A Descriptive Study of Florida Public School Elementary Highly Effective Reading Coaches'

Perceptions on the Performance Evaluation for Coaches

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore Florida public school highly effective elementary coaches' perceptions on how to best evaluate the effectiveness of the position of reading coach. The study attempts to answer the research questions-

- What are Florida elementary public school exemplary reading coaches' perspectives on the performance evaluation process?

- What are the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the evaluative process?

This study was comprised of interviews with 6 full time coaches who currently work as reading coaches at one elementary school with an increasing school grade and have been labeled highly effective by district staff.

Coaches believe that collaboration should be included in the evaluative process through observations. Teacher input and feedback should be considered through an annual survey. Coaches should turn in a schedule in order to develop their skills in prioritizing their time. Danielson believes portfolios have extraordinary potential to present an authentic view of teaching and learning (Danielson, 2000). District reading coaches would be knowledgeable and credible to evaluate and support school based coaches.

Good quality reading coaches can decrease the number of teachers who leave the profession. Negative implications include: that district coaches would be in an evaluative role, and developing an evaluation and training personnel to be evaluators would be time consuming and costly. Based on the research, my study fills the gaps by creating procedures for assessing all aspects of coaching and provides a trained evaluator to provide consistent judgments.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior who has constantly shown what true love and forgiveness should look like and my mother, who has always loved and supported me.

My Mother

For as long as I can remember you have been by my side
to give me support, to give me confidence, to give me help

For as long as I can remember
you have always been the person I looked up to
so strong, so sensitive, so pretty

For as long as I can remember
and still today
you are everything a mother should be

For as long as I can remember
you have always provided stability within our family
full of laughter, full of tears, full of love

So much of what I have become is because of you
and I want you to know
that I appreciate you, thank you, and love you
more than words can express

Author: Susan Polis Schut

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background Information

Programs like Reading First and Just Read, FL! have set the high standard that all students read proficiently by the end of the third grade. The Reading First program was designed to reach this goal by using scientifically researched-based methods to ensure that students can be successful in reading. Another goal of the program is to increase the access teachers have to quality professional development. The role of reading coach was implemented as a part of this program so teachers could collaborate and reflect on classroom practices with a peer. Professional development can be difficult to implement without guidance, and reading coaches are regarded as guides to implementing effective instructional practices. Reading coaches have been successful in increasing student achievement in reading by giving teachers access to research-based instructional practices through job-embedded professional development. Teachers are more likely to implement and retain instructional practices when a knowledgeable peer can provide consistent reflection on changing instructional practices.

Problem

Federal policies such as Reading First, Striving Readers, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act have further encouraged the coaching role across the country (Lockwood, 2010). With such a commitment to the development of coaching, a need exists for rigorous research on the method utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of a reading coach. School districts use different tools and processes for evaluating reading coaches. Some school districts require the coach to create a goal for the year and the school grade as the grade of the coach while other districts use a simple evaluation rubric (Coach 3 & Coach 5, personal

communication, May 2017). Are reading coaches learning enough to be able to improve the practice systematically?

Mastery of literacy instruction is key to success in the workplace and in life. Most jobs require that an employee have the ability to interact with instructional manuals and be prepared to read and comprehend the materials pertinent for success in the job role. The business community asserts that students who have recently graduated are not prepared for the workplace. Supervisors believe the skills necessary for success in the workplace are not part of the public school curriculum (Strauss, 2016).

"The National Assessment of Adult Literacy finds that higher literacy levels are associated with greater levels of full-time employment, higher income, and lower levels of receipt of public assistance" (Kutner et al., 2007). With such an important emphasis on literacy, a focus has been placed on this essential subject area. Unfortunately, a majority of students drop in reading proficiency and struggle from primary school into secondary school when complex texts are introduced and used across subject areas (McCombs & Marsh, 2009). The United States Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics (2016) states that 76% of students in grade eight and 72% of students in grade twelve are performing at or above grade level in 2015, which is lower than 2013. Solutions such as the position of reading coach have been put in place by the federal government and by individual school districts to improve literacy skills.

Teacher training and professional development are an important part of the solution, specifically the role of a school-based reading coach. Desimone (2009) suggested the research agenda be focused on professional development, and the effects of implementation of programs

on teachers' instruction, attitude, and student outcomes. This is where the reading coach can be integral to a school's success.

With this focus on reading instruction, reading coaches are then necessary to support teachers' consistent access to professional development in the subject of reading. This non-evaluative mentor supports improved effective instructional practices, which in turn will support increased student achievement. Teachers and administrators have a set of standards that create a sense of uniformity and clarify job expectations. Currently, reading coaches across the United States have little clarity as to their job duties and expectations (McLean, Mallozzi, Hu & Dailey, 2010). Reading coaches should be provided a similar set of expectations and be evaluated according to those expectations, driven by federal policies such as Reading First, Striving Readers, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act that have encouraged the development of the coaching role across the country (Lockwood, 2010).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore Florida public school highly effective elementary coaches' perceptions about how to best evaluate the effectiveness of the position of reading coach. This study sought to determine a link between identifying an effective reading coach and using that definition to evaluate effective reading coaches in order to mainstream job roles and responsibilities. A reading coach is a specially trained master teacher who provides leadership and ongoing professional development for a school's literacy program. Coaches are responsible for encouraging teachers to use effective instructional practices and model lessons that include those effective instructional practices. Through collaboration and reflection, teachers are more likely to integrate new and improved instructional practices in the classroom (McCombs & Marsh, 2009). This study's focus was coaches' perceptions on what components should be included in an effective performance evaluation.

Significance

How do highly effective reading coaches think coaches should be evaluated? Research shows that "students tend to make minimal learning gains when teachers lack instructional competence" (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011). Joyce and Showers (2002) state that teachers' expertise contributes to student achievement. Therefore, it is important to build teachers' expertise; reading coaches can be an important part of that process. Stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, reading coaches, school boards, and district staff need an evaluation tool to gauge the effectiveness of a reading coach in improving teacher practice. An effective performance evaluation tool would not only inform coaches about performance but would also allow coaches to pinpoint areas for growth. Like teachers, reading coaches need an evaluation tool that can streamline job responsibilities while providing feedback for the coach (McLean, Mallozzi, Hu & Dailey, 2010). L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles identify the characteristics of an effective reading coach. By incorporating those principles into a performance evaluation, coaches at the elementary level would recognize which responsibilities are essential in helping to identify areas for growth in order to improve the coaching, which in turn would improve teacher and student performance.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that serves as the foundation for this study is Knowles' Adult Learning Theory. Reading coaches work with school leadership to help teachers improve instruction. Coaches can wear multiple hats in a school on any given day. Reading coaches generally do not work directly with students since most of the school day is spent collaborating with teachers. Other important job roles could include building school leadership and enhancing a positive school climate, which could indirectly affect student achievement (Lockwood, 2010). A coach has a plethora of job roles throughout the day and those roles are different at each

school site, but the evaluation process should be linked to job responsibilities (Lane, Robbins &

Price, 2013). Coaches should have a performance evaluation process that not only defines what

techniques are useful with adult learners but also gives coaches specific ways in which to

strengthen areas of improvement (Lane, Robbins & Price, 2013).

Adult Learning Theory

Collaborating and modeling effective instructional practices is one of the most important

roles of a reading coach. Coaches' performance evaluations rarely include the process of

collaboration in the evaluation process. Malcolm Knowles, an American educator, is known for

The Adult Learning Theory and the term andragogy, which is synonymous to adult education

(Merriam, 2001). Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2014) referred to andragogy in *The Common Core*

Coaching Book and stressed the importance of identifying the differences between students and

adult learners.

Knowles's theory is a constructivist approach that links the relevance of learning to the

pool of experience that adults can use as a resource (Cox, 2015). Through coaching, adults learn

effective instructional practices by collaborating with knowledgeable peers. Collaborating with

and teaching adult learners is very different than instructing children. The process of evaluating a

coach on the skills of teaching adults has not been fully researched. Andragogy has five

underlying assumptions and states that an adult learner can (1) direct his or her own learning, (2)

has background experiences that become a source for learning, (3) has learning needs based on

social roles, (4) wants to immediately apply new learning and is motivated by that urge, and (5)

has an internal motivation to learn. Based on these assumptions, Knowles created a program-

planning model designed with a classroom climate of "adultness" (Merriam, 2001).

Coaches spend much time collaborating with and teaching adult learners how to accommodate and educate students in the classroom. In order to meet the needs of adult learners, coaches need to ensure that teachers are involved in the planning and evaluation of instruction (Merriam, 2001). Even though research has supported the usefulness of collaborating and planning instruction, most coach performance evaluations do not include this characteristic. Adult learners insist that learning is problem-centered and usually come to a coach for assistance after failure in a particular area. Coaches need to be aware of teachers' need for learning to be relevant and impactful (Merriam, 2001). Coaching is more than just learning and can be considered a collaborative solution to unlock potential (Cox, 2015). Adult learners bring a plethora of experience to the table, so learning can be differentiated based on the background of the teacher. Adult learners also depend upon teacher-directed learning while children are naturally curious (Merriam, 2001).

Knowles' Six Characteristics of Adult Learning

Knowles discovered six characteristics of adult learning that can influence how an adult tackles learning. The first characteristic is adults' need to relate learning to real world problems. Coaching aligns to this principle because the learner is in control and decides what the coach will model. The second principle is that adults are self-directed learners: with coaching teachers decide when the coaching cycle begins and how the new instructional practice is developed. The teacher is completely in charge of asking for help and deciding when success is evident. The third principle is that adults have an abundance of background knowledge and work experience. Coaching aligns with this principle because coaches are encouraged to use probing questions to allow the teacher to think through what needs to be improved. Teachers create a coaching goal

and determine how that goal will be achieved. Coaches become facilitators of learning instead of lecturing (Cox, 2015).

The fourth characteristic is that adults learn when a need arises. This relates to coaching because most teachers come to a coach for assistance when an event triggers the need for a new instructional routine. The fifth principle is that adults are life-centered and like to apply learning to a task or problem. In coaching, teachers are receiving job embedded professional development on a consistent basis that can be directed at the issue. The sixth and last characteristic is that adults are mostly internally motivated. For coaches, this characteristic is evident in that most teachers truly want to be the best for the students in the classroom. Every new technique or instructional practice is for the benefit of the students (Cox, 2015).

The Adult Learning Theory provides coaching techniques to best accommodate adult learners and coaches could be evaluated on how well adults learn. There is an abundance of research about which techniques are helpful in teaching adult learners and which characteristics define an effective reading coach (Cox, 2015).

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms have been identified for this study:

Highly Effective- The highest level of performance on personnel evaluations.

Reading Coach/Literacy Coach- A coach who assists teachers in the areas of reading, writing, and language arts.

Reading Initiatives- Federal or state funded initiatives, such as the Reading First Initiative, aimed at helping all students become successful readers by establishing high-quality Reading instruction for all students in kindergarten through third grade.

Research Questions

The research questions this study attempted to answer are:

- What are Florida elementary public school highly effective reading coaches' perspectives on the performance evaluation process?

- What are the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the performance evaluative process?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Coaching

In the 1960's the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Title I programs allowed schools to use Title I funds to hire trained teachers to work with students who experienced reading difficulties. In 1986, The International Reading Association (IRA) labeled five roles for the reading specialist, which were shortened in 1992. In the late 1990's, the National Assessment of Educational Progress found flat or decreasing reading scores across the United States. This study prompted legislators to confront the issue of students not becoming proficient readers (Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Reading coaching has been funded through a national initiative, Reading First. The Reading First initiative is a federal education program mandated under the No Child Left Behind Act. The initiative's goal was "that all students read proficiently by the end of third grade" (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Reading First then prompted and helped fund Florida's reaction through an executive order known as Just Read, Florida! Through these initiatives, funds have been set aside for the position of reading coach in schools at all levels.

Reading First

Professional Development

One way the U.S. Department of Education decided to reach the initiative's goal is through professional development, which helps teachers develop the skills to implement the program effectively, and is also necessary to meet the reading needs of all students (as cited in Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Professional development aims to increase student achievement by enabling teachers to implement research-based reading programs. Research shows that teachers who are actively involved in well-designed professional development programs get better results from students. It is important for teachers to receive feedback from coaches, mentors, peers, and outside experts as new concepts are put in to practice. Professional development also prepares

teachers to manage the classroom environment, use assessments to interpret students' progress, and maximize time on task (as cited in Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

"A major focus of Reading First was professional development for K-3 teachers related to evidence-based reading instruction" (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011). Reading coaches provide on-site, job-embedded professional development in which coaches work with teachers daily to increase effective instructional practices. Professional development must align with the instructional program and state standards. The U.S. Department of Education defines the coaches' role as providing on-site professional development and working with teachers to implement strategies in the classroom (as cited in Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

With tools and guidance, Reading First sets to provide teachers across the nation with the skills and support needed to teach all students to read proficiently by the end of third grade. The U.S. Department of Education believes that teachers in the classroom provide the most important venue to reach these early readers. This policy focuses on using research-based instruction, supported by reading coaches, to increase the number of children who can read by the third grade. Coburn & Woulfin (2012) argued that teachers were more likely to make changes within the classroom when the reading coach was delivering the policy message. Coaches influenced teachers to make changes and implement new strategies in the classroom. Coburn & Woulfin (2012) state that coaches even pressured teachers into implementing Reading First by shaping how the teachers understand the Reading First policy.

Funding

This initiative allocated funds to school districts to hire reading coaches and place those coaches in elementary and secondary schools to focus on reading instruction. Secondary reading coaches are especially important since secondary literacy requires reading to be taught with

complex text across content levels like history and science (Lockwood, 2010). Because of this

initiative, more than 5,200 schools nationally hired reading coaches through the Reading First

grant program (Moss & Jacob & Boulay & Horst & Poulos, 2006): "Reading First, which

provided funding for states to support improvement in early reading in high poverty schools with

chronic underachievement in early reading" (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

Just Read, FL!

In response to No Child Left Behind and the Reading First initiative, Governor Jeb Bush

signed an Executive Order creating Just Read, Florida!. The primary goal of Just Read, Florida!,

like Reading First, is "every child being able to read at or above grade level by the year 2012."

This initiative focuses on three main components: educators, parent involvement, and

community & corporate involvement. Reading First funding in Florida provided over 2,000

reading coaches in K-12 schools. The initiative also provided over $300 million in funding for

professional development and teacher materials. Just Read, Florida! also established the Florida

Reading Center for Reading Research (FCRR), which conducts research on reading, reading

growth, and reading instruction. FCRR is responsible for developing the Florida Assessment for

Instruction in Reading (FAIR), which can be given to students three times a year as a progress-

monitoring tool. The center also hosts a website with reading materials and resources for

teachers to utilize in the reading classroom (FLDOE, 2016).

The second component is parent involvement. Just Read, Florida! focuses on family

literacy, and The Florida Family Literacy Initiative helps parents learn together with children of

all ages. The last component, community & corporate involvement, helps families take an active

role in a child's education during the summer months. The Just Read, Families! website offers

the community tools to encourage reading-friendly environments. Just Read Florida! continues to

offer reading-based tools for families such as Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!, summer literacy

adventures, and professional development. These two initiatives support the importance of

reading coaches in schools (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

<div align="center">**Characteristics of an Effective Reading Coach**</div>

L'Allier (2010) synthesized the findings from many studies to create seven guiding

principles that reading coaches can use to focus on improving the teaching and learning of

reading and literacy in the elementary grades. These research-based suggestions for coaching can

help the coach make decisions that are responsive to classroom instruction and students' reading

achievement. L'Allier's seven guiding principles include: (1) "coaching requires specialized

knowledge," (2) "time working with teachers is the focus of coaching," (3) "collaborative

relationships are essential for coaching," (4) "coaching to support student reading achievement

focuses on a set of core activities," (5) "coaching must be both intentional and opportunistic,"

(6) "coaches must be literacy leaders in the school," and (7) "coaching evolves over time."

Like L'Allier's research, Bean (2009) believes there is a set of five lessons important to

the role of coaching. Bean writes that coaching is like a journey with "its peaks and valleys, its

detours and roadblocks, and its unanticipated rewards." The lessons are based on research

performed by Bean and his colleagues working with the Reading First initiative in Pennsylvania.

Bean's five lessons are: (1) "coaches expect the unexpected," (2) "effective coaching requires a

qualified coach," (3) "coaching must be intentional and opportunistic," (4) "coaches make haste

slowly," and (5) "teachers are both targets and agents of change." There are different

perspectives on the job role and responsibilities of a coach. These perspectives change based on

the opinions of classroom teachers, administrators and the district; however, these five lessons

provide universals useful to coaching initiatives. A consistent performance evaluation that links

jobs responsibilities with job performance for all coaches would be very helpful in defining those

job roles so that each coach would not have to depend on the perspective of the administration of a particular school to define the job role (Mundy, 2012).

These two theories along with Knowles' six characteristics of adult learning provide a foundation for the criteria that make a reading coach effective. Reading coaches are experts at redelivering important information to adult learners. The six characteristics of adult learning that Knowles has created are: (1) "adults need to relate to learning," (2) "adults are self-directed," (3) "adults have an abundance of prior life and work experience," (4) "adults learn when ready and when a need arises," (5) "adults are life-centered in learning," and (6) "adults are internally motivated" (Cox, 2015).

Figure 1 contains the 3 theories that serve as the foundation for this study. Using those 3 theories determine the eight characteristics that make an effective reading coach.

Theories Creating the Characteristics of an Effective Coach

Characteristic of an Effective Coach	Description	L'Allier's Seven Guiding Principles (2011)	Bean's Lesson to Effective Coaching (2009)	Knowles' Adult Learning Theory
Multi-Task	Coaching involves many different responsibilities.	Core Activities	Expect the Unexpected	
Technical Expertise	Everyone involved in coaching has knowledge to input.	Specialized Knowledge	Qualified Coach	Background Knowledge
Flexible	Coaching is purposeful yet happens when it is most needed.	Intentional and Opportunistic	Intentional and Opportunistic	Learn as the Need Arises Internally Motivated
Evolves	Coaching takes time to be effective.	Coaching Evolves Over Time	Make Haste Slowly	
Leader	Everyone involved in coaching is focused on students' success.	Literacy Leaders	Leaders by Influence	Self-Directed Learners
Learning Focused	Coaching is a job embedded process that takes time focusing on specific issues.	Time with Teachers		
Collaborative	Coaching requires everyone to be actively collaborating.	Collaborative Relationships		Life Centered Learning Relates to Real World Problems

Figure 1. Theories creating the characteristics of an effective coach. This figure displays the

connections between the foundational theories of this study that determine the characteristics of

an effective coach.

Multi-Task

One very important role of the reading coach is the ability to multi-task and wear many

hats within the same work day. The fourth of L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles is

coaching that supports students' reading achievement focus on a set of core activities. When

coaches are involved in specific activities, student achievement in reading increases

significantly. Those activities include administering and discussing student assessments,

observing teachers' instruction with supportive feedback, conferencing with teachers about

instruction and students, and modeling instruction in the classroom. By engaging in those

specific activities, the reading coach can customize the advice given to support individual

teachers or sets of students.

Expect the Unexpected.

Bean's (2009) first lesson of effective coaching is to expect the unexpected. Even with a

job description, the expectations of a coach can change from school to school and from

administrator to administrator. Not all schools are ready for a coach or have a clear purpose for a

reading coach. Bean conducted interviews with 20 Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania and

found that "all 20 felt they had extensive understanding of reading, reading instruction and

assessment, and they were prepared to support the instructional work of teachers." Those

coaches were less comfortable working with adult learners and teachers who are reluctant about

receiving help or advice from a coach. These 20 teachers also felt overwhelmed about how to

manage all the tasks assigned to coaches, "such as writing reports, keeping the logs required for

coaches, spending time assessing students, and entering assessment data" (Bean, 2009). Coaches

serving at new schools found "that the position was not clearly defined initially," but the position

"evolved and there is a clear understanding of coaching." Teachers who were hired as coaches

and transferred to a new school said it was an advantage not to know the staff but a disadvantage

not to have more knowledge about the students. Teachers that were hired as coaches at the same

school where they previously taught found that credibility was already established. The new

coaches had to think about how to define job responsibilities in the new role as a coach and not

lose relationships in the process.

Multitude of Job Responsibilities.

McCombs and Marsh (2009) examined a variety of coaches in Florida middle schools and concluded that coaches divide time among many activities. These activities include observing, modeling, lesson planning, informal coaching, managing assessments, and non-coaching activities such as lunch duty and bus duty. One-on-one work with teachers is the primary goal for coaches, with Florida creating a "goal that coaches spend 50% of their time working with teachers in classrooms." However, only "15% of coaches reported spending 30% or more of their time working one-on-one with teachers." This study suggests that the multitude of job responsibilities a coach has can impede the primary responsibility of working directly with teachers (McCombs & Marsh, 2009).

Katherine Casey (2006) wrote that the basic role of coaches is provide "job-embedded, context-specific, ongoing support to teachers and students" (Casey, 2006, p.4). The many roles of a coach can include designing and facilitating teacher specific professional development, working with teachers in the classroom to guide the use of effective strategies, evaluating the needs of the students and collaborating with teachers to meet those needs, and providing ongoing opportunities to learn and grow. Coaches are also responsible for building trusting relationships with teachers. Coaching is a reform strategy, and building coach-teacher relationships is very important to work with adults. An effective teacher of children does not always equate to an effective teacher of adults (Casey, 2006).

Data Analysis.

L'Allier (2010) writes that one of the coaches' most important job roles is data analysis. Studies indicate "certain coach activities are correlated with higher student achievement, most notably time spent analyzing student data with teachers" (Lockwood, 2010, p. 384). Data

analysis can be complicated and time consuming, but with the help of a reading coach, it can be a

smooth and highly informative process. Data analysis is a very important part of effective

teaching, and coaches spend time allowing teachers to collaborate on the data received from

assessments. If there are trends in data that are grade wide or school wide, then the coach would

be responsible for trying to strengthen the school in those areas of concern through professional

development. With the guidance of a coach, data analysis becomes less of a hardship and more

of an opportunity to find trends and share ideas about what instructional strategies work best

(Lockwood, 2010).

Time Spent with Coach.

One of Elish-Piper's (2011) studies found that "the amount of time each teacher spent

engaged with the coach on specific coaching activities and specific aspects of reading content

was related to student reading gains at the teacher level." The activities researched included

conferencing, discussing assessments, modeling, observing, and comprehension. This study

used the coaches' logs to track how coaches spent each day. Elish-Piper (2011) found that the

number of hours a teacher spent conferencing with a coach was a significant predicator of total

student gains in kindergarten and third grade. All five coaching activities were significant

predictors of student learning at one or more grade levels. This study shows the importance of

the coaching role and student gains. When teachers spend time with coaches and focus on

specific activities, then students' reading gains increased in one or more grades (Elish-Piper &

L'Allier, 2011).

A study by Feighan & Hereen (2009) explored the impact a reading coach had on teacher

practice. This study focused on which daily tasks reading coaches perform that teachers perceive

to be beneficial, and if teachers who worked with reading coaches increased the frequency of

strategy use. The study uses three sources of data to address these questions: coaches' daily activity logs, teacher surveys, and teacher focus group interviews. The results of the coaching logs showed that most tasks completed by coaches were often administrative in nature or involved training or meeting with teachers. The schools varied in the percentage of teachers who received high levels of coaching. This data might underestimate the frequency of teacher-coach interactions depending on how often the teacher counted informal interactions such as talks in the hallway or workroom.

"In sum, the majority of survey and focus group respondents across the two-year period described coaches as dedicated and resourceful individuals who helped boost their confidence and willingness to try new things in the classroom, which they felt resulted in higher student engagement levels." Teachers with access to a reading coach reported a higher mean frequency of using the strategies taught in the professional development than the comparison schools. The results show that coaching did change teacher perceptions about the impact of coaching and strategies used to affect students' engagement levels, but no significant changes were detected in the analysis of the test scores (Feighan & Heeren, 2009). A very important characteristic of an effective reading coach is the ability to multi-task, yet also focus on the core activities that affect student achievement.

Useful Tools for Time Management.

Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2014) identified two tools to help coaches spend time in the most effective ways possible. The first tool is developing a clear and comprehensive job description or purpose statement that that will bring focus to the coaching work. After creating a job description, it is best for coaches to share this with all teachers and staff at their school location so all agree on the type of work the coach is responsible for doing. The purpose statement needs

to be reviewed often and used to determine if each task is something that will achieve the goals

of the reading coach. An example of a purpose statement from Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2014) is

"the purpose of my literacy coaching work is to build teacher instructional capacity related to the

Common Core; to improve student literacy learning; and to build supportive, collaborative

professional learning community for teachers at my school" (p. 14). The purpose statement

should also be shared often to ensure coaches are not caught up in random acts of coaching and

secretarial work.

      The second tool that Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2014) suggest is the targeted coaching

model, which is depicted as a 2-ring target with the bull's eye representing the goal of literacy

coaching- reading and writing gains. The outer ring is a coach's certification, which is important

because all coaches should possess specialized knowledge in the area of literacy instruction,

curriculum, and assessment. The inner ring of the target represents activities that coaches

participated in with teachers that directly related to student achievement. These activities include

conferencing, modeling, observing, co-planning, and working with assessments. There is also an

"other" section in the inner circle, which represents professional development workshops,

collaborative planning, grade-level meetings, book studies, and other professional development

activities.
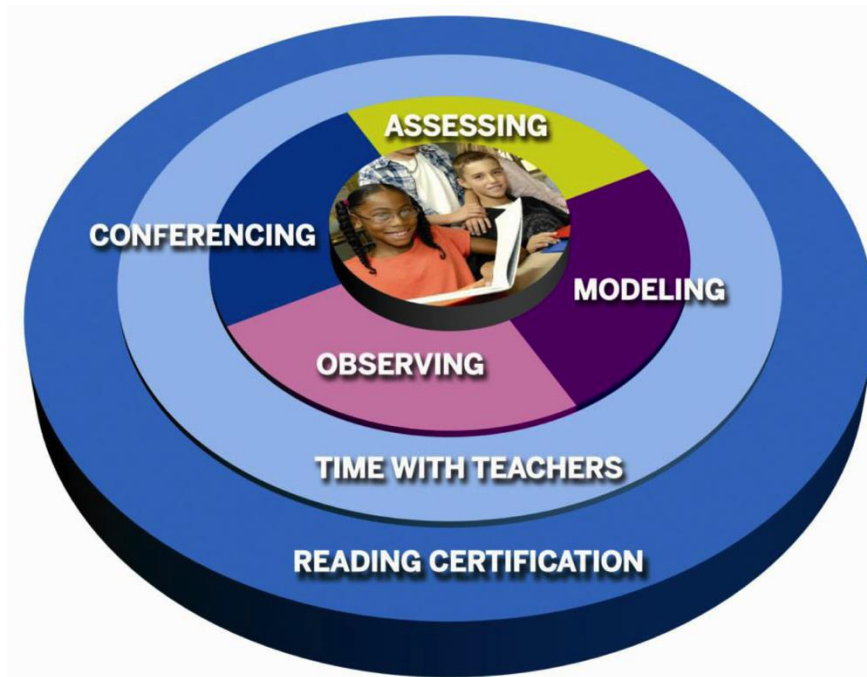
Figure 2. The targeted coaching model. This figure is a tool to help coaches determine how to use time effectively (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2014).

Technical Expertise

Another important characteristic of an effective reading coach is the background knowledge the coach has obtained and the ability to recognize the experience of others. All adults involved in the coaching process have background knowledge and experiences to input (Cox, 2015). The first of L'Allier's (2010) Seven Guiding Principles is that coaching requires specialized knowledge. Most of a coach's responsibilities revolve around the knowledge of the literacy process: acquisition, assessment and instruction. To develop this knowledge base, reading coaches have a strong foundation in effective reading practices. Reading coaches also participate in ongoing professional development, obtain a graduate degree in a field of literacy, and work with teachers to improve classroom practices.

Qualifications.

Bean's (2009) second lesson is "effective coaching requires a qualified coach." Frost & Bean (2006) claim that "the gold standard for qualifications of literacy coaching, indicate that effective literacy coaching requires individuals who have strong literacy backgrounds- e.g. a master's degree in literacy- and be successful classroom teachers." Candidates also have "experience working with adults and be able to facilitate teacher reflection." Some educators believe that coaches in the secondary schools have in-depth knowledge in an academic discipline such as science or English. Upon acceptance of the job, coaches can work through professional development programs to acquire knowledge in literacy instruction. Mundy (2012) claims that without professional development that requires critical thinking and engagement, coaches are unlikely to use or redeliver new strategies.

Education.

Coaches at the elementary level would benefit from a reading endorsement. Elish-Piper (2007; 2011) found that the highest average student learning gains occurred in classrooms that were supported by coaches with this certification. The Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse states that the qualifications of a reading coach include previous teaching experience, a master's degree (preferably in reading education), a minimum of twenty-four graduate semester hours in reading or related courses, and an additional six hours of supervised internship experience (The Role of a Reading Coach, 2004). Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2014) state that coaches will not necessarily possess all the skills and knowledge expected of a coach when beginning but all coaches need to be cognizant of strengths and areas of need in order to develop of path of learning to enhance the coaches' effectiveness.

Experience.

The International Reading Association created Standards for Reading Professionals and

advises reading coaches to hold a reading specialist certificate, but with the immediate need for

coaches the minimum requirements include excellence in teaching of reading, in-depth

knowledge of the reading process, expertise in working with teachers to improve practice, and

experience or preparation that empowers the coach to model, observe, and provide feedback

IRA, 2004).

Professional Standards.

Reading coaches have professional standards that have been published by the

International Reading Association (IRA) and a coalition of reading professional organizers.

These standards include: skillful collaborators, job-embedded coaches, an evaluator of literacy

needs, and an instructional strategist (Casey, 2006). The IRA also states that coaching should be

grounded in inquiry and reflection, teacher driven while sharing knowledge within communities,

and intensive and ongoing (IRA, 2006).

Flexible

Another important characteristic of an effective reading coach is the ability to be flexible

with scheduling and teachers. Coaching needs to be purposeful yet coaching often happens when

the teacher initiates the change based on what is happening in the classroom. The fifth of

L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles is "coaching must be both intentional and

opportunistic." A coach must always have a deliberate yet flexible plan when working with a

teacher. A coach will treat a novice teacher differently than an experienced one, but in each

situation the coach must have a mental map to guide the work. Coaches also need to be available

for spontaneous interactions in the hallway or teachers' lounge that could transform into more intentional conversations later. Coaches should be easily accessible to all staff.

Intentional yet Opportunistic.

Bean's (2009) third lesson to effective coaching is that coaching must be intentional and opportunistic. Coaching is intentional and coaches need to make purposeful decisions about which teachers to coach and how to implement the coaching cycle. At the beginning of the year a coach may decide to work with all first grade teachers with the purpose of improving a school-wide trend of low oral language scores. The coach may plan with teachers, model in classrooms, or co-teach. The coaches' instruction is differentiated based on teacher needs and experiences of the teacher. The instruction is directly linked to the teacher's data and not based upon unrelated events. Adult learners need to feel that new learning directly relates to teachers' current needs. This is necessary because teachers differ in professional strengths and weaknesses and would benefit from varied activities.

By giving the teacher options, the coach is respectful of the teacher's way of learning, which increases the possibility of a successful coaching experience. Coaches need to seek opportunities to coach by being easily accessible and approachable so that all teachers are able to come and make requests comfortably. Bean says that "on-the-fly" coaching occurs when a teacher asks a question in the hallway that could turn into intentional coaching. Non-evaluative classroom walkthroughs can also be a time for the coach to get a picture of what is occurring and gives a chance for coaches to have informal conversations with teachers and students. Coaches have a responsibility to develop interpersonal communication and leadership skills that establish the coach as a colleague who supports teachers in the effort to provide meaningful instruction for students (Bean, 2009).

Layers of Coaching.

Elish-Piper & L'Allier (2014) use the metaphor of three layers of literacy coaching support, which include large-group coaching, small-group coaching, and individual coaching. Coaches should start with large-group coaching to create a collaborative environment with a shared knowledge base. Teachers can establish a big picture mentality by meeting with other teachers from the school or with teachers in the primary or intermediate levels. While large-group coaching is valuable, it does not support a particular teacher's path in teaching. Small-group coaching is specific to the needs of certain groups of teachers such as PLCs (professional learning communities). These trainings can be facilitated by the reading coach or by teacher leaders. These small-group meetings can also add a layer to coaching that allows teachers to work collaboratively to determine how to modify teaching practices to meeting the needs of Common Core. Newer teachers or those that change grade levels might need more specific, individual training. Individual coaching uses a coaching cycle, which includes goal setting, co-planning, co-teaching, observing, and modeling. Though individual coaching can be time consuming, the powerful results make it worthwhile (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2014).

Scaffolding.

The ability of a coach to scaffold conversations for different types of teachers is an important characteristic of an effective coach. Literacy coaching is a personalized approach to professional development and has the potential to make a positive impact on teachers and students. Typical professional development for teachers is usually a workshop in a group setting. Effective professional development includes criteria such as being personally meaningful, challenging, providing opportunities for choice, building on prior experience, focusing on effective strategies, and being job embedded. Reading coaches follow all these criteria and

choose the professional development focused on how that teacher learns. Reading coaching takes

professional development a step further by meeting with the teacher to set goals and then

providing personalized professional development based on the needs of the teacher. These

personalized alternatives include: demonstration of lessons, book study groups, video-based self-

reflection, gallery walks, and classroom-focused visits.

Ross (2009) also provides a list of questions for coaches to ask before selecting an

approach, such as: which approach suits "the personality, needs, and developmental level of this

teacher?" Coaching implements more individualized professional development by catering the

professional development to the teacher. Ross (2009) concludes that death by demonstration

lesson should not happen to teachers in the coaching cycle. Each coaching activity can be

specifically chosen based on the needs of that particular teacher. Effective coaches are able to

decipher which professional development activities match which teacher based on the needs of

the adult learner (Ross, 2009).

Coaching Stances and Coaching Language.

There are three different coaching stances that coaches can use to share ideas, pose

concerns and ask questions. The coach can determine which stance to use by listening closely to

what teachers say. The coaches' stances include: facilitating where the teacher provides

information and leads problem solving, collaborating where the teacher and the coach work

together to provide information and lead problem solving, and lastly, consulting where the coach

is responsible for leading the conversation and providing resources and information. Coaches can

determine which stance to use by translating cues given by the teacher. Cues such as "I'd like to

talk through with you about how this has been going" or a teacher seeking confirmation about a

new practice would require the coach use the facilitating stance with the teacher. Cues like "can I

bounce some ideas around about a lesson with you" or "can I talk about some data with you" would suggest that the coach collaborate with the teacher and share ideas. Lastly, cues like "I just don't know what else to try" and "what did you do about this when you were teaching" would encourage the coach to consult with the teacher and lead the conversation. Being intuitive about the needs of teachers and listening to what teachers say is imperative to the process of communicating effectively (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2014).

Evolving

Coaching takes time to be effective and requires the coach to make a purposeful plan for the teachers' learning. The seventh and last of L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles is that coaching evolves over time. Like all adult learners, each coach comes into the job role with a different set of experiences and qualities. All coaches continue to attend trainings, strive to develop positive relationships with teachers, and modify strategies to fit the needs of teachers. An experienced coach with three or more years' experience will spend significantly more time conferring with teachers, observing in classrooms, and co-teaching than a newer coach. As a coach's experience increases so does the confidence of the coach.

Make Hast Slowly.

Bean's (2009) fourth lesson is for coaches to make haste slowly. This lesson emphasizes the importance of going slow to move fast. Coaches need to start slow to build trust; that trust can then turn into one-on-one meetings discussing the teacher's instructional goals and how to achieve those goals. Often times when a new initiative is implemented, there are varying reactions, from resistance to a positive attitude. Coaching is one of these initiatives, and asking teachers to open up classrooms and teaching practices to the public can be a threatening concept.

Coaches suggest that working with teachers who request support or who are teacher leaders in the school can be beneficial because those teachers can share experiences with others (Bean, 2009). Viadero (2010) found that placing reading "coaches in schools can help increase students' reading skills by as much as 32% over three years." Reading coaching might not have an instant effect on student success but after time has elapsed with trusting relationships being built, coaching can have a major effect on literacy learning gains.

Long Term Effects.

Lockwood (2015) studied to see the effects of a reading coach on student achievement. Lockwood examined the effects of Florida's coaching initiative on middle school student achievement between the years of 2002 and 2006. The analysis of these data examined the effect of receiving a state-funded coach but did not take into account the quality of implementation. The study found mixed results: "positive significant impacts on reading achievement for two of the four cohorts." The lack of consistent data suggests that though coaching is a popular intervention, it may not be the solution for all schools (Lockwood, 2010).

Lockwood's (2010) findings suggest that coaching may have a greater impact on low performing schools when coaching has been implemented for a number of years. This is supported by the 2003 cohort, which was the lowest achieving and longest implementation of the cohorts, as well as having the most positive effects. Lockwood found a link between student achievement and the amount of time a coach spent at the school. When a reading coach is placed within a school to help teachers enhance instructional practices, that improvement directly affects students' success. There was only one significant association found in the 2003 cohorts, which had implemented coaching for the longest period of time. Some would argue that it takes years to see results after implementing coaching. Harris and Sass (2007) found the impact of

professional development, like coaching, takes three years to show on student achievement.

Coaching is a process that takes time to show improvements in teacher practice and students'

achievement.

Leader

Another characteristic of an effective reading coach is the ability to be seen as a literacy

leader in the school with a focus on students' success. The sixth of L'Allier's (2010) seven

guiding principles is that "coaches must be literacy leaders in the school." Leithwood, Louis,

Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004) write that reading coaches are frequently involved in three

practices that are essential for successful leadership: "setting goals in a school, developing

people, and redesigning the organization to facilitate goals." Coaches design the schools'

collaborative schedule by planning times for teachers to meet. Coaches can also plan for

paraprofessionals to support teachers through small-group instruction. Coaches are also regarded

as a hub for communication, sharing information that is passed down from the state, district or

administrators. A reading coach serves as an advocate for literacy teachers. Coaches know that

adult learners are very different from student learners. Teachers bring an overabundance of

background knowledge and previous experience when trying to learn a new strategy. A reading

coach will start off each year with a goal that will drive the literacy instruction in the school. In

the area of administrative support activities, Reading First coaches characterized two activities as

imperative to the position: "compiling reading assessment data (88 percent), and administering

and coordinating reading assessment (87 percent)" (Moss, et al, 2006).

Agents of Change.

Bean's (2009) last and fifth lesson is that teachers are both targets and agents of change.

Coaches are leaders by influence. If the teacher does not believe coaching is effective then little

will change within the classroom. Coaches can only initiate change through inspiring and persuading the teacher to make changes in the classroom. A significant role of coaching is to build leadership capacity in the school. Coaches can do this by asking teachers to share in grade level meetings or workshop sessions. Coaches can also ask teachers to share student samples in collaborative planning meetings and share strategies that worked to master those standards. The coach also builds teacher leaders within a school to help facilitate student growth in literacy.

Education is always changing, and new programs, initiatives, and curriculum are constantly being implemented. Coaches are often in charge of the change process by planning and developing professional development sessions. Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2014) state that literacy coaches must understand two key ideas to be agents of change. First, coaches must consider the change process itself and second, coaches must become part of the leadership team so that school level leaders and not just one individual support change.

Literacy Leader.

Taylor & Gunter (2009) stress the importance of a literacy leader for all students to improve in reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and communicating. The leader could be an administrator, teacher, or specially trained teacher called a reading coach. With such high standards for learning, leadership is distributed throughout the school. Taylor and Gunter (2009) identify trends that will help leaders change student achievement. The first trend is high expectations for all learners. In order to align instruction within the same grade level or subject area, teachers must have weekly planning sessions vertically and horizontally. The second trend is empowerment through professional development. Professional development based on learners' needs is essential in assisting others to become experts in the field. The third trend is the expectation of collaboration by leadership. Collaboration is not left to chance but is intentionally

planned by leadership. The fourth trend is technology infusion with digital media. Leaders are always willing to take on new challenges and find ways to motivate student learning. Technology is an essential skill that not only motivates students but also prepares them for the future. The most important characteristic of a literacy leader is the belief that all students have the capacity to learn at high levels. Literacy leaders empower educators through professional development and data analysis that improve student achievement (Taylor & Gunter, 2009).

Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2014) summarized four important guidelines to focus coaching efforts and to provide long lasting change within a school. First, coaches must build capacity of teacher leaders. Second, they must create sustainability by creating a leadership team that will progress without individual teachers or coaches. The third guideline is that time spent with teachers and teacher leaders is imperative. Last, a focus on student learning allows teachers to concentrate on the standards and not wonder about all the options.

Distributive Leadership.

Creating sustainability is an important aspect of coaching, and distributive leadership allows for all members of the learning community to engage in teaching and learning, while the mentor or reading coach oversees and encourages the process. One teacher in an interview indicated that collaborative planning resulted in the introduction of new and more creative ways to offer instruction based on the interest of the students. Teachers at this school emphasized the power a leader or principal can have on building a culture of collaboration and learning (Owen, 2014).

Administrative.

Reading coaches generally do not work directly with students since most of the time is spent collaborating with and modeling for teachers. Some important job roles include building

school leadership and enhancing a positive school climate, which could indirectly affect student

achievement. Reading coaches play an important role in the leadership of a school. Principals

can become immersed in everyday obligations that managing a school requires. A reading coach

can provide a bridge for teachers (Lockwood, 2010).

Learning Focused

Effective reading coaches are also focused on job embedded professional development

initiated by the teacher after reflection about the practices currently used in the classroom. The

second of L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles is time working with teachers. There are

four types of reading coaches: teacher-oriented, student-oriented, data-oriented, and managerial.

"Only one-third of reading coaches are classified as teacher-oriented coaches- coaches who spent

between 41% and 52% of their time interacting with teachers" (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean

2010). For example, Polk County Schools requires that 70% of reading coaches' time is spent in

the coaching cycle with teachers, while the state of Florida has a goal of teachers spending 50%

of the workday with teachers (McCombs & Marsh, 2009).   A study by L'Allier & Piper (2006)

indicates that the most significant reading gains occurred in classrooms that were supported by a

reading coach who was engaged with teachers for a substantial amount of time.

Research-Based Instruction.

The reading coach is responsible for working with teachers to implement research-based

reading activities. Ninety-eight percent of Reading First schools currently have a reading coach.

Reading First coaches spent about 87% of time working with teachers in grades kindergarten

through grade three. Reading First coaches described three activities as central to the work in the

area of teacher support activities: providing professional development (94%), organizing

professional development for kindergarten through grade three teachers (87%), and coaching

school staff (91%). Reading coaches spend time helping teachers become more effective in the

classroom, which will increase student achievement. Coaches conference with teachers before

an official observation from the principal to help prepare and strengthen areas of need. After a

conference, the coach will then help the teacher by modeling effective strategies in the classroom

setting. By observing the strategy in action, the teacher will be more likely to understand the

instructional strategy and then find it easier to implement the strategy. All teachers have a

unique style of teaching in the classroom. By seeing the strategy in action with current students,

that teacher is more likely to find the strategies beneficial and repeat those strategies with

practice. The mentor can be "an external agent of change, an expert in reading who makes

scheduled, periodic visits to schools and classrooms" (Brady et al., 2009)

Non-Evaluative Support.

Reading coaches serve in a non-evaluative support role for teachers, helping develop

instructional practices that are key to student success (Lockwood, 2010). Coaches have to

actively gain the teachers' trust. Coaches are confidants that can be trusted by the teachers to

provide valuable insight related to needs the teacher currently has with the students in the

classroom. An important part of Knowles's characteristics of adult learning is that learning for

adults should be based on real world problems that are currently happening in the classroom

(Cox, 2015). All parts of the coaching cycle remain confidential and the principal is not privy to

the information. A coach is simply a master teacher who is helping teachers improve

instructional strategies that will increase student achievement. Coaches are never evaluative in

order to keep the trust of teachers; without trust a coach becomes ineffective (Lockwood, 2010).

Student Achievement.

Elish-Piper (2011) conducted a study to see if reading gains could be linked to coaching. The study was conducted "in a school district that received a Reading First grant." The study investigated a research question on the relationship between the amount of time a coach spent in the classroom and students' reading gains. The study found "that the amount of time literacy coaches spend working directly with teachers may be related to student reading gains." The results show total coaching hours were a significant predictor of success at the second-grade level (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011).

Peer Relationship.

Leithwood (2012) found that teacher-teacher relationships are even more important than principal-teacher relationships as a foundation for how teachers work to improve instruction. Reading coaches must foster a community of collaboration and working relationships that allow the teacher to express concerns. Teachers feel comfortable with talking to peers about challenges in classroom instruction and collaborate on ways to make the strategy more effective next time. A coach should be considered a peer in that coaches provide advice and feedback based on a teachers' reflection of what is happening in the classroom.

"In two studies, Joyce and Showers (1996, 2002) found that teachers in peer-coaching relationships practiced new skills more frequently, applied them more appropriately in the classroom, and demonstrated clearer understanding of the purposes and uses of new skills." Teachers are more likely to try a new practice if the coach is willing to confirm that the practice is implemented effectively. Teachers also demonstrated clearer understanding of the purposes and uses of new skills when a coach was there to model strategies and motivate teachers to continue to use those strategies. With coaching, teachers showed greater retention and

improvement in the use of new skills over time compared with teachers not in coaching relationships. If a teacher can be assured that the skill is working and the coach can help the teacher realize that research supports certain instructional practices are more effective, then the teacher is more likely to continue the use of the new skills. Using highly effective instructional practices can help student achievement, but not all teachers utilize the strategies routinely to optimize student success. Teachers need support in using instructional practices with purpose. "Such research indicates that teachers who work with literacy coaches are more likely than their peers who do not receive coaching to enhance their classroom literacy environments" (De Alba-Johnston et al., 2004).

Instructional Practices.

Dixon (2015) states that teachers' ability to deliver effective instruction can instrumentally impact the achievement level of students within a classroom. The position of reading coach is to work alongside teachers and support the process of using effective instructional practices in literacy. The one constant in education is change; there are constant new directives and policies that affect teachers' classroom instruction. Little support or guidance is included in this change process. Reading coaches are well positioned to provide this support and become the bridge to change. Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011) state, "there is increasing evidence to suggest that the amount of time literacy coaches spend working directly with teachers is positively related to student gains in reading." Coaching has shown an increase in teachers' instructional practices. Coaches spend the majority of the school day observing classroom instruction, modeling in classrooms, offering feedback, and discussing assessments. Using data from observations to structure coaching conversations is an imperative part of the coaching cycle. A reading coach who observes a classroom can seem obtrusive at times, but

when a coach takes the time to build a relationship with a foundation of trust then teachers can

see the coach as another resource to strengthen instructional abilities (Dixon, 2015).

Data from the Illinois School Report Card was used to design a school-wide literacy plan,

which covered recommendations for changes in instructional practices, professional development

to support teachers, and job-embedded professional development that would guide teachers

through the change process. This action research study attempted to answer the following four

research questions:

1. Does reading coaching increase confidence of teachers with new instructional

practices?

2. What factors influence teachers' confidence regarding implementation of the new

practices?

3. Does an increase in confidence with new practices lead to an increase in

implementation?

4. What qualities do the reading coaches who are successful having teachers implement

new instructional practices possess (Dixon, 2015)?

Reading coaching on specific instructional practices was found to help teachers who were

initially reluctant to implement new strategies become more confident. This, in turn, helped

teachers increase the use of those strategies in the classroom. With more confidence came more

frequent use of effective instructional strategies. Teachers felt the debrief strategy was effective

in helping increase the implementation of practices. Teachers reported that having a coach who

was positive, offered advice, helped the teachers learn, and were willing to model strategies was

best for optimal success.

This study resulted in three recommendations by Dixon (2015) for all reading coaches working to guide teachers through change. First, trust is the foundation of any coaching relationship. Without this trust, teachers will feel threatened and the coach will be unable to impact the teacher's instruction. Second, reading coaches spend the majority of time with teachers engaging in activities that lead to higher levels of implementation. Third, using action research can be a powerful tool in strengthening the effectiveness of coaches trying to support teachers in the process of change. Coaching that is compassionate, respectful and responsive to teachers' concerns is a powerful way to make changes in a school and ultimately make a difference for students (Dixon, 2015).

By using these three recommendations, coaches can become more effective in improving teachers' instructional practices, which increases student achievement (Brady et al., 2009). Every aspect of coaching should be focused on student achievement, and coaches should spend as much time as possible in the classroom with teachers and students.

Collaborative

One of the most important characteristics of an effective reading coach is the ability to collaborate and to encourage collaboration in others. Coaching is a collaborative process that requires all stakeholders involved to be honest and reflective. The third of L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles is that collaborative relationships are essential for coaching. Coaches must build on a foundation by establishing trust, communicating effectively with teachers, and maintaining confidentiality. By focusing on what the students are learning and what is best for the learning environment, reading coaches become more of a collaborator and less of an evaluator. Adult learners will be more apt to learn new material when it relates directly to the current job role. A reading coach is someone who offers suggestions but not absolute solutions,

someone who is always open to discuss ways to differentiate a strategy so that all teachers are

comfortable using that strategy to meet students' needs. Coaches are an essential resource that is

available and convenient to use when the teacher feels open to improve. Coaching language is

very important to keep in mind when considering collaboration. Coaches ask open-ended

questions in order to respect the opinion of the teacher. Good coaching allows teachers to lead

the discussion and helps those teachers develop a timeline that is comfortable for all participants.

Coaches are facilitators of learning, not directors (L'Allier, 2010).

Ongoing Professional Development.

Coaching involves trust and is based on what issues the teacher deems necessary to

improve. Reading coaches help to provide an environment for collaborative planning on a

regular basis. Coaches are on-site specialists who can work with teachers to improve literacy

instruction by implementing a particular instructional model or curriculum. Conventional

professional development usually consists of a teacher attending a workshop where a trainer will

lecture about a specific topic for an extended amount of time in hopes that the teacher will bring

information back to the classroom and be able to implement effective instructional practices.

Fewer than 15% of teachers actually implement new practices from these traditional professional

development workshops, because teachers lack the knowledge or confidence needed for effective

implementation (Lockwood, 2010). Teachers are very critical of one-shot professional

development programs that lack follow up and fail to recognize realistic issues. The worst

consequence of traditional professional development over a long period of time can be a lack of

enthusiasm for new interventions (Knight, 2007).

Teachers need a bridge from traditional professional development to implementation, a

person with whom teachers can collaborate. Having opportunities to discuss new ideas, reflect,

and clarify is important to develop one's own understanding and opinion of new content

(Lockwood, 2010). With these opportunities and the appropriate amount of support, 90% of

teachers embrace and implement programs that increase students' achievement (Knight, 2007).

> **Constructive Feedback.**

Opportunities to receive constructive feedback from an expert can also promote

understanding and help teachers apply new learning (Rogoff, 1990). Teachers' efficacy

improves by allowing them a chance to reflect upon learning and model new practices. Research

also shows that students tend to show minimal learning gains with teachers who lack

instructional competence. Teacher expertise does contribute to student achievement. A coach

who can change teacher practice is one who will truly affect student achievement (Joyce &

Showers, 2002). "Improved knowledge about reading and reading practices does not necessarily

lead to improvements in teachers' practices" (Garet et al., 2008). Traditional professional

development does not always transfer well into the classroom.

> **Job-embedded Training.**

Teachers can have extensive knowledge and be trained in many instructional practices,

but unless the teacher is using those practices effectively in the classroom on a daily basis, those

practices will not positively affect student learning. The disconnection between teachers'

knowledge and implementation of practices has encouraged researchers to focus on a solution.

Coaches are responsible for encouraging teachers to collaborate with each other and model

lessons that include those effective instructional practices. Through collaboration and reflection,

teachers are more likely to integrate new and improved instructional practices in the classroom.

Reading coaching is job-embedded, ongoing professional development, where master classroom

teachers are trained to work with adult learners. As a result of this job-embedded training,

"classroom teachers will improve their instruction, which is related to increased student achievement." The theory behind reading coaching postulates that when coaches work with teachers on site and in the classroom, it allows teachers to gain imperative knowledge that will enhance the instructional practices already used in the classroom on a more consistent basis (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011).

Professional Community.

Coaches also work with teachers to improve general classroom practices, such as pacing or behavior management. Coaches can work with teachers through collaboration, one-on-one, or in a small group setting. Contemporary research stresses the importance of a professional community because evidence shows that the professional community within a school is related to improved instruction, student achievement, and shared leadership. When teachers support each other within a school, they enable one another to assume many different roles such as mentor, mentee, coach, specialist, advisor, and facilitator (Lockwood, 2010).

Findings from several sources reveal that when the professional community focuses on the quality of student learning, teachers adopt instructional practices that benefit students and enhance student learning. Professional communities have a direct relationship with student learning, so when teachers are working together on instruction, a school culture is created that fosters student learning in and out of the classroom setting. Reading coaches are directly responsible for creating and fostering this community of open collaboration and learning (Lockwood, 2010).

Consistent Support.

One study that focuses on the impact collaboration has on classroom quality and students' achievement is Spelman's (2011) research. Monthly professional development was

designed to support teachers with content knowledge of literacy instruction to improve

instructional delivery and the overall classroom environment. Instructional coaching was then

added to support teachers in applying the new information. Coaches were involved in

observations, feedback, and problem solving with teachers on a monthly basis. Professional

development was data-driven and continuously changed based on student needs. Meetings that

followed benchmark assessments were filled with meaningful conversations about the students'

areas of weakness. "The combination of professional development and instructional coaching

can be an effective design for increasing the instructional support provided by teachers." This

model of consistent support did positively affect literacy scores for the majority of students

(Spelman, 2011).

Carlisle (2011) states, "there is some evidence that suggests a reading coach can provide

the needed support for teachers' professional learning, self-efficacy, and engagement in the

process of improving instruction" (Carlisle, 2011, p. 777). Reading coaches help teachers build a

bank of instructional practices that the teacher is comfortable using on a consistent basis.

Coaches also help build teachers' confidence and self-image. Teachers need to be confirmed in

the practices used in the classroom; doing so builds efficacy and in turn student engagement.

Teachers with confidence are more likely to try new instructional practices without fear of

failure. The ability to encourage collaboration among peers is essential to the coaching process

(Carlisle, 2011).

Building Trust.

Collegial trust is important in building a professional learning community. Collegial trust

is when teachers can depend on each other and rely on the integrity of colleagues (Gray &

Summers, 2015). Hord (2007) developed the term professional learning community (PLC) and

describes a PLC as a collegial group of teachers who are united by a commitment to student learning. Professional learning communities have the following characteristics: collective creativity, supportive conditions, supportive and shared leadership, shared values and visions, and shared personal practices. Three factors are essential parts of "developing professional learning communities through enabling school structures, collegial trust, academic emphasis and collective efficacy."

Current Evaluative Methods

The characteristics of an effective reading coach and the effect a reading coach can have on student achievement and teacher performance are very important, but how do administrators and coaches know when the reading coach has made positive impacts on the school?

The Problem

Since the job role of reading coach is a relatively new form of professional development, the job responsibilities and best practices are still evolving (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2014). Evaluations often have simplistic comments such as "needs improvement" or "satisfactory" without any guidance about where the focus of improvement should be or how to go about improving practice. There is also a lack of consistent evaluations based on administrative preference. A coach could be rated highly effective by one principal and receive a much lower rating by another principal. Administrators need to be trained evaluators able to accurately assess good teaching and give meaningful feedback to engage teachers and coaches in improving instructional practices. Administrators should also find time to conduct meaningful conversations with coaches after spending a quality amount of time observing the practice of coaching (Danielson, 2010).

Successful Coaching

Ferguson (2009) reviews the research that looks at the effects of reading coaching. Booth, Olson & Land (2008) studied secondary school reading coaching and found that classes supported by a coach showed significant gains in writing achievement. When reading coaching is used in conjunction with professional development, a sustained boost in the effectiveness of writing instruction is apparent. An indicator of success in coaching is the potential to change teaching practice. Poglinco et al. (2003) studied twenty-seven schools using observations and interviews and found that 62% of teachers were able to implement an America's Choice literacy initiative with fidelity when helped by a reading coach. The researchers reported a significant correlation between the teachers' abilities to transfer new learning into the classroom and coaches' abilities.

The interviews with teachers, coaches, and principals generated much data about the perceptions of success in reading coaching. Ferguson found four themes that the players in the program viewed as indicators of success. "These indicators are: (1) a perception of growth in student achievement, (2) a perception of improved teaching, (3) an increase in professional dialogue in a safe environment, and (4) a commitment to the reading coach" (Ferguson, 2014).

Growth in Student Achievement

All players believed student learning and achievement improved with reading coaching. This perceived link in reading coaching and student achievement became an incentive to change teaching practices. In one interview, a teacher expressed, "if we did not have a reading coach…we would not have moved as far along the spectrum as we have, and I think [we] moved more easily and more quickly because of the reading coach" (Ferguson, 2009, p.16). One reading coach proudly explained, "I see such huge growth in student assessment data, and I listen

to the success stories that teachers share about the students; that is a major indicator of success" (Ferguson, 2009, p.17). The principal was interested in describing the visible changes in teaching practices as an indicator of success.

Improved Teacher Practice

Another indicator of success was that the teachers and principals believe that teachers' literacy knowledge and teaching practices had improved with reading coaching. One teacher said that the ultimate test to measure the success of the reading coach was to "go walk around the school and see there is evidence" (Ferguson, 2009, p.18). A coach agreed with this indicator by saying, "I do see a difference in the classroom environments, the quality of work displayed, and the quality of assessments given to students" (Ferguson, 2009, p.18). A principal stated that changes are happening by "seeing visible changes in classrooms when I do my walkthroughs" (Ferguson, 2009, p.18).

Professional Dialogue

The third indicator was an increase in professional dialogue amongst teachers. Ferguson (2009) saw firsthand the effect of a coach on the professional learning community. A teacher with 30 years of experience helped a novice teacher talk through a student concern and gave advice on how to deal with the situation. The veteran teacher later explained that it had taken three years for the staff to feel comfortable and have that kind of dialogue. Teachers need to feel as if the school is a safe learning environment where all can admit that a strategy is not working and what next steps need be taken to correct the issue. Reading coaches are responsible for creating a team in the schools (Ferguson, 2009).

Support from Staff

The last indicator of success was that teachers in all three schools supported the reading coach and the work being done. All three coaches shared the traits of dedication, positivity, a passion for literacy, approachability, flexibility and humility. For a reading coach to be successful, teachers say that the reading coach generally has to be the right person for the job. A principal stated, "it is the personality that makes it effective" and "you need a personality that is going to get along well with staff, but yet still say this is the way it is, but in a very non-threatening, listening way" (Ferguson, 2009, p.21).

Reading coaching requires continued research because of its impact on teaching and learning, as well as on teachers and school culture. Current research give educators a voice in determining the success of the coaching program and evaluating the program using a variety of measures (Ferguson, 2009).

Characteristics of an Evaluation

"An effective evaluation must contain three key elements: (1) a definition of the domain of teaching" with decisions on what is acceptable performance, (2) "procedures for assessing all aspects of teaching," and (3) "trained evaluators who make consistent judgments based on evidence." No evaluation is complete without a set of clear criteria that defines good teaching or coaching. This criterion could include inputs, what teachers or coaches do, and outputs, the results achieved (Danielson, 2000).

Types of Evidence for Evaluations

There are many difference types of evidence coaches could include in the evaluative process. Recent findings suggest that teachers play a more active role in the professional learning process when the evaluative system is not a passive one. Administrators play the active role in current evaluations by observing, taking notes, and summarizing those notes based on the current

tool. Coaches could play a more active role in the evaluative conversation by taking part in what

information is presented during an evaluation. One way of taking a more active role in the

evaluation would be for coaches to assemble and present a portfolio. Classroom observations

could be more useful by taping the lesson and having a collaborative conversation with the

coach. Coaches could be required to self-assess in order to reflect upon current practice in the

school and ways in which to improve that practice. Planning documents could also be submitted

in order to evaluate what consideration coaches put into the process. Coaching artifacts would

also be an invaluable part of an evaluation process by providing a window into the coaching

cycle. Logs of professional development activities could ensure that coaches are continuing

lifelong learning skills despite the label of master teacher. Student or colleague feedback could

be helpful so that administrators can see aspects of the coach's performance that might not be

visible otherwise (Danielson, 2000).

Portfolios.

A portfolio is a collection of information about a teacher's or coach's practice. The key

features include (1) a structure based on sound professional standards and school goals, (2)

carefully selected examples of work, (3) contents that include captions and written commentary

that explain and reflect, and (4) are used as a basis for ongoing professional conversations. The

use of portfolios has extraordinary potential to be the basis for ongoing feedback with buy-in

because portfolios present an authentic view of teaching and learning (Danielson, 2000).

Appraisal Instrument.

An excess of instruments and tools are used to evaluate the effectiveness of reading

coaches around the country. Each county in Florida uses a different process to evaluate reading

coaches. Lane, Robbins & Price (2013) determined whether the Literacy Coach Appraisal

Instrument, which is one particular evaluation tool used to evaluate reading coaches, has content

validity. This appraisal tool is used as a structured process of self-reflection to encourage

individuals to identify areas of strength and areas of development. There are varying opinions

about the best use of coaches within a school. This lack of consistency in implementation creates

difficulties on how to best evaluate job performance. The ultimate goal of coaching is to increase

student achievement in reading; however, the skills needed for coaching and how coaches spend

time vary widely due to inconsistency in implementation and evaluation. Lane, Robbins & Price

(2013) reviewed this particular appraisal instrument to determine the degree to which it was

supported by job-related evidence.

Link to Job Responsibilities

Appraisals have been successful in the past due to the link between job responsibilities and

evaluation. One of the reasons why the teacher evaluation system is successful is because it

directly links a complete description of teacher performance to effective teaching practices. A

coach performance evaluation tool is similar in that it links the qualities of an effective reading

coach to a particular reading coach's performance. By using an appraisal that is related to the

standards developed by a national professional organization, schools and districts have some

level of assurance that the use of reading coaches is consistent and purposeful. Appraising

teachers based on a job description allows for supervisors to identify areas of strength and areas

of need. A consistent appraisal based on job duties can also elevate a coach's impact on a school

(Lane, Robbins & Price, 2013).

Accurate Assessment

The study by Lane, Robbins & Price (2013) used a survey to determine whether or not the

appraisal accurately assesses the duties of a reading coach. After a multitude of meetings with

reading coaches, principles, and district-level supervisors from twenty-eight different states and

five revisions, the participants reported that the appraisal instrument provided targeted feedback

for coaches with an enhanced understanding of the role of the coach for principles. Overall, the

appraisal instrument was deemed to have content validity, and most participants labeled the

instrument as being essential. This study supports the claim that an effective performance

evaluation is imperative for coaches and principles in order to clarify job responsibilities and

coaching expectation.

Summary

Based on current research, the characteristics of an effective reading coach have been

identified and supported. L'Allier (2010), Knowles, and Bean (2009) have established similar

characteristics that effective reading coaches possess to support adult learners. Research also

supports that reading coaches can be an effective tool in increasing students' reading

achievement and teacher's instructional practices. More research needs to be conducted on how

best to evaluate the qualities of a highly effective reading coach in order to mainstream job roles

and responsibilities and give reading coaches quality feedback on job performance.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research was a descriptive study to examine highly effective reading coaches' perceptions on the components of an effective performance evaluation for reading coaches. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are Florida elementary public school highly effective reading coaches' perspectives on the performance evaluation process?

- What are the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the performance evaluative process?

This study explored highly effective coaches' perceptions on the ideal performance evaluation system for reading coaches.

This study was comprised of interviews with highly effective reading coaches. The interviews were conducted with six full time coaches who each currently work as a reading coach at one elementary school and have been deemed highly effective by district staff through the current performance evaluation process in the district. Highly effective coaches are important to this study because those coaches are knowledgeable about what it takes to increase teacher effectiveness and students' achievement.

Study Participants

The participants were reading coaches in elementary schools across districts that have been deemed highly effective by key informants. Reading coaches purposefully selected for this study earned a highly effective rating for the past three years based on current performance evaluation methods and served at an elementary school with an increasing school grade. The chosen reading coaches work at public schools that differ in economic status, school achievement level, and location within Florida.   I contacted the supervisor of reading coaches at

each county to inquire about the reading coaches who were deemed highly effective.

Recommendations for coaches who have made a positive impact on a school and deemed highly

effective were contacted through email and telephone. The study asked participants in an

interview what should be expected of a highly effective reading coach and how those coaches

should be evaluated.

Instrumentation

The interview consisted of 10 questions based upon the chart connecting L'Allier's (2010)

seven guiding principles, Bean's (2009) lessons to effective coaching, and Knowles adult

learning theory. These questions encouraged the interviewee to describe what characteristics

should be included in an effective performance evaluation for reading coaches. Before the

interview, the interviewee was presented with the chart connecting the three studies. With this

information and the experience of being a highly effective reading coach, the interviewee

provided information to help determine how to evaluate a reading coach. The following

questions were asked:

1. How long have you been teaching and coaching? What made you decide to accept the role
   of reading coach? How long have you been in the coach position at this particular school?

2. What do you think is the most important characteristic of an effective reading coach?
   (Will prompt the interviewee with possible answers if hesitant: Multi-Task, Technical
   Expertise, Flexible, Evolving, Leader, Learning Focused, or Collaborative.)

3. Tell me about a time when your evaluation helped you grow into a more productive coach.

4. Tell me a little about your coaching evaluation process. How you are currently evaluated?
   Is this a true reflection of your abilities?

5. How do you show your teachers and administrators that you are knowledgeable about
   reading? Should this be included in the evaluative process? If so, how?

6. How do you spend time with teachers every week? Do you work with all teachers or a subset of teachers? How do you communicate with your administrator how often you are spending time with teachers?

7. How do you collaborate with teachers? Tell me how a typical collaborative planning meeting runs. Should this be in the evaluation process? Why or why not?

8. Certain job responsibilities like discussing student data, observing teachers' instruction with feedback, conferencing with teachers, and modeling in the classroom can each be easily documented. What documentation are you required to share with your administrator? Do you find that this is a more formal or informal process? What documentation should be included in the evaluation process?

9. Are there other characteristics of a highly effective reading coach that should be included in the evaluation process?

10. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Questions one and two gave more information about the participants. After an analysis of the interviewees, interview questions three and four explored the current evaluation process and perceptions of highly effective coaches about the processes. After discussing the current evaluation process, interview questions five-ten investigated how the characteristics of an effective reading coach can be intertwined with an evaluation process that pinpoints areas of strength and points of improvement.

Research Questions	Interview Questions
What are Florida elementary public school highly effective reading coaches' perspectives on the performance evaluation process?	1, 2, 3, 4
What are the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the performance evaluative process?	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Figure 3. Research Questions vs. Interview Questions. This figure is a comparison of which interview questions answer the described research questions.

Procedures

Each prospective participant was recommended by district staff responsible for reading coaches to ensure the rating of highly effective and work at a school with an increasing school grade or maintaining a grade of A. After a recommendation was given, I contacted the participant by email and phone to receive an invitation to participate in a research study. Each participant gave informed consent to be recorded and a copy of the transcription was be provided to him or her upon request. Participants were labeled by a pseudonym and personal information such as name, school, or district was not identified in the study. The anonymity of the research respondent is of the upmost importance so that each participant feels secure relaying all pertinent information. Each respondent participated voluntarily with no rewards or monetary benefits exchanged.

Data Analysis

Data was recorded, transcribed and then analyzed for major themes. Through analysis of the interview data, I might return to the same reading coaches to clarify and expound on meaningful points. The interviews were recorded using a Proster digital voice recorder and

transcribed using an online service. After all transcriptions were available, an in-depth study of

the words, sentences, and paragraphs began. During the first read through the data, words or

phrases considered important to the topic of reading coach performance evaluations were marked

and labeled. Reducing the data is one of the most important yet difficult steps in the analysis

process. Though I collected a substantial amount of data, analyzing the data was a smooth and

interesting process.

Categorizing

This study applied Siedman's process of marking the individual passages, grouping the

passages into categories, and then studying the categories for "thematic connections within and

among" the transcripts. The labels within the text, such as question numbers, were used to create

categories for the text. Once the transcripts were marked and labeled, categories arose. These

important sections were placed into sections based on the category of interest. The two major

categories were what coaches current like about the evaluation and what components could be

added to evaluate the important characteristics of an effective reading coach. After filing all the

important sections by category, the data was reviewed again to sift out any excerpts that were

less than compelling. After categorizing all the important data, the last stage of data analysis is

interpretation (Seidman, 2013). I used the data to create themes based on what new learning was

extracted from the text. These themes were used to find what highly effective reading coaches

perceive to be important components of the evaluative process. That data was then used to create

a figure that summarizes the components that coaches thought were important in an evaluation

process.

My subjectivity in this study was provided so that all experiences are transparent. As a

researcher engaged in a descriptive study to determine highly effective reading coaches'

perceptions on the components of an effective evaluation for reading coaches, many life experiences have shaped the views and opinions. I currently hold the position of a school-based reading coach and have been evaluated as such for the last three years. I have found gaps in the current evaluation process across many districts and a gap in the literature, which prompted this research. As a result of this gap in practice and literature, a decision to explore highly effective coaches' perceptions on the ideal evaluative process for reading coaches was made. Though I have an opinion about what should be included in the evaluation process, I made a conscious and deliberate effort to minimize bias as it relates to participants. I was not obscured by a need to evaluate all coaches in one particular way and I've maintained an open mind on the topic in order to research what other highly effective coaches consider to be important in the process of performance evaluations.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

- There are limitations to this study in the way participants were selected. I selected reading coaches deemed highly effective based upon current evaluation methods, even if the current evaluative process may be flawed.

- Limitations to this study may be influenced by the extent that reading coaches responded to the questions based on what they believe is appropriate or the desired answer of the district, and not based on their own perceptions.

- All interview questions are subject to the interpretation of the reading coach.

- The interview questions specifically developed for this study are the only method for gathering data in this study.

- This study was limited to assessing the perceptions of elementary reading coaches in five districts in central Florida.

- The participants in this study have benefited from the current evaluation system. It is

conceivable that the participants do not want the current system improved or altered.

Assumptions

- An assumption to this study is that all participants responded honestly to interview

questions.

- Another assumption to this study is that the instrument used is a valid instrument to

measure the perceptions of highly effective reading coaches.

- Another assumption to this study is that all participants in this study have perceptions

regarding the evaluative process and the components that should be included in a coaches'

evaluation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This study explored what perceptions highly effective reading coaches have on the current evaluation processes and what components those reading coaches thought should be included in the evaluative process. The research questions this study attempts to answer are:

- What are Florida elementary public school highly effective reading coaches' perspectives on the performance evaluation process?

- What are the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the performance evaluative process?

Interviewed reading coaches were asked 10 questions based upon the Theories Creating the Characteristics of an Effective Coach chart connecting L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles, Bean's (2009) lessons to effective coaching and Knowles' adult learning theory (Figure 1). This chapter first describes the coaches' perceptions on the current evaluation system, then uses the chart to incorporate the characteristics of an effective reading coach into identifying components in an evaluation process that would incorporate these characteristics. The graphic displayed in Figure 4 reveals the flow of the chapter and how it can be used to form an effective evaluation process.

Data

To analyze the data, Siedman's (2013) process of marking the individual passages, grouping the passages into categories, and then studying the categories for "thematic connections within and among" the transcripts was applied. The transcriptions were read and the answer to each interview question was highlighted. Important sections were placed into categories of interest based on three categories. The first was participant information, then perspectives on

current evaluation methods, and last perspectives on which components a highly effective

reading coach thought should be included in an effective evaluation process. After highlighting

the answers to each interview question, I used the data to create themes based on new learning

extracted from the text. These themes were organized into the figure below and were used to

answer the two research questions. The current evaluation system and the characteristics research

reveal as essential for effective reading coaches were combined to establish components that

should be included in an evaluation that can identify areas of strength while also determining

what areas the coach can grow in order to become more effective.

Participants

Six coaches labeled highly effective by current evaluations, each working full time at an

elementary school with an increasing school grade, were interviewed. These coaches are

currently working in five different counties across the state of Florida. The interviewed coaches

have between three to eight years of experience in the coaching role. All of the coaches have

been employed for two years or longer at an elementary school with an increasing school grade.

Participants were discussed using the following pseudonyms: Amy, Brenda, Chris, Debby,

Evelyn, and Faith.

The first coach, Amy, does not see the evaluation as something that changes the job role.

This coach builds relationships with administration and staff and uses those relationships to help

the school run and teachers grow. The role of coaching at this school is more about improving

individual teachers and less about collaborative planning meetings. The second coach, Brenda,

has an interest in professional development and a passion for training teachers in the area of

reading instruction. Brenda uses that passion to motivate teachers to try new research to improve

students' achievement. Her evaluation does not change her role as a coach because she is more

responsive to feedback from her principal on a daily basis. The third coach, Chris. describes an

evaluation as a contrived activity that does not display a coach's daily walk. This coach was very

knowledgeable on reading content and has served in many different roles around the state. Chris

has a passion for sharing that knowledge with teachers. He stressed the importance of a school

faculty becoming a family and a coach leading the collaboration through relationships.

The fourth coach, Debby, felt that evaluations were not important because there is not

enough manpower within the district to truly evaluate a coach's position. Debby is driven by a

need to help struggling teachers. She stressed the importance of a coach being a non-evaluative

role designed to help and develop teachers. Debby also stated that professional development and

collaboration between coaches is necessary so coaches have the same expectation to grow that

teachers have. The fifth coach, Evelyn, had an interesting view on the role of peer evaluators and

saw her role supporting teachers in the planning and collaborating process. She thought the peer

evaluators her district uses are beneficial to the process but that the evaluation system should be

revamped. The last coach, Faith, was the only coach who indicated that her evaluation provided

her areas of growth. Her organizational skills were clearly apparent and her passion for

developing teachers motivates her to grow as a coach.

Participant	Years Experience-Teaching/Coaching/Total	Type of Evaluation
Amy	15/6/21	"same instructional matrix as teachers"
Brenda	22/3/25	A goal is set every year and the coach is evaluated on that goal
Chris	29/8/37	2 informal evaluations and a summative with a rubric similar to teachers
Debby	28/3/31	"It is the same exact evaluation that a teacher gets, yes, because we're still considered instructional."
Evelyn	20/4/24	Peer evaluator with an established rubric
Faith	12/5/17	2 informal evaluations and a summative with a rubric similar to teachers

Figure 4. Years of experience and type of evaluation for each participant in this study.

Findings

Current Evaluation

The coaches' current evaluative processes and perceptions the coach has about the effectiveness of the system was an important aspect of the study. The coaches' perceptions about current evaluations differed based upon the coach's district and what evaluation is in place within that district. The following sections discuss the different types of evaluations that are in place across the state of Florida in five selected districts.

Identical to Teacher Evaluation.

Amy and Debby stated the evaluation process is the same evaluation used to evaluate a teacher, including a rubric, scheduled observations, and a school VAM score. Amy states that this instructional evaluation is not always accurate due to the differences in job duties. "I feel like some of the things I do aren't necessarily considered in my evaluation…I don't look at it as anything that changes what I do."

A Broader Picture.

Brenda feels that the current coaches' evaluation is an improvement from the current teacher evaluation. She asserts that the coach's evaluation gives a broader picture of the role of the coach instead of pinpointing a particular lesson or day like the teacher evaluation. Brenda states, "It (the coach evaluation) is more broad so it allows you to show more of what you're capable of doing." Brenda also expressed, "I like it much better as a coach than I did as a teacher. You either have multiple ways of showing it or you aren't doing it." She explained that the coaching evaluation has the ability to see an overall picture of the impact a coach can have instead of just a one time, one day snippet. Coaches believe that administrators can see coaches performing many aspects of the job role and then form an overall perception of performance to evaluate.

Peer Evaluator.

Evelyn has a peer evaluator from the district coming in to conduct observations throughout the year and ultimately an evaluation. Evelyn reflects, "My first peer evaluator had been a reading coach before…I knew she'd been in my shoes, I know she knew the job, and I admired her and trusted her opinion, I really took that and I ran with it and I tried to do some of the things that she told me." Evelyn did warn that the effectiveness of this type of evaluation depends upon the experience of the peer evaluator and the relationship the evaluator builds with the coaches. Evelyn discussed other peer evaluators who were not reading coaches and did not give effective feedback that highlighted strengths and pinpointed areas of improvement.

Instructional Rubric.

Chris and Faith have a slightly different evaluation from teachers. These coaches are evaluated using an instructional rubric designed for support staff outside of the classroom. This evaluation process includes two informal observations and a summative evaluation with evidence presented by the coach that satisfies the different domains within the rubric. Chris said "Our administrator can observe us providing professional development in a workshop. They can observe us having a coaching conversation with a teacher based on a model lesson." Coaches using this evaluation system seem more satisfied by the evaluation process but there are still pieces missing. Chris continued to say, "I think an evaluation tool becomes almost contrived. It becomes something other than what your daily walk truly is. You're trying to fit your daily walk into boxes as opposed to a tool that really understands and reflects what your daily walk is." Debby stated, "The teacher's rubric is geared toward classroom practices and ours is geared toward providing support for teachers, being an expert in our field."

Relationship with Administration.

One overarching theme in the data on the current evaluation system is the relationship between the coach and administration. Amy states, "I'm lucky here because I have a good relationship with my principal and AP. That is key to us all working together and having the same goals." The coaching works "because we click, she knows what I'm doing. She's very intuitive." Chris states, "It's really the relationship with the administrator and the ongoing input that I receive that influences my practice on a daily basis." Evelyn agrees: "I feel very fortunate here because my principal trusts me to do what I think. She lets me figure out what needs to be done and I like that." All six of the coaches interviewed spoke about a positive relationship with the administration and how that relationship drove coaching.
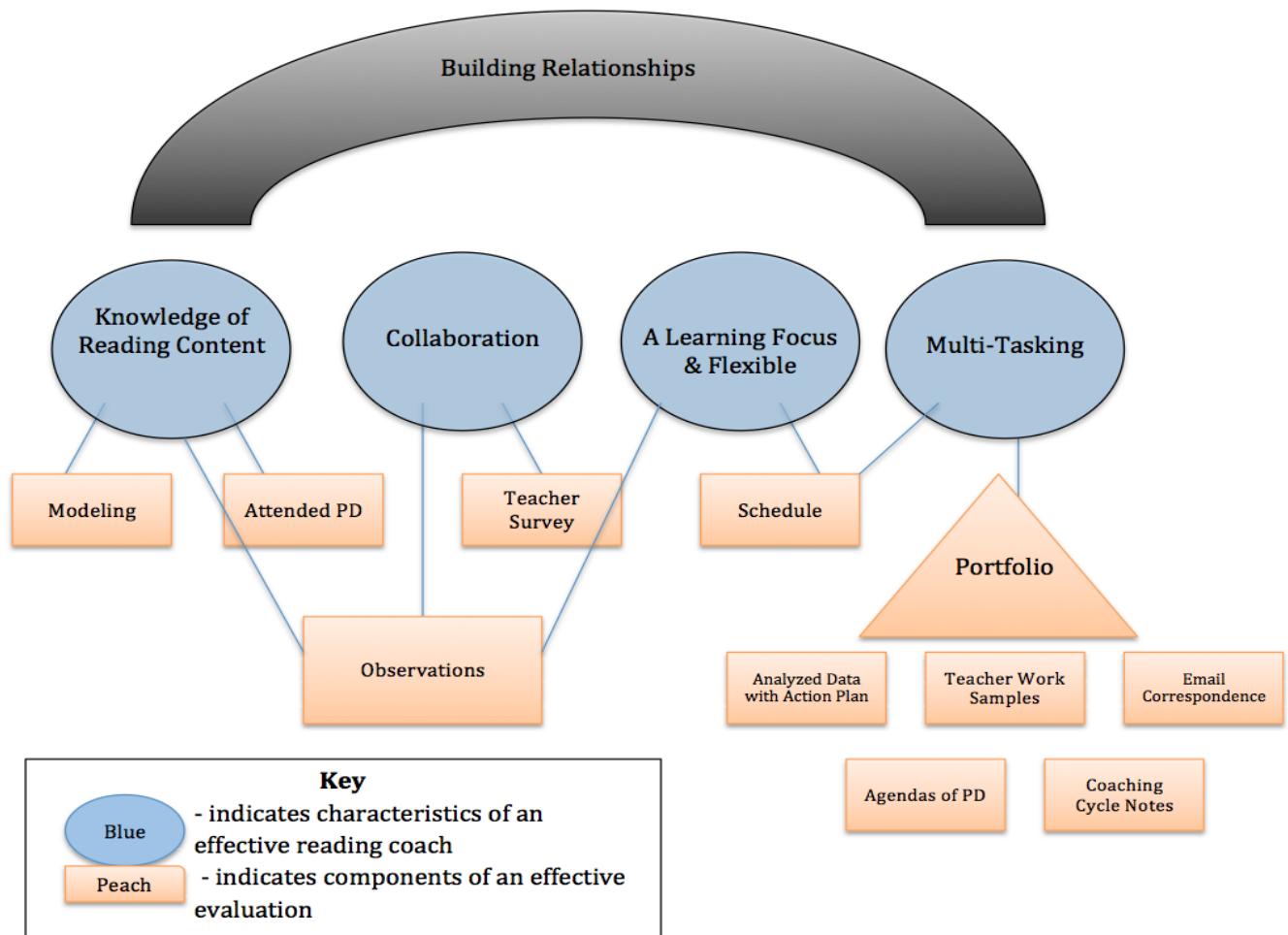
Figure 5. Characteristics of an Effective Reading Coach and Components of an Effective

Evaluation Process. This figure displays the findings by combining the participants' perspectives

on the characteristics of an effective reading coach with the suggested components that should be

included in an evaluation process.

Components in an Effective Evaluation

Using the Theories to Create the Characteristics of an Effective Reading Coach chart, the next focus was on what components should be included in an effective evaluation process. Participants were asked what characteristics were important to the role of coaching and how those characteristics could be placed into an evaluation that helps coaches grow into more effective coaches.

Knowledge of Reading Content

An effective reading coach should be knowledgeable in reading content and able to share that knowledge with adult learners (Bean, 2009; L'Allier, 2010). All participants agree with research that knowledge of reading content is important but did not agree upon a uniform way of integrating it into an evaluation system. Evelyn explained that reading content knowledge is an observable skillset that could be seen through facilitation of professional development and strategies that teachers were taught to implement in the classroom. Evelyn stated that the proof of a coach's reading knowledge is through student learning: "She (my principal) sees the instruction being implemented correctly and that children are learning." Debby stated that content knowledge is observable "through conversations, through the responses that I can provide to their specific questions." Chris linked relationship building to content knowledge by sharing "it's the relationships, it's the conversations that occur over time, where your knowledge comes out and people start to see you. You don't go in saying I know a lot, let me enlighten you." Chris stated that emails from teachers and staff provide documentation of content knowledge. The participant brings this documentation to the principal during an evaluation along with professional development attendance as proof of the acquired content knowledge.

Evelyn and Brenda thought that knowledge of reading content is not as important as a foundation in reading with the ability and yearning to learn more. Evelyn stated, "I think knowing that I can get the answer for them and not acting like I know everything (is important), they value that." According to Brenda, "the key" is being willing to say that you do not know the answer and that you are willing to go find the answer.

Modeling is Vital

Debby explained how modeling in a classroom is an efficient way to show knowledge and expertise in the subject area. Debby explained by sharing:

> The modeling piece is vital. The first two months I model the lessons and then we debrief. The next two months we do side by side teaching and we debrief. Then, the rest of the year the teacher teaches and then we debrief.

She compared coaching to teaching and linked the gradual release of teaching to the schedule of modeling, side-by-side teaching, and observing. Debby explained, "You set the purpose before you model. You do the side-by-side. You do the independent. You do the collaborative. All of those pieces need to be included." Coaches can build trust and respect from teachers through modeling in the classroom.

Coaching Cycle

Debby discussed that a framework for good coaching could be placed into the evaluation, which pinpoints areas and activities where coaches should be spending most of the week. The coaching cycle is an important part in the framework of an effective coach. Teachers who enter the coaching cycle will work one-on-one with a coach to pinpoint an area of improvement and work towards achieving a goal. Evelyn talked about how coaching cycles are initiated in her school:

We have a leadership meeting, and she tells me who she sees that's struggling and where

she really wants my focus to be. It's also teachers who request or as I'm doing

walk-throughs, if I notice something, I'll say, "Hey, do you want to try coaching cycle?"

and usually they're very receptive. I've had hardly any resistance since I've been here.

The willingness of teachers to participate in the coaching cycle with Brenda shows that an

environment of trust has been established between the coach and teachers. Amy also mentioned

coaching cycles and the important role that administrators play in the process:

Most of the teachers that I definitely calendar in or I spend time with are ones that are on

a coaching cycle. I try to follow the lead of my administrators. When they observe a

teacher has a need, no matter if it's academic, instructional, classroom management,

resources, whatever it is, I'm lucky to have a principal that will sit down and have a

meeting with them. We set goals with that teacher, then I take the lead from there.

Administration is vital in identifying teachers who need to participate in a coaching cycle and

encouraging them to seek development from the coach. Brenda agreed that administration is

imperative when pinpointing teachers who need help during the observation process, but the

coach also can have an opinion of what benefits teachers might gain from the coaching cycle.

We (administration and myself) meet on a weekly basis. Whenever we're meeting it's

always asked of us (coaches), "How's it going with your coaching cycle teachers? Are

there any other teachers that you see that we might need to bring in on the coaching

cycle?"

Faith mentioned the coaching cycle as a way to build trust and creditability with a teacher. Faith

elaborates, "I go in, and model, and co-teach, and then go through that coaching cycle with them.

That is how I've been able to build credibility with them." Debby explained the coaching cycle

by mentioning the debrief phase in which the teacher and coach sit down to discuss what was observed and how to implement new strategies to increase learning. "Without the debrief, you're not going to get any growth."

Though administration is important when identifying teachers or beginning a coaching cycle, it is important that administration steps away from the process at that point. Teachers should feel safe with the coach and be able to express a need for more individual help. Evelyn elaborated on the importance of discretion in the role of a coach.

I don't share anything about coaching cycles, that's just between the teacher and I. Unless there's a safety issue, or I really feel like the children aren't learning, then I will go to her and ask her to, maybe walk through the room, go see the teacher. I have to be very careful, though, and in the past I've really tried not to hang out long as much, or be seen a lot with administration, because I don't want the teachers to perceive that I'm not able to be trusted.

By showing teachers that the coach knows the curriculum and can share ways to make instruction better, teachers learn to respect the coach and know that the process stays confidential.

I Work with All Teachers

There are four types of reading coaches, but only one-third of coaches are classified as teacher-oriented, spending between 40% and 52% of time interacting with teachers (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean 2010). The amount of time a teacher spends with a coach can equate to significant gains in reading achievement (L'Allier & Piper, 2006). Coaches spoke of many different ways to spend time with teachers, including whole staff workshops and trainings, small groups or grade level sessions of planning, a book study, development in a particular area of need and individualized coaching, such as action research, modeling or observing. Amy

estimated about 40% of the week is spent in the classroom with teachers. Debby spoke about her schedule being created specifically for particular sets of teachers. "I work with three teachers one week and three teachers the next week. I have a week A and Week B—A, B, A, B, A, B. Then there's a week C once a month where I support the whole staff." Coaches spoke about the importance of being in the classroom with the teachers on a consistent basis. Brenda even said this time could be used to see if the teachers are implementing what is being taught in professional development sessions.

Evelyn stated, "I work with all teachers, but there are certain teachers that I focus on, the ones that need more help." Chris said that while he works with all teachers, there are some that need "more support or support in a different way." Brenda agrees that working with all teachers is best but also admits there is a subset of teachers that needs additional assistance. Overall, all 6 coaches agreed that working with all teachers is important to the coaching role.

Teachers Know That I'm Accessible

Teachers and administration should be aware of how a coach is spending their time. Chris stressed the need for teachers to know that the coach is available and ready to assist.

> Teachers know that I'm accessible anytime. All they have to do is email me. Whether it's a meeting during planning time, after school, I can even come in and address grade levels during lunchtime…I feel fortunate because I have access to my teachers."

Faith agreed with Chris and elaborated,

> Another thing that I use is a Google Calendar, and all teachers have access to my Google Calendar as well as administrators. That's another piece I didn't mention earlier that they can view or teachers can view if they need me or would like to schedule something with me. They can look at my Google Calendar to see my availability.

All the coaches interviewed in this study mentioned the need for a calendar or schedule that was open for teachers and administration to view and four specifically mentioned an electronic calendar in Google Docs or OneNote. Coaches had many reasons for the importance of a public calendar. Debby said,

> I have a schedule on the whiteboard in my room so that they (teachers or administration) always know where I am. We need to be held accountable for our time because this is a job where somebody could easily misuse their time because you could be invisible.

Chris admits,

> It might be an extra step for me, but it just helps me and it's the way I organize my time. My principal- she knows, whenever I come to a meeting, I open it up. I actually leave it on my desk during the day so that if she comes into my office and I'm not there.

Amy agrees, "I do have a calendar, a Google calendar that is shared so they can figure out where I am and what I'm doing throughout the day, week or have been doing." None of the six coaches spoke about the calendars in a negative way or found them to be intrusive. The coaches were aware of the importance of confidentiality and were not too specific as to which teachers were actively engaged in the coaching cycle. All six coaches mentioned the importance of using time wisely and tracking the time spent on activities by using a schedule or calendar. Coaches spoke about using those schedules as documentation of time spent for evaluative purposes.

Open to Asking Questions

Collaborative relationships are essential and coaches must build a foundation by establishing trust, communicating effectively, and maintaining confidentiality. Amy started by saying,

> I feel like I have a really good relationship with my teachers. They're very open to
> coming and asking questions anytime. Like yesterday, I talked to them about vetted
> resources and I already got an email this morning. They're very responsive to anything I
> talk to them about. I have an open door policy.

Coaches collaborate with teachers in many different ways, but collaborative planning meetings was one of the most discussed. Two coaches mentioned running the planning meetings while four coaches attend sporadically based on the needs of the grade level. Brenda pushes collaboration through purposeful questioning:

> At our school, we do these little sticky notes on their interpretation of the standard, and
> how they're going to teach it…I always pose questions to them whenever we're sitting in
> there because I have some grade levels that really want me to do all the work.

Chris also collaborates with teachers "when we will have a specialized need, so we'll put subs in the classrooms and we might meet with English Language Arts teachers for 3 hours." Coaches stressed the importance of not pushing collaboration on teachers but instead allowing the relationship with the teachers to drive the collaborative process.

Observation of Collaboration

Coaches believe that collaboration should be included in the evaluative process through observations. Chris reflected on a time this year when he had to "demonstrate evidence that our reach makes it to the teacher and groups of teachers and that we are engaged in meaningful work with them." This coach stated that he invites administration to those collaborative planning meetings because "I know that would be evidence towards my end of the year evaluation." This coach stressed the importance of observations in the evaluation process.

> If they're sitting in it (a collaborative planning meeting) and taking some notes, that
>
> actually kills a lot of birds with one stone because it shows the knowledge base, it shows
>
> I'm collaborating with teachers, that I'm being responsive to the differentiated needs in
>
> the school. I just wish we could have them more often.

Brenda stated that collaboration should be evident in the instruction: "administration should be
able to see your influence with the instruction. If teachers are collaborating on a weekly basis
then administrators should be able to see the cohesive instruction growing within the classrooms
and across the grade level."

Teacher Input

In agreement, Amy mentioned a survey that teachers were asked to complete regarding
the effectiveness of the coach each year. "Teachers were sent a survey about my influence, my
input, how much I contribute, how they value me here on campus. I think that is a more authentic
representation of my success or lack of on campus." The coach explained how teachers should be
the primary targets of a coach just like students are for the teacher. The participant believes that
the opinions of the teachers within the school should be considered when determining the
effectiveness of a coach.

> Ultimately our (coaches') goal is to increase student achievement, but that is through our
>
> teachers. I feel like their input should be considered. It (a teacher survey) would be a
>
> good way to provide evidences of their (coaches') activity or the fact that they are doing
>
> certain parts of their job responsibilities.

With all six coaches agreeing that relationships are the most important characteristic of an
effective coach, coaches mentioned that teacher insight and opinion should be weighted factors
in an evaluation. Amy stated, "I would like to know how they feel and if I'm not doing what they

need me to do then I need to know that too." By giving teachers a voice, the evaluation process can include the most important participant in coaching, the teachers. Debby explained the need for a teacher survey by expressing the importance of knowing how the teacher feels:

> The teacher actually feels like the coach is a partner, and not in any supervisory role. They're actually on equal standing, which supports the safe feeling, and the teacher being able to...The teacher should always be able to say no, or have a little push-back. If you don't have choice, then you're not valued in the partnership. That's something that is vital.

Chris spoke about his district and how it already has a teacher survey in place:

> It's called the inside survey…it's kind of a school culture type survey. It's very expansive and there's a section on coaching where teachers can actually provide input. I know that's making ourselves very vulnerable, but the teachers are our primary audience... Tell me a time this year when the reading coach really supported your efforts. I mean, that can be problematic.

Chris acknowledges that a teacher survey does have issues and elaborated on how the experiences of the teacher throughout the year with evaluations and administration can influence the answer. Chris still believes that the opinions of "our primary audience" should be valued.

Documentation for Multi-Tasking

When coaches are involved in specific activities like administering and discussing student assessments, observing teachers' instruction with supportive feedback, conferencing with teachers about instruction and students, and modeling instruction in the classroom, student achievement in reading increases significantly. With the link to increased achievement, these high-yield activities should be considered important within the job role of a reading coach.

I Wish They Would Have a Big Section on Data.

Administering and discussing student assessments and analyzing data is a crucial part of being a coach. "So much of my job is data, analyzing data, getting with teachers, making action plans for what we're going to do with the data. I wish they would have a big section on that because that's such a huge part of my job." Evelyn agreed that coaches should be required to collaborate with grade levels and submit an action plan based on progress monitoring assessments given to the students throughout the year in the evaluation process.

Reflective Notes.

Many coaches have notebooks or, as Debby mentioned, "Google doc of writing notes" filled with notes on teachers. This can be brought to an evaluation and used as evidence of observing teachers and providing supportive feedback. While coaches do not evaluate teachers, the opinions of the coach can be an important part of the coaching cycle and improving teacher practice. Brenda suggested journaling or reflecting on data or school improvement goals would be good documentation. "I think depending on what their focus area is, it could be a journal reflection, if you're trying to improve how you implement planning with teachers, having a reflection journal after a planning session and keeping track of that."

Contact with Teachers.

Chris likes to show evaluators proof of that time through email correspondence. Chris explained, "Emails that have demonstrated the types of requests that I've gotten from teachers, when teachers have thanked me, and let me know the impact" are important to the evaluation process. Three coaches spoke about the opinions of teachers and email correspondence shows an evaluator positive interaction a coach has with teachers. Email correspondence can be one-sided

since coaches decide which emails to bring and would not be willing to show emails where

teachers were upset.

Portfolio.

One way for coaches to show evidence of the work being accomplished is through a

portfolio. Amy stated, "It (portfolios) would be a good way for coaches to provide evidences of

their activity or the fact that they are doing certain part of their job responsibilities." Portfolios

could include all of the activities that administrators cannot observe. Amy continued,

> In my role it's hard for the administrator to ever observe me in certain capacities like
>
> when I'm doing a coaching cycle and I'm planning with a teacher, then modeling, then
>
> co-teaching, all of those types of things. They're not always there to watch and to
>
> participate. Sometimes that's better because the teacher may feel more intimidated if the
>
> administration is there.

Portfolios that coaches assemble throughout the year with certain predetermined expectations

could provide evaluators with evidence of job responsibilities that might be more effective

without the oversight of administrators.

Teacher Work Samples.

Another way for coaches to provide evidence of the coaches' work on campus would be

to submit samples of work from teachers. Evelyn compared the role of a coach to a teacher and

that teachers submit student work samples to demonstrate understanding. Coaches could submit

similar work samples to demonstrate teacher understanding of a concept. "I like to see student

work being used, in this case, teacher work. I guess it will be more like lesson plans." Lesson

plans could prove that teachers are planning together and implementing strategies that are being

taught and modeled by the coach.

Agendas.

Professional development is a big part of coaching, and coaches agree this should be an important part of the evaluation. Brenda mentioned that agendas are created for each training where teachers sign in. Those agendas are then used as evidence of the trainings that have been implemented that school year. The same coach also mentioned that an effective way to prove trainings in which the coach has participated would also be good to include in an evaluation. The coach prints out evidence of the trainings attended throughout the current year as proof of continuing professional development. Chris also stated, "Anytime I attend a training, especially if it's out of district, on my own accord, on my own dime, those are things that I include and what I show."

Relationships

When asked to identify the most important characteristic of a reading coach, every coach answered with the same response. All six coaches believe building relationships is the key to a successful coaching relationship. Coaches emphasized this characteristic by explaining the importance of listening to what people are saying, the need for teachers to feel safe, that trust is imperative to a successful coaching experience, and the respect and trust teachers have in a coach. Debby stated, "The teacher has to know your conversations are confidential. They have to feel safe with you." Chris agreed and expressed the importance of getting to know the teachers as individuals before sharing any knowledge with them. Coaching is different than most professional development because it adds the human element to training. Amy adds, "You have to have a relationship with your teacher to where they respect you and trust you." Every other benefit of coaching hinges upon this one characteristic; without relationships coaching is not successful.

Conclusion

This descriptive study explored the perceptions of six reading coach across Florida to better understand what current performance evaluation methods are working successfully and what components should be included in an effective evaluation process. Coaches in many districts across Florida are not happy with the current evaluation system and have some insight in how to improve it. Evelyn stated, "I feel like they need to revamp our whole evaluation…I feel like there's so much more that we do that's not here." Coaches want an evaluation that reflects the job responsibilities of the coaching role by incorporating observations, documented schedules and a portfolio into the evaluation process. In the following chapter, the implications of these findings in relation to the research questions, the literature, and best practice will be explored thoroughly.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is an exploration of the findings in relation to the research questions. In the second section the findings are related to the literature. The third section includes personal reflections on the findings, informal observations, and the implications of both for coaches' practices. The fourth section presents recommendations and the fifth contains concluding remarks.

Findings Related to Research Questions

Research Question 1

The first research question explored Florida elementary public school highly effective reading coaches' perspectives on the current performance evaluation process. Coaches had different opinions of the evaluation process because there are so many different evaluations, depending on the coach's district. The six coaches interviewed worked in five different districts, and only two of those districts had the same evaluation for coaches, which consisted of an instructional rubric. Some districts use the same evaluations that are used for teachers, while other districts have a slightly different evaluation for staff outside of the classroom. One district had a peer evaluator who came in to evaluate the coach while another district uses a rubric for school instructional staff. Some trends did arise as each interview was conducted.

Usefulness of Observations.

On a positive note, coaches seemed to find the observations with administrators to be helpful, and coaches encourage an effective evaluation to include this component. Evelyn, who had a peer evaluator knowledgeable in the position of a literacy coach, found this aspect of the evaluation to be most helpful. In the coach's opinion, the background of the evaluator helped establish a relationship of trust, which resulted in a higher rate of change in the opinion of the interviewed coach. Brenda agreed that coaching evaluations are based upon an overall view of

the coach, and she believes this is more reflective of her abilities than a teacher's evaluation, which focuses on one day's lesson. Coaches also noted that evaluations that are specific and pinpoint areas of strength and growth are more effective. Coaches want to know at what they excel and then a limited few areas of improvement. Many evaluations did not include this component and simply have an administration-approved goal for the coaches or an evaluation based on daily interactions and the opinions of administration. One coach even admitted to the favoritism of administration affecting the evaluation process and how she enjoyed this aspect of being a coach. Another coach said that evaluations are most effective when positive feedback and constructive criticism are both incorporated.

Areas of Improvement.

On a note of improvement, one coach felt as if the current performance evaluation process did not change their practice or truly reflect their abilities. One coach felt as if the evaluation process is contrived and often a show. One coach said that she feels the evaluation reflects how the principal sees her, which narrows the focus on the opinions of the administration and not a set of established expectations. Those who are not observed in the evaluation process tend to have stronger beliefs that the evaluation system is not effective and does not change practice.

Importance of Relationships.

Overall, all 6 coaches made comments about the importance of the relationship between the coach and the administration. Leadership needs to be in constant communication and have a similar vision for the school. Though opinions of administration will always be present in the evaluation process, coaches need more consistent expectations throughout the state in order to know what characteristics create a highly effective reading coach.

Amy	Brenda	Chris
• "I don't feel like it (the evaluation) helps me grow." • "We are currently evaluated on the same instructional matrix that all teachers are evaluated." • "I feel like some of the things I do aren't necessarily considered in my evaluation." • "I don't look at it (the evaluation) as anything that changes what I do."	• "It's really reflecting on how did my principal sees me." • "She doesn't observe so it's really in leadership meetings discussions that we have, the coaching cycle and seeing the products so to speak and the teacher's learning." • A goal is established every year and the coach is evaluated upon the completion of that goal. • The coach thinks this type of coach is more reflective of her true abilities because "it gives more of a broader overall picture of what you're doing because you're not looking at very specific little aspects of everything."	• "I think an evaluation tool becomes almost contrived. You're trying to fit your daily walk into boxes as opposed to a tool that really understands and reflects what the daily walk is." • "It's the input she (the principal) gives me from those daily experiences that means more than a summative (evaluation) at the end of the year." • "The two informal (observations) and one summative, (is) where we provide evidence of how we have performed in those little areas on the rubric." • "Especially if you want to be noted as a highly effective reading coach. You really have to provide evidence of that."
Debby	Evelyn	Faith
• "It is the same evaluation that a teacher gets, yes, because we're still considered instructional." • "I do get observed." • "There's no way it (the evaluation) does" reflect a coach's true abilities.	• "We don't have peer evaluators anymore—we had peers before this year." • Principal conducts one informal and one formal observation. The coach gets to choose the time and place of the formal observation. • "I find that when I get positive feedback and constructive criticism, that motivates me more." • "My first evaluator had been a reading coach before…I knew she'd been in my shoes and I admired her and trusted her opinions." • "I feel like they need to revamp our whole evaluation system."	• "I have usually two informal (evaluations) per year where they'll just pop in, whether I'm conferencing with a teacher, or modeling a lesson in the classroom, or leading PD." • "I have two informal (evaluations) and then I have one formal observation which is where it could be the same types of things." • Evaluations have helped this coach grow by "being able to pinpoint my areas of strength and then look at the areas where I have room to grow and develop."

Figure 6. Opinions of Highly Effective Reading Coaches on the current evaluation. This

figure summarizes the opinions and statements made by highly effective reading coaches about

the current evaluation processes.

Research Question 2

The second research question investigated the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the performance evaluative process. After interviewing six coaches, each coach had a unique perspective on which components should be included in an effective evaluation. Using those perspectives and the theories creating the chart of the characteristics of an effective reading coach (Figure 1), figure 4 was designed to display the components in an effective performance evaluation. Every evaluation should begin and continue to build a positive and trusting relationship. Without this overarching theme, evaluations become more about judgments and less about continuous improvement. Under this theme, the characteristics of an effective reading coach that can be included in an evaluation process are displayed in blue. Under each characteristic is the component that could appropriately evaluate this characteristic.

Knowledge of Reading Content.

All effective coaches have a thorough knowledge of reading content that can be evaluated through observations by administration during planning meetings, coaching sessions, and conversations with the coach. A coach can also share reading knowledge with teachers through modeling effective reading strategies in the classroom and modeling how to deconstruct the ELA standard during collaborative planning. Two coaches even mentioned submitting documents that list professional development trainings in which the coach participated throughout the year to continue to grow.

Collaboration.

Collaboration was also emphasized as an important characteristic of an effective reading coach. Collaboration can be evaluated through observing collaborative planning meetings,

professional development trainings hosted by the coach, and even daily conversations that the coach has with teachers. Another way to evaluate how collaborative and approachable a coach is perceived is through a teacher survey. Amy mentioned in her interview that "to get a true reflection, they (evaluators) should probably speak to the teachers that I work one-on-one with." This coach admits there are downfalls to this survey. "How do you keep that data driven versus opinion driven, what would that look like in a rubric, I don't know?" Three coaches mentioned that the opinions of teachers are invaluable to the process. Teachers' opinions should be a component in a coach's evaluation since so much of what coaches do is surrounded by teacher progress and growth.

A Learning Focus.

A learning focus and a coach's flexibility can be evaluated through observation during every activity in which the coach engages. The coach should constantly motivate the teachers and be able to keep them focused on the task at hand during planning and professional development meetings. Coaches interviewed mentioned a requirement to turn in a weekly schedule. This would ensure that each coach is focused on those activities that yield the most results. Coaches often get bogged down in daily-required tasks but should instead be focusing on those activities that yield growth in student achievement.

Multi-Tasking.

Multi-tasking is another important characteristic of a reading coach. While being flexible and allowing teachers to consume large amounts of a coach's time, prioritizing is a skill that is essential in the job role. Since there are so many responsibilities of a reading coach, two interviewed coaches explained that a portfolio would be a great way to prove a coach's status of

highly effective. Each coach that mentioned that portfolio had a different opinion of what should be included in a portfolio, so all their ideas were combined.

Data analysis and leading teachers in understanding data in an important task that results in higher student achievement. Coaches should have proof of analyzed data with a plan on how to increase student achievement through pinpointing areas of need revealed in the data. Progress monitoring data three times a year would be a good time to analyze data to place into a portfolio. Another important and time-consuming task of a reading coach is collaborative planning with teachers. Coaches could submit teacher work samples of standards-based activities or lesson plans that the coach helped create. This could ensure that the coach is collaborating with teachers while using the limited time in the workday. Another way to show that a coach listens to the needs of the teacher and provides appropriate feedback would be through email correspondence. Coaches could print out and submit email evidence of resources shared with teachers or letters of appreciation on a strategy that was effective in the classroom.

Another great way to show the many roles of a coach would be to provide the evaluator with copies of professional development agendas that show the topic of the training along with a list of participants. Coaches often spend much of the school day involved in the coaching cycle with teachers who have been selected by administration or self-selected to receive coaching on a particular topic. Coaches could provide redacted coaching cycle notes or just a list of coaching cycles for the year with teacher signatures as evidence of being an active participant in the growth of teachers. This would depend upon the level of comfort of the teacher and teachers could sign using a designated pseudonym or number.

Even though some coaching evaluations are measured through the school VAM score, coaches felt too far removed from student achievement but agreed that the growth of teachers

within the school would be a better indicator of a coach's success. With the many job

responsibilities of a reading coach, a simple portfolio created throughout the year could be a

valuable tool in the evaluation process. While most evaluations do not require coaches to bring

evidences of performance, Chris agreed that this aspect helped him feel in control of the

evaluation process, "Especially if you want to be noted as a highly effective reading coach. You

really have to provide evidence of that." Coaches who are willing to take the extra steps to prove

their effectiveness should be given the chance through supporting evidence.

The components of an effective performance evaluation could be combined to create an

evaluation that uses the characteristics of an effective reading coach to provide positive feedback

and constructive criticism for teachers. The purpose of every evaluation should be to strengthen

the participants and create an environment of continuous improvement. By using the research to

identify common characteristics in effective reading coaches, and then defining components that

would appropriately evaluate those characteristics, a district or school would have a tool to

improve the coaches and in turn, teacher practice and student achievement.

Findings Related to Literature

My literature review and the chart linking the three major theories that create the

characteristics of an effective coach are vital to constructing an evaluation that improves

coaches. L'Allier's (2010) seven guiding principles include: (1) "coaching requires specialized

knowledge," (2) "time working with teachers is the focus of coaching," (3) "collaborative

relationships are essential for coaching," (4) "coaching to support student reading achievement

focuses on a set of core activities," (5) "coaching must be both intentional and opportunistic", (6)

"coaches must be literacy leaders in the school," and (7) "coaching evolves over time."

Like L'Allier's research, Bean (2009) believes there is a set of five lessons important to

the role of coaching. Bean's five lessons are: (1) "coaches expect the unexpected," (2) "effective

coaching requires a qualified coach," (3) "coaching must be intentional and opportunistic," (4)

"coaches make haste slowly," and (5) "teachers are both targets and agents of change" (Mundy,

2012).

These two theories along with Knowles' six characteristics of adult learning provide a

foundation for the criteria that make a reading coach effective. The six characteristics of adult

learning that Knowles created are: (1) "adults need to relate to learning," (2) "adults are self-

directed," (3) "adults have an abundance of prior life and work experience," (4) "adults learn

when ready and when a need arises," (5) "adults are life-centered in learning," and (6) "adults are

internally motivated" (Cox, 2015).

Together these 3 theories create a foundation for which characteristics make an effective

reading coach. Coaches agreed that the characteristics found in literature are important to include

in an evaluation. The results were very consistent across all six coaches.

Characteristics of an Effective Reading Coach	Highly Effective Reading Coaches who agreed this characteristic should be included in an effective performance evaluation process
Multi-Task	Amy, Brenda ("though I'm happy not to"), Chris , Debby, Evelyn, Faith
Technical Expertise	Amy, Brenda , Chris , Debby, Evelyn, Faith
Flexible	Amy, Brenda , Chris , Debby, Evelyn, Faith
Evolves	n/a through evaluation, could look at data over time
Leader	n/a through evaluation, could be observable over time
Learning Focused	Amy, Brenda , Chris , Debby, Evelyn, Faith
Collaborative	Amy ("it should be considered but not required"), Brenda , Chris , Debby, Evelyn, Faith

Figure 7. Opinions of Each Reading Coach based on the Characteristics of an Effective Reading

Coach. This figure displays the opinions of each coach interviewed on how each characteristic

should be included in an effective performance evaluation.

All six coaches agreed that multi-tasking, technical expertise, flexibility, learning focus, and collaboration should all be included in the performance evaluation. Brenda did end her agreement with the statement on providing documentation of multi-tasking by adding, "though I'm happy not to." This coach explained that her evaluation is quite vague, yet she appreciates that since other parts of her job are quite stressful. This is the perfect example of why evaluations should be viewed as a way to identify areas of improvement and not just a way to be judgmental. Coaches should feel in control of the evaluation and be able to provide evidences of their success in each area. Amy did not agree that collaboration should be required within an evaluation but should be considered as an optional yet successful piece of coaching. All the other coaches agreed that collaboration should be required and considered in the evaluation process. Overall, coaches are in agreement on the importance of each characteristic within the evaluation process.

Though there is limited research on effective reading coach performance evaluations, current research does provide some suggestions on components that could be effective within the evaluation process. Danielson (2000) states an effective evaluation must contain three important elements: (1) "a definition of the domain of teaching" with decisions on what is acceptable performance, (2) "procedures for assessing all aspects of teaching," and (3) "trained evaluators who make consistent judgments based on evidence."

Each piece of the evaluation process should include a rubric that identifies what is highly effective, effective, needs improvement/developing, unsatisfactory, and unrated. This piece allows teachers to identify areas of strength and pinpoint areas of growth. Danielson's third element is very important because without the proper training, evaluations become opinions and based upon favoritism. Using peer evaluators such as district level reading coaches to evaluate

school based coaches would be an effective unbiased way to train someone who is fluent in the job roles and responsibilities of coaching.

Lane, Robbins & Price (2013) emphasized the importance of connecting a performance evaluation to a coach's job responsibilities. Interviewed coaches who felt like the evaluator knew the job role with the intention of providing job related critiques were more likely to take the feedback and implement changes. Linking an evaluation process to a knowledgeable peer with emphasis on those characteristics that have been proven effective for reading coaches is creditable.

Overall, evaluations that are centered on mainstreaming job roles and responsibilities while providing quality feedback are the best type of evaluations for reading coaches. Reading coaches can be an effective tool in increasing student achievement but each coach needs to be aware of the high expectations in the job role. An evaluation should improve the quality of reading coaches by evaluating them on the characteristics that research suggest are imperative to be effective.

Limitations

- There are limitations to this study in the way participants were selected. I selected reading coaches deemed highly effective based upon current evaluation methods, even if the current evaluative process may be flawed.

- Districts were hesitant to approve this study. One of the five districts denied approval while the other only accepted the request under specific conditions.

- Participants were scarce due to budget cuts and movement within districts. Coaches are not often at a school with an increasing grade for an extended period of time.

- The reading coaches may respond to the questions based on what they believe is appropriate or the desired answer of the district or school, and not based on their own perceptions.

- The participants in this study have been benefited by the current evaluation system. It is conceivable that the participants do not want the current system improved or altered.

- I am currently a reading coach receiving what is in my opinion, an inappropriate measure of my abilities. Though I am currently affected by a coaching evaluation, I have removed my bias and opinions from the research as much as possible.

Implications

Positive

The implications of putting this research into practice could have a major impact on student achievement in reading. Joyce and Showers (2002) show that "students tend to make minimal academic gains when their teachers lack instructional competence" and states that teachers' expertise contributes to student achievement. Therefore, it is important to build teachers' expertise and reading coaches can be an important part of the process. By giving stakeholders, such as administrators, teachers, reading coaches, school boards, and district staff an evaluation tool to gauge the effectiveness of a reading coach in improving teacher practice, coaches will be more apt to continually improve.

School districts would benefit greatly from having effective reading coaches at the school level providing consistent professional development on a daily basis. Teachers are often burnt out after only a few years teaching and leave the profession. Good quality reading coaches can decrease the number of teachers who leave the profession by providing support. Amy stated that one of her main responsibilities is training and modeling for new teachers. Her principal

understands the importance of guiding and mentoring new teachers through a positive role model.

Principals are trained frequently on teacher evaluations due to the number of teachers in each school but reading coaches have a role that is quite different than teachers. Coaches should have an evaluation separate from teachers that is closely linked to those characteristics that research has identified as effective. Peer evaluators like one district mentioned in the study would be helpful for all school-based coaches. Principals do not often have more than two to three coaches so training would not be the best use of time. Many principals have never been a reading coach and therefore do not have the experience to back up an evaluation. By using a district reading coach as an evaluator, the school-based reading coach can be assured that personal experience and not personal bias will guide the evaluation. Often coaches are promoted by current administrators based on a buddy system that does not always promote based upon merit or experience. By having an effective evaluation process in place, coaches can feel secure in the job role and not subjects to the whims of their current administrators. None of the coaches interviewed spoke about their promotion experiences, but Amy, Chris, and Evelyn did talk about how the relationship with administration is important and communication is imperative.

Coaching can be a job role that can be easily camouflaged and left without many expectations. By holding coaches to a high standard, they are more likely to be effective. An effective performance evaluation process would help recruit and retain high quality reading coaches that possess all the characteristics of an effective reading coach. With an evaluation that focuses on improving reading coaches, every coach can seek out the development needed to improve.

It is often difficult to give coaches the professional development needed to improve because it is common practice to hire only one coach per school. By receiving an evaluation that pinpoints areas of need, coaches can search for that training from a source outside of the district. An effective performance evaluation tool would not only inform coaches about performance but would allow coaches to pinpoint areas for growth. Like teachers, reading coaches would benefit from an evaluation tool that can streamline job responsibilities while providing feedback for the coach (McLean, Mallozzi, Hu & Dailey, 2010).

Negative

Some negative implications to a more organized evaluation system by district coaches or peer evaluators would be that district coaches would be in an evaluative role and could be seen as evaluative and not a resource, due to a fear on the part of school-based coach as not seeming knowledgeable. Establishing a common evaluation for reading coaches could be cumbersome and expensive on the district. Developing an evaluation and training district personnel to be evaluators would be time consuming and costly. With the limited number of reading coaches in a district, the district might deem the cost to be too high. Reading coaches are often promoted from within and are deemed highly effective teachers so a district might not see a need for a mainstreamed evaluation system. Reading coaches might represent the caliber of teacher that is internally motivated and does not need an evaluation to identify areas of improvement. Coaches might be self-aware and able to evaluate themselves on the characteristics they need to improve upon. If the coach was a highly effective teacher, then coaching might be a natural transition, and therefore not worth the cost of an evaluation process. Though there is no research on the transition from teacher to coach, future research might reveal that a highly effective teacher equates to a highly effective coach and therefore an evaluation would not be necessary.

Recommendations

While interviewing highly effective reading coaches one thing was overwhelmingly obvious. The current evaluations are lacking in developing those characteristics that are essential to good coaching. Reading coach evaluations should contain the components mentioned in Figure 4 that directly relate to characteristics of an effective reading coach to ensure those characteristics are being developed in all reading coaches, such as observations, a teacher survey, a schedule, and portfolio. By evaluating coaches on what makes them effective, the district or school would encourage coaches to grow in the areas that would make them more effective. Coaches should be required to model in front of evaluators in order to demonstrate their knowledge of reading content. By modeling, coaches would be able to demonstrate knowledge about reading to not only administrators but also the teachers they are coaching.

Coaches should also have to attend professional development and submit agenda documentation, like teachers, in order to continue growing in the coaching field. Professional development in the area of coaching should be expected for coaches. Districts should prepare trainings for coaches on aspects of the job role that are deemed areas of need in previous years' evaluations. Collaboration established by the coach should be observed by the evaluator on a consistent basis with feedback on ways to enhance collaboration in the school community. By attending planning meetings and being involved in other collaborative environments administrators can gauge how much influence a coach has on teachers' practice. Teachers should be surveyed about the reading coach on a yearly basis in order to ensure that the coach is meeting the needs of the teachers and improving teacher practice at the school level. The opinions of the teachers are imperative to the position of reading coach since increasing effective teacher practices is the purpose of the role of coaching.

The coach's schedule should be monitored in order to ensure that the coach manages time effectively and focuses on activities that yield growth in student achievement. The many responsibilities of a reading coach can become overwhelming and coaches should be encouraged to maintain a schedule that prioritizes those activities that are labeled highly effective in increasing student achievement. Coaches should also be allowed to keep a portfolio of accomplishments, which include analyzed school data with actions plans, teacher work samples, email correspondences, and coaching cycle notes that have been appropriately redacted with teacher approval. Coaches should feel in control of the evaluation process and see it as a way of self-improvement in order to continually develop in the field.

Reading coaches' roles are different from teachers and should not be evaluated in the same way. Though coaches are instructional, adult learners are quite different than young learners and the coaches' evaluation should reflect support for the needs of teachers. A coach can be an amazing teacher to young students but be an inadequate coach to adult learners. A teacher evaluation does not properly pinpoint areas of improvement for a reading coach.

District reading personnel should be in charge of evaluating school based reading coaches since they are more aware of the responsibilities of the coach. District reading coaches have been labeled effective in their school based coaching role in order to be promoted to their current positions, so reading coaches would respect their perspectives and learn from their evaluations. Like the concept of peer evaluators, district reading coaches provide that job experience which gives credibility to an evaluation. This would also benefit schools because coaches are often hired and chosen by administration. To have an outside evaluation would ensure all coaches are right for the job and not evaluated based on relationships or favoritism.

Future Research

Several possibilities exist for future research that this study did not address, the perceptions of coaches who have not received positive evaluations would provide important answers this study did not. The opinions of coaches who have not been as successful in the coaching role is important because an evaluation should provide areas of improvement for coaches at any level. The opinions of these coaches would be invaluable in creating an evaluation that will benefit all coaches. If continuous improvement is the goal of evaluations, then all evaluations should include feedback to enhance growth. Another aspect this study did not examine is middle and high school reading coaches. Do the same characteristics and evaluation processes apply to secondary schools? Do they have the same types of relationships?

Another study would be to explore the effectiveness of the presented components of the performance evaluation with the goal of finding out how the components of this performance evaluation adequately evaluate the performance of highly effective reading coaches. The study would consist of tracking coaches labeled highly effective through this newly created evaluation process to see if the new evaluation correlates to the current evaluation, and to examine if teacher evaluation ratings rise under that highly effective reading coach.

Many of the interviewed coaches spoke about certain prerequisites in knowledge and personality that highly effective reading coaches possess. A study of the components in a training program that would ensure that new reading coaches are more prepared for success would be beneficial. One coach mentioned the importance of taking a personality test so the coach is self-aware. Another coach mentioned that most coaches are a type A personalities and an initial coaches' training could review how the coach's background and personality can affect their effectiveness. Researching what type of teacher makes an effective reading coach would also be interesting.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore Florida public school highly effective elementary coaches' perceptions on how to best evaluate the effectiveness of the position of reading coach. This study examined a link between the characteristics of an effective reading coach and using those characteristics to identify components in an effective job performance evaluation. The research questions this study addressed were:

- What are Florida elementary public school highly effective reading coaches' perspectives on the performance evaluation process?

- What are the components that highly effective reading coaches believe should be included in the performance evaluative process?

This study focused on which components highly effective reading coaches found helpful in the current evaluation system. The research combined what coaches already considered helpful in their current evaluation with the components reading coaches thought evaluated the characteristics of an effective reading coach identified in the research. I combined these perceptions into a table (Figure 1), which displayed the components that could be included in an evaluation process that would pinpoint area of strength and identify areas of improvement. The purpose of any evaluation should be continuous improvement and this newly created evaluation process follows that same pattern. An effective evaluation process for school based reading coaches would be an evaluation by district reading personnel that includes observations of modeling and collaboration, teacher input, a schedule, and an optional portfolio of the coach's accomplishments for the year.

Overall, highly effective reading coaches have similar opinions on which components make an effective performance evaluation. Those who are constantly working in the job role should be a part of the process to create an effective performance evaluation. While an

evaluation is necessary, it is not always implemented with fidelity as discovered in this study. A consistent evaluation system for coaches across the state of Florida would encourage school districts and schools to proactively utilize a reading coach in ways that yield an increase in student achievement. An evaluation should be a tool for professional development and not just a way to judge the coach without any basis for improvement. By using the components developed in this study, an evaluation would become a tool to improve reading coach performance, which improves teacher practice, which ultimately increases student achievement.

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