentic literacy practice.** Jennifer believed in the importance of an early
foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics, yet felt strongly that students need to
read connected text at their own level to make gains in reading, “You’re not going to
improve fluency if you give the kids something they can’t read. The best practice you can
give a kid is to have them reading at their level” (Interview, May 2009). While the
district’s core program provided a solid foundation in early skills, it lacked
comprehension strategy teaching. Jennifer worked with teachers in her before-school
professional development sessions on using authentic text with students to strengthen
understanding. She also used leveled books and authentic text for decoding and fluency
practice in her direct teaching.

Jennifer’s literacy teaching philosophy can best be described as student centered.
She focused on providing opportunities for students to engage in real literacy tasks at
their own individual levels. These beliefs were evident in her literacy coaching
philosophy as well.

**Understandings of Literacy Coaching**

Jennifer believed a coach should work to support both teachers and students in
multiple ways:

As a coach, you have to be ready to do anything that will support the kids. My job
entails… helping teachers in any way I can, whether it’s going in the classroom,
helping them with curriculum, solving issues as far as scheduling. I just feel I am
a jack of all trades... (Interview, May 2009)

Professional learning, moving students forward and acting as a liaison for teachers
comprised the basic tenets of her philosophy.

**Professional learning.** Jennifer became a literacy coach because she enjoyed
“helping teachers be the best they can be” and was “really interested in what’s best for
kids” (Interview, May 2009). Jennifer advocated for teachers and worked to make
coaching worthwhile, practical, and relevant. She involved teachers in the professional
development as much as possible, “Just like in teaching, you cannot be a talking head,
that you have to involve them, that they have to be involved in the learning” (Interview,
May 2009). Jennifer used various techniques to get teachers talking and engaged with the
content, such as interactive activities and paired discussions. Jennifer reported teachers
“have to be able to know it [the content] well enough to carry it forward in their
classrooms” (Interview, May 2009) She felt strongly about meeting teachers where they
were and asking them about their professional beliefs and opinions, building on the
known. Jennifer did not coach using an authoritative or evaluative manner: “I never
approach anything in that manner. Ever.” (Interview, May 2009).

**Moving students forward.** Jennifer believed coaching should support teachers,
yet she acknowledged she was ultimately working with teachers to better support
students: “You’re not only there to help the teacher, you’re ultimately there to help the
students- bring the students forward” (Interview, May 2009). Jennifer focused on
students’ needs to ground her in the daily realities of the classroom and learn information
about classroom literacy instruction and teacher practices, “I try to involve myself with
the kids because it tells me more about what they’re doing and where they are”
Jennifer believed, “That’s what makes a good coach - that they [coaches] always want the best for the kids in their schools and they want teachers to do the very best they can for those kids” (Interview, May 2009). She used student assessment data to choose topics for her grade level meetings to help teachers better teach their students, “People can’t argue with data. It helps teachers look at students and bring students forward” (Interview, May 2009). Jennifer insisted her work as a coach was relevant and meaningful by focusing on the students.

**Acting as a liaison for teachers.** Jennifer held additional responsibilities beyond coaching. She was also a Teacher-in-Charge at Building 1, overseeing student behavior and management. These were more administrative duties, rather than coaching activities, yet Jennifer worked to show teachers, “I’m one of you- I’m not an administrator” (Interview, May 2009), focusing on her coaching role over all others. Jennifer reported a crucial part of her role was to act “as a liaison” (Interview, May 2009) with administration to get the teachers’ voices and needs heard. She said she did so by meeting regularly with the building principal, raising important issues on the requests of teachers and making the principal aware of the strengths and needs of the building.

**Evaluating the impact of coaching.** Jennifer reported teacher-level measures were essential to evaluating the impact of coaching on teachers. Specifically, Jennifer cited application of classroom practices as a main indicator of success:

I think that the demonstration of classroom practices that go along with… research based professional developments that the coaches have given to the teachers. I think it’s even really evident in conversations that you have with teachers at grade level meetings. So, I think it’s really evident in conversations teachers have. I think it’s evident in the classroom practices, I think it’s even
evident in scores. (Interview, March 2010)

Jennifer also stated sustainability of coached classroom practices should be an indicator of effectiveness. Unfortunately, as her coaching role shifted and changed, she felt the practices applied to the classroom in previous years were not continuing across both of her buildings:

At [Building 1] here I feel that these teachers are dedicated to practices that through Reading First they have learned and they will continue regardless if there is a coach, if there’s not a coach. I cannot say that about [Building 2]. Through 2nd grade yes. 3rd no. 4th/5th absolutely not. The minute my back is turned they go back to what they did before. (Interview, March 2010)

Jennifer did not engage in any coaching within the classroom throughout the study, but reported doing so in previous years before gaining additional responsibilities. Regardless, Jennifer based her success not only on the application of classroom practices, but on the continuation of those practices, even as her coaching role diminished.

Jennifer’s coaching philosophy focused on continual professional learning. She acted as a liaison for teachers with administrators and moved students forward as a result of her work with teachers. Yet, she struggled to fully enact her philosophy into practice. Her attitude of doing anything to support teachers led her to accept, and assume, multiple responsibilities outside of her coaching role. This fragmented Jennifer’s position and left her questioning the nature of the coaching role, the value teachers placed on the position, and her daily work as a coach.

Jennifer’s Coaching Practices, Alignments and Disjunctures

During this study, I spent eight full school days, totaling over fifty hours, with Jennifer to capture a typical day as a Reading First Reading Coach at Lincoln Elementary
School. In this section, I describe and analyze observations of Jennifer across several time periods (May, 2009; October, 2009; February, 2010). First, I discuss the results from each observation period. The discussion of Jennifer’s daily practices was based on scheduled observations throughout the research period. As I observed and analyzed the data, I returned to Jennifer to discuss my main findings and receive feedback. These member checks took place regularly throughout the research period to ensure accuracy of the observations and resulting discussion of the results.

Jennifer reported the observations were typical for her role as coach in many ways, yet were atypical in others. As discussed, Jennifer engaged in varying amount of behavior management activities throughout the research period. Jennifer admitted the time she spent in behavior management was often higher than the percentages I observed across the observations, taking even more of her coaching time. Jennifer also reported leading before-school meetings with teachers on a regular basis, something I only observed once throughout the research period.

Second, I examine the results across all three periods, utilizing the International Reading Association’s (2005) framework of coaching activities to guide my analysis. Third, I examine shifts in Jennifer’s position, identifying specific factors that influence the role. Finally, I discuss shifts in Jennifer’s thinking about literacy coaching over time.

**Coaching Versus Administration**

My first three days of observations took place in late Spring of the 2009 school year. A chart outlining the percentage of activities in each category observed can be found in Appendix K. During this first observational period, Jennifer spent almost half of her day in tasks unrelated to the coaching role (47%). These tasks included behavior management and other tasks considered part of her ‘Teacher-in-Charge’ role. Outside of
those tasks, Jennifer primarily focused on assessment (23%) and communication (11%) as her primary coaching activities.

Jennifer was Teacher-in-Charge at Building 1 and had behavior management responsibilities in addition to her coaching role. Jennifer admitted this role took a large amount of her time, varying throughout the school year. While I observed that 31% of her activities were spent specifically engaging in behavior management-related duties, she stated this was much lower than the previous school year. She reported as much as half of her day, if not more, was previously spent in behavior management. This included following up on referrals, making phone calls home, connecting professionals, overseeing lunch and recess detention and even restraining kids who were harmful to themselves and/or to other children. During this observation period, Jennifer received behavioral referrals, talked directly with students and made numerous phone calls to teachers and parents. Other tasks that also kept her away from the coaching role included participation in the school’s morning program and school play, bus duty, and traveling between the two buildings.

Jennifer also engaged in more typical coaching roles, particularly focusing on assessment (23%), during this observation. She prepared and organized materials for the upcoming Terra Nova testing and administered individual Peabody Picture Vocabulary Tests to 9 kindergarten students. As part of her coaching role, Jennifer oversaw the schools’ assessment programs, crafted schedules, and assisted with administration when needed.

Jennifer also focused on communication over this time period through informal teacher and administrative contact. Noting, “It always goes like this” (Communication, May 2009), Jennifer reported her day was often dictated by this constant stream of
communication, whether in person, through phone calls or emails. Jennifer attempted to keep in contact with teachers to discuss students and focus on the reading program and assessments. Given her additional role, Jennifer also communicated with teachers on building concerns, behavior management issues and updates with building and district administrators. Within this period, Jennifer engaged with her building principal and district administration, “Our principals rely on us” (Interview, May 2009). Jennifer felt her own building principal gave her more freedom than other coaches, stating, “He’s let me run with my job, so to speak” (Interview, May 2009), possibly because of her dual roles. Jennifer stated, “I think my job is vastly different from the other Tier II coaches because I am the administrative liaison, Teacher-in-Charge” (Interview, May 2009). These additional responsibilities took her away from her coaching duties and influenced teachers’ perceptions of the role.

**Acquiring AIS Teaching and a New State Grant**

The 2009 – 2010 school year brought significant changes to Jennifer’s coaching role. A combination of financial constraints and union issues prompted a change in coaching roles and responsibilities. According to Jennifer, if coaches within the district did not start directly teaching students 51% of the time, they would be excluded from the teachers union. As a result, in September 2009, Jennifer assumed 51% teaching duties within the AIS program. At Building 2, Jennifer also assumed library supervision duties as a result of budget cuts. In addition to the changes initiated by the union, Jennifer’s district also received a NYS *Response to Intervention* grant that she wrote over the summer in an attempt to preserve the coaching position. Jennifer now assumed the role of RTI literacy coach as well.
I observed Jennifer for two days in early October and one additional day in December. A chart outlining the percentage of activities within each category observed can be found in Appendix L.

Jennifer searched for a way to incorporate her new responsibilities into her day without compromising her current coaching duties. She documented her time spent in direct contact with students on a daily basis per the union’s request even though she was not yet working with intervention groups. The mandate requiring her to teach 51% of the time was not yet evident in her daily practices. Across these observations, Jennifer increased her time spent in communication, planning, paperwork, and direct teaching activities. Her participation in unrelated activities decreased drastically.

Communication activities rose approximately 20% from the first observation period. A portion of these activities resulted from the new Response to Intervention grant. Jennifer talked with another district coach and the state’s technical assistance center on multiple grant topics, including completing the faculty self-assessment survey. Other communication activities primarily focused on her Teacher-in-Charge role and included contact with administrators, teachers and teacher assistants on building level concerns.

Jennifer also spent increased time (about 20%) in planning and paperwork activities. Jennifer focused on crafting agendas for upcoming before school grade level meetings and typing minutes from completed meetings. Paperwork duties focused on the new Response to Intervention grant. Jennifer gathered and analyzed data from a faculty survey administered by the state’s grant administrator. Jennifer’s additional paperwork duties included documentation of her direct contact with students.

Within this observation period, an additional role, library supervision duties, emerged. Given recent cuts in the school budget, Jennifer assumed responsibility of the
library, teaching classes and supervising the Teaching Assistant at Building 2. Instead of teaching traditional library sessions, Jennifer crafted a mini-reading block focusing on comprehension strategies for upper grade level students. She found that the core program provided a solid foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics, yet did not focus as much on comprehension strategies, “strategies are different than skills” (Observations, October 2009). Jennifer reminded teachers they needed to go outside of the core to support their students. Feeling like she was “beating a dead horse” (Conversation, October 2009), she decided to use the library sessions to focus on comprehension strategies with the students as a model for teachers.

While Jennifer enjoyed working with students, she expressed frustration with these additional responsibilities, “I'm not being paid for it [library supervision], because the Board of Education said they couldn't afford that couple thousand dollars even though it was budgeted and they would hope that I would continue to do it because of my dedication” (Conversation, December 2009). Jennifer noted the Board of Education cited her for her dedication, but her union continued to make her feel inadequate with their recent demands and cultivation of a negative climate.

Jennifer completed a great deal of work at home to incorporate her additional responsibilities into her position. She admitted her current situation was not working as successfully as she would have liked and was contemplating how to best reorganize her day.

**Settling Into A New Role**

As the 2009 – 2010 school year continued, I observed Jennifer again for two full school days in February of 2010. A chart outlining the percentage of activities engaged within each category can be found in Appendix M.
Observational data demonstrated an additional shift in Jennifer’s responsibilities. Jennifer now primarily engaged in teaching (38%), paperwork (24%), planning (10%) and unrelated behavior management activities (10%). When asked how her days were now structured, Jennifer replied, “You know, each day I come in and I’m like, is today going to be a sane day or an insane day?” (Conversation, February 2010). Yet she indicated she finally found a schedule that best met her professional responsibilities.

Jennifer engaged in increased teaching duties within this observation period, now consisting of about 38% of her activities. Jennifer spent her morning teaching K-1 intervention groups based on DIBELS assessment scores and felt her direct work with students earned trust and respect from the teachers she worked with. She reported feeling validated by her work, as she was seeing “tremendous growth” (Interview, March 2010) by her students:

And you know what’s every interesting I have found that since I have been doing my RTI interventions here at [Building 1] I have regained a lot of my respect here because in the short time that I worked with those kids I’m moving them forward and they’re thinking she really does know what the heck she’s talking about. (Interview, March 2010).

Jennifer used her teaching responsibilities as a way to connect and reconnect with teachers.

When her teaching duties ended at approximately 11:30 am, Jennifer spent the remainder of her day in coaching duties. When asked what her afternoons now consisted of, Jennifer replied, “It depends on what I have to do for coaching” (Conversation, February 2010). She spent most of the afternoon in her office planning for her direct teaching, and completing paperwork for Reading First and the Response to Intervention
grant, admitting she no longer did any coaching in the classroom. Consistent with her reports, no instances of classroom coaching were observed. Instead, planning and paperwork for the *Response to Intervention* grant comprised 30% of her activities. Admitting, “Honestly, I’m no longer doing the job that I used to” (Conversation, February 2010), Jennifer struggled to keep in communication with teachers about their teaching, their curriculum and their needs, something she once prided herself on:

> My coaching has basically been reduced to grade level meetings where we talk about students and how they’re doing, what RTI practices we can implement to help those kids to move them forward and the short bursts of time that I go into the classroom just either ask a question of a teacher or to pick up my own kids when I go, because in those short periods of time you can learn a lot by being very observant and go looking around, seeing what’s going on. (Interview, March 2010)

Jennifer facilitated mandatory grade level meetings through *Reading First* and worked with a grade level team each morning. While these were not part of the scheduled observations, Jennifer reported the content of those meetings responded to both teacher and student needs. Jennifer utilized assessment data and teacher input to guide the sessions.

Jennifer’s focus on behavior management varied throughout the year, which was confirmed through observational data. During this observational period, behavior management activities increased slightly and accounted for 10% of all activities observed. Jennifer had many students in and out of her office for lunch and recess detention and handled multiple referrals throughout the afternoon. When not engaged in these tasks, Jennifer planned and completed paperwork tasks.
Over the three observation periods, Jennifer’s philosophy of doing anything to support students through her jack-of-all-trades approach was evident. She engaged in a wide variety of activities both related and unrelated to coaching. Over the course of this study, Jennifer’s coaching roles and thinking shifted in several ways. These shifts, as well as particular contextual factors that impacted those shifts, will be discussed next.

**Shifts In The Coaching Role:**

Jennifer experienced shifts in her coaching roles and responsibilities over the course of the study. In September 2009, Jennifer acquired additional responsibilities that included teaching, library supervision duties, and tasks for the new *Response to Intervention* grant. These additional responsibilities impacted her coaching practices significantly as the majority of Jennifer’s time was spent on tasks outside of a typical coaching role. Table 11 illustrates the changes in coaching activities across the three observational periods.

Jennifer’s engagement in paperwork, teaching and activities within the school increased across the three observation periods. Assessment activities steadily decreased. Other activities fluctuated, namely communication, planning, professional development, meetings and unrelated activities.
Table 11

*Jennifer’s Observed Activities Across Each Observation Period*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Activities</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Steadily increasing activities.** Paperwork, teaching, and activities within the school increased over the three observation periods. Paperwork activities increased over time from nearly nothing to almost a quarter of her activities. Jennifer documented her daily activities for the *Reading First* grant and completed detailed status reports.

Additional paperwork in the second and third observation periods included requirements for the newer *Response to Intervention* grant.

Teaching duties significantly increased over time from nearly nothing to close to half of Jennifer’s daily activities as a direct result of the requirement imposed by the
teachers union for coaches to work with students. This percentage slowly increased as Jennifer worked to find a schedule that combined all of her professional responsibilities.

**Steadily decreasing activities.** Jennifer’s engagement in assessment activities steadily decreased over time. During the first observation period, Jennifer spent a significant portion of her time preparing and administering benchmark and diagnostic assessments to Kindergarten and first grade students. This percentage decreased in later observations and shifted from administering assessments to imputing assessment data into the district’s online data system. Jennifer used this information with district administration and at grade level meetings as part of a *Response to Intervention* focus.

**Activities varying in consistency.** Several activities fluctuated over the observation periods: communication, planning, professional development, meetings and unrelated activities. Communication activities varied across the observation periods and primarily occurred with administrators and other district coaches. When Jennifer did communicate with teachers, she primarily focused on behavior management and other topics related to her Teacher-in-Charge role. The increased focus in the second observation period resulted from working on tasks related to the new *Response to Intervention* grant.

Jennifer’s planning activities fluctuated and consisted of planning for before school grade level meetings and her direct teaching duties.

Professional development activities also fluctuated. These sessions took place before school hours and were not always observed. However, Jennifer reported having a grade level professional development meeting almost every morning before school across her two buildings.
Outside of those before-school meetings, Jennifer engaged in meetings with administrators, teachers and teacher aides throughout the school day. These meetings primarily focused on content unrelated to coaching such as behavior management and building level concerns.

Unrelated activities consisted of travel and behavior management duties and fluctuated throughout the year according to varying student needs and behaviors in the building. These additional roles impacted her ability to maintain a coaching presence with teachers.

**Activities not observed.** Jennifer did not engage in any activities within the classroom, nor did she work to find resources for teachers. Jennifer indicated that, in previous years, she spent time in classrooms modeling lessons and providing classroom support, yet given the changes to her position, she no longer had time for these kinds of coaching activities.

**Changes in Coaching Intensity**

Table 12 outlines shifts in Jennifer’s coaching roles according the International Reading Association’s (2005) framework of coaching activities.

**First observation period.** Within the first set of observations in May of 2009, Jennifer spent 38% of her daily activities in level 1, focusing on maintaining communication with administrators, participating in meetings and assisting with student assessments. Approximately 5% of her daily activities were spent in level 2, which consisted of before school grade level meetings and professional development sessions. No instances of level 3 activities were observed. Approximately 57% of Jennifer’s activities lay outside of the IRA’s levels of coaching. These activities consisted mainly of behavior management, planning and unrelated building-level activities, such as breakfast
supervision, participation in the school’s morning program and supervision of school plays and travel between her two buildings.

**Second observation period.** Jennifer’s focus according to IRA coaching levels (2005) remained fairly consistent through October, 2009. During those observations, Jennifer engaged in level 1 activities 41% of the time, focusing on communication, assisting with assessment and meetings, a slight increase from observation period 1.

Level 2 again took about 4% of her time, focusing again on grade level meetings and professional development. Level 3 remained at 0%. Activities not listed on the IRA’s(2005) framework took approximately 55% of Jennifer’s time, consisting of planning and paperwork, behavior management, new library supervision duties, and new direct teaching responsibilities. While Jennifer’s position officially shifted to include teaching duties, her focus across the three IRA (2005) levels of coaching did not.
**Third observation period.** Jennifer’s activities clearly shifted in the third set of observations in February, 2010. During this time period, Jennifer spent only 10% of her activities in Level 1, an almost 30% decrease from the previous observations. Jennifer remained consistent with her engagement in level 2 activities approximately 5% of the time, focusing on assessment data. As with the other observations, she did not engage in any instances of level 3 activities. Approximately 85% of Jennifer’s time was now spent in the ‘other’ category, a 30% increase from the previous observation period. This included increased direct teaching, paperwork duties planning, and unrelated activities.

Jennifer reported the shifts in her position began long ago with the inclusion of additional Teacher-in-Charge duties. Over time, Jennifer’s position shifted to something almost unrecognizable to her original coaching position. Important findings emerged from this analysis. First, across the three observation periods, Jennifer primarily focused on informal level 1 coaching activities. Second, over half of Jennifer’s day was spent in activities outside the IRA’s (2004) framework.

**Level 1 coaching activities.** Jennifer engaged in level 1 activities across all three observation periods as her primary coaching focus. Few instances of level 2 activities were noted and she did not engage in any instances of level 3 classroom coaching. These informal activities are needed to build relationships with teachers and learn about, literacy instruction within the building. Yet, alone, they do not have enough intensity to effectively facilitate instructional change. Given Jennifer’s position focused on these tasks above all others, it seems unlikely teachers could, or would, change their instructional practices and teaching beliefs based on the level of support Jennifer provided. Ultimately, this led teachers to question the coaching role and drove the union to enforce changes in the position.
‘Other’ coaching activities. Over half of Jennifer’s day was spent in activities not articulated in the IRA (2005) coaching framework and in some cases, completely unrelated to the literacy coaching role. While Jennifer ultimately connected her teaching duties to a re-envisioned coaching role, they took her further away from her previous coaching position (due to an ultimatum by the teacher’s union). While the IRA does outline direct work with students as a way to learn about teachers’ strengths and needs, Jennifer worked with students in the AIS program and did not engage in this work as an intentional coaching activity. Jennifer’s Teacher-in-Charge roles were completely unrelated to literacy coaching and severely compromised her coaching roles. Jennifer’s case reveals the complex realities facing today’s literacy coaches.

Tensions of Practice

Jennifer experienced two primary tensions over the course of this study: balancing a fragmented role and her decreasing visibility as a coach. Observation data documented the fractured nature of Jennifer’s position and illuminated the amount of time she completed tasks unrelated to coaching and removed from teachers’ visibility.

Balancing a fragmented role. While Jennifer’s official title remained a literacy coaching position, the majority of her time was spent engaged in tasks outside of a typical coaching role. She juggled the multiple demands placed on her and abandoned coaching roles that aligned with her coaching philosophy to complete the daily tasks required by her ‘Teacher-in-Charge’, library supervision, and teaching roles. Jennifer admitted the coaching role looked drastically different than in the past and she struggled to continue elements of her previous coaching roles in her current position. As part of reading and grant mandates, Jennifer continued to meet with grade level teams and completed required study groups and professional development sessions before school. These were
the only coaching activities Jennifer felt remained. The majority of her time was spent teaching in the AIS program or engaging in building level administrative duties related to her Teacher-in-Charge role. Both kept her in her office for a significant portion of her day, removing her even more from teachers. When Jennifer did communicate with teachers, these interactions often focused on building level concerns related to her other professional roles within the school. The lack of a coaching presence contributed to a questionable, and increasingly negative, climate for coaching in the district, and continued to push Jennifer away from a typical coaching role.

**Contextual Factors and Negotiations:**

Jennifer was affected by contextual factors that have required her to negotiate her literacy coaching positions over time. Outside entities, additional roles and responsibilities within a changing district and school context and culture impacted Jennifer’s position.

**Outside entities.** Outside entities, specifically, the Reading First program, the Response to Intervention grant and the district’s teacher’s union impacted Jennifer’s coaching role. Jennifer stated, “I never know from year to year what they will do to me” (Interview, March 2010). She negotiated these outside, often competing, influences on a daily basis.

Jennifer was frustrated by these competing influences, specifically discussing the differences between the Reading First program and the Response to Intervention grant. She felt the instructional practices being promoted by a new Reading First coordinator contradicted much of what she learned in the Reading First program, “This is the last hurrah, this is the last year and then she’ll be gone but she is very whole language. She is pushing Fountas and Pinnell, she is pushing everything whole language, which goes..."
against a huge amount of philosophies that were first incorporated through *Reading First.*” (Interview, December 2009).

Jennifer also worked with a grant administrator for the statewide *Response to Intervention* grant. Jennifer felt she was very “anti-whole language” (Interview, December 2009) and focused quite heavily on early phonics and phonemic awareness skills, clearly at odds with the current *Reading First* coordinator. Jennifer stated it was very difficult for these two particular grant administrators to work together cooperatively: “She [RTI administrator] wants to go fisti-cuffs with [Reading First Coordinator], and I'm thinking, you know -- it's nuts, it's very nuts right now, very nuts.” (Interview, December 2009). Jennifer tried to find a way for the programs, and their administrators, to work together and send a unified message to the teachers: “I’m trying to pacify [Reading First Coordinator]. She wants to do professional development, which I think is great, but she -- we really want her to focus on something that's not whole language, so we're looking at -- on teacher, time on task with students, student engagement, something that's pretty nebulous that would not necessarily have to do with whole language, to pacify [RTI Coordinator], to pacify *Reading First* and also to pacify [Reading First Coordinator]. So we’re sort of doing a tap dance at this point.” (Interview, March 2010). This ‘tap-dancing’ created turmoil in her daily work.

**Additional roles within a changing district.** Jennifer acquired additional responsibilities as a result of union mandates. She stated, “Whenever I introduce myself, you know when we go around and introduce, you know, people say I’m a fourth grade teacher from wherever, I list all my jobs and end by saying I am the jack of all trades master of none.” (Interview, March 2010). These additional roles impacted her daily practices, “I do have plans about what I am going to do on a particular day, but they can
get kicked to the curb” (Interview, Match 2010). Jennifer responded to the context around her:

My role has changed -- I think my role changes each year, and it's funny because, according to the group of students or the expertise of the teachers, you know, as teachers retire, new teachers come in, there’s a different emphasis at each grade level…….So, I mean, it depends on the expertise of the teacher, experience of the teacher. It depends on the group of kids coming through. I found I spent a lot of time in second grade teacher because of that group that was such a problem. Next year I'll be focusing on second and fourth because second’s losing a TA and fourth-grade is down to two sections. There’s a lot of, you know, outside influences, I guess you would say. (Interview, May 2009)

Jennifer admitted frustration over her current situation and the climate of her buildings. She stated, “Every day is different, which is interesting” (Interview, march 2010). She hypothesized about the constant shifting nature of her position:

I think it's always a work in progress because, you know, teachers are human and, you know, people have other lives, and you know, people go through hard times. They need support in a different way at a different time. So I think it's always -- always -- everything is a work in progress. I think we can never stop learning, we can never stop supporting. I hope this job lasts forever because after I've moved on, I hope it's still in place, because I think that it's just such an important part of support for the kids in the classroom. It's always in flux, it’s always changing. (Interview, May 2009)

Guided by her philosophy, her knowledge of the potential the position holds, and the students she worked with, Jennifer strove to make her position work, even given her
School context and culture. Jennifer’s school context and climate greatly impacted her coaching role, personal beliefs and even her identity: “Not only the job you do, that you think you do, but the climate, the atmosphere affects you personally and professionally as well” (Interview, May 2009). Her personal beliefs and experiences guided her coaching, but she could not remove them from the context in which she practiced: “The climate and the atmosphere of the district or buildings really has a huge impact on how you see yourself and how you see your job” (Interview, May 2009). As a coach who gave and expected professional respect, the climate of the building was frustrating and disappointing for Jennifer:

Because of union issues, budgetary cuts, everything that has gone on in this district, especially the -- having the union members spy on us, you know that really subversive kind of you know let’s make sure they’re doing what they’re supposed to be doing, I have lost respect for colleagues for my position. And personally I would say as well, you know. (Interview, March 2010)

These feelings were evident at both buildings, but she reported feeling even more removed from Building 2. Jennifer complained coaching now consisted nothing more of being a “glorified gopher” (Conversation, March 2010). Teachers only contacted her when they were in need of something and if they were not in need, then “they don’t want me there” (Conversation, March 2010). Since Jennifer split her time between buildings, she hypothesized this affected teachers’ perceptions. Since coaching was new to this building, she felt teachers did not clearly understand the possibilities for coaching. She also felt the union’s recent ultimatum and resulting climate and culture hurt the atmosphere for coaching across the district.
Shifts in Thinking

Over the research period, in addition to observable changes in roles and responsibilities, Jennifer’s thinking shifted, too.

Initially, Jennifer stressed her main role was to support teachers so they could, in turn, support their students. Jennifer supported teachers in multiple ways, such as working within the classroom, helping with assessment and curriculum and even solving scheduling issues. Striving to be “sympathetic” and “empathize with them about things they can and cannot do” (Interview, May 2009), Jennifer changed her coaching focus to meet the needs of the current students in the classroom.

As the study continued, there was a distinct change in Jennifer’s attitude toward her position and toward teachers. The teacher’s union recent mandates resulted in a clear shift in attitude on the part of the teachers. Jennifer stated teachers were outwardly negative about the coaching position and were asked for feedback on the daily work Jennifer completed. Teachers no longer valued or understood the coaching role, although Jennifer wondered if they ever fully understood the role in the first place. Jennifer hypothesized:

I think they see coaching as a more cerebral job. They don't see it as down in the trenches kind of thing. And they think, “Wow, I’d like that job, that would be an easy job. I think I'd like to do that. Because in the beginning when we were picked to be coaches, you know, teachers complained, “Why wasn’t there an interview process? Why wasn’t I, you know, selected to be the coach? I would like that job. That’s a cake job. (Interview, December 2009)

When asked if teachers, including the union, truly understood or valued what literacy coaching is or could be, Jennifer replied:
Absolutely not. Absolutely not. That is the crux of a lot of problems. They don’t understand and our superintendent even said to us the union thinks that your feet are up on the desk and you’re eating bonbons all day. They absolutely think that you do nothing. And you know you can do job descriptions all you want and you can distribute them but unless someone actually follows you around and sees what you do all day they don’t make the connection. (Interview, March 2010)

Jennifer felt this lack of consideration came directly from teachers’ isolation to their own classroom: “It’s what immediately affects them in their own little world. I’ve learned that about teachers. The teachers find it very difficult to think globally. They think about their own little jungle and nothing else.” (Interview, March 2010).

Observations documented that Jennifer spent more time in her office on planning and paperwork. She indicated she was trying to balance her professional roles within increased scrutiny and a tension-filled environment. Teachers’ confusion about the role, combined with Jennifer’s decreased visibility and fractured role, added to the negative culture and climate. She reported feeling hurt, both professionally and personally:

It's really hurt us emotionally and professionally...not only the job you do that you think you do, but the climate, the atmosphere affects you personally and professionally as well...now when we do professional development, we second-guess ourselves because we don’t feel as confident as we did before because we feel that people are critiquing us, so, you know, it's really led to a negative feeling on the part of the coaches...sometimes it's those few people that make you feel, you know, -- so that can be so hurtful, give the whole job a negative connotation”. (Interview, 2009)
During the third observation period, Jennifer was more at ease with her new responsibilities, her current teaching schedule and the teachers she coached. She enjoyed working with students and felt she was slowly gaining back the trust and respect of teachers within the building as a direct result of her teaching. Teachers were interacting with her more when she picked up or dropped off her intervention students and started asking her about the intervention sessions since they noticed improved classroom performance, “And the practices that I am preaching I am using because I’ve had more teachers come to me, what are you doing because it’s really working, those kids are moving forward.” (Interview, March 2010). Jennifer felt success based on these conversations.

Competing outside influences, as well as her own teachers’ union, greatly impacted Jennifer’s daily practices, her personal views on coaching and her perceptions of teachers. Jennifer shifted her perceptions of teachers and coaching over time, impacting her identity as a practicing coach.

**Jennifer’s Impact on Teachers**

During this study, I interviewed three classroom teachers (first, second and fourth grade) and one building principal to explore the ways Jennifer’s coaching practices impacted teachers. Each felt the coaching role needed greater clarity and definition, especially as Jennifer acquired additional responsibilities. Over time, teachers shifted their perceptions of the role and some came to see the coaching role as a more administrative position. Yet, each felt Jennifer impacted their teaching and in some cases, their students. In this section, I discuss the current climate for coaching in the building and the impact Jennifer had on teachers, specifically, increased support for the reading program, more effective small group instruction and the impact on student performance.
Jennifer had been coaching for over eight years, yet she primarily worked with grades K – 3, working with fourth and fifth grade in recent years. Lynn, a fourth grade teacher, characterized a problem that first needed to be addressed when working with a coach: “First, you have to get used to the idea of what a coach does first, if it is new to you” (Interview, May 2009). Fran, a first grade teacher who worked with Jennifer from the beginning of her career, stated, “I think the role isn’t clearly defined enough” (Interview, May 2009) as Jennifer shifted from teacher to coach. Lynn stated, “a lot of people questioned the whole process…people are afraid of change. It depends on the person, really, some people received it very well, while others, I guess, are on their own mindset to teach” (Interview, May 2009). Each teacher I interviewed admitted a lack of initial understanding surrounding the coaching role that may have contributed to the recent union difficulties and the current climate within the buildings.

The lack of clarification as to what a coach actually did was confounded by the multiple roles Jennifer assumed within her two buildings, specifically the addition of teaching, library duties, and a Teacher-in-Charge role. Fran, the first grade teacher, acknowledged, “She just seemed right for the role as coach, you know, it made sense” (Interview, May 2009). Yet, Fran also acknowledged Jennifer’s additional roles interfered with her view of Jennifer as a coach, “I’m seeing her more of an administrator and I go to her with behavior problems, you know, questions you might go to a principal for” (Interview, May 2009). A large portion of Jennifer’s responsibilities and daily practices were unrelated to the coaching role and instead included significant time in her office planning completing paperwork, handling building level concerns and overseeing behavior management, which may have contributed to this view. Acknowledging these perspectives, the three interviewed teachers provided insightful reflections about the
impacts of coaching over time.

Each of the teachers, along with the building principal, reported positive benefits to working with Jennifer. Each cited increased support for the reading program, more effective small group instruction and an impact on student achievement as a result of Jennifer’s coaching over time.

**Increased Support For The Reading Program**

All three teachers reported Jennifer is the “go-to person” (Interview, May 2009) in terms of the reading program. Fran stated, “I think you can go to Jennifer with anything and she’ll try to work it out with you, figure it out” (Interview, May 2009). Karen stated, “She is always there for whenever we need anything. She is a valuable source of holding the whole program together” (Interview, May 2009). These benefits aligned with Jennifer’s coaching beliefs in doing anything she could to help teachers and students, a self-confessed “jack of all trades”. Teachers agreed Jennifer’s main coaching roles were organizing testing, holding professional development sessions before school for grade level teams, hosting grade level meetings, and at times, coming into the classroom. Each indicated they would like more time with Jennifer as a coach in their classrooms, something that diminished over time. While two teachers indicated they would like that classroom support in the form of modeling lessons, observing their teaching for feedback or team-teaching, one teacher felt Jennifer’s time would be better spent teaching students to directly impact student performance. In September 2009, this shift occurred in Jennifer’s position and Jennifer began working with struggling students from her classroom.
Effective Small Group Instruction

Two of the three interviewed teachers, as well as the building principal, indicated coaching was effective in helping teachers value and implement small group, differentiated instruction. Each stated the information presented in grade level meeting and the classroom coaching previously available to them through Reading First impacted their work as teachers. While this level of support was no longer provided, these two particular teachers felt it had a lasting impact on their teaching. Karen noted, “I’ve changed my ways, definitely” (Interview, May 2009) and reported new confidence in assessing students informally to better meet their needs. Lynn, a 4th grade teacher, stated, “Differentiation has been the most change I’ve seen” (Interview, May 2009). She also reported an increased understanding of active student engagement in literacy activities, which shifted how students engaged in literate work within the reading block. She felt teachers better understood how to implement literacy stations and saw the value of working together to make them effective.

Impact on Student Performance

Two of the three teachers, as well as the building principal, reported increased student achievement as a result of Jennifer’s coaching. The principal stated, “with the professional development [before-school meetings] that Jennifer has done, her various teaching techniques, it’s just been tremendous and it’s shown in our test scores” (Interview, May 2009). He attributed much of that growth to the fact that “more veteran teachers are seeing new and better teaching techniques and see the value of small group instruction” (Interview, May 2009). He indicated 4th grade teachers started changing reading groups during the year, something they had never done previously.
Karen, a second grade teacher reported specific increases in her students’ DIBELS scores. She reported 48% of the second grade students were identified as struggling students in the beginning of the year. In May 2009, the time of our interview, she reported only 21% were identified as struggling. She attributed this success to increased teacher knowledge and coach support over the years. Lynn, a fourth grade teacher noted, “There’s definitely been a rise in our scores” (Interview, May 2009).

One interviewed teacher did not feel coaching impacted overall student performance. She stated, “It helps the children that are at risk of having problems, but as far as your day to day normal child, I honestly don’t see much impact” (Interview, May 2009). Fran, the first grade teacher, attributed direct coach contact to student success, specifically, those Jennifer worked directly with in intervention groups or those she oversaw as part of the Response to Intervention process in the school. Given the confusion surrounding literacy coaching in the initial days, it is possible Fran might not understand how Jennifer’s indirect support could help her, in turn, provide better teaching to her students.

Jennifer’s case study demonstrated the need to sustain the coaching role over time, maintaining a coaching presence within an ever-changing school context. Jennifer took on a wide variety of roles and tasks over her coaching career and stated:

I think I was able to get better and then for a while I was spread so thin that I got worse. But I think that I have kind of learned that I can’t do it all. Some things I have to let go and so I fine-tuned what’s really important. You know the best part of this experience has been my own growth as a teacher, my own growth as a professional...you know when you are at the point where you feel you have nothing left to learn it is time to get out of that profession and go somewhere else.
because there is always something you can -- I learned from my kindergarteners every day. They teach me something. If you feel that you have nothing left to learn, you might as well just roll up in a ball and die. (Interview, March 2010)

**Conclusion**

Jennifer maintained her professional demeanor and her love for teaching and learning throughout the tumultuous changes across her coaching career. Over her 8 years as a literacy coach, Jennifer’s position changed in response to reading policy and grant mandates, district changes and union ultimatums. Consequently, Jennifer was forced to engage in activities outside of a typical coaching role. This left Jennifer with conflicting feelings about the nature of the literacy coaching role and teachers’ perceptions of the position. Yet, over the course of this study, Jennifer shifted her thinking as she settled into her new, fragmented coaching role. Jennifer felt her teaching responsibilities helped her regain credibility as a literacy coach and rebuild professional relationships with teachers, some of which had been damaged with the shifts in her position and the recent union mandate that required teaching duties. At the end of this study, Jennifer was beginning to see that her teaching responsibilities were not only building relationships and respect, but improving her credibility as a coach as well. Jennifer used her knowledge as a coach in her work as an early intervention provider and noted significant growth of her students. Jennifer reports teachers also saw that growth and were beginning to view Jennifer as an instructional resource once again. Jennifer believed the teaching time positively impacted professional relationships, increased her credibility as a coach and possibly influenced teachers’ instruction within the classroom.
Chapter 6: Meg

Meg began her career over 23 years ago, teaching pre-K – grade 3 as a classroom teacher, at Washington Elementary School. Over her career, Meg had numerous conversations with colleagues about the literacy curriculum in place. In recent years, she expressed frustration at the gaps in the curriculum and the lack of ongoing assessment. She looked into the Reading First program to support her district and was pleased when her district earned funding. Meg applied for the K – 3 Tier II Reading Coach position, noting “I really, truly believe that teachers need change, and I like change” (Interview, May 2009). Meg accepted the position after being selected through a district level interview process. For four years, Meg worked as the Reading First Coach, and for one year, as the district Reading First Coordinator. When the program ended, Meg’s district continued funding the coaching position, yet changed her roles and responsibilities over time. First, Meg was named as a ‘Literacy Coach’ and then, ‘Literacy/Writing Coach’, her current title. Changes in the district’s budget and staffing required Meg to also provide Academic Intervention Services to students for varying amounts during the school day.

Meg’s Understandings of Literacy Teaching and Coaching

Meg continuously looked for ways to enrich her thinking and develop her teaching and coaching practices over the course of the study. Her understandings of literacy teaching and coaching are presented next.

Understandings of Literacy Teaching

Meg developed her philosophy of literacy instruction over her 23 years of experience in the classroom and in the Reading First program. Meg’s literacy teaching

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As noted earlier, all names of participants, schools, and school districts are represented by pseudonyms.
focused on literacy integration across the content areas and differentiated teaching based on student assessment data.

**Literacy integration across the content areas.** Meg believed literacy was critical to the elementary curriculum and valued integrating literacy across the content areas and across the school day, “I believe literacy is the mainstay of the elementary curriculum” (Interview, May 2009). Meg believed “you have to think outside the box” (Interview, May 2009). Meg emphasized literacy across the curriculum and the content areas, especially in the upper elementary grades, “Literacy can go across the curriculum. In the higher grades, four through six, literacy strategies like comprehension strategies can be addressed in other content areas” (Interview, May 2009). Meg felt there was an important connection between reading and writing as well, “They are so intertwined. A good reader becomes a good writer and a good writer is a good reader” (Interview, May 2009). The lack of writing in the Reading First program frustrated Meg and she worked to make the literacy block more balanced and content-based.

Within this integrated approach, Meg believed in explicit, systematic instruction for all students. Meg felt teachers needed to fully understand the curriculum of their grade level and model thinking, strategies and skills for their students across the day.

Meg also felt strongly about using literacy stations in the classroom. She believed students needed hands-on practice at their instructional level to become engaged and motivated. While students worked at stations, teachers would then have time to work with small groups of students, differentiating instruction across the classroom based on student assessment data.

**Differentiated teaching based on student assessment data.** Meg believed literacy instruction needed to meet individual children at their current level of
development and stated, “I believe children need to be grouped in flexible groups, you know, not every child is at the same level, so I think literacy has to be very differentiated” (Interview, May 2009). Meg’s differentiation was guided by observations in the classrooms and assessment data. She believed assessment data should impact and guide instruction. Meg used assessment data to guide literacy instruction by helping teachers form instructional groups and choose the right fit of instruction.

**Understandings of Literacy Coaching**

Meg’s understandings of literacy teaching were also evident in her understandings of literacy coaching:

I think your philosophy for children, definitely, becomes apparent in your coaching because you run your coaching of your faculty like you do your kids in the classroom... You’re not telling teachers you have to use them [materials] you’re providing them. And what do you do with your students? You provide the materials. You provide the model. Same theory. You provide the practice and they benefit down the road. (Interview, March 2010)

Meg supported teachers to make the connection from theory to practice to better teach their students. She also understood how difficult this connection could be and stated, “I know what theory says, but sometimes theory doesn’t always apply” (Interview, May 2009). Meg also relied on her own experiences and teacher responses to guide her work as a literacy coach. Her philosophy of literacy coaching emphasized strong content knowledge and teaching experiences, a non-evaluative status, professional learning, working with both teachers and students and using student assessment to guide her daily work.
**Content knowledge and teaching experience.** Meg believed a literacy coach should have a background and certification in reading as well as significant classroom experience. She stated coaches “have to feel what classroom teachers feel” (Interview, May 2009) to order to identify with teachers’ celebrations and frustrations. Meg believed only when both reading content knowledge and classroom experience were present could a coach garner respect from teachers. Coaches with classroom experience were better apt to develop the “broad shoulders” (Interview, May 2009) needed to work with resistant teachers and defend their position when needed.

**A non-evaluative status.** Walking what Meg calls a “fine line” on a daily basis, Meg believed coaches should not be in an administrative role:

You’re not an administrator. You cannot go tell teachers, ‘well, you have to do this- I shouldn’t see this going on’. But you’re there to support them and support the program and…you always have to come back to them and say ‘What are we here for?’. Number one, we’re here to provide the best instruction that we can provide. And I’m just here as a resource and a mentor to help you. (Interview, May 2009)

Meg did feel the coaching position was essential in supporting instructional leadership in schools, “The coaching position fills the void that the administrators cannot provide anymore” (Interview, May 2009). Meg felt principals were less prepared to lead the instructional practices of a building, a gap that a knowledgeable and experienced literacy coach could fill.

Meg’s shift into the coaching position brought confusion for many of her colleagues who had to re-envision her role. She worked to make her role clear to teachers, stating, “I’m not here to evaluate you, you’re a great teacher, don’t lose your
creativity, just- I’m there to look at reading programs” (Interview, May 2009). While many teachers found it hard to shift their view of her from teacher to coach, her persistence and practices convinced them. In discussing one particular teacher, Meg noted, “I think she realized I wasn’t there to zone in on her teaching ability or anything. It was, let’s make it better for the kids” (Interview, May 2009).

**Working with both teachers and students.** Meg believed a coach should be present in classrooms as much as possible, yet Meg’s classroom coaching time was severely reduced as she acquired AIS teaching responsibilities.

Teaching duties took her away from the classroom time and from connecting with teachers. Meg initially felt student ‘contact time’ versus ‘teaching time’ was more beneficial. She believed she should work with students in the context of her coaching position instead of teaching students as part of the AIS program. Yet, as the research period continued, Meg shifted her thinking and came to see teaching as another way of coaching. This will be explored later (page 143).

**Using student assessment data.** Meg’s focus on student data permeated both her teaching and coaching philosophies. Meg used data to focus on student achievements. She believed the concrete nature of the data was why it was so effective and stated, “You want to talk about closing the gap of achievement – you have to have black and white. I’m sorry, but teachers like black and white.” (Interview, May 2009). Meg used data to identify instructional needs and provide the right match of instruction for students.

**A focus on professional learning.** Professional development was critical to Meg’s coaching philosophy and she believed it had the potential to impact teachers’ beliefs and practices. When Meg facilitated professional development sessions, she organized the sessions as she would her own classroom. She utilized modeling and
hands-on work to support teachers’ application of the content within their own classrooms, “You want them to leave like this, “Ooh, I cannot wait to get this implemented into my classroom” (Interview, May 2009). Meg felt coaching was about providing formal professional development, as well as informal events and conversations with teachers. For example, during a scheduled observation, a teacher asked Meg a question about a particular student. After a moment of conversation, the teacher retrieved a writing sample, upon Meg’s request, and Meg quickly analyzed it and gave suggestions. A meeting was set to revisit the student’s progress and invite parents in for a discussion. Meg stated “not every decision has to be formal and I think that is a big piece of coaching too” (Interview, May 2009).

Meg admitted, “I can’t do what needs to be done” (Interview, March 2009) given the various shifts that have occurred to her coaching role, specifically the addition of teaching duties. Meg was constantly “trying to rethink how it can be better for the teachers for coaching purposes” (Interview, May 2009). She struggled to enact her coaching philosophy into her daily practices. Acknowledging “systemic change is really hard and takes a long time” (Interview, March 2010), Meg worked diligently to make her work as effective as possible to better meet the needs of her teachers and their students.

**Evaluating the impact of coaching.** Meg believed an equal focus on teacher and student level measures was needed to assess the impact of coaching. According to her, student data helped measure the overall effect of the reading curriculum in place. While Meg valued the information that student assessment data provided teacher measures were needed to measure coaching more specifically. Relying solely on student measures would only apply to those who actually implemented the practices just learned. Meg felt an observation tool, completed by the principal during observations, might help to
effectively observe teacher classroom’ practices and involve the principal in a more instructional role. Combining both would provide critical information to help Meg assess the effectiveness of her practices.

Meg’s coaching philosophy focused on a strong knowledge base and teaching experience to support teachers. She felt strongly about using student assessment data to guide her daily work. As with the other coaches, Meg struggled to fully enact her philosophy into practice and grappled with teaching students as part of her changing coaching role. The addition of teaching duties severely hampered her time for other coaching activities important to her.

**Meg’s Practices, Alignments and Disjunctures**

During this study, I spent eight full school days, over fifty hours, with Meg to experience what a typical day might look like in her current role as Literacy/Writing Coach at Washington Elementary School. In this section, I describe and analyze observations of Meg across several periods (May, 2009; October, 2009; February, 2010). First, I discuss the results from each observation period. The discussion of Meg’s daily practices was based on scheduled observations throughout the research period. As I observed and analyzed the data, I returned to Meg to discuss my main findings and receive feedback. These member checks took place regularly throughout the research period to ensure accuracy of the observations and resulting discussion of the results.

Meg reported the observations were typical for her role as coach in many ways, yet were atypical in others. As discussed, Meg taught AIS intervention groups in varying amounts throughout the research period. While I documented AIS teaching, Meg reported teaching AIS for increased amounts of time on the days I was not present. Meg also reported she led professional development sessions focusing on benchmark
assessment data in the Spring of 2009. While I observed her planning for these sessions, I was not present to observe them.

Second, I examine the results across all three periods, utilizing the International Reading Association’s (2004) framework of coaching activities to guide my analysis. Third, I examine shifts in Meg’s position, identifying specific factors that influence the role. Finally, I discuss shifts in Meg’s thinking about literacy coaching over time.

**Philosophy Into Practice: Student Assessment Data**

My first days of observations took place in May, 2009. A chart outlining the percentages of activities within each category observed can be found in Appendix N. During this time, Meg primarily focused on assessment, which was consistent with her philosophy of literacy coaching. She valued the information both informal and formal assessment provided and enjoyed working with student data: “I really love to look at each child; I love analyzing kids” (Interview, May 2009). Meg was a member of the school assessment team and inputted all of the assessment data, as well as analyzed and presented the results to teachers. Over this observation period, Meg prepared and administered standardized assessments and held discussions with teachers about the results. Meg worked to ensure the assessment role remained important to her position.

When asked why she focused on data, Meg replied:

If kids aren’t progressing my question comes up as why aren’t they progressing? So if they’re an intervention kid, then I can go and meet with the interventionist and say, do you know what, look at all these scores…it’s 20, 19, 20, 18, 20, 19. Since the beginning of the year what’s not happening? Then you have this discussion and they know I’m not coming in as like attacking them, it’s like I’m concerned and they’re concerned too and they’re like, I just don’t know, this is
what I’m using, should I do this, maybe I should -- should I focus on fluency or maybe now just bump it down and why aren’t they fluent. It is a conversation starter…We do have some students that we’re baffled as to -- we can’t find the missing puzzle piece…. I would hope most coaches use their data to drive their discussion and their model (Interview, March 2010)

By working with student assessment data, Meg learned about the strengths and needs of the school overall, which helped her craft her focus with individual teachers. It also kept Meg connected to the students. Meg reportedly knew each and every student in her building, “You have got to know your kids…I don’t care if you have 300 kids in the building” (Interview, March 2010). Meg connected with teachers and students to remain grounded in the daily realities of classroom literacy instruction.

Communication was woven throughout Meg’s practices. Admitting she was “always on” (Conversation, May 2009), Meg multi-tasked throughout the day and engaged in numerous phone calls, emails, conversations in the hall, and informal contact throughout this period. The constant stream of communication kept Meg connected and knowledgeable about classroom practices as her position shifted and changed.

When Meg’s position was originally funded through Reading First, she coached full-time without additional teaching duties. When the grant ended, her district continued to fund the position, yet slowly added teaching responsibilities over time, distancing Meg from her original coaching role. During this observation period, Meg was directed to teach students in the AIS program approximately 50% of the time. Yet, throughout these observations, many scheduled AIS groups were canceled due to field trips or other ‘end of year’ activities.
Planning was another component of Meg’s day, focused on the lesson planning for her AIS teaching. Meg reported a passion for classroom design and management and was always seeking new ideas for small group teaching, literacy stations and teaching resources. Throughout this time, Meg browsed professional texts and articles, searched the Internet and brainstormed new ways of thinking to share with her teachers. Meg was the only coach who engaged in such activities during scheduled observations.

Meg’s philosophy of coaching was evident in her daily practices with a strong focus on assessment, working with both teachers and students, furthering her own professional learning. Meg expressed frustration with her fractured day and planned to speak with her principal about returning her position to its original configuration with fewer teaching duties. Changes were evident across the next observation period.

**Returning to a Full Time Coaching Position**

The 2009 – 2010 school year signaled a shift in Meg’s position. Meg discussed her frustration over her position with her principal. Meg offered ways to make the position more effective and more closely aligned to her original coaching role. As a result, Meg’s position shifted from a 50% AIS provider back to a full time literacy coach. Meg agreed to maintain 40% contact time with students. This included classroom support, modeling lessons and work within the classrooms during the reading block. She delegated her AIS teaching duties, but assumed oversight and scheduling of the AIS program. A chart outlining the percentages of activities within each category observed can be found in Appendix O.

Over this observation period, Meg significantly increased her focus in planning (29%) and activities within the kindergarten classroom (25%). She felt more confident about her role as a Literacy/Writing coach, and felt she was effectively supporting her
teachers, something that was lacking in previous years.

This support required additional planning and a shift from lesson planning to planning for grade level meetings and upcoming professional development sessions, “I’m spending time now preparing and getting ready to assist them [teachers]” (Conversation, September 2009). Meg browsed resources, crafted agendas and brainstormed future topics and support structures for teachers. She focused on planning for future assessment meetings, outlining and analyzing data for teachers, and developing professional development sessions based on data and teacher feedback.

Meg spent additional time in the classroom during this observation period. She felt her time was best spent in the kindergarten classrooms to “catch them early” (Conversation, September 2009) and provide a solid foundation for students. Meg completed an online course titled, “Integrating Picture Books into Math Instruction”, and shared her new learning with Kindergarten teachers. Meg and the two kindergarten teachers decided to apply their success with implementing literacy stations in the classroom to math content and crafted ‘math tubs’ that contained hands-on manipulatives and children’s literature that supported the mathematical content. Throughout the introductory lesson and the actual “tub time”, Meg remained in the classroom and helped when necessary or requested. Upon completion of the session, all teachers reported success with student engagement and began brainstorming future stations together.

Additional classroom support consisted of meeting with small groups of kindergarteners during their morning literacy block. Meg worked with two advanced students in a small group. In the afternoon, Meg prepared kindergarten *Handwriting Without Tears* materials for upcoming lessons. Admitting teachers could easily do this for themselves, she felt it gave them the extra support they deserved. Meg observed in the
classrooms during this time, which helped her craft an agenda for upcoming professional
development and grade level meetings. Previously, Meg’s professional development roles
were diminished with the addition of her teaching duties. Meg was pleased with these
opportunities to work with teachers.

This second set of observations documented fewer teaching duties and more time
spent on coaching roles and responsibilities. Meg’s position better resembled its original
configuration. These changes were short-lived.

**Another Return to AIS Teaching**

In January, Meg sent me an email outlining the latest changes to her position. An
excerpt follows:

I just want to give you a heads up as to my gift that was given to me 2 days before
break. You know Heather went to [another school] to teach 1st grade. You also
know ,I am sure, how our wonderful Governor has cut state aid to school d
istricts. Well our district was cut like $425,000 as of January. So the district will have to
use it's total reserve fund to get through the rest of the year. So the decision was
made not to fill Heather's position. Yes, I was called into a meeting about this
whole thing- a BIG mess!!! I was not a happy camper being told 2 days before
break and also told [the principal] I would not do all the data, testing, plus teach.
It would have to be one or the other or work my schedule to fit it in during the
school day…So after much discussion and meetings I will be taking on a good
portion of Heather's groups…My schedule now will be from 7:45-9:30 testing,
data, coach duties; 9:30-9:55 I will be pushing into K (I told them I refused to
give up my K kids); 9:55-10:25 planning period; 10:25-10:55 a 4th grade group;
10:55-11:25 a 2nd grade group; 11:25-11:55 K writing (will see how this goes
may have to give this up for lunch); 11:55-12:25 a K group; 12:25-12:55 a first grade group; 12:55-1:25 push-in for K math; 1:25-1:55 lunch/coach duties - so basically my job has been shifted to 60% teaching and 40% coaching and this is basically for data and assessment. So I won't be able to have PD days with my teachers- how sad. (Email communication, January 2010).

Meg, once again, acquired additional AIS teaching duties in addition to her coaching roles. I visited Meg for two full school days, once in February and once in March of 2010. A chart outlining the percentage of activities within each category observed can be found in Appendix P.

Meg experienced significant changes to her daily work during this observation period. There was an increase in assessment and teaching activities. Planning and activities within the classroom also took a significant portion of Meg’s time. Meg did not engage in any other activities during this observation period.

Meg assessed students using the MAZE comprehension assessment in various classrooms to monitor the progress of all students. Meg focused on data as her main coaching role, “So, basically, coaching ends up being the data” (Interview, March 2010), even with the addition of teaching duties.

Since Meg now had a greater presence with AIS teachers as a result of her increased teaching duties, she brought them into the data analysis process with greater intensity, “We’re really fine tuning the data and staying as close to the RTI [Response to Intervention] model as we possibly can” (Interview, March 2010). While she did not meet regularly with classroom teachers at this juncture to discuss classroom-level data, she did so with her AIS staff. Meg stated:
Now intervention teachers are a little different because we sit here and say okay what should I do? This isn’t working, so should I focus on just the fluency kit or should I use just, you know, like Read Naturally and just do fast phrases and so we come up with a plan. Now if grade level teachers sat and did that - imagine what your academic success would be. (Interview, March 2010)

As Meg’s position shifted away from full time coaching roles and responsibilities, she chose her activities carefully, guided by her beliefs and experiences. Meg was not willing to give up her kindergarten support when her position changed. Indeed, she remained present in those classrooms, providing similar supports as in the past. In addition to Meg’s kindergarten classroom support, she again provided AIS instruction as required by her district. The building principal reported “the district, the principals, the elementary principals, superintendent and Board of Education were very pleased with the progress the students made with the Reading First program, so they decided to pick up the funding to keep the coach in place. The biggest change is not being under the restrictions of the Reading First grant and combined with the need for more AIS services, both buildings have actually had to shift some of the AIS need to the coaches. We do see the value of the coaching, unfortunately, coaching is not mandated, AIS is” (Principal Interview, March 2010).

Meg taught three AIS instructional groups. Meg worked with a group of first graders on fluency, fourth graders on writing and vocabulary and second graders on fluency and comprehension. Teaching these small groups helped Meg shift her thinking about her original claims that coaches should not hold such responsibilities, “It really isn’t a bad thing to have some aspect of teaching as part of your role” (Conversation, March 2010). When asked to elaborate further since this was against her original
statements, she continued, “It’s about being open, being flexible. I have to make it work. Instead of dwelling on it, you ask, How can I take this situation and give it the best that I can give?” (Conversation, March 2010). Meg began to use her teaching as a way to support her students, their teachers and her own coaching. She implemented the best practices she shared with teachers and refined her own beliefs about literacy learning and teaching. In doing so, Meg gained information and experiences to inform her own coaching roles and also gained credibility and visibility with her teachers in the process.

Meg’s coaching philosophy was evident in her daily practices. She focused on her own professional learning and used student assessment data to guide her work. Over the course of the study, Meg’s coaching roles, and her thinking about the nature of literacy coaching shifted. These shifts, as well as particular contextual factors that impacted them, will be discussed next.

**Shifts in the Coaching Role**

Across the observation periods, Meg experienced shifts in her coaching roles and responsibilities. Meg’s role changed to accommodate various amounts of AIS teaching program as required by her district. Table 13 documents changes in coaching activities across the three observation periods.

Meg did not engage in any activities that steadily increased over time. Communication, searching for and providing resources and meetings steadily decreased over time. Fluctuating activities included assessment, planning, paperwork, activities within the classroom and direct teaching of students. Throughout the observations, Meg did not engage in any instances of activities within the school, professional development or unrelated activities.
Table 13

*Meg’s Observed Activities Across All Three Observation Periods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities Observed</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of Students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Steadily decreasing activities.** Communication, searching for and providing resources and meetings steadily decreased over the observation period. Meg’s communication with her faculty decreased over time. The first observation period was full of movement throughout the building, which allowed for informal discussion and interaction. In the second observation period, Meg planned for upcoming professional development sessions which kept Meg working in her office more, with fewer opportunities for unplanned interactions. The third observation period brought additional teaching responsibilities. Planning for and teaching AIS students isolated her in her office
even more. No informal interactions outside the other documented activities were observed.

Meg was the only coach who searched for and provided resources for teachers across the observations. In the first two observation periods, Meg located resources in response to teacher needs accounting for 4% of her daily activities. This aspect of her work decreased with the additional teaching duties imposed. In the third observation period, no instances of this activity were noted.

Meg’s participation in meetings (12% to 8% to 0%) declined over time as well, with zero instances noted in the third observation period. These decreases most likely were a result of Meg’s increased teaching responsibilities.

**Activities varying in consistency.** Meg’s position shifted multiple times, in multiple ways, as did her activities. Several activities that fluctuated included teaching duties, assessment, planning, paperwork and activities within the classroom.

The primary shift in Meg’s position resulted from the teaching duties required by her district. Meg’s teaching varied from 12% to 0% to 23% over the three observation periods. These shifts impacted all other activities Meg engaged in as it left varying amounts of time for other coaching duties.

Assessment activities were always present in Meg’s daily practices, yet varied over the observation periods. The first and third observation periods took place around the school’s benchmark testing time, which explained the increased focus. The decreased focus in the second observation period resulted from Meg’s increased planning for upcoming coaching opportunities. Yet, Meg worked to keep assessments as part of her daily work.
Meg’s planning activities varied in relation to the additional responsibilities added to her position. She engaged in the largest percentage if planning in the second observation period when she no longer taught AIS classes. The type of planning also shifted. In the first and third observations, planning focused on lesson planning for teaching duties. In the second observation period, Meg focused on planning for upcoming grade level meeting and professional development.

Meg’s activities within the classroom varied over the course of the study observations. Meg did not engage in any instances of classroom support outside of teaching during the first observation period. As Meg’s position shifted away from direct teaching, Meg began to spend time in the kindergarten classrooms, preparing materials and supporting instruction during the literacy block. Even as her position shifted back to include teaching duties in the third observation period, Meg did not negotiate this aspect of her work and kept her focus on the Kindergarten classrooms.

The changes in Meg’s position impacted her daily activities. Meg’s daily practices shifted in response to the fluctuating additional teaching duties placed on her position.

**Activities not observed.** Across the study, I did not observe any instances of coaching activities within the school, or professional development sessions. While Meg did engage in practices that brought her throughout the school, they were all related to her work with assessment, teaching and support within the classroom. No outside duties, such as bus duty, travel or administrative tasks, were observed.

While no professional development sessions were observed, Meg planned for these activities within the second set of observations. Yet, before they were completed, Meg’s position shifted and she was unable to work with teachers in this manner.
Changes in Coaching Intensity

Table 14 outlines the shifts in Meg’s coaching roles using the International Reading Association’s (2004) framework of coaching activities.

Table 14

Meg’s Observational Analysis Using the International Reading Association’s (2004) Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal activities to develop coaching relationships</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities to learn more about teachers’ strengths and needs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal and intense coaching work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First observation period.** Within the first set of observations in May, 2009, Meg spent 24% of her daily activities in level 1. Meg maintained communication with teachers and administrators, attended meetings and provided resources to teachers. Approximately 33% of her daily activities were spent in level 2, which focused on assessment, specifically DIBELS and Terra Nova preparation and administration. No instances of level 3 activities were observed. Outside of the IRA’s three levels, approximately 44% of Meg’s activities could be classified as ‘other’, activities not outlined on the IRA’s levels of coaching. These consisted of planning and direct teaching.

**Second observation period.** Within the second set of observations in October, 2009, Meg’s activities shifted as she returned to a full time coaching position. Meg engaged in level 1 activities 16% of the time, a slight decrease from the first period. Meg
communicated with teachers and examined curriculum materials. Level 2 now took about 17% of her time, focusing again on assessment, but also included teaching lessons with Kindergarten teachers. While Meg had additional time for coaching, no instances of level 3 coaching activities were observed. Looking outside the articulated IRA (2004) levels, 67% of Meg’s time was spent in activities such as, planning, varied classroom support and paperwork, an increase of over 20%.

**Third observation period.** Meg once again returned to direct teaching during the third observation period. This shift was also reflected in an analysis of the IRA’s levels of coaching. Level 1 activities, consisting primarily of communication and administering assessments, took approximately 27% of Meg’s time. Level 2 dropped to about 5% and primarily consisted of focused discussions around the assessments with AIS teachers. Level 3 activities remained at 0%. Meg spent a large portion of her time providing in-classroom support or teaching AIS classes. Therefore, 68% of her time was considered ‘other’ activities not listed on the IRA (2004) framework.

Important findings emerged from this analysis. First, Meg focused on levels 1 and 2 throughout the three observation periods with no instances of level 3 coaching activities documented. Second, almost half of her position, and at times, almost three quarters, was spent in activities not articulated on the IRA (2004) coaching framework.

**Coaching at levels 1 and 2.** Meg focused on level 1 and 2 coaching activities and did not engage in any instances of level 3 coaching activities throughout the three observation periods. Meg maintained a presence in the building, yet her work was focused on activities related to her teaching and assessment focus. While Meg initially had a stronger focus in level 2 activities, this decreased over time as activities outside the coaching role steadily increased.
‘Other’ coaching activities. Activities considered ‘other’ activities outside of the IRA’s coaching framework (2004) steadily increased from 44% to 68% and consisted of direct teaching responsibilities. While the IRA does outline direct work with students as a way to learn about teachers’ strengths and needs, Meg taught students in the AIS program and did not initially engage in this work as an intentional coaching activity, disrupting the framework. As with the other coaches, Meg’s case also reveals the complex realities facing today’s literacy coaches.

Tensions of Practice

The changes made to Meg’s position clearly impacted her daily coaching work and caused particular tensions in practice. Meg struggled to negotiate her roles in the midst of multiple district changes and preserved her focus on student assessment data.

Negotiating her roles. The changes to Meg’s position began when the Reading First grant ended and her district began funding the position. Multiple cuts in the school budget and increased student intervention needs prompted the district to add additional responsibilities to Meg’s position. Each time her role shifted, Meg struggled to understand the rationale behind the changes, change her coaching role and shift her thinking to accommodate her new work. Throughout these changes, Meg preserved her focus on assessment data, activities she deemed critical to the coaching role.

Preserving an assessment focus. Meg sought the Reading First grant to provide assessments and resources to better guide instruction. A focus on assessment was evident across all three observation periods. In the second observation, her focus dropped as she gained additional time for coaching activities and focused on planning for upcoming professional development sessions. Yet, in the first and third observation periods, when Meg held additional teaching duties, assessments accounted for at least one-third of her
daily work. While Meg struggled with her altered coaching duties, she focused her limited coaching time on what mattered most to her.

Meg also struggled with duties she felt were not her responsibility, but the principal’s. Meg took control over the scheduling of classrooms, placement of students, and administration of outcome assessments, such as TerraNova and the New York State English Language Arts exam. While Meg acknowledged these tasks were connected to instruction, she felt the principal needed to engage in such work and make himself more visible to teachers. Given her limited availability to coach teachers within the classroom, Meg struggled with these other roles, as did her teachers.

**Contextual Factors and Negotiations**

Meg was affected by contextual factors that required her to negotiate her literacy coaching positions over time. The lack of a concrete job description and the pivotal role of the building principal were the primary factors.

**The lack of a concrete job description.** The lack of a concrete job description severely impacted Meg’s coaching role. According to Meg, a job description would define her role and facilitate teachers’ understanding and response to coaching, especially as her position shifted over time. Meg felt teachers did not understand her role because they were not provided with clear information and guidelines on how to work with a coach. Meg identified two reasons for this lack of a clear job description. First, she said her administrators lacked the knowledge to create a job description. Second, the union prevented a clear job description. As a result, Meg coached without a clear set of articulated guidelines.

**The pivotal role of the building principal.** Meg felt the building principal had a strong influence on the coaching position. Meg was frustrated by the principal’s “lack of
leadership” (Interview, May 2009) and his failure to become involved on a daily basis with teachers. She reported he did not attend any grade level meetings or professional development sessions, nor did he participate in Meg’s assessment meetings. Meg noted her principal did not have “his ducks in a row” (Interview, October 2010) and this greatly affected her position. Meg felt “communication is there, but there isn’t any follow-up or follow-through” (Interview, October 2010) in terms of his actions:

There’s no ownership,. There’s no ownership of the faculty. There’s no ownership of the kids. And I guess what bothers me as coach, I don’t feel as a coach I should be going to the administrator and saying ‘do you want to see the data or do you want to have a meeting?’. That should be intrinsic in a principal saying, ‘Gee, Meg, I want to see you on every Friday…and I want you to bring your data folder and I’m going to go through everything with you. (Interview, March 2010)

These experiences changed her view of his capabilities and potential as an instructional leader. Meg reported he delegated key responsibilities, such as AIS scheduling and assessment oversight, to Meg. She felt these activities were more administrative and not part of a coaching role. Yet, Meg assumed responsibility for those roles, “I just take charge because I don’t want to mess up the teachers’ schedules or frustrate the kids” (Interview, May 2009). Meg acknowledged the difficulties of coaching without principal support:

Administrators need to be visible and know as much or question their coach and say ‘when I walked in this classroom the kids were working with the teacher, a group was working with a teacher and the other kids were just sitting at their desks working on answering comprehension questions. Is that effective use of rotation time? and I would tell them no. And then the principal kind of learns
from the coach, saying well what could I work with the teacher on and then so they go -- the administrator calls the teacher in and says when I walked in your room today during supposedly your rotation time you were working with small groups which was good but none of the other kids were doing any stations so what is the issue? Is it because you’re not willing or you don’t know how or -- so that’s where the administrator says well I’m going to have Meg or whoever your coach is, I’m going to have them work with you and you’re going to meet with her three days a week and the next time I come in, I’ll give you two weeks -- I’m going to come back in and I want to see different things going on in your room. Now that’s accountability. That’s where the administration has a huge piece in coaching. (Interview, March 2010)

Combined, the lack of a clear job description within a changing position and the lack of instructional leadership in the building impacted Meg’s daily work as a coach.

**Shifts in Thinking**

In addition to observable changes in roles and responsibilities, Meg’s thinking shifted, too.

Initially, Meg articulated her frustration at the changes to her coaching position and felt this impacted her ability to be an effective literacy coach. She felt literacy coaching needed to be flexible to meet teachers’ and students’ needs within the classroom. A restricted teaching schedule severely hampered the amount of time she could visit classrooms, schedule conversations and meetings with teachers and provide professional development sessions. The additional planning time needed for her teaching responsibilities also affected the amount of time Meg had for data analysis, a role Meg did not want to sacrifice.
Meg wanted coaching to go back to its original configuration, a full time coaching position. She approached her building principal at the close of the 2009 – 2010 school year and had a candid discussion about her feelings. She shared her struggle to effectively balance her coaching and teaching roles and requested additional time to spend coaching teachers and decreased teaching responsibilities. Meg’s principal agreed to 60% coaching and 40% student contact time. Contact time was defined as time spent assessing students, modeling lessons, facilitating literacy stations and providing support where needed.

These changes were quite noticeable in the Fall of 2009. Then, Meg planned for upcoming modeled lessons and professional development and classroom support (Observations, Fall 2009). Meg felt she was supporting teachers as she intended and eagerly showed me some of the things she had been working on, namely co-planning lessons with teachers, crafting professional development sessions and reviewing curriculum. She even registered for an online course on integrating literacy into the math curriculum because of her interests and her desire to support her Kindergarten teachers’ interests.

This enthusiasm was short lived. In January 2010, facing changes in staffing and budget cuts, Meg’s district required Meg return to direct teaching. Meg was frustrated and admitted it was difficult to make the required changes. She felt the teachers were disappointed as well. Meg said teachers had responded positively to the recent changes in her role and were looking forward to the upcoming professional development sessions.

Meg was contemplative and discussed her feelings on the changes. Early on, she reported coaching could vary in formality, believing informal coaching interactions could impact instruction. Meg now reported coaching could vary in directness as well. After settling into her new schedule, she reported her direct teaching role could actually be
viewed as an “indirect way of coaching” (Conversation, March 2010) that helped her put theory into practice. It is this practical application that she felt was most powerful. She stated, “When coaches get totally removed from teaching, they can’t do the ‘prove it’ method” (Conversation, March 2010). Meg showcased her office wall, which was covered with various sight word lily pads that encouraged students to “Hop to Fluency”, a resource she created for her intervention students. When teachers saw and heard about this resource, they asked Meg about her intervention teaching and considered implementing such techniques into their classroom. Meg felt this kind of ‘prove it’ method was critical for working with seasoned teachers: “She’s a good teacher. How is she going to respond to me saying, I’ll model a lesson? But, if I do it with her kids and she sees it, that’s different” (Conversation, March 2010). When I remarked on her shift in thinking and positive attitude, Meg replied, “Bottom line, it’s about the kids” (Conversation, March 2010).

Meg’s flexibility allowed her to effectively sustain her role given the changes to her position over time. She felt teaching was a form of indirect coaching that deserved merit and consideration.

**Meg’s Impact on Teachers**

During this study, I interviewed seven teachers (kindergarten, first, second and third grade teachers and a reading specialist) and one building principal to explore the ways Meg’s coaching practices impacted teachers. All seven teachers indicated benefits from working with Meg. Abby, a kindergarten teacher, stated, “She really just educated all of us on the process of teaching reading” (Interview, February 2010) through the professional development she provided. She deemed Meg “the greatest person to have meet the needs of our kids…She just has that passion to want to do it and just help
teachers help kids” (Interview, February 2010). Yet, the shifting nature of the Meg’s role and the lack of her principal’s strong instructional leadership, impacted their views.

Teachers expectations of coaching changed in response to the shifts in Meg’s position, but their perceptions of Meg did not. Kristen, an AIS teacher stated her expectations in what the role provided changed over the years, but she felt Meg still made the best of the situation and remained dedicated and professional, giving each aspect of her position the attention it needed.

Teachers reported the principal’s lack of leadership and indicated friction between Meg and himself. Some felt Meg assumed additional responsibilities not appropriate for a coach, such as class placement and scheduling. Second grade teachers stated Meg had “responsibilities they might not necessarily have the right to, or the teachers don’t want that person to have, and that occasionally happens and so you build resentment toward a person that’s really your ally” (Interview, May 2009). Combined with the constant changes to her position, this contributed to a school culture not always conducive to coaching.

Abby, the kindergarten teacher, stated (Interview, February 2010) coaches need to “remember their role as a co-worker” and walk that “fine line” between coaching and administrative duties. All interviewed teachers felt Meg’s position should not be administrative, but reported the program was successful because she took those responsibilities over when needed.

All teachers talked about the position in “then and now” terms, preferring the coaching position as it was originally, with Meg coaching full time, coming into their classrooms and facilitating professional development sessions. All teachers and the building principal indicated they would like more time to work with Meg as a coach.
Andrew, the principal, wished there was “more time available to the coach to spend coaching” especially since he felt teachers “practices have aligned” and they were “taking the same language” as a result of their work with Meg and the program (Interview, May 2009). All teachers and the building principal indicated positive impacts as a result of Meg’s coaching.

Interviewed teachers consistently reported coaching helped them use assessment data to guide instruction, which led to an increase in student achievement, as the primary impact of coaching.

**Using Assessment Data to Guide Instruction**

Five of the seven interviewed teachers felt Meg’s coaching helped them use assessment data to guide instruction. Abby, the kindergarten teacher, reported, “It’s really just something so concrete and is a pivotal role of a literacy coach” (Interview, February 2010). Kristen, the AIS teacher stated:

> The coach is busy teaching, putting data together, putting testing together, trying to get everything organized. I think they [teachers] love the fact that somebody’s there again, providing, doing all that legwork they can’t do, gathering the data, putting it together, presenting it, saying, ‘here’s everything on one page for you to look at, now go ahead and how can you use this to help your children? It’s right there and it provides immediate, almost immediate, ability for us to change our instruction. (Interview, May 2009)

The building principal also reported this benefit, stating, “The most important piece of a coach’s position is providing that data for teachers” (Interview, March 2010). Teachers reported this increased work with assessment data helped drive their instruction and provide appropriate supportive resources to students, leading to increased student
achievement.

**Increased Student Achievement**

All seven interviewed teachers, as well as the building principal, indicated positive changes in student performance as a result of Meg’s coaching. From a building perspective, Andrew reported the building’s NYS ELA scores have improved over the years and the number of special education referrals has decreased over time. Teachers reported changes on the classroom level as well. Second grade teachers reported “students are achieving better than they have in the past” (Interview, May 2009), reporting positive outcomes in both fluency and comprehension. These reported impacts align closely with Meg’s philosophy of coaching and her attempt to keep an assessment focus evident in her daily work.

**Conclusion**

As Meg’s literacy coaching positions shifted and changed over time, she relied on her philosophy of literacy learning and coaching to guide her daily work and protected particular coaching activities she deemed critical to the coaching position and her school’s success. For example, Meg worked to include working with assessment data as part of her coaching role, as well as provide kindergarten classroom support, even as her time for such activities decreased. When her position allowed for more typical coaching roles, Meg planned professional development sessions with her teachers.

Throughout the changes to her roles and responsibilities, Meg shifted her practices and her thinking to make the most of her fractured position. At the end of the study, Meg believed that teaching roles were a valued, and even needed, aspect of coaching to gain credibility with teachers and model best practices. She began using her teaching as an opportunity to model effective teaching practices and data-driven
instruction to others. Meg stated, “Bottom line, it’s about the kids” (Conversation, March 2010) and demonstrated a positive attitude can preserve the integrity of the position.
Chapter 7: Cross-Case Analysis

The previous chapters explored and discussed the professional understandings, practices, and impact of three elementary literacy coaches. Three major research questions guided the dissertation:

1. What are literacy coaches’ understandings of literacy teaching and coaching?
2. In what ways are coaches’ understandings enacted in daily practice? What accounts for alignments and/or disjunctures?
3. In what ways do coaches’ practices impact teachers?

The findings of my study indicate that the three literacy coaches held understandings about literacy instruction and coaching which were based primarily on their own experiences, rather than professional literature or research on literacy coaching. Coaches engaged in a variety of coaching activities. While some of these daily activities were aligned with the research on coaching, others were not, particularly as the coaching positions changed over time. In addition, the context surrounding coaching, including policy, district, school, teacher, and student level factors influenced coaching activities.

In terms of how coaches impacted teachers, the data suggest teachers found benefits to working with their literacy coach, particularly when the coach was visible in the classroom. In some cases, these benefits translated to increases in student performance. This chapter provides detailed information on the findings for all three research questions.

Literacy Coaches’ Understandings of Literacy Teaching and Coaching

Understandings of their role as a literacy coach evolved over time for all three coaches, based on their experiences as classroom teachers and reading specialists, as well as in their positions as literacy coaches. The data showed areas where the coaches held
similar beliefs that informed practice, yet other times where they differed greatly in their beliefs and approach.

In terms of common beliefs, all three coaches felt, above all, literacy instruction should be differentiated to meet individual student needs. Each coach talked of meeting students at their current level of development to provide instruction that matched their instructional strengths and needs. Each talked of providing responsive whole group instruction, differentiated small group instruction, and independent literacy work that promoted individual practice. Of note, while all three coaches reported using assessment data to guide their differentiated instruction, each did so in different ways.

Meg felt strongly about the role that formal assessment data, such as DIBELS and other standardized measures, played in both her teaching and coaching understandings. She felt assessment data provided concrete information to help drive instruction in ways that met individual student needs. Similarly, Jennifer felt formal assessment data was important to differentiating instruction. In contrast, Kim was more reluctant to use formal assessment data to guide her work as a teacher and as a coach. Instead, she relied on informal measures, such as observation and running records.

Each coach reported other areas of literacy teaching and learning important to their understandings. Kim felt strongly that a balanced literacy program that included attention to phonics, comprehension, and writing, was critical to students’ success. While Meg did not talk of a balanced program, she felt strongly about integrating literacy across the curriculum into the content areas, balancing literacy across the instructional day. Jennifer spoke of authentic literacy practice as important to her literacy understandings. Jennifer felt strongly that students should be reading at their individual independent and instructional reading levels.
Coaches’ understandings of literacy coaching mattered, guiding each coach’s daily work. However, each coach held a different vision of how to best engage in this role. For Kim, coaching in the classroom was central. Jennifer focused on professional development and learning. Meg emphasized analyzing student assessment data. However, they all believed they supported teachers in a non-evaluative manner.

Kim equated coaching with the classroom. Consistent with the literature on literacy coaching, collaborative interactions with teachers support changes in teachers’ instructional practices (Dozier, 2006; IRA, 2004). Much of Kim’s philosophy focused on working with teachers within the classroom to provide instructional support. As shown in chapter 4, Kim believed the coaching and teaching she did in the classroom had the most impact on teacher practice and student learning. Therefore, Kim worked to spend as much time in the classroom as possible. She prepared and delivered model lessons, modeled instructional strategies and scheduled classroom visits to support teachers’ work, all activities consistent with the literature on coaching (Dole, 2004). For Kim, the purpose of coaching was to share additional, effective ways to teach and reach students in the classroom. Kim believed “modeling is the best” (Interview, May 2009) way to support teachers’ new thinking and dedicated hours of time planning for classroom demonstrations. Over the course of the study, Kim provided coaching within the classroom on multiple occasions, the only coach who did so.

Jennifer, a self-proclaimed lifelong learner, entered the coaching position to continue her own professional learning and share her knowledge with teachers to ultimately impact students. Consistent with the literature, a primary role of the literacy coach is to provide professional development to teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; IRA, 2004; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). As shown in chapter 5,
Jennifer felt strongly about providing professional development as part of her work as coach. Jennifer became a literacy coach because she enjoyed “helping teachers be the best they can be” and was “really interested in what’s best for kids” (Interview, May 2009). Jennifer used various techniques to get teachers talking and engaged with the content during professional development sessions. She felt strongly about working within teachers’ own zones of proximal development (Warford, 2011), meeting teachers “where they are”, asking teachers about their professional beliefs and opinions, and building on the known.

For Meg, an emphasis on student assessment data was central. Burkins (2007) highlights the role coaches have in organizing student literacy achievement data. The IRA (2004) placed working with student assessment data on its coaching framework as both level one and two coaching activities. Meg believed her emphasis on data analysis made her coaching so effective. While Meg used data to identify instructional needs and provide the right match of instruction for students, she used it to congratulate teachers as well. Never wanting to evaluate teachers negatively, Meg used data positively to congratulate teachers for their hard work in a context where teachers are given few accolades. Meg worked to incorporate data and assessment into her daily practices, even as her position shifted and changed.

All three coaches felt strongly about supporting teachers and students. As discussed in chapter two, literacy coaching relies on the assumption that coaching practices lead to changes in teacher knowledge and practice, resulting in positive changes in student performance (Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010). In this study, each coach articulated the purpose of her role was to support teachers instructional practices, and as a result, student performance. Kim was a “teacher oriented” coach. Her coaching activities
directly related to her work supporting teachers. Ideally, Kim articulated she would coach within the classroom as much as possible. Even when Kim worked outside the classroom, her daily activities had a teacher focus, such as planning for upcoming coaching visits. While Meg and Jennifer did not define their coaching activities as teacher oriented, they also felt a large part of their role was to support teachers. Jennifer’s literacy coaching focused on “helping teachers be the best they can be” (Interview, May 2009). Meg constantly tried to “rethink how it can be better for the teachers” (Interview, March 2010) and shifted her practices accordingly. For all three coaches, meeting teachers’ needs and helping teachers strengthen their instructional practices was central.

Each coach felt a need to understand and value teachers’ perspectives as a critical aspect of coaching. Meg felt quite strongly that you have to “feel what teachers feel” (Interview, May 2009) to understand teachers’ feelings and how they might respond to coaching. Both Meg and Jennifer believed classroom experience was critical to a coach’s success because teachers value a colleague who has “been in the trenches” (Jennifer Interview, May 2009). Kim, in her fourth year of coaching, was unique among the other two coaches in her level of prior classroom experience. Before becoming a coach, Kim worked in a private school setting as a teacher for three years. Kim felt she lacked the experience needed as a classroom teacher to transition into the role of a coach and worked to develop strong relationships with teachers.

All three coaches worked to be viewed as a colleague, rather than as a supervisor or administrator. The collegial nature of coaching is essential to building collaborative relationships with teachers (Dozier, 2006). Toll (2006) discusses the difficulties in maintaining literacy leadership without entering a supervisory position. Coaches in this study also reported this was a critical consideration of coaching. Meg referred to the “fine
line” (Interview, May 2009) coaches have to walk each day and considered herself a resource and a mentor to ultimately help students. While the three coaches worked to remain a colleague, each felt they were instructional leaders in the school, supporting both teachers and students. Each coach was clear she did not have an administrative role and did not evaluate teachers’ performance. However, Jennifer’s Teacher-in-Charge role blurred the lines between coaching and administrative roles. Yet, Jennifer believed her conflicting roles did not impact teachers’ perceptions of her since her administrative role was focused on behavior management and not on evaluating teachers. While Jennifer worked to convey this to teachers in grade level meetings, interviewed teachers did state they saw her in an administrative role. Meg’s teachers also felt Meg engaged in administrative roles, such as classroom placement and scheduling, as part of her coaching position. In contrast, teachers in Kim’s building did not feel she had administrative roles.

Consistent with the literature, coaches often drew upon their own understandings and experiences to envision their coaching position and daily activities (Burkins, 2007; Duessen et al., 2007; Dozier, 2007; Toll, 2007). All three coaches indicated they formed their coaching understandings primarily based on their own experiences and expectations for how they wished to be coached. However, coaches in this study did not utilize professional literature or research on literacy coaching to develop or further those understandings. While the coaches said they valued continued professional learning, only one coach engaged in such work during the research period. Meg completed an online course related to the content of literacy instruction to share with the teachers she coached. None of the three coaches engaged in professional learning specifically devoted to the content or process of the coaching role. Yet, when coaches engage as learners, they provide a model for teachers and empower themselves in their position as coach (Dozier,
This continued learning helps develop the literacy expertise needed for the position. While coaches do not act as experts (Dozier, 2006), they draw upon expertise in literacy instruction to help teachers make instructional changes in the classroom. To do so, coaches act as more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1986) and work alongside teachers, co-constructing knowledge. Coaches in this study did not always enact the role of a more knowledgeable other, developing and sharing their experience with teachers in a collaborative nature. Early in the study, Kim worked with selected teachers to pilot new instructional practices she was learning. After these trial lessons, Kim shared her instructional expertise with all teachers. In this case, Kim acted as a more knowledgeable other, reporting on her own instructional experiences and helping teachers enact them in the classroom. While Jennifer and Meg had specialized knowledge about literacy and literacy instruction, they did not act as more knowledgeable others in their positions, strategically mediating their assistance to teachers, at least none I observed during the research period. This is problematic given the very nature of coaching focuses on providing instructional support to teachers through strategic supports and intentional coaching activities. While their positions were identified as coaching positions, they were disconnected from the theoretical underpinnings behind literacy coaching, in part as a result of the contextual factors that impacted how coaches enacted their role.

**Enactments in Daily Practice**

Research on literacy coaching suggests a responsive approach (Dozier, 2007; Ippolito, 2008; Killion, 2008; Toll, 2007) to coaching supports teachers and students and considers the context for teaching and learning within the school. In this study, coaches engaged in in a variety of activities to support teachers and students. Many of the
activities coaches engaged in were supported by the research on literacy coaching, such as communication (IRA, 2004; Learning Point Associates, 2005), assessment (IRA, 2004; Learning Point Associates, 2005), planning (Learning Point Associates, 2005), work within classrooms (IRA, 2004; Learning Point Associates, 2005; Moran, 2007) and providing professional development (IRA, 2004, Learning Point Associates, 2005; Moran, 2007). Other coaching activities were not aligned with the research on coaching, including behavior management, library supervision and administrative tasks.

Activities depended on the individual contexts. As Duessen, et. al. (2007) found, coaching can look drastically different across coaches and contexts as coaches implement their understandings into practice and respond to the context for coaching. Similarly, the three coaches in my study engaged in a variety of activities as a result of their contexts and varied in their enactment of these roles.

**Communication**

All three coaches reported communication was essential for the success of their role. Each coach communicated with teachers, administrators, other coaches, and parents through phone, email and face-to-face contact. While each coach engaged in these activities across the research period, they varied in intensity.

For Kim, shifts in the school year and in building relationships with teachers impacted her communication and visibility. Initially, Kim cultivated relationships with upper elementary teachers, touching base with each and trying to set up appointments and meetings. Over time, Kim’s informal communication decreased. As the research continued, Kim focused more on planning for the upcoming classroom coaching visits for a greater number of classroom teachers.
Similarly, Meg’s communication with teachers also decreased over the course of the research from, a direct result of the changes in her coaching position. Meg acquired additional teaching responsibilities, decreasing the amount of time she spent interacting with teachers. Interestingly, in the second observation period, even though Meg did not engage in any direct teaching duties, the percentage of her activities spent communicating with others continued to decrease. While Meg gained additional time for her coaching, she spent an increased amount of time planning for upcoming coaching sessions in her office. In the final observation period, all of Meg’s communication was embedded in her other coaching activities. The spontaneous conversations or unplanned meetings that occurred in earlier observations were no longer observed.

Jennifer’s percentage of communication-related activities varied throughout the research. Often, Jennifer’s communication related activities stemmed from her Teacher-in-Charge role, rather than her coaching role, as she kept in contact with administration and teachers on a variety of building issues. These additional responsibilities often dictated communication activities.

Communication was an important goal for each coach. Each of the three coaches felt ongoing interactions were critical to building coaching connections with teachers. Yet, over time, informal interactions decreased. As each coach acquired additional responsibilities, they spent less time on informal communication with teachers. However, each coach expressed dissatisfaction with these changes.

**Assessment**

Each coach engaged in assessment activities across each observational period. These activities included administering a variety of assessments, inputting assessment data, analyzing assessment results and engaging in assessment conversations centering on
the data and resulting interventions. Coaches also covered classrooms for teachers to engage in assessments as well.

While all coaches focused on assessment and using data throughout the research period, the attention paid to it changed significantly throughout the school year in response to school’s assessment calendars, coaches’ other activities, and their own beliefs about the value of assessment.

Both Jennifer and Meg valued working with student data and worked to make it part of their coaching role. Since both coaches also held direct teaching responsibilities, they worked with assessment data on a daily basis. Meg worked with student assessment data more than the other coaches. Meg used this data to guide her coaching work on a daily basis and felt this was one of the most important aspects of her work. Kim felt assessment was important, yet struggled with using assessment data as part of her coaching work. Kim felt teachers already knew how their students were performing and her time was better spent modeling effective instructional practices in the classroom.

**Planning**

Planning emerged as a consistent and strong presence in coaches’ daily work. Planning and preparation included planning for coaching visits in the classroom, creating agendas for grade level meetings and crafting presentations. Each coach engaged in planning across all three observation periods. Two of the coaches spent a significant amount of time planning. While this planning was directly related to their coaching work, they were less visible to their teachers.

For Jennifer, the largest amount of planning took place when she began directly teaching students in addition to her coaching work. Her normal planning for grade level meetings now included planning and preparation for AIS intervention groups.
Meg’s planning was impacted by a variety of factors. In the first observation period, Meg held direct teaching responsibilities, leaving little time within the work day for planning and preparation. As her position shifted, in the second observation, Meg’s planning increased significantly as she prepared for her new coaching roles, held grade level meetings and provided professional development. Even as her position shifted back to include direct teaching responsibilities during the third observation, Meg preserved time in her schedule to plan and prepare during the school day.

Kim’s planning activities steadily increased over the research period. During this time, she began working with upper elementary teachers who were newer to the coaching process and planned accordingly. During the third observation period, planning took almost half of her daily work, as she prepared for multiple upcoming coaching visits. She struggled with this increased planning time and felt it took time away from her work in the classroom. Yet, Kim indicated this increased planning was essential to her success in working with the upper elementary teachers and this shift in focus was essential.

**Activities Within the Classroom**

Each coach indicated working with teachers in a supportive manner was important to her philosophy. This support consisted of classroom coaching, classroom support, monitoring literacy stations and meeting with teachers and students.

Only Kim and Meg participated in classroom level activities, but each did so differently. During the second and third observation periods, Meg worked with students, prepared materials and supported lessons. When her position changed to include additional teaching duties during the third observation period, Meg continued her classroom support. While Meg’s work supported teachers’ existing plans, she did not engage in explicit coaching or modeling of lessons.
Kim was the only coach who engaged in explicit coaching within the classroom. Throughout all three observations, Kim modeled lessons and provided explicit teacher support to elementary teachers.

Each coach stated coaching within the classroom would, ideally, be their main focus as coaches. Yet, each indicated other tasks and responsibilities compromised this aspect of their work and fragmented their role.

**Professional Development**

Jennifer was the only literacy coach who engaged in leading professional development sessions during the observations. She facilitated before school grade level meetings twice a month per grade level, K – 5.

Kim led professional development sessions, including grade level meetings and book clubs, although these were not observed. While Meg spent time planning for professional development during the second observational period, the actual sessions did not take place as a result of the changes in her position.

Each coach indicated continued professional development for teachers was important to her as a coach. Yet, each struggled to fully enact this role.

**Teaching Students**

Across the research period, all three coaches engaged in direct teaching of students. Jennifer increased the time spent teaching students directly over the research period as a direct result of the mandate from her teachers’ union. Since Meg’s position shifted multiple times over the study, her direct teaching responsibilities varied. Across the study, Meg directly taught students up to 23% of her daily activities.

Kim’s only instance of direct teaching took place within the first observational period and was not required. Kim spent time in classrooms working with students and
trying new instructional techniques before sharing them with her teachers. As Kim began working with a greater number of teachers in the later observation periods, she no longer taught these lessons.

While each coach engaged in direct teaching, they did so for very different reasons. Jennifer taught reading intervention as a result of a mandate by her teachers’ union. Meg taught AIS as a result of budget and staffing issues. Only Kim used her direct teaching as an intentional coaching activity.

**Other Activities**

Each coach worked to dedicate time to coaching activities that aligned with their philosophies and supported teachers and students. Yet, other responsibilities took a portion of Kim and Jennifer’s time: bus duty, overseeing morning programs and school plays, breakfast and bus duty, behavior management, administrative tasks, and travel.

Jennifer’s Teacher-in-Charge role brought additional responsibilities outside of coaching, such as behavior management and supervision, monopolizing up to half of her activities over the course of the study. These administrative duties impacted her ability to effectively work with teachers on literacy instruction.

**Literacy Coaching Roles**

Clearly delineated roles support and guide coaching (IRA, 2004; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Poglinco et al., 2003; Moran, 2007). Initially, coaches in this study practiced under *Reading First* guidelines, which provided a structured job description for coaches. As coaches positions changed, *Reading First* funding was removed and districts changed the coaching position, adding additional responsibilities to the position. Many of these changes distanced coaches from coaching activities and more intensive coaching work.
The International Reading Association (2004) outlines literacy coaching activities on a continuum of intensity, as previously explored in the literature review and within each individual case. Particularly, intensive coaching interactions, such as level three coaching activities (IRA, 2004) are thought to effect instructional change. Yet, only Kim engaged in such coaching throughout the research period. Jennifer and Meg did not engage in level three coaching activities during the observations. Meg reported she engaged in more intense coaching during the Spring of 2009 when her position shifted to include less AIS teaching. Yet, these changes were brief and she could not enact this aspect of her role. Jennifer stated the lack of tier three activities was typical of her current position, both during and outside, the observations.

Each literacy coach engaged in activities outside of the IRA’s (2004) framework across all three observation periods, accounting for a significant portion of their daily work. Both Jennifer and Meg held additional duties outside of the literacy coaching role as a result of their direct teaching duties or the additional administrative tasks Jennifer assumed. Yet, Kim, who was considered a full time literacy coach, also engaged in activities, especially planning, outside the IRA framework, taking up to 52% of her day. While related to the coaching role, planning is not explicitly articulated on the framework. This may be because it is assumed that planning accompanies coaching activities or that planning is expected to be completed after school, much like classroom teachers.

At the heart of coaching are the instructional conversations and interactions between teachers and coaches (Dozier, 2007). Level three coaching activities, such as modeling and co-teaching lessons (IRA, 2004) are built on these interactions. When literacy coaches engage in level three coaching activities, they have the potential to
impact teachers’ practices and resulting student achievement (Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010). The fact that only one coach engaged in such work over the course of the research is problematic. Two of the coaches felt they were no longer in a coaching role and instead filled various needs in the school. If coaches are not actually coaching, then naming their positions as such has consequences for perceptions toward the coaching role and measuring the efficacy of it.

**Contexts for Coaching**

The context for coaching greatly impacted the coaching role. Research demonstrates coaches practices are impacted by multiple contextual factors, including organizational and social factors (Allington, 2006; Frost & Bean, 2006; Roller, 2006), the interpretation of the coaching position (Duessen, et. al., 2007; Rivera, Burley & Sass, 2004) norms for teacher learning within the school (Stoelinga, 2008) and principal leadership (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Mangin, 2007, 2008; Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel & Garnier, 2009). In this study, school, district, and state level factors influenced how coaches enacted their role and often fragmented their positions.

**School Level Influences**

Multiple school level contextual factors influenced the coaches. Specifically, building principals, teachers and students impacted how coaches crafted their individual roles.

**Building principals.** All three coaches indicated the building principal had a direct impact on defining the coaching role, supporting coaching activities, and measuring the effectiveness of coaching.

Coaches agreed the principal could support and hinder their work as coaches. Both Kim and Jennifer felt their administrators gave them space to coach as they saw fit.
Kim reported a close relationship with her principal in her earlier years of coaching; by the end of the study, Kim felt her principal gave her more freedom as her principal became more confident in her work. Similarly, Jennifer felt her principal trusted her judgment and gave her freedom within her position. Yet, while Kim enjoyed this freedom at the building level, she felt more constraints with administrators at the district level. However, Kim said her principal’s strong, inflexible personality made it difficult to talk candidly about concerns and ideas.

Meg felt the lack of strong instructional leadership in her building hindered the coaching role. Meg clearly felt the principal’s absence at grade level meetings and other sessions with faculty. His lack of communication with Meg about important instructional topics frustrated her and she felt unsupported in her position. This frustration was evident to teachers as well. Meg felt the accountability that the principal could provide was essential in ensuring teachers followed through with Meg’s recommended, and mandated, instructional practices. Meg believed the lack of this follow-through negatively affected her impact on both teachers and students.

Building principals were important in determining and sustaining the coaching role. Within these three buildings, all principals relied on their coach to ensure support the literacy program and teachers’ instructional practices and often delegated instructional roles to coaches.

**Teachers and students.** Teacher and student contexts influenced all three coaches. Whether through Jennifer’s ‘jack-of-all-trades’ approach, Kim’s focus on building trusting relationships, or Meg’s emphasis on the realities of classroom teaching, each responded to teachers’ personalities, strengths and instructional needs in a variety of ways. Both Jennifer and Meg’s coaching activities diminished over time, yet both
continue to focus on teachers in their remaining coaching activities. Jennifer crafted her grade level meetings, professional development sessions, and even library sessions, around teachers’ wants and needs. For example, in response to teachers’ frustration with students’ difficulty in comprehension, Jennifer focused a grade level meeting and designed library sessions on teaching comprehension strategies. Meg relied on her assessment and teaching roles to help her learn more about students’ instructional needs. Meg then used this data to guide her work with students and when possible, teachers.

Kim’s interactions with teachers built professional respect and encouraged teachers to take instructional risks. Kim followed teachers’ leads when coaching within the classroom and often deferred her own beliefs and coaching plans to accommodate teacher needs and preferences. She also considered teachers’ perspectives when crafting agendas for grade level meetings. Kim slowly introduced new ways of thinking and teaching to teachers both in the classroom and in professional development sessions.

Each coach responded to teachers and students as they enacted their daily responsibilities. Yet, each coach was also influenced by challenges outside of the immediate school context, as indicated in the following section.

**District and State Level Influences**

Influences outside of the school context significantly impacted each coach’s position, defining their overall roles and responsibilities. These influences included grant-funded state reading mandates, union issues, and district level factors.

**State-funded reading mandates.** Each literacy coach began their coaching career within the context of a state-funded grant program. Meg and Kim began coaching through *Reading First* while Jennifer began coaching through *Reading for Results*. Both programs were federal reading projects aimed to improve reading outcomes for students
in low-performing K-3 schools. All three coaches operated under Reading First mandates for at least three years. Each indicated their coaching was influenced by these programs.

Both Kim and Meg articulated the influences, and constraints, of the Reading First grant program on their philosophies of literacy teaching and coaching. Kim explained, “I have certain expectations I need to fulfill under the Reading First model” (Interview, May 2009). Meg identified program requirements of Reading First that restricted her coaching work, including the 90-minute reading block, benchmark assessments, and paperwork tasks that dictated a large focus of coaches’ work. When Reading First funding ended, Kim altered the reading program to make it more flexible and responsive, specifically incorporating more writing and wide reading into the core program. Meg also felt writing instruction was lacking in her district’s Reading First program. Once the grant ended, Meg, too, worked to better incorporate writing into the literacy block.

Jennifer noted that the Reading for Results and Reading First program’s focus on K-3 instruction, at the exclusion of the upper elementary grades, hindered her coaching role and the climate of instructional change for the building. Jennifer admitted struggling with coaching upper elementary teachers for a number of reasons. She felt if Reading First had encompassed the intermediate, as well as the primary grades, it may have brought grade levels together to align instruction and develop common language, benefits she recognized in the primary grades.

Jennifer also felt the impact of competing grant programs within the district. Jennifer reported that staffing changes in Reading First over the years brought differing ways of administering the grant program and differing philosophies of instruction and interactions with teachers and staff. With the addition of a new Response to Intervention
grant, Jennifer faced competing philosophies and personalities within both programs on a daily basis.

**Union Issues.** Each coach indicated their teachers’ union impacted their daily work. Kim coached within a district well known by teachers for its’ strong teachers’ union presence. Kim knew the unions’ role in the district and the teachers’ strong connection to it, and acted accordingly. She regularly updated the union representative as to current events in the literacy program, asked questions about preferred methods of holding required grade level meetings, and acknowledged the important role it played in the culture of the building. Kim learned to structure her role and her position to meet union needs to achieve a positive working climate.

Both Jennifer and Meg did not feel as positively toward the teacher’s union. Meg cited the union as a reason the coaching was not clearly defined, while Jennifer’s union significantly altered her coaching role. Meg felt a concrete job description would help teachers better understand her role and protect it from the constant changes made by district administration. She cited the teachers’ union as a primary reason her role was never clearly articulated over time. Every time it was modified, Meg’s union had a posting process requiring reposting of the position, complete with a new interview and hiring process. This requirement severely hindered defining the role once *Reading First* ended. Nor did the district articulate the parameters of her position for teachers, which also impacted her daily work.

Jennifer’s case study clearly demonstrated the intense role the union played within her coaching position. Her union required coaches to teach 51% of the time to remain within the union, no longer believing coaching practices were successful in the district. Jennifer was uncertain why the union changed its views on the practice and
effectiveness of literacy coaching. She hypothesized the additional responsibilities placed on her position and the exclusion of upper elementary teachers in the early years of coaching led teachers to question, and ultimately change, the position, which led to a negative culture and climate within her buildings.

In varying degrees, the teachers’ union impacted literacy coaches’ work. As Kim’s case demonstrates, learning to work positively with the teachers’ union was critical to building a positive coaching climate.

**District level administration.** Administrative staff also impacted how coaches crafted and sustained their coaching roles. In Jennifer’s case, district administrators supported her. The others believed district administrators hindered them.

Jennifer was the only literacy coach who felt supported by district administration. She felt district administration understood the true purpose and potential for literacy coaching. Initially, some administrators had doubts, but after shadowing the coaches for a period of time, any lingering questions vanished and coaching positions were fully supported. Even with the recent changes to Jennifer’s position and the watchful eye of the teachers’ union, Jennifer felt supported by district administration. While they could not intervene in recent union mandates, Jennifer reported feeling comforted knowing the administrative team would support her in any way they could.

Meg and Kim did not feel as supported by district level administration. Instead, they felt administrators lacked knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of a literacy coach. Meg felt her building and district administration did not truly understand or value literacy coaching. Instead, administrators viewed coaching as a position that could shift and change according to the district’s needs, even if those changes made coaching less
effective. This indifference and lack of knowledge about coaching and school issues caused her frustration.

Kim grappled with competing messages from district level administrators, both about the role and the instructional content of coaching. Kim reported her district supervisor had a broad coaching philosophy that focused on school level tasks, such as coordinating school wide events and assemblies. Kim, however, wanted to focus more on specific coaching activities, such as spending time in classrooms. She worked to continue her classroom focus, yet found herself engaging in more school tasks than she preferred, taking her away from the classroom. Over the course of the study, Kim gained confidence in her coaching and began to speak up about her opposition to roles added to the position and developed a stronger coaching voice with both teachers and administrators.

School, district and state level factors changed coaches’ positions over time. Coaches shifted their thinking to accommodate the changes to her position.

**Shifts in Positions and in Thinking**

Shifts to the coaching position included changes in the core reading program, changes in district level administration, changes in daily coaching activities, the end of grant mandates, the addition of teachers and grade levels to work with, additional direct teaching of students, library supervision duties or administrative tasks. Both Lynch & Ferguson (2010) and Walpole & Blamey (2008) found the literacy coaching is ever evolving over time and contexts. My results supported the changing nature of the coaching role.

Both Meg and Jennifer experienced major shifts in their positions. Over time, both assumed additional responsibilities beyond the coaching role. Meg acquired additional teaching responsibilities within the AIS program. Jennifer also acquired
additional direct teaching duties, as well as library supervision tasks and a Teacher-in-Change role across the two buildings. While Kim did not acquire additional responsibilities outside of her coaching role, she became responsible for a larger number of teachers and grade levels to work with over time. These shifts fragmented the coaching role and altered the visibility of the coach in the building, along with the intensity of her coaching. As my results demonstrated, only one coach engaged in level three coaching activities over the research period. Fragmented roles hinder the coaching process (Smith, 2009), compromising the visibility of the coach and the intensity of coaching.

Each coach changed her thinking about coaching and how to best work with teachers given the changes to their position. Both Jennifer and Meg shifted their thinking about the nature of literacy coaching as a result of these changes. The Reading First program coaches initially coached within required coaches did not teach students directly. Instead, coaches worked with teachers within the context of the overall reading program. Shifts to the original framework disrupted their practices, and their thinking. Jennifer and Meg grappled with these changes, yet eventually acknowledged, and even valued, teaching students as an important part of a coaching role.

In contrast, while Kim did not change her understandings about the underlying nature of literacy coaching, she began to reflect on her understandings of coaching. Kim worked through feelings of imbalance as she worked outside of her comfort zone of primary level teaching. Over time, Kim gained confidence working with upper elementary and resistant teachers, clarifying her coaching beliefs and gaining confidence in her coaching.

These changes in thinking were important to each coach’s’ continued development and sustainability of the coaching role to effectively impact teachers.
Impact of Coaches on Teachers

Similar to other studies (Brady, et. al., 2009; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Frey & Kelly, 2002; Gersten, Morvant & Brengelman, 1995; Lovett et al., 2008; Neuman & Wright, 2010; Staub & Stern, 2002; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010; Zwart, Wubbels, Bolhuis & Bergen, 2008), educators in my study found benefits to working with their literacy coach. Building principals, teachers and students benefitted from coaches’ daily work in multiple ways, including using research-based instruction, gaining confidence working with assessment data, and meeting students’ needs within the classroom.

Research-Based Instruction

Interviewed teachers indicated their respective coaches provided up-to-date information on research-based reading instruction. Kim’s teachers specifically noted the research-based instructional strategies she brought to grade level meetings and classroom coaching. One teacher felt this support helped her stay current and think of new ways to meet her students’ needs. Jennifer’s teachers valued the professional development sessions from Jennifer’s early coaching days. They found these particularly beneficial because of the new information and resources Jennifer shared. While Jennifer could no longer sustain the level of professional development support, teachers found her grade level meetings helpful. Similarly, Meg’s teachers stressed the benefits of the professional development she provided early on through Reading First and felt it still benefitted their teaching today. The teachers wished it would be sustained.
Working with Assessment Data

Jennifer and Meg valued student assessment data. Teachers in the buildings felt the focus on assessment data positively benefitted their literacy instruction. Jennifer’s teachers reported increased confidence in assessing students and using data to guide their daily teaching. All of the interviewed teachers in Meg’s building felt this was a critical component of her work as it helped them understand students’ development and guided their instruction. Kim grappled with the role of assessment practices and did not ground her coaching in student data as explicitly. Teachers in Kim’s building did not report working with student assessment data as a benefit of coaching.

Meeting Students’ Needs

Teachers reported coaches provided them with information and support to better meet students’ needs. Kim’s teachers stated her classroom coaching helped them to envision new practices to support students, such as explicit small group instruction. Some teachers indicated Kim’s presence in the classroom provided a smaller teacher-student ratio and allowed teachers to reach additional students. Teachers in Meg and Jennifer’s buildings indicated their previous professional development and work with assessment data helped them to provide more effective small group instruction in the classroom. Jennifer’s current before-school grade level meetings also helped teachers differentiate instruction and learn new teaching practices.

Overall, teachers and building principals found literacy coaching positively impacted them through building confidence, strengthening their knowledge of literacy and teaching in the classroom.

In this study, literacy coaching supported changes in teachers’ instructional practices, changes which are thought to lead to increases in student performance.
(Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010). Consistent with the research, many teachers in this study felt literacy coaching helped them become a better teacher, which then translated to their students. However, a few studies found coaching did not impact student achievement as intended (Garet et al., 2008; Lockwood, McCombs & Marsh, 2010; Marsh, et al., 2008). In this study, there were teachers across all three cases who saw increases in student achievement only for those the coach worked with directly. For example, one of Kim’s teachers felt students in Kim’s pilot intervention group benefitted immensely from her instruction. A teacher in Jennifer’s building saw increases for those students Jennifer focused on in child study teams, and later, intervention groups. Two of Meg’s teachers noted increased student performance, but did not attribute the success to Meg’s coaching and spoke about the reading program overall, and their growing comfort within it. These teachers saw benefits only when the coach worked directly with their students in the classroom.

Overall, teachers and building principals found literacy coaching positively impacted them in multiple ways through building confidence, strengthening their knowledge of literacy and using it within the classroom. Results from my study demonstrate some promise for literacy coaching in effecting instructional change and resulting improvements in student achievement.
Chapter 8: Discussion

In this dissertation, I used case study methodology to construct a portrait of three literacy coaches’ teaching and coaching philosophies, daily practices and impact on teachers and students. Two important issues emerged from this study which have important implications for literacy coaching theory and practice: understandings of literacy coaching and the multiple contexts of coaching practice.

Understandings of Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching emerged from the constructs of a social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1986) approach. From a theoretical perspective, coaching involves more knowledgeable others engaging with teachers to support their learning. Coaches engage in joint-productive activities with teachers (Dozier, 2006) to make instructional changes.

The notion of coaches as more knowledgeable others requires coaches to have practical experience and knowledge of literacy teaching as well as knowledge of research and professional literature relating to both literacy practice and coaching. Just as teaching philosophies and learning histories influence instructional actions within the classroom (Cole & Knowles, 2000), coaches’ philosophies guide their coaching actions as well (Dozier, 2006). In this study, coaches’ own experiences and visions drove their daily decision making and provided a framework for their job description (Burkins, 2007; Deussen, et. al, 2007; Toll, 2007).

Each focused on providing support for teachers by building trust and collaborative relationships. Even though the literacy coaching positions originated from reading policy mandates with a more direct coaching orientation, all three coaches’ philosophies focused on elements of a responsive coaching orientation, relying on the needs of the teachers and students to guide their work (Dozier, 2006; Ippolito, 2008; Killion, 2008; Toll, 2007).
This clearly reinforces the contribution of practical experience and individual coaches’ knowledge of literacy teaching strategies.

However, while coaches in my study had sound practical knowledge (although it varied between coaches), what seemed to be missing was a solid theoretical and research basis for both literacy teaching and coaching. None of the coaches in this study indicated they learned about their positions, or continued to develop their understandings, through reading professional or research literature (e.g., from professional books and journals). Only one coach furthered her own professional learning during the study period. Meg took an online course connecting literacy and math instruction. While coaches in this study had initial expectations of coaching, and relied on their philosophy of coaching to guide their daily work, many factors impeded their abilities to coach. An understanding of the nature and purposes of coaching would have helped them adapt to changing responsibilities as coaches, while still supporting teachers and students. Yet, in this study, coaches did not further their understanding of the underlying nature and process of literacy coaching. In fact, coaches were not even aware of the International Reading Association’s (2004) framework for literacy coaching. This lack of knowledge on the process of literacy coaching hindered coaches’ ability to conceptualize and reconceptualize the coaching role in changing contexts over time. If coaches do not continue to develop as learners, they cannot engage in coaching work as more knowledgeable others and engage as such with teachers (Dozier, 2006).

It is one thing to criticize coaches for not engaging in, or updating, their professional understanding, and quite another to enable or support them in doing so. Coaches in this study faced the challenging task of effecting instructional change in positions that did not always provide the time or support to do so. The challenges of
coaching require organization and professional support for coaches, yet coaches are often left alone to overcome such obstacles and define their role as they learn to do it (Marsh et al, 2008; Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). While the coaches in this study were initially provided training through Reading First, they were provided little or no opportunities for sustained professional support, leadership and collaboration during the research period. Coaches were left to search these opportunities out on their own, or neglect their own learning altogether.

Yet, coaches can seek a variety of experiences to update their professional knowledge. These experiences include readings, lesson observations, analysis of data, and targeted discussions. Coaches might read professional texts on coaching, such as Dozier’s (2006) text on responsive literacy coaching. Coaches might utilize the coaching resources provided by the International Reading Association and attend conferences focused on literacy coaching. Coaches can seek out other coaches to enter into dialogue with, either within or outside individual schools and districts (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007) and engage in co-reflection, building a support system for each other. Each contributes to the building of knowledge for coaches (Walpole, McKenna & Morrill, 2011; Petti, 2010) that include the content and process of literacy coaching.

While coaches can engage in their own professional learning, a more concentrated effort to better support literacy coaches is necessary to support the coaches who support the classroom teachers (Gallucci, DeVoogt Van lane, Yoon & Boatright, 2010). Particularly, colleges and universities and coaches’ own schools and districts can support literacy coaches. Colleges and Universities can support research and discussion about literacy coaching as part of its preparation of both teachers and coaches. At the preservice level, educators can teach prospective teachers the nature and purpose of literacy
coaching to prepare teachers to effectively collaborate and with coaches in their careers. At the graduate level, literacy coaching could be included as part of the content explored in the Masters programs for future literacy specialists and possibly, coaches. Additionally, colleges could design specific programs of study to effectively prepare literacy coaches and supporting practicing coaches over time. Programs could focus on the realities literacy coaches might encounter, thoughtful articulation of literacy coaching philosophies, opportunities for reflective conversation based on research and literature on literacy coaching, and collaboration with or mentoring from other literacy coaches.

Schools and districts can provide the time and resources for coaches to engage in their own professional learning. In districts with multiple coaches, districts can set up a system for support that includes regular collaboration and reflection on the coaching role. Opportunities for coaches to learn from professional literature, from experiences, and from the culture and context surrounding them help guide their daily work and engage in a professional exploration of practice (Danielson, 2006).

**Multiple Contexts of Literacy Coaching**

While the coaches in my study had practical knowledge of literacy teaching, they did not have as much theoretical or research understanding of either literacy practices nor coaching. Even if they had been grounded in both of these, I doubt they would have been able to overcome the challenges they faced in the field. My study clearly shows coaching requires not merely an understanding of literacy practices and coaching theory, but also a thorough understanding of the contexts in which they have to enact their jobs in schools. These include state and federal policies and initiatives, local institutional contexts, and the literacy profession (e.g., professional organizations, researchers, authors of professional books).
State and Federal Policies and Initiatives

State and federal initiatives for literacy education reform have played an important role in defining literacy coaching, mandating the use of coaches, and regulating their responsibilities. As results from this study demonstrated, reading policies, such as Reading for Results and Reading First, not only created literacy coaching positions in school, but sustained and protected them within the building from additional responsibilities. Yet, these policies also brought a direct coaching approach to their programs. Reading First reading coaches worked under specific federal and state guidelines to implement scientifically based reading research and assessment in kindergarten through third grade. Coaches were hired to assume oversight of the program and implement required core reading programs and standardized assessments within the school. Yet, emerging research on literacy coaching supported a more responsive view of coaching in contrast to Reading First’s model of coaching.

Reading First emphasized working with teachers, rather than students. Unlike Reading First, other programs that utilize literacy coaches require literacy coaches to work with students directly for a portion of their professional days. The Literacy Collaborative (LC) is a “comprehensive school-wide project designed to improve the reading and writing from Kindergarten through eighth grade” (Biancarosa & Bryk, 2011). The LC includes professional development and literacy coaching to support the development of deep understandings that teachers need to continually improve their practice (Biancarosa & Bryk, 2011). Literacy coaches provide a range of school-based professional development opportunities and practices, yet still continue to teach students half-time. Another program, Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy, previously the Arkansas Comprehensive Literacy Model, led by Dr. Linda Dorn, works to redesign
struggling schools by increasing student achievement (Center for Literacy, 2011) through a comprehensive reading program that includes literacy coaching. Both district and school-based coaches not only support teachers in multiple ways, but are required to teach students every day in a variety of settings and grade levels. The National-Louis University Literacy Coaching Model (2011) also requires that coaches stay connected to students and student learning by maintaining some direct interactions with students. While not explicitly requiring daily direct teaching, the centrality of students in the coaching model is evident, as it is throughout each of the coaching models presented.

While federal and state policies brought coaching into the spotlight, tensions exist between the model required for reading policy and other coaching models. Future policy could support a more responsive model of coaching that does not require implementation of programmatic elements and instead, focuses on differentiated support for teachers (Stover, Kissel, Haag & Shoniker, 2011) and students to help schools effectively sustain the position over time.

Currently, New York is implementing a variety of reforms, such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Race to the Top (RTTT) initiatives. Race to the Top (RTTT) was begun to “create a comprehensive systemic approach to improve teaching and learning” (NYSED, 2011). This consists of well-designed learning standards and aligned curricula measured by meaningful, performance-based assessments, core instruction taught by well-prepared teachers and school leaders and analysis of student data to inform instruction (NYSED, 2011). Each initiative focuses on improving instruction to better support student performance.

Coaches were mandated within Reading First in response to federal policy mandates. Yet, current initiatives, such as RTTT, do not mandate coaches as part of their
programs. Federal and state programs have abandoned coaching as a component of its policy programs and New York has reduced its funding for, and support of literacy coaches, to its pilot RTI grant programs. Lacking federal and state support, and leaving decision-making to local school districts, literacy coaches are at a cross-roads. One might applaud the federal government for not mandating a particular conception of coaching, yet the loss of federal and state support, as well as the benefits of policy mandates, bode poorly for the future of coaching.

**Local Institutional Contexts**

In this study, each coach’s individual school context demanded she engaged in a multiplicity of roles. While each practiced within an elementary school and held similar titles, each coaching position was strikingly different. Deussen, et. al. (2007) state, “simply knowing that literacy coaches are in schools does not imply anything about how those individuals spend their time - there is a difference between being a coach and doing coaching” (p. 1). My findings support these assertions.

It goes without saying that literacy coaches have to be responsive to the needs of schools, teachers and students (Dozier, 2006; Ippolito, 2008; Killion, 2008; Rainville & Jones, 2008; Smith, 2009; Toll, 2007). In this study, literacy coaches’ practices shifted and changed, in some cases quite dramatically. However, these changes were not based on the changing needs of teachers and students, but rather on district staffing, budget, and political concerns.

Negotiations about coaches’ responsibilities began with changes in Reading First funding. As Walpole, et. al. (2010) reported, the future of coaches, and the sustainability of coaching positions, is not always assured with the end of funding. As districts exited the Reading First program, they were free to modify the literacy coaching position to suit
the schools’ individual needs and budgets. Building principals were important in determining and sustaining the coaching role. When asked specifically about the changes made to the coaching position, Meg’s principal stated, “AIS is mandated. Coaching is not.” (Interview, May 2010). Other principals in the study talked of the additional requirements placed upon school districts, such as Academic Intervention Services for struggling students, which included teaching as part of Response to Intervention. They acknowledged a need for additional administrative duties and behavior management roles, due to budget and staffing constraints. In one district, interactions between the district and the teachers’ union prompted changes to the coaching position. These challenges forced administrators to think differently about literacy coaching, no longer sustainable in its original configuration. Burkins (2007) hypothesizes, “each coach constructs a reality from the opportunities afforded by the school environment and the constructed reality does have considerable influence on variations among coaches and differences in their coaching outcomes” (p. 26). Smith found similar results and stated “with so many factors shaping the coaching process, the coaching process played out differently for each coach” (Smith, 2009, p. 60).

Negotiations about coaches’ job descriptions also were hindered by conflicting philosophies and political decisions between schools and unions. Coaches faced competing philosophies between grant programs, between administrators and between other coaches. Kim had to find ways to balance her philosophies with those of her district administrators. Jennifer had to balance differing philosophies between grant programs and Meg grappled with differences between her own vision of coaching, and her principal’s vision. Coaches also faced political tensions between policy programs, schools and teacher unions. Particularly, Jennifer had to navigate competing perceptions
of her own district and her teachers’ union. These negotiations across contexts made coaching look quite different across the three cases studied.

The different approaches each school district took to sustain coaching positions once the funding ended demonstrate the role played by school districts’ in determining what coaches actually did. For two of the coaches, ‘doing coaching’ was drastically different than their visions of being a coach. As Walpole & Blamey (2008) note, the “realities of schools may have directed coaches to complete tasks not anticipated in IRA’s role definitions…many coaches are simply managing the multiple demands of principals and teachers in idiosyncratic ways” (p. 223). Jennifer and Meg’s school changed their positions to include teaching students and engaging in supervisory roles. This fragmented the coaching position and decreased their visibility and the intensity of their coaching. While some literacy coaches refine their practices over time and engage in more extensive coaching with teachers (Bean & Zigmond, 2007), Jennifer and Meg became more disconnected from coaching roles. My study reinforced the concern that while intense and sustained work with teachers is the purpose of coaching initiatives, those goals are not always achieved in the current coaching climate (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). In contrast, Kim’s school added additional teachers and grade levels for Kim to coach. These additions changed Kim’s role and required significant planning, but preserved her classroom coaching with teachers. The influence of local contexts has been neglected in the literature, yet results from my study demonstrate a clear need to understand them and to negotiate between them.

Overall, coaches felt the changes to their position negatively impacted the coaching role. Yet, over time, each coach shifted her thinking to accommodate the shifts to her position. Both Meg and Jennifer began to view direct teaching duties as a positive
coaching activity. Using L’Allier, Elish-Piper and Bean’s (2010) notion of opportunistic coaching, Meg focused on her informal interactions with teachers surrounding her AIS instruction to act as catalysts for teacher reflection, leading to more intense coaching if time and scheduling allowed. Jennifer came to view her intervention teaching and library supervision as a way to reconnect with teachers and learn more about student needs. When coaches focus on how to best meet the needs of students, they communicate their role as a colleague and collaborator, rather than an evaluator (Casey, 2006; Toll, 2005). In fact, Bean et al. (2010) believe teachers facilitate learning when there is a focus on students that can create the atmosphere, attitude and need for changes in beliefs and practice. Such a student focus also emphasizes the end goal of improving student outcomes, while placing coaches and teachers into more collegial, problem-solving roles (p. 110). This shift in thinking may be needed to effectively sustain and actualize the coaching role, and its changing nature, over time and preserve a coaching focus as outside responsibilities vie for coaches’ time and attention.

Throughout the study, each coach attempted to become advocates and leaders for their positions, in different ways, and with varying degrees of success. Meg approached her building principal to initiate positive changes to her coaching position, which were implemented, but short-lived. Jennifer co-wrote a grant proposal that provided for a full-time literacy coaching position. While Jennifer earned the funding, her district still did not return her to a full time coaching position. Kim began to voice her opinion to district administrators to question the activities required and recommended of the district literacy coaches. While, ultimately, coaches’ leadership actions did not fully protect the coaching role, it did demonstrate the need for such leadership abilities to advocate for the coaching role in changing times.
The evolving understanding and changing daily work, of literacy coaching should be articulated and discussed with school faculty (Moran, 2007; Mraz, Algozzine and Watson, 2008). Dozier (2007) states, “we bring our understandings of coaching to each meeting, to each conversation and to each encounter and must continually navigate these understandings (p. 93). Yet, in this study, all three coaches in coached without clearly delineated job descriptions. This is understandably difficult given the constraints facing schools, including a lack of funding for a protected coaching position. However, the lack of a clearly delineated role impacted the perception of coaching in the school.

Articulating the coaching role provides a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of literacy coaching. When coaches and teachers know what is expected of them, they can negotiate a coaching relationship that has the greatest potential to influence teaching and learning. Learners' backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, motivation, interests, cognitive processes, professional identity, and commitment to school and school system goals impact how teachers approach professional learning and the effectiveness of various learning designs. Schools need to “consider how to build knowledge, develop skills, transform practice, challenge attitudes and beliefs, and inspire action” (ASDC, 2011) in teachers. Collaborating and negotiating coaches’ daily activities in light of the instructional needs of the building preserve activities most likely to impact teachers and students.

The Literacy Profession

Professional organizations, researchers, and authors can, and do, conceptualize the literacy coaching role. Given the critical importance of context in literacy coaching (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007), the literacy coaching position is difficult to universally define. While the various role definitions available (IRA, 2004; Ippolito, 2008, Toll,
2007; Killian & Harrison, 2005; Walpole & Blamey, 2008) are useful in conceptualizing the coaching role, they do not necessarily help coaches engage in practices within their particular context (Ippolito, 2008) or capture the complexities and realities of literacy coaches. Rodgers and Rodgers (2007) state, “since much of the recent trend toward implementing a coaching model of professional development has been a ground-up response to a top-down call for increased school accountability, there are perhaps as many understandings of what a coach is as there are sites where coaches conduct their work (p. xviii).

In my study, coaches’ practices were misaligned with the current literacy coaching framework available (IRA, 2004) and did not demonstrate the shifting multiplicity of roles or help coaches connect their additional roles to their coaching efforts. One such example is the absence of sustained, direct teaching of students as part of a literacy coaching position. While direct teaching is listed as a level one coaching activity on the IRA’s (2004) framework of coaching activities, direct teaching of this nature has the purpose of learning more about students to better coach the teacher. Yet, as this study demonstrated, coaches may be required to directly teach students for a significant portion of the day, leaving less time for other, more typical, coaching activities. Another example was the significant time Jennifer engaged in administrative tasks and behavior management. While outside of her coaching role, the IRA’s (2004) framework does not address the additional roles a coach may assume in reality.

The literacy profession has made progress on both the theoretical and empirical conceptions of literacy coaching, but there’s still a lot of work to do. Certainly the IRA has taken steps to offer guidance, but other professional organizations need to get involved--especially when there are so many tensions between coaches and
administrators that need to be resolved. Joint position papers between IRA and ASCD, for example, could help resolve these issues, as could revising the current coaching frameworks (e.g., IRA, 2004).

The International Reading Association has already begun such work and recently released its Standards for Reading Professionals (IRA, 2010). In it, the IRA redefines reading specialists and literacy coaches as “professionals whose goal is to improve reading achievement in their assigned school or district positions” (IRA, 2010). The Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach may have primary responsibility for working directly with struggling students, for supporting teacher learning, or for leading the school reading program. The new standards acknowledge that coaches’ roles and responsibilities differ based on their school context, as well as their own teaching and educational experiences. Coach responsibilities may include teaching, coaching and leading school reading programs, as well as acting as a resource for teachers, providing professional development, working collaboratively with other professionals, and serving as advocates for struggling students. These revised standards highlight the situatedness of the role and the contextual factors that focus the position in particular ways.

Current coaching frameworks, such as the IRA’s (2004), could also be revised to better reflect the wide range of roles and activities coaches might engage in. These frameworks should not only describe those activities, but acknowledge how coaches could connect each to their literacy coaching efforts. One possibility is to change the coaching frameworks from the viewpoint of intensity to the viewpoint of relatedness. In this newly envisioned framework, coaching activities would be clearly defined. These would include typical coaching roles, such as coaching in the classroom, professional development and assessment tasks, as well as possible atypical roles, such as sustained
teaching of students. Explicit recommendations on how coaches could connect each to literacy coaching work would be clearly articulated, building coaches’ knowledge on the process of literacy coaching. In the case of teaching, the framework might outline how coaches use their teaching to model literacy instructional practices, focus on student assessment data, and develop collegial relationships, similar to the shifts Jennifer and Meg were beginning to make. Finally, the revised framework might include a discussion of the contextual factors impacting coaching roles, such as administrators, teacher unions, and competing policy mandates, and how coaches could navigate them to successfully sustain their positions. Given the continually changing nature of the coaching position in response to schools, teachers and students, coaching frameworks should be updated to reflect the evolving roles and activities coaches might engage in (IRA, 2010) as we learn more from and within the field.

Literacy coaching is ever-evolving (Moran, 2007) as coaches respond to the contexts in which they enact their jobs in schools. Typically, research on literacy practice and coaching hasn’t sufficiently taken these contexts into consideration, but they are essential to consider when thinking about what coaches should be doing. Results from this study provided insight into the contextual complexities of coaching, the challenges facing schools and the realities of practicing literacy coaches, complicating “our own collective thinking about teaching, learning and literacy coaching” (Dozier, 2006, p. 5). This complication caused reflection, celebration and frustration as literacy coaches worked to effect instructional change within changing school structures.
Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This case study of three practicing elementary school literacy coaches contributes to and extends current professional research and literature on literacy coaching. In this section, I discuss the study’s limitations and directions for future research.

The three coaches I studied provided many insights into the nature of the coaching role and the realities of their daily practices. I took care to include coaches in three different districts with differences in their understandings of literacy coaching to represent a varied sample. Yet, this represented a very small sample of literacy coaches. Each coach began her career within the context of reading policy, influencing her visions and enactments of her position. Future research should focus on a larger sampling of coaches, both participating within, and outside, of reading policy mandates, to extend the findings.

A sufficient amount of time is needed to capture the complexities of the research questions posed. While this study took place over two school years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010) and included more than 150 total hours of observation, an obvious limitation was the inability to address long-term effects on student achievement. Therefore, I did not attempt to do so, but rather, completed shorter term observations to paint a portrait of what literacy coaches are currently practicing and document their impact on teachers. The discussions of each coach's daily practices were based on scheduled observations throughout the research period. These observations included most, but not all, of the coaching activities each coach engaged in. As discussed in the literature review, we know little about what coaches actually do as they engage in the act of coaching within individual contexts that shift over time. Future research needs to move beyond documenting the beliefs and practices of literacy coaches, to explore how and why those
beliefs and practices change over time and what that means for teachers and the potential effect on student achievement.

The teachers interviewed as part of this study also represent a small sample of coached teachers. Future studies could focus more on the impact coaches have on teacher practice, seeking interviews with all teachers participating in professional collaborations with literacy coaches. The three literacy coaches in this study chose the teachers I interviewed based on my guidelines, which may have skewed the results in favor of literacy coaching. Future research should interview a greater number of teachers to better describe the impact, and lack thereof, of coaching practices on teachers and students. Future research might also begin to develop and use teacher measures essential to defining the impact of coaching initiatives.
References


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Appendix A
Spring 2009, Initial Interview Protocol

For Literacy Coaches:
Talk a bit about yourself
Talk about the literacy program at your school.
Talk about your core beliefs about literacy instruction.
Talk about literacy coaching at your school.
Talk about how you decided to be a coach.
Talk about your beliefs about literacy coaching.
Let’s pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how you would spend your time as coach.
Now let’s talk about the real world. Talk about how you actually do spend your time as coach.
Now, list those areas in order of how you spend your time. 
Talk about your experiences with the teachers at your school. How was coaching introduced to them? How are they responding?
Talk about your sense of how the administrators perceive coaching.
Talk about how your role has changed over time and experience. What do you think accounts for that?
Name a celebration in relation to your coaching. What is a work in progress? In retrospect, what might you change?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Classroom Teachers:
Talk a bit about yourself
Talk about the literacy program at your school.
Talk about your core beliefs about literacy instruction.
Talk about literacy coaching at your school
Let’s pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how your coach would engage with you.
Now let’s talk about the real world. Talk about how you actually do spend time with your coach.
Talk about your sense of how the administrators perceive coaching.
Talk about how the coaching role has changed over time and experience. What do you think accounts for that?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Administrators:
Talk a bit about yourself
Talk about the literacy program at your school.
Talk about your core beliefs about literacy instruction.
Talk about literacy coaching at your school.
Let’s pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how your coach would engage with you and your teachers?
Now let’s talk about the real world. Talk about how your coach actually spends time with you and your teachers.
Talk about your sense of how the classroom teachers perceive coaching.
Talk about how the coaching role has changed over time and experience. What do you think accounts for that?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?
Appendix B
Spring, 2009 Second Interview Protocol

For Literacy Coaches:
Is there anything you have been thinking about over the time we have spent together and want to discuss?
I have had the pleasure of observing you over the past three days. Talk about what influences your decisions as literacy coach.
I noticed (questions based on specific data)…
Talk about how your coaching has evolved over the course of the school year. How have teachers and administrators responded?
What impacts do you think coaching has had on teacher practice? On student achievement?
Talk about how coaching might be more beneficial.
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Classroom Teachers:
Is there anything you have been thinking about since our last meeting and want to discuss?
I noticed (questions based on specific data, if applicable)…
Talk about how coaching has been received at your school. Has this changed over the course of the year?
What impacts do you think coaching has had on teacher practice? On student achievement?
Talk about how coaching might be more beneficial.
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Administrators:
Is there anything you have been thinking about since our last meeting and want to discuss?
I noticed (questions based on specific data)…
Talk about how coaching has been received at your school. Has this changed over the course of the year?
What impacts do you think coaching has had on teacher practice? On student achievement?
Talk about how coaching might be more beneficial.
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?
Appendix C
Fall, 2009 Initial Interview Protocol

For Literacy Coaches:
Talk about how coaching has been going this year.
In our last interview, you indicated teachers and administrators responded a certain way to literacy coaching. What do you think about this now?
In what ways is your literacy coaching different now in the Fall than in this past Spring?
Is it the same?
Let’s pretend we are in a perfect world. Talk about how would you spend your time as coach? Is this the same as this past Spring?
Now let’s talk about the real world. Talk about how you actually do spend your time as coach. Now, give a listing of them in order how you spend your time.
Talk about your experiences with the teachers at your school. How are they responding to coaching this year?
Talk about your sense of how the administrators perceive coaching. Has this changed?
Name a celebration in relation to your coaching. What is a work in progress? In retrospect, what might you change?
What short and long term goals do you have for this school year?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

For Administrators:
We have started a new school year! How is your year progressing?
Talk about literacy coaching at your school this year.
Talk about how you spend time with your coach this year. How do your teachers spend time with your coach? Has this changed?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?
Appendix D
Fall, 2009 Second Interview Protocol

**For Literacy Coaches:**
Is there anything you have been thinking about over the time we have spent together and want to discuss?
I have had the pleasure of observing you again over the past three days. Talk about what influences your decisions as literacy coach. Has this changed at all?
I noticed (questions based on specific data)…
Talk about how teachers and administrators have responded to literacy coaching this year.
What impacts do you think coaching has had on teacher practice? On student achievement?
Talk about how coaching might be more beneficial.
Talk about the challenges do you face as literacy coach?
Talk about any advice you would give to other literacy coaches. Why?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

**For Classroom Teachers:**
Is there anything you have been thinking about over the time we have spent together and want to discuss?
I noticed (questions based on specific data)…
Talk about how coaching has been received at your school this year.
What impacts do you think coaching has had on teacher practice? On student achievement?
Talk about how coaching might be more beneficial.
Talk about any advice you would give to new coaches. Why?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

**For Administrators:**
Is there anything you have been thinking about over the time we have spent together and want to discuss?
I noticed (questions based on specific data)…
Talk about how coaching has been received at your school this year.
What impacts do you think coaching has had on teacher practice? On student achievement?
Talk about how coaching might be more beneficial.
Talk about any advice you would give to new coaches. Why?
Is there anything else you would like to discuss?
Appendix E
Reflective Memo from Coaching Journal

1/26/2010

Today, Kim brought up an amazing point. People have different coaching philosophies. Her administration has a ‘coaching broad’ philosophy (school level, overall literacy work, task oriented). Kim is ‘coaching personal’ (getting into classrooms, building relationships, etc.). As Kim points out, she cannot do both - so what does she do?

If people have different philosophies on coaching, then they have different philosophies on how they perceive coaching as being effective, right? Would Kim say increased teacher practice? What would Melissa say? I need to ask this.

So, then how can we truly define effectiveness if we operate under a different model? Meg focuses on kid contact, data and teacher support. Hers would probably be more evident on student performance. Kim focuses on teacher practice- hers most evident on teacher measures at first? Jennifer focused on implementing the program, and now, AIS. How would hers be evident?

What we believe causes us to operate in different ways (as much as we can with teacher needs, responses, outside factors, etc.) through coaching and we measure our own effectiveness differently based on those beliefs and actions.

So, how do we sustain the coaching role if we do not agree on the philosophy or ‘effectiveness’ measure? What do we do when these do not align? Or take longer to shine through? (First teacher response, beliefs, then student achievement?). Shifts and disjunctures.

This is on a ‘small’ level (daily interactions with teachers and administrators) but also on a ‘large’ level (overall agreement on how to carry out role). How does this impact our daily coaching role, as well as the ‘bigger picture’? Funding and continuation of position? Need to talk to administrators about this too.
Appendix F
Example of Interview Data Analysis

June 2 Interview Part 1 - 8:32:

Stephanie: Can you talk a minute about your beliefs about literacy instruction - basic tenets of your beliefs about literacy instruction for kids.

June: I believe that literacy instruction is the mainstay of the elementary curriculum. I believe it needs to be systematic and explicit and I believe children need to be grouped in flexible groups, you know, not every child is at the same level, so I think literacy has to be very differentiated and literacy can go across the curriculum instruction, so in the higher grades four through six, literacy strategies like comprehension strategies. Those can be addressed in other content areas, you know. And the other component that I really - this really kind of bothered me throughout reading first is that writing has to be maintained in the literacy. They are not separate. They are so intertwined, you know, that whole thing, good reader becomes a good writer and a good writer is a good reader. If you go back and look at your kids that scored very well on like ELA assessments, if go you look at their reading scores, there's a huge correlation - reading scores are very high and the writing is high. So why it was ever taken apart - somebody didn't know literacy when they were doing all this. That has been the hardest thing trying to get that all balanced out now that reading first, you know, because the principles are still there as far as you know, 90 minute block, and I am, you know - I think in the past teachers have always done 90 minutes, but it's been broken apart. So I do like the instruction to be uninterrupted, and that helping teachers go that - to many lessons in literacy - doesn't need to be 45 minutes instruction. You know, move the kids, they learn better. I think literacy is taught and children learn better in small chunks than they do in this large section. I mean adults' attention is what - 15 minutes and we're expecting kids to sit there for 30. You know, so, especially now in the month of June, right.

Stephanie: How about your beliefs about literacy coaching?

June: Coaching. See why I'm afraid to do interviews in chunks? Coaching, you know, now that I have been exposed and developed and educated on coaching, I really think it's a valid position in the elementary middle school, however, because unfortunately your administrators years ago - your administrators came out of the classroom, so they were able to instruct and work with the teachers. Now that piece is missing and now a lot of your administrators are from the corporate world, you know, from being a Phys Ed teacher and going to be a curriculum and you know, I had a teacher friend of mine who retired a few years back and she went from fourth grade to being a principal, and she always said an elementary principal's requirement should be they have to have a reading background. If they don't have a reading background they should not be allowed to be an elementary principal. And I totally agree with
Appendix G
Example of Analyzed Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency, %</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/2/09</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>3, 2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Direct</td>
<td>1, 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource to Teachers</td>
<td>3, 25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>1, 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AIS</td>
<td>3, 17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1, 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Teacher Contact</td>
<td>1, 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/3/09</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>7, 39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Direct</td>
<td>4, 22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource to Teachers</td>
<td>7, 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>1, 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AIS</td>
<td>2, 11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Teacher Contact</td>
<td>1, 6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/4/09</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>9, 35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Direct</td>
<td>1, 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource to T.</td>
<td>4, 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>2, 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AIS</td>
<td>2, 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Teacher Contact</td>
<td>4, 15%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Meetings</td>
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# Appendix H

## Kim’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Activities</th>
<th>Description of Observed Activities</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal communication with administrators, teachers (e.g. inventory materials and set up appointments), district coaches (clarify meeting dates) and Reading First personnel (schedule training session).</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
<td>Modeling lessons in the classroom (e.g. 2nd grade how-to and personal narrative writing lessons, 1st grade phonics lesson, 3rd grade small group demonstration) and completing classroom observations (Kindergarten).</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for upcoming coaching visits in the classroom and end of the year grade level meetings.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>Documenting daily activities and preparing status reports for reading First program officials.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Teaching of Students</td>
<td>Piloting an intervention program that focused on learning letter and sound correspondences with a group of Kindergarten students.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Meeting with building principal to provide updates and individual meetings with upper elementary teachers.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Scheduling logistics for DIBELS benchmark assessments with teachers, reading specialists and building principal.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within School</td>
<td>Participation in the school’s Kindergarten Round-Up program, presenting the literacy program to parents.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix I

### Kim’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Activities</th>
<th>Description of Observed Activities</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Informal face to face communication with administrators (school updates and concerns), teachers (set up appointments and informal conversation) and district coaches (emails and phone calls to clarify meeting dates).</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td>Planning for upcoming coaching visits in the classroom (e.g. 5th grade friendly letter lesson) and upcoming grade level meetings.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meetings</strong></td>
<td>Meeting with 4th and 5th grade teachers to discuss concerns and schedule coaching visits, meeting with the building principal to provide updates and meeting with the reading specialists to discuss the AIS schedule.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Providing classroom coverage for teachers who were administering DIBELS, administering DIBELS to students and discussing results with teachers, reading specialists and the building principal.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities Within Classroom</strong></td>
<td>Modeling lessons in the classroom</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paperwork</strong></td>
<td>Logging daily activities and completing paperwork to attend an upcoming professional development session.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unrelated Activities</strong></td>
<td>Bus duty</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activities Within School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Searching For and Providing Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Teaching of Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed Activities</td>
<td>Description of Activities Observed</td>
<td>% Observed in Period 3</td>
<td>% Observed in Period 2</td>
</tr>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for upcoming coaching visits in the upper elementary classrooms on embedded text preparation in upper elementary grades</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Reviewing assessment administration with reading specialists, discussing assessment results and planning subsequent instruction.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
<td>Modeling lessons in the classroom (e.g. 2nd grade small group instruction lesson, 2nd grade literature circles, 2nd grade authors message lesson)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal communication with teachers to set up final appointments and reading specialists to discuss data.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Meetings with building principal to discuss updates and concerns</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>Documenting daily activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within School</td>
<td>1000 Book Club Meeting</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct teaching of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
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## Appendix K

### Jennifer’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Activities</th>
<th>Description of Activities Observed</th>
<th>Percentage of Activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>Behavior management, bus duty, travel, morning program, school plays</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Preparation for Terra Nova assessment and administration of the PPVT</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal contact with teachers, related staff, the building principal and parents</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for upcoming before-school grade level meetings (e.g. K-1 session on classroom design for literacy)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Meetings with building principal, special education teachers (e.g. student updates) and parent coordinator (e.g. home-school connections with K-1 parents)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>Documentation for Reading First status report</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Grade level meeting with K-1 teachers on literacy stations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Teaching of Students</td>
<td>Direct teaching through the AIS program (e.g. first grad group focusing on fluency)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
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<td>Activities Within School</td>
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### Appendix L

**Jennifer’s Activities Observed in Observation #2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities Observed</th>
<th>Description of Activities Observed</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal contact with building principal, district administrators and teachers (e.g. behavior management, updates and clarifications)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for upcoming grade level meetings (Grades 2 – 4) and direct teaching in AIS program</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>Documenting daily contact with students and work within RTI grant analyzing survey data</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct teaching of students</td>
<td>Direct teaching of K-1 intervention groups (e.g. K groups on letter ID and first grad group on decoding and connected text)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Administration of PPVT and PAT assessments to K students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Brief meetings with building principal and specialists to touch base and answer questions on building concerns</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>Travel between buildings, library supervision (reading comprehension lesson to 5th grades) and behavior management (K-1 students)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Before school grade level meeting (K-1 focus on sound cards from core program)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
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<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
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### Appendix M:

**Jennifer’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #3**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activities Observed</th>
<th>Description of Activities</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 3</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Teaching of Students</td>
<td>Direct teaching of K-1 intervention groups (e.g. multiple K – 1 groups focusing on letter identification)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>Documenting daily activities for RTI grant</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for grade level meetings and direct teaching (e.g. planning for library class of 4th graders)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal contact with superintendent (updates) and teacher aides (building level concerns)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Inputting assessment data in district’s data system</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Meeting with teacher aides on emergency procedures</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Activities Within School</td>
<td>Planning for school and district after school tutoring program</td>
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<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
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<td>Professional Development</td>
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### Appendix N

Meg’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #1

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<th>Activities Observed</th>
<th>Description of Activities</th>
<th>Percentage of Activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Preparation and administration of Terra Nova and DIBELS assessments, meetings with teachers to review data</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal and unplanned contact with the building principal, teachers, assistants and parents (e.g. student updates, assessment questions)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Teaching of Students</td>
<td>Direct teaching within the AIS program (1:1 Kindergarten intervention)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Meetings on PBIS program and faculty meetings</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for direct teaching and upcoming assessment meetings with teachers and parents (Kindergarten parent with concerns)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching For and Providing Resources</td>
<td>Finding catalogs and resources for the speech language pathologist</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities Within School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
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Appendix O
Meg’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities Observed</th>
<th>Description of Activities</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 2</th>
<th>% Observed in Period 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for upcoming professional development sessions (1/2 day content sessions on literacy stations and using student data collected)</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Within Classroom</td>
<td>Kindergarten support (e.g., setting up HWT program) with co-planned lessons (e.g. math lesson) and small group instruction (enrichment students)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Informal communication with teachers and parents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Meeting with AIS teachers on students and assessment data and Kindergarten teachers on upcoming lessons</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
<td>Completing registration process for online course on Picture books in the classroom</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Preparing DIBELS assessments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for and providing resources</td>
<td>Reviewed writing curriculum and Leap Pad grant materials</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Activities Within School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Teaching of Students</td>
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<td>Unrelated Activities</td>
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Appendix P
Meg’s Activities Observed in Observation Period #3

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<tr>
<th>Activities Observed</th>
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<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Preparation and administration of MAZE comprehension assessment</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for direct teaching duties (K-3 intervention groups) and upcoming presentation on RTI in the district</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities within the classroom</td>
<td>Kindergarten support consisting of small group instruction (enrichment support) and preparation of HWT materials</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct teaching of students</td>
<td>Direct teaching as part of the AIS program (e.g. 1st grade group on sight words; 2nd grade group on sight words and connected text; 4th grade writing group)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork</td>
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