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How Do Literacy Coaches Function as Policy Actors?

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by

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DEDICATION

In genuine gratefulness and deep affection, this work is dedicated to Robin and my sisters. I appreciate your love, patience, and acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

How do literacy coaches function as policy actors? Using a case study of literacy coaches in a small, rural South Carolina school district, this dissertation explored the ways coaches act as policy actors, the policies coaches create, and how they institutionalize policy.

This study focused on literacy coaches as policy actors. The South Carolina Read to Succeed R2S legislation of 2014 created coaching positions to support teachers in meeting the needs of students and to assist in meeting the requirements of the legislation. These professionals are usually successful master teachers chosen to share their content and instructional expertise. The coaches are not required to have advanced educational leadership training. The demands of reading policies require these coaches to take on leadership roles for which they may not be well prepared. The aim of this research was to determine the role coaches play as policy actor. This knowledge can prepare policy makers to better support literacy coaches in their professional roles.

The study used a focus group and interviews of coaches, principals, and the district literacy director to determine how coaches function as policy actors. In addition, this research analyzed school reading plans to determine what procedures and processes reading coaches created for their schools and districts, and how the coaches institutionalized policies. I used a framework, the 4I Framework, to understand the levels at which decisions are made and the processes the coaches use in making decisions.

The 4I Framework organizes data at the individual, group, and organizational levels, which are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing (Crossan et al., 1999). This study focused on how coaches interpret and integrate at the individual, group, and organization levels. This framework helped me organize my data for analysis and answer my research question.

The findings of this study show that literacy coaches are sophisticated crafters of policies that impact the school district even though they are not aware of the extent of their role in policy creation and implementation. The coaches' actions influence policy at all levels of development for the organization.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading coaches have become synonymous with reading policy. Over the years, schools and districts have looked to reading experts to improve instruction for all students and struggling readers in particular. These experts have included researchers, curriculum developers, and building level master teachers. In the current environment of accountability, policy makers are requiring the use of building level experts known most commonly as reading or literacy coaches. These coaches are required to be more than reading and writing experts, though; they are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of reading policies are being fulfilled.

While we know a great deal about how reading coaches function as instructional experts, less is known about their role in policy implementation as policy actors. Policy actors include any individuals who are connected to a policy. Policy actors can have direct or indirect involvement in the policy process. Generally, coaches assume their role as literacy leaders with little knowledge of educational administration or policy leadership. These professionals are usually successful master teachers chosen to share their expertise. The demands of reading policies require these coaches to take on leadership roles for which they may not be prepared. The aim of this research is to determine the role coaches play as policy actors as seen by principals, the literacy

director and the literacy coaches. This knowledge can prepare policy makers to better support literacy coaches.

Background on Reading Policy in South Carolina

Reading legislation has been at the front of the American education policy agenda since the mid-1980s landmark report, A Nation at Risk. This federal focus led states to pay more attention to education, including more stringent graduation requirements and increased expectations for teaching credentials. Accountability demands following No Child Left Behind, coupled with the push for college and career ready standards during the second decade of the twenty-first century, have led many state legislatures to enact policies promoting reading achievement (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; DeYoung, 2004).

Reading ability is an indicator of success in both school and later in life. Research indicates that children who are not reading proficiently by the third grade are four times less likely to graduate on time (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). In recent years, states have enacted legislation requiring reading proficiency by the end of the third grade. This legislation has become commonly known as third-grade reading legislation or third-grade reading policy. As of 2016, thirty-six states plus the District of Columbia require reading assessments in at least one grade in pre-K through third to identify students who are not reading at grade level. Thirty-three of those states require interventions for students reading below grade level, and at least sixteen states, plus the District of Columbia, require retention of third-grade students not reading at grade level (Workman, 2014). Each state customizes reading legislation to address the needs they have identified. Requirements may include student interventions, teacher in-service and pre-service training, competency testing at one or more grade levels pre-kindergarten through third

grade, recommended or mandatory retention of students not meeting proficiency at the end of third grade, and the use of reading or literacy coaches (Workman, 2014).

Currently, ten states use reading coaches to assist teachers, schools, and districts in research-based reading instructional practices (ExcelinEd, 2017). A reading coach provides school-based professional development throughout a school year. Coaching can take on a variety of forms including directly working with teachers to plan and deliver instruction, providing school-wide professional development, assisting in data collection and interpretation, providing interventions for students, and testing students (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

Coaching and Policy

Since urbanization in the 1890s, the teaching profession has included a strong element of bureaucratic organization with leaders who were responsible for both monitoring and supporting the teaching staff. Professional organizations have also provided a support system for teachers, including special supervisors and other resource personnel. At the close of the twentieth century, these support supervisors became known as instructional coaches and assisted teachers in their school with planning, instruction, and the use of data in various content areas (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2012, p.11).

Perhaps contrary to popular understanding, the origin of the concept of instructional coaching precedes athletic coaching. The derivation of coaching evolved from traveling in a coach; ergo, to coach someone, means to carry them through. One of

the earliest forms of coaching included tutoring students to prepare for examinations (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012).

Education policymaking over the last two and a half decades has shifted from the mere creation of standards to increased accountability. Many of the policies have also targeted reading instruction and the improvement of reading levels in students. Coaching, or providing instructional coaches, is one of the most common strategies that accompany these policy initiatives. How coaches work with teachers and the effects that they have had on instruction have often been the topic of research studies in recent years. This research, though, has only begun to explore the role of coaches in shaping teachers' educational practices to conform to policy directives or a coach's role as a policy actor (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

In a longitudinal case study of a Massachusetts elementary school's approach to federal Reading First Initiative, Coburn & Woulfin (2012) explored the coach's impact on classroom practice and the tension that emerged as a result of the coaching linked to this policy initiative. These researchers found that classroom teachers responded to policy in five discreet ways: rejection, symbolic response, parallel structure, assimilation, and accommodation with the level of fidelity to the intention of the policy increasing respectively. According to this research, teachers were much more likely to accommodate with the involvement of a coach.

Coaches, in their educational role, assist teachers by using a variety of strategies including professional development sessions, grade level planning, classroom demonstrations, one-on-one coaching, and resource attainment. Coburn & Woulfin

(2012) explain that coaches play a political role as well. "They interacted in ways that involved asserting and negotiating power in attempts to push or coax teachers to respond to the Reading First in specific ways" (p.19).

The role of coaching is rife with tension between honoring the self-directed goals of teachers versus goals of policy that the coach is responsible for supporting. In addition, coaches are often considered teaching positions, so they have to navigate a balance between peer and instructional leader. In navigating these tensions, Coburn & Woulfin (2012) found that coaches in their study employed three political moves: *pressuring*, *persuading,* and *buffering.* Either implicitly or intentionally, the actions of coaches are politically driven.

Many comprehensive reading policies require the use of coaches. As Coburn & Woulfin (2012) explain, little is known about the coaches' political roles, the methods they use to encourage teachers to comply with the relevant policy. The purpose of my study is to understand the ways in which coaches influence policy appropriation, the intersection of policy formation and implementation. I believe that coaches act as policy implementers and influencers in their schools and districts.

Reading Policy in South Carolina

South Carolina has a long history of supporting literacy through specialists. The state has had a group of literacy specialists working at the state department for over a decade. These specialists provided support for the schools and districts that chose to be part of the initiatives.

There have been several statewide efforts to address the needs of struggling readers in recent years. From 2000-2010, South Carolina implemented three reading initiatives. SC Reading Initiative (SCRI) was in place for 9 of the 10 years, included kindergarten through high school, and ended in 2009. SC READS focused on pre-kindergarten through grade three and took place from 2002 to 2007. Finally, South Carolina Reading First (SCRF) focused on kindergarten through grade five from 2004 to 2010. These South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) initiatives were designed to support reading instruction through professional development. These policies were not mandated by the state legislature, so participation was at local school district discretion. Together these initiatives impacted 68 districts, 435 schools, and an estimated 9,000 teachers (SCDE Reading Plan, June 2015).

South Carolina has 103 school districts with just over 48,000 teachers and serves approximately 736,000 students. While the state has been addressing the issue of improving literacy, the reach of the programs was far from comprehensive. In 2014, the Read to Succeed (R2S) Act was signed into legislation. This law is different from previous reading policy in the state because it is "comprehensive, systematic, and affects every educator and student in the state" (SCDE Reading Plan, June 2015, p.3). This policy has eight components: 1) state, district, and school reading plans, 2) focus on third-grade progression, 3) summer reading camps, 4) provision of reading interventions, 5) requirements for in-service educator endorsements, 6) early learning and literacy development, 7) teacher preparation, and 8) reading (literacy) coaches.

Several components of R2S distinguish it from previous reading policy in the state. These include: teacher preparation and ongoing professional development;

mandated reading intervention for all students reading below grade level; summer reading camps for students not reading at grade level in third grade; and third-grade progression, or more accurately, retention for non-proficient readers.

This study focused on the state's use of reading coaches. Ostensibly, coaches are provided to support schools and classroom teachers in providing adequate instruction and intervention. Coaches do function in those capacities; though, with the regular training and meetings provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), the coaches also act as an agent of the state policy.

Problem Statement

The role of coaches in assisting teachers in instruction has been studied over the last decade. Literacy coaches play a variety of roles including planning, co-teaching, using data, managing testing, and working directly with students. Though the use of coaches is often originated by policy initiatives, researchers have only begun to explore the role of coaches in shaping teachers' educational practices to conform to policy directives or the coach's role as policy appropriators (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to explore how literacy coaches function as policy actors from the perspectives of principals, the district literacy director, and themselves. I used individual interviews, a focus group with the coaches, and analysis of school reading plans to gather information. I want to know:

- How do coaches function as policy actors?
- What policies do coaches create and how do they institutionalize them?

Coburn & Woulfin (2012) view implementation as policy to practice. I investigated implementation as policy in practice, or appropriation. Appropriation is the recursive process of policy creation in which the implementation, and reaction to such, modifies and adjusts the actual policy (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). All actions taken by the coaches, since they are mandated as a part of South Carolina's Read to Succeed (R2S) Act, are acts of policy.

I recognize that my own beliefs, goals, and life experiences shape my research. In the next sections, I explored how these beliefs, goals and experiences shape and affect my research.

Positionality

Policy is a practice of power. Policies like Read to Succeed are created to make a change in society. This policy, and others like it, create a societal expectation, give guidance on how that expectation is to be achieved. As a social democrat, I value policies that are intended to make improvements in society, especially those designed to improve the quality of life for less empowered members of society. At the same time, I struggle with legislation that assigns consequences for unmet results for particular populations. For example, I believe that our society has an obligation to ensure that all students can read. I also believe in accountability, but I struggle with the punitive nature of many education reforms. The consequences for lack of improvement are felt by those with the least power, the classroom teachers and the students themselves.

Researchers choose qualitative research for a variety of reasons. Some researchers prefer qualitative data collection. "I like field work, it suits me, and I concluded that

rather than pursuing research with questions in search of the 'right' methods of data collection, I had preferred method of data collection in search of the 'right' question" (Peshkin, as cited by Maxwell, 2005, p. 20). Others choose qualitative research for epistemic reasons. "Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam and Tisdale (2016). I don't know that field work suits me like Peshkin, but I definitely have a preferred method of constructing knowledge for myself. I think analytically about what I am learning to notice inconsistencies and the implications of what I am learning. Even as a teacher, I have tried to teach students that information is not just right or wrong, true or false, but much more complex. We need to know the why, how, and under what conditions for information that we learn.

Quantitative researchers tend to be concerned whether, and to what extent, one variable affects another. A qualitative researcher is more concerned about how they affect each other (Maxwell, p.23). I venture to say that why a variable is affecting another is also a consideration. "Meaning, however 'is not discovered, but constructed'" (Crotty, as cited by Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 24). Researchers are, therefore responsible for interpreting the information they collect and formulating a theory that shares the essence of what they are studying. In addition, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved.

An inductive approach allows me to recognize the participants' values, goals, and emotions in a way that a strictly quantitative approach does not. The participants'

understandings of their experiences are shaped by their perceptions of the events that are occurring. In a sense, "perception is reality."

As a qualitative researcher, I am seeking to understand the participants' reality, much like a reader. The qualitative researcher constructs knowledge much the same way that a reader constructs meaning from a written text. Constructing meaning is more important to me than developing a theory that I am seeking to test. I recognize that this meaning and subsequent theories were shaped through my own implicit theories and my interpretations of the experiences of others. "Whether or not you set out to contribute to a theory, you need to be aware that your research does not occur in a vacuum. Your theoretical perspectives (behaviorism, critical theory, feminism, liberalism, etc.) and values affect what you look for and, consequently, how you describe what it is you 'find'" (Glesne, 2006, p. 28).

The tenets of qualitative research complement my beliefs about the reading process. Louise Rosenblatt theorized that reading is a transaction between the reader and the written word. Readers brings their own experiences with them when they read. They can only understand the written word based on their own background knowledge, experiences, or schema. They construct their own meaning of the text as they assimilate the written word into their own frame of reference. This is why many people say that two people never read the same book, nor does one read the same book twice. Our schema constantly grows and changes. This shapes how we transact with the written word (Weaver, 2002).

Personal goals.

My personal goals are linked to this project in many ways. I have a passionate desire for equity in society, especially for school children. There is a considerable amount of research on what we call the achievement gap. There are a multitude of theories of both how the gap originates and perpetuates despite new curriculum initiatives and local and federal monies that are allocated to improve education for children from poverty.

South Carolina ranks among the ten most impoverished in the nation and second with the percentage of children who have lived in foster care. (South Carolina Report - 2016, 2017). The state ranks 43 in the nation in quality of education, based on the yearly Quality Counts report by Education Week (2016). Even though White students constitute just over half of the school population, white privilege exists in education as in the rest of society. The black/white achievement gap is the most pronounced demographic disparity recognized by achievement test scores in the state.

Though I attended grade school in one of the poorest counties in the state with a White population of less than (10%) of the student body, I had no understanding of these issues. White flight was becoming a recognizable phenomenon for the county while I was in high school, but I had little understanding of the concerns that contributed to this trend besides the struggling economy and lack of jobs. As a white female with a father who worked as a mechanic on one of the few remaining large-scale farms for that part of the state, I led a sheltered childhood with what could be considered traditional, white, Southern values. Even though I went to school with mostly African-American students whose families struggled financially even as my own did, I had little interaction with these peers outside of the school. In fact, my school day was fairly segregated. Few

African-American students were in my high school academic classes, and those who were enrolled were the children of professionals in the county, like teachers.

My first understandings about the disparities facing minority groups did not come until I went away to college in North Carolina. I remember that one of my first lessons came when I learned that a minority group was defined by the lack of power a group had in society, as opposed to the number of individuals in a certain demographic. This was powerful for me because where I grew up, the white population was the smallest in number. I had just begun to understand the dynamics of power and privilege. My concepts of power and privilege developed more through my undergraduate years with my academic choice to concentrate on the study of history in underdeveloped regions of the world and my study of social history in the United States.

Queer history became especially important to me, as I had recently identified as gay. Social history connected me with the struggles faced by gays and lesbians in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. My social groups also changed with this realization, so I learned more of what it felt like to be part of a minority group and have different experiences. I realize now that even though I had a connection to a minority group, middle class, white privilege at a liberal arts school protected me from discrimination that many have experienced.

Practical goals.

Even though my understanding of inequality grew during my undergraduate years, I did not become impassioned about disparities until I became a teacher. I recognize that I have always chosen to work in schools that have both a high poverty

status and a larger concentration of minority students. I am sure that there are many factors behind this choice. Two of which are that it is an environment in which I am comfortable because of my school experiences growing up and also that jobs in schools like this have a higher turnover of teachers, making jobs available.

In these schools, I saw every day the impact of poverty and powerlessness on students. I saw the effects of hunger, inadequate housing, and unstable home environments. Perhaps the most infuriating for me as an educational professional, though, were the results of an educational system that had not met the educational needs of students.

Researchers and educators have many theories as to why there is a performance gap between white and minority students. Some theories include racism, the effects of poverty, lack of home support, and testing bias. While these factors do impact a child's education performance, the fault must be shared with the educational system. Study after study has shown that teachers have the biggest impact on a child's education (Allington, 2002; Hattie, 2012). Teachers must continue to develop assessment and instructional practices to teach each student.

I recently moved from working at the middle school level as an administrator to the district level as a literacy specialist for the school system. This position was created in response to state legislation targeting reading. In 2014, South Carolina joined states in creating comprehensive reading legislation. This legislation cited several needs:

Challenge 1: Low student achievement in reading and writing

Challenge 2: Literacy achievement gaps among demographic groups

Challenge 3: Summer reading achievement loss

Challenge 4: Limited number of exemplary literacy classrooms (South Carolina State Reading Plan, 2015)

As the district literacy specialist, I work with the reading coaches to address the needs identified by the legislation. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has provided guidelines and support from the onset of this legislation. As a district leader, I want to see how literacy coaches have appropriated policy to ameliorate the challenges identified by the state.

Intellectual goals.

I find that aligning myself to one theoretical tradition is difficult. I gravitate towards critical theory. Injustice and inequity rankle me, personally and intellectually. Power relationships, in my opinion, have created some of the worst blights in human history, like feudalism, segregation and apartheid, gender inequality, and other forms of discrimination. At the same time, I believe that power can be used to improve conditions of injustice and inequity. I am critical of the consequences (retention and mandatory summer programs) for students that accompany the Read to Succeed Act, but I hold society responsible for many of the disparities that we see, like the achievement gap experienced by minority groups and the problem of illiteracy. The educational system has to change to improve education for all students and meet the needs of the most struggling learners.

A positivist orientation is alluring to me. It would be so comforting for me to find that there is a truth existing "out there," but only if that absolute truth aligns with my own world view (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This allure disappears very quickly for me,

though, when researchers look for absolutes and use strict scientific reasoning. I see more nuance in causation and construct knowledge from experience.

For this research, I relied heavily on my ontological understanding that reality is not the same for everyone. Each person's experience of reality is understood through her own experiences and life situation. As I shared above, my perspective on reality changed as I left the small community in which I grew up, went to college, and then into the workforce as a teacher. Likewise, I believe that knowledge is constructed as I seek to understand my experiences and those of others. Like Rosenblatt's theory of reading which literacy coaches learn, individuals create understandings of the world by linking new information and experiences to those they have already had. My reflections show that I am most aligned with an epistemology of constructivism, and my research took an interpretive approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The state of South Carolina is promoting a balanced approach to teaching literacy. This means that teachers use a variety of strategies to teach literacy while creating large periods of time for students to read, write, and communicate. Before R2S, the state had not advocated a philosophy of teaching literacy. This research did not evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional philosophy promoted by the state. Instead, I seek to understand how reading coaches act as policy appropriators. I would like to see how appropriators use their positional power to implement a policy aligned with social improvement goals.

Theoretical Perspective and Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform your research" (Maxwell, 2005, p.33). The 4I framework of organizational learning was created to study strategic renewal as a domain of organizational learning. The requirements of a good framework include an identified phenomenon, stated assumptions inherent in the framework, and a description of how all the elements are related (Crossan, et al., 1999). This framework is applicable to my research. I infuse the concept of policy appropriation into the 4I framework to bridge its origin in organizational learning with my desire to understand policy implementation.

Policy is more than a set of laws or normative guidelines, as it is often perceived (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009). Policy is a complex set of interdependent sociocultural practices based on an exercise of power. Policy is not a simple linear, sequential process in which authorities legitimize policy, designees implement the policy, and then constituents receive the effects. Levinson & Sutton (2001) used the term appropriation to refer to the intersection of policy formation and implementation. Appropriation is, therefore, a "dynamic, interrelated process that stretches over time" (p.2). According to this definition, policy creation does not end before implementation. It is a recursive process in which the implementation, and reaction to such, modifies and adjusts the actual policy.

The 4I framework has four premises that support the proposition that the 4Is are related in feedforward and feedback processes across the individual, group, and institution levels of an organization.

Premise 1: Organizational learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation).

Premise 2: Organizational learning is multi-level: individual, group, and organization.

Premise 3: The three levels of organizational learning are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing (4Is).

Premise 4: Cognition affects action and vice versa (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 523).

Level	Process	Inputs/Outcomes
Individual	Intuiting	Experiences Images Metaphors
	Interpreting	Language Cognitive map Conversation/dialogue
Group	Integrating	Shared understandings Mutual adjustment Interactive systems
Organization	Institutionalizing	Routines Diagnostic systems Rules and procedures

Figure 1.1 Learning/Renewal in Organizations: Four Processes Through Three Levels (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 525).

The first premise addresses the tension between learning or doing something new versus relying on expertise. This premise can be likened to implementing policy with fidelity, as opposed to making approximations and allowances for practices implementers perceive to be effective or adapting to context. The next premise claims that learning occurs at the individual, group and organization levels. Similarly, policy is implemented;

or perhaps more accurately, appropriated, at all levels of the organization. The processes look differently at each of the levels, but it all must occur for both organizational learning and enacting policy to take place. Social and psychological processes link the three levels of an organization: intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing. These processes are explained in more detail below. The final premise for the framework is bounded rationality, the notion that the decisions we make are limited by our available information, time frame, and cognitive abilities. This premise has been explored in policy implementation studies. The (un)successful implementation of a policy has often been attributed to the capacity of those responsible for implementing it.

The third premise delineates the four processes that occur over the organizational levels that are responsible for the learning that takes place. Intuiting happens inside the mind of an individual. According to the 4I framework, learning and understanding is a complex process that occurs in the brain. The subconscious is critical to this learning; as our brains seek to make connections and discern patterns between the new information and our own experiences and expertise. In reading instruction, this is called using your schema to make meaning, or the transactional theory of reader response (Weaver, 2002). I believe that this preverbal, preconscious process-making occurs when an individual experiences anything new, including policy. This reliance on personal knowledge and experience explains why no two people understand a text, policy, or directive in exactly the same way.

Intuiting and interpreting occur at the individual level, with interpreting spilling over into the group level. Interpreting involves seeing and expressing relationships within a domain or environment. This conscious contextualization occurs when individuals

articulate their understandings. Individuals may adjust their personal understandings when they interact with others. The group then "creates and refines common language, clarifies images, and creates shared meaning and understanding" (Crossan, 1999, p.528). A similar process occurs with interpreting and implementing policy, like the mutual adaptation that research studies in wave two documented.

Integrating leaves the realm of meaning-making and individual action and occurs when the group moves to a shared practice and a shared language. Like in the previous processes, language is integral to this process. It is used to convey both new understandings and previous knowledge. Crossan et al. (1999) reasoned that language

Level	Process	Inputs/Outcomes
Individual	Intuiting	Experiences Images Metaphors
	Interpreting	Language Cognitive map Conversation/dialogue
Group	Integrating	Shared understandings Mutual adjustment Interactive systems
Organization	Institutionalizing	Routines Diagnostic systems Rules and procedures

Figure 1.2 Learning/Renewal in Organizations: Four Processes Through Three Levels (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 525).

must evolve for new learning to take place. At the organizational level, policy leaders make a conscious effort to create routines, procedures, and rules for common practice.

Since new policy is in effect new learning, the shared language at the group and institutional levels plays a critical piece of policy appropriation. In fact, Levinson & Sutton (2009) claimed that appropriation is a form of "creative interpretive practice necessarily engaged in by different people involved in the policy process" (p. 767).

This framework was useful for studying policy. Both organizational learning and policy appropriation can start at the individual level and expand to the institutional level, or they can be conceived outside the organizational structure and be superimposed until the individuals and groups are able to intuit, interpret and integrate. For this study, I framed my research with the four premises of the 4I framework and investigate the interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing social and psychological processes as they apply to the literacy coaches appropriation of Read to Succeed.

In this study, I used an abbreviated version of the 4I Framework. Since intuiting happens as soon as one is exposed to a new phenomenon, any questions about the literacy coaches' first thoughts were explained through the lenses of the coaches' experiences over the last seven years. Questions about the coaches' interpretations are more valid. Coaches were able to reflect on early interpretations of the R2S Act and how those interpretations may have changed over time. Our interpretations are shaped by our worldview, but since our worldview expands as we interact with others, I am interested in discovering the coaches' collective interpretation of the R2S policy in addition to their individual ones. As the coaches have worked together and shared their interpretations with each other, they have participated in integration. "The interpreting process quite naturally blends into the integrating process" where the group creates a shared understanding and makes plans for coordinated actions (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 525).

The final component to the 4I framework is institutionalizing where routines and procedures become embedded. Institutionalization happens at the organization level. The reading coaches in this study work with multiple levels of organizations. From the very beginning, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) attempted to control the policy message and delivery by providing twice-monthly trainings for the coaches. The literacy coaches are employed at the district level. At times, district policy did not align with state training, so the coaches negotiated implementation, both individually and collectively. The coaches also worked inside the schools where they are assigned, which constitutes another organization.

Relevance

Because policy is often understood to be the specific legislation or document passed by a governmental entity, few people would regard a school district's literacy coaches as policy actors. In this dominant, linear view of policy, coaches are the implementors of legitimized policy created by legislators and government agencies. More recently, policy has been studied as a recursive process where legitimized policy is adapted, changed and often recreated in response to local needs and customs. Literacy coaches play a central role in this process.

Coaches study, read and interpret policy in order to implement the Read to Succeed legislation in their schools. Coaches create the everyday, working procedures in their buildings as they decide how to assist teachers and students in improving student performance. These decisions are based on the coaches' understandings of the legislation, their understandings of state and district initiatives, and their understanding of the school culture.

Coaches create school procedures as they determine how things are done to meet the needs of students and teachers. This is a powerful position for creating practices for student instruction and creating school culture. As new procedures are developed, they are in actuality policies that guide instruction until new policies are created. Therefore, literacy coaches are not just policy implementers, they are policy creators.

I am interested in the dialogic approach that coaches take to policy appropriation as they move between their schools and district levels. I want to understand how their concept of policy developed and changed as they interpreted and integrated the shifting state requirements, district pressures, and teachers' needs.

Terminology

4I Framework- A conceptual framework is a system of concepts and beliefs that organize research and define the approach to data collection. The 4I Framework organizes data at the individual, group, and organizational levels which are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing (Crossan et al., 1999).

Appropriation- This is a recursive process of policy creation in which the implementation, and reaction to such, modifies and adjusts the actual policy (Sutton & Levinson, 2001).

Balanced literacy- is an approach to teaching literacy that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Literacy includes reading and writing instruction.

Coaching- The practice of providing sustained, job embedded professional development (Buly, et al., 2006).

Implementation- The simplest definition is to put into effect. Traditionally, implementation has been seen as a linear process where policy makers created the policy and other officials put it in action (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). In recent years, implementation has been understood as a recursive process where policy is shaped and formed by the interaction of agents including policy creators, policy regulators, and policy receivers (Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009).

Institutionalization- The conscious effort to create routines, procedures, and rules for common practice throughout an organization.

Integration- This occurs when a group leaves the realm of meaning-making and individual action and moves to a shared practice and a shared language (Crossan, et al., 1999).

Interpretation- This is the defining of a process through words or actions in the 4I Framework. This process occurs at the individual and group levels (Crossan et al., 1999).

Iterative Policy Creation- Policy implementation occurs in a linear cycle that includes formation, implementation, evaluation, and recreation. This occurs in a cycle and may be repeated as frequently as policy actors desire.

Literacy Coaches- Professionals that provide sustained, job embedded professional development in reading, writing, and communication standards (Buly et al., 2006). This term is used synonymously with Reading Coaches.

Policy- The established way things are done. All three types of policy as identified by Guba (1984) are addressed in this research. Policy-in-intention refers to goals or intentions, official decisions, guidelines, or strategies that are determined by legislatures and secondary agents such as government officials. Policy-in-action refers to the result of day-to-day decisions that are made by the agents in charge of implementing the goals and intents of legitimized policy of governing bodies which occur in close proximity to the point of action. Policy-in-experience refers to what is experienced by the client, those in which a policy is designed to affect.

Politics- In the context of this study, politics refers to actions undertaken to implement policy where power relationships are negotiated. This stands apart from the responsive roles coaches play in nurturing teacher reflection and growth (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

Political Role- interactions "that involve asserting and negotiating powering attempts to push or coax teachers to respond" to policy mandates (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012, p.19).

Policy Actor- any individual who is connected with a policy. They may have direct or indirect involvement with the policy.

Reading First- a federal initiative that focused on putting proven methods of early reading instruction into the classrooms to ensure that students read by the end of third-grade.

Recursive Policy Creation- the notion that policy creation and implementation exist simultaneously. Policy is created as policy actors strive to implement a formalized,

or legislated, policy. This policy creation does not require a full policy cycle like an iterative notion of policy creation. New policies may be created at any point during policy implementation.

Student Centered Coaching- coaching technique that focusses on collaborating with teachers to meet the needs of students based on ongoing data collection (Sweeney & Harris, 2017).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF POLICY AND LITERACY COACHING LITERATURE

Introduction

The scope of policy implementation research in education is vast. Researchers began studying education policy with federal entitlement grants in the 1960s. Research has evolved from whether the policy is implemented, to how well it is implemented, and then to how effective policy is under which conditions. This research looks at policy as governance. A smaller body of research has evolved over more recent years that looks at implementation through a broader lens of policy as an effect made up of legislative guidelines, implementation by policy agents, and the actual results of the implementation process.

This literature review begins with implementation theory to build the case that a different view of policy implementation has begun, and additional research is needed from that lens. This review allows readers to recognize that current research from this perspective is limited in scope.

The review briefly explores current research on reading coaches. These studies show what coaches spend their time doing in their buildings and their qualifications. Knowing the experiences and expertise allows new research to speculate

on why policy in effect may look differently than policy intentions. Some of the most current research has begun to examine the role of coaches as implementers of policy. This research looks ar how coaches conduct daily activities to help staff and students meet policy mandates.

Even though policy implementation has evolved greatly over the five decades, policy is still most often studied based on whether or not implementation meets governance expectations. Policy can also be defined as a normative process of every day expectations in a society. This research bridged the gap between studying the implementation of policy mandates to understanding how policy is formed from day to day actions of coaches and staff in schools.

Implementation Theory

The study of policy in educational leadership programs for administrators is generally conducted to prepare leaders for implementing policies in their buildings. Though courses delve into the big picture of policy being created by governmental and regulatory agencies, the study of policy implementation for aspiring leaders gives the impression that building leaders have the autonomy to choose the way in which they implement a policy and the authority to make it happen. Policy creators and implementers "typically draw on a relatively straightforward model of organizational change--the bureaucratic/ rational choice model" (Diamond, 2007, p. 286). Policy implementation is much more complex than this common perception suggests.

Politics is "the authoritative allocation of values for a society" (Easton as cited in Nakamura, 1980, p.3). This definition of politics would have us believe that Americans across the country highly value education. As early as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787,

the federal government issued land grants for public schools (Nelson & Weinbaum, 2009). Education is compulsory in all states. Public and private colleges and universities vie for top graduates each year, while technical schools and smaller college offer opportunities to graduates who want to prepare themselves for jobs and professions that do not require the same amount of commitment to academia. Recent policies at the federal and state levels reinforce society's value of education.

Easton later explains that the box in which he placed politics was a necessity to organize thinking about what goes into a political system, but two additional factors were missing. One missing component was an explanation of who or what determined the inputs, outputs, and conversion process. Perhaps even more importantly, this policy box definition did not explain how inputs are converted into outputs.

Policy can be conceptualized in three ways (Guba,1984). The questions we seek to answer determine the definition of policy that a research study uses. The first type of policy, policy-in-intention, is what many think of when referring to the term policy. Definitions in this category refer to policy as goals or intentions, official decisions, guidelines, or strategies that are determined by legislatures and secondary agents such as government officials. In general, legislatures and law-making bodies create the goals or intents, while government agencies interpret those intents and create guidelines and strategies. When studying policy intentions, a researcher is removed from what Guba considered the point of action (p.65), the place where policy and clients meet.

The second type of policy is policy-in-action, or policy implementation. Definitions in this category deal with behaviors, norms, and outputs conducted by local

administrators and public service workers who interact with citizens daily, coined "street-level bureaucrats" by Michael Lipsky (Peters & Pierre, 2015). When considering policy-in-action, policy is the result of day-to-day decisions that are made by the agents in charge of implementing the goals and intents of legitimized policy of governing bodies which occur in close proximity to the point of action. Policy-in-experience is the final type of policy in this model. From this perspective, policy is what is experienced by the client, those in which a policy is designed to affect. Therefore, the effects are the actual policy.

Policy implementation has evolved greatly over the last five decades. Odden (1991) originally divided the history of educational policy implementation research into three stages; Honig (2006) preferred the term "waves" when referring to the same phases. The first implementation studies began to evaluate the effects of social programs in the 1960s. They were mostly concerned with whether or how federal policy was implemented at the local levels. Stage one studies of these programs in the 1960s and early 1970s reported conflicts that hinged on implementers' lack of capacity or will to implement the large-scale grant programs. Starting in the mid-seventies, regulations created a more structured implementation of grant programs like Title I. Studies of policy during this time showed that implementation happened with mutual adaptation between local priorities and policy regulations. Policies in stage three moved away from categorical programs, focusing on issues like poverty, to comprehensive education reform; like educator professionalism, curriculum changes, or school restructuring. This wave of policy studies, concluding in the early 1990s, was concerned about what works in improving student performance.

In 2006, Honig dubbed policy design and subsequent studies in the fifteen years between the end of the third wave and the publication of *New Directions in Educational Policy Implementation* as contemporary education policy. She explained that policy during this time span aimed to change professional practice instead of adding services for specific populations and promoted an increased attention to how and why "policy, people, and places interact to shape how implementation unfolds" (p10). Though Honig did not issue the moniker of fourth wave in policy research to this fifteen-year period, later researchers, Young and Lewis (2016), termed Honig's contemporary education policy as a "fourth eve."

Cohen-Vogel et al. (2014) explain that researchers have known at least since the third wave of implementation research that the question is not, "what is implementable and what works," but "what works where, when, and for whom" (p. 260). Even though this is the case, the federal government continued its focus on what works with experimental and quasi-experimental research and passed the Educational Sciences Reform Act of 2002. This focus on research to inform practice is translational research. Translational research is the application of scientifically proven programs in the classroom. This mandate for federal grants ignores the practical knowledge that not every program works in every context, and what works in certain contexts may not have been proven in a research study.

Over the last fifteen years, translational research has evolved into improvement science, or the continuous improvement cycle. Implementation of policy in this fourth wave "focuses on characterizing the setting in all its complexity and uses an iterative, flexible process wherein design and research plans are revised as the work progresses"

(Cohen-Vogel et al., 2016, p 269). Therefore, the emphasis on improvement does not just focus on implementation but also on the quality of the research being performed.

Current reading policies are situated in this fourth wave or continuous improvement paradigm. Educational leadership standards task leaders to act as agents of continuous improvement to meet the needs of all students (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Though reading coaches are not administrators, they are leaders in the schools in which they serve. In policies that prescribe them, reading coaches act as agents of continuous improvement. Coaches provide a variety of supports to promote the professional development of teachers and the school.

Reading Coach Literature

Literature on the use of instructional coaches exists in a convergence of policy implementation research. At the end of the twentieth century when policy began to focus on professional practice (third-wave), instructional coaching positions were created to facilitate improved practice to meet rigorous standards at the federal and state levels. Likewise, coaches themselves were charged with supporting practices that work for the specific populations and contexts in which they work as a part of research-based practices (translational policy).

Most educators believe that the intent of school-based coaching is to provide continuous, job-embedded professional development and other supports to improve student learning (Sweeney, 2011). Coaches build communities of teachers who engage in improving their craft, create a shared language and belief system for improving instruction and learning, and provide a structure for learning new skills and strategies

(Bright & Hensley, 2010). Coaches work side-by-side with teachers to co-construct a repertoire of effective practices for the specific students they teach (Galey, 2016).

A study of Reading First Coaches in Alaska found that the roles of coaches vary due to three things: 1) mandates from the legislature, state departments of education, district and school, 2) the literacy initiative or program that is being implemented, and 3) the coaching model that is being utilized (Bright & Hensley, 2010). Similarly, an essay on the evolving role of instructional coaches divides coaching roles into three categories. The cognitive role includes teacher development activities. The organizational roles are those that build capacity including scheduling and managing professional learning communities. The final category is the reform role. In this final role, coaches are recognized as policy actors who promote the components of the reforms which created the coaching position (Galey, 2016).

The literature on literacy coaching lies mainly within the cognitive and organizational roles of coaches and can largely be placed into three categories: the roles literacy coaches take in supporting teachers, the effectiveness of literacy coaching, and teacher and principal perspectives about literacy coaching.

Roles and time allocations of coaches.

One of the most researched topics on literacy coaches is the roles that they undertake to support teachers and the amount of time that they spend in these roles. Policies, districts, and researchers do not share a common vocabulary for the roles and responsibilities undertaken by literacy coaches. Policies create an urgent need for coaches, but may not define their responsibilities (Mundy, Ross & Leko, 2012). In

addition, coaches and building leaders largely determine the roles they take to meet the intentions of a policy. One two-year multiple-case study of 31 participants in Georgia analyzed coaching activities or responsibilities to determine the roles of coaches (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). This study used the perspectives of principals, coaches, and teachers to determine that literacy coaches acted as mentors when they performed formal presentations, facilitated study groups, demonstrated instructional practices, analyzed data, or observed teachers. The study found that coaches acted in their role as director when they purchased and organized materials, scheduled instruction, grouped students, promoted assessment and curriculum fidelity, analyzed data, or observed teachers. The dual roles used by this study are much broader than the definitions of roles in other studies.

A multiple methods study conducted by the National Reading Technical Assistance Center found that reading coaches provide support by helping teachers improve their understanding on a range of topics (Bright & Hensley, 2010). These topics include materials, strategies, and a range of assessments. Coaches present and provide support through individual coaching, grade level meetings, and whole group professional development. They provided ongoing support in helping teachers implement their new understanding and provided feedback and follow-up in a non-threatening, collegial environment.

Researchers in the same study, pulled information from Florida's Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN). This network was used to compare student progress with the amount of time coaches log in twelve different coaching activities including: professional development, planning, modeling, coaching, coach/teacher

conferences, student assessment, data reporting, data analysis, meetings, knowledge building, managing reading materials, and "other." Coaches at the middle and high school levels mostly fell into two groups. The *normal* group consisted of coaches who distributed their time relatively equally among the activities, and the *conference* group that spent a larger amount of time conferring with teachers. The study found no major differences in student performance based on the coaching style teachers experienced.

A qualitative study of two Reading First coaches (Mundy, Ross, & Leko, 2012). found that while coaches engage in similar professional development methods like modeling, observing, and walk-throughs, their approach differed. One of the coaches used an expert driven approach where she showed and told teachers what to do based on her personal success as a teacher. Her intentions were to improve teacher knowledge which would improve their practice. The second coach used a collaborative approach where she and her teachers made joint decisions on how to improve classroom practice. This coach believed that teacher reflection and inquiry led to better instructional practice. This study found that expertise in reading did not equate to more effective coaching.

Instead of identifying coaching roles by the specific actions they performed, Ippolito (2010) described how coaches in one large urban district used coaching behaviors in ways that were responsive, directive, or balanced. Responsive relationships with teachers were based on teacher reflections and student data. Directive relationships were ones where the coach positioned themselves as experts and were assertive in establishing instructional practices. This mixed method study found that coaches balanced the two types of relationships and switched between them depending on the

context, like whole faculty, grade level, or individual, and the specific needs of the teachers they were assisting.

Qualifications and effectiveness.

The research on qualifications and effectiveness is disparate and inconclusive. Studies measure effectiveness in a variety of ways including self-reflections, teacher and principal reports, and student assessment data. Likewise, coach quality has been measured in multiple ways including qualifications, expertise, experience, practice and the ability to affect teacher and student outcomes (Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2012).

Given the right circumstances, coaches can have a positive impact on teacher instructional practices and student achievement (Mundy, Ross & Leko, 2012). School principals are the key to effective coaching in a building. Strong coaches who have a productive professional relationship with their principals lead the development of learning communities. Principals directly determine coaches' roles and determine the amount of time coaches spend on responsibilities. Coaches perform a variety of duties including to administer testing, to oversee intervention programs, to tutor struggling students, to plan and to supervise summer programs, to supervise curriculum, and to enter data. The more responsibilities coaches are given, the less time they actually spend on coaching teachers. Principals are directly linked to the success of a coach (Heineke & Polnick, 2013).

Some research correlates coaching practice and coach qualifications with student achievement data or teacher perspectives. Education and experience are two commonly used indicators of coach quality. These indicators are not necessarily linked positively to

improved reading achievement. Coaches in larger schools and higher performing schools were significantly more likely to have the recommended qualifications than coaches in smaller or lower performing schools (Marsh, et al., 2012). A study of the Alabama Reading Initiative found that literacy specialists who served primarily as instructional coaches had a positive effect on school-wide reading achievement while specialists who served as intervention teachers seemed to have a negative relationship to school-wide reading achievement (Pipes, 2004). Likewise, coaches who had more years of teaching reading had a small, negative relationship with teacher's report on influence in a multiple method study of middle school reading coaches. On the other hand, there was a positive relationship between perceived effectiveness and the number of years of coaching experience (Marsh, et al., 2012).

A correlation was found in a study of Reading First coaches between the amount of time teachers work with coaches and student growth on DIBELS, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment, in a K-3 environment (Piper, 2011). This study found that the number of hours teachers conferred with coaches, coach administration of assessments and analysis of results with teachers, modeling lessons for teachers, and coaching on specific comprehension strategies all led to significant increases in student achievement on DIBELS post-assessments. Coach qualifications had no impact on student achievement in this study.

A study of 287, K-5 teachers in Minnesota determined that teachers found student centered coaching to be the most effective and have the biggest impact on instruction. These practices included using student data to determine instructional needs and practices. The study also found that the teachers who spent the most time with literacy

coaches found them to be the most beneficial (Bissonette, 2014). Students scored at benchmark levels on DIBELS when teachers participated in job embedded professional development according to a meta-analysis of coaching effectiveness (Bright & Hensley, 2010).

Teacher, principal, and coach perspectives.

According to Reading First evaluations of fifteen states (Bright & Hensley, 2010), teachers, principals and coaches share positive perspectives on coaches and coaching. The majority of principals agreed that the coach is knowledgeable and provides support for teachers. Teachers found that the help they received from coaches was beneficial and that coaches were a knowledgeable resource. Coaches concurred with the principals and teachers and believed that they did provide support that was valued and useful. Interestingly, the reading coach and administrator responses were more similar to each other while teacher responses were the most different. All school professionals believed that coaches are important, but they do not agree on which roles are the most beneficial.

An examination of Florida's reading coach implementation found that teachers and principals reported that coaches made a positive impact on instructional practices, and teachers credited coaches with having a "moderate to great" influence through surveys and questionnaires. Both principals and teachers were satisfied with the qualifications of their coaches and rated them highly effective. They valued the coaches experience, knowledge, collaboration and specific coaching skills. Interpersonal skills were highly valued as well. One area of growth identified by many principals was the knowledge and use of strategies to support adult learners (Marsh, et al., 2008).

Similarly, a study of Michigan Reading First coaches used survey, questionnaires and coach logs to determine that teachers appreciated the coaches work to help teachers be successful and improve their practices. Specific coaching support included facilitating grade level meetings, analyzing assessments, and providing specific feedback. The study found that teacher satisfaction with coaches was dependent on the principals' support of the coaches, but there was no correlation between the satisfaction of teachers and principals on the qualifications of the coaches (Scott, 2012). Mundy's (2012) study of two reading coaches determined that teachers valued the skills and knowledge that coaches bring to their practice, but the number of years of coaching practice was not as important as the ways the coaches supported adult learners.

Implementation and Coaching

Most educators believe that the intent of coaching is to assist teachers in understanding and implementing needed changes in instructional practices based on classroom evidence to improve student achievement on standardized measures (Sweeney, 2011, Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Researchers have begun to recognize that coaches have political responsibilities as policy implementers. Hargreaves & Skelton (2012) adopt the construct that coaching can be examined through three lenses: technological, concerned with time and space; cultural, concerned with communication, understanding and culture; and political, concerned with allocations, distributions, and dynamics of power.

In the context of this study, *politics* refers to actions undertaken to implement policy where power relationships are negotiated. This stands apart from the responsive roles coaches play in nurturing teacher reflection and growth (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

The roles and responsibilities of coaches are broad and even ambiguous because the use of coaches is "intentionally framed as a multi-purpose policy tool," or lever for change, where they guide teachers to change practice in the direction of policy (Galey, 2016 p.58; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin, 2014). A key understanding is that coaches assume a political role when they are placed as the "mediators and managers of mandated reforms" (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012, p. 7). There is an emerging body of literature on this political role of coaches.

Reading policies have specific mandates for instructional practices and accountability measures. Literacy coaches are responsible for training educators in these specific mandates and supporting the implementation of them. Coaches do this by building teacher capacity for required instructional and assessment practices that meet the goals of policy makers. Coaches are also tasked with pressuring teachers to meet the requirements of policy to couple policy to practice. Studies have shown that there is an agenda that coaches are expected to promote in classroom practices (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Deussen, 2007; Ippolito, 2010; Woulfin, 2014).

Policy mandates go beyond instructional practices and require changes that fall in the realm of administration like required amounts of instructional time, the formation of classroom libraries, or specific instructional structures. Coaches are placed in the middle of conflicts between policy provisions and existing practices of teachers and administrators. Coaches navigate the waters of responding to authentic teacher needs and policy expectations they implement or enforce (Galey, 2016; Ippolito, 2010; Woulfin, 2014).

In Galey's (2016) review of coaching literature, she found the coaches functioned in three roles. The cognitive role focusing on teacher development and the organizational role of capacity building were addressed in the literature above. Those roles fall into the intuiting and interpreting dimensions of the 4I Framework where individuals begin to understand and articulate a policy and their roles in it. The third capacity, the reform role, is twofold. Coaches influence teachers into adjusting their professional practice to policy mandates while also adapting reforms to the local context. The duality of the reform role addresses how coaches integrate their own understandings with current practices and the understandings of others to begin institutionalizing new policy as shown in the 4I Framework.

In a longitudinal case study of a Reading First school (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), researchers found that teachers responded to policy in three ways: rejection, assimilation, or accommodation. Teachers who rejected policy mandates either ignored them completely, dismissed them, or considered and then rejected them. This included teachers that gave symbolic responses or added in pieces of mandates without changing their practices. Teachers who assimilated adopted Reading First practices as it fit into their own schema. Accommodation occurred when teachers reconstructed their instructional practices to meet policy mandates.

These teacher actions occurred in response to three distinct political coaching actions. Pressuring is the most direct role coaches take to get teachers to adopt policy mandates. This means that coaches explicitly invoke power to get teachers to change classroom practices. When coaches do not have formal authority over teachers, they leverage the authority of the principal, district office, or state department of education.

Persuading occurs when coaches convince teachers to make changes on their own. This could involve persuading teachers that the policy mandates are not very different from their current practices or that there are distinct benefits to making the changes.

Buffering, the third political action, occurs when coaches protect teachers from policy messages. The study found that coaches supported symbolic responses to certain policy mandates (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012).

Coaches are often caught between responding to teacher self-directed learning goals and helping them implement specific policy goals (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Using surveys, interviews, observations and focus groups, a study of a mid-sized urban school district on the East Coast found that coaches balanced responsive and directive relationships with teachers in three ways. Responsive roles are those that assist teachers with their self-identified needs. Directive roles relate to implementing policy or district/school mandates. Directive roles fall clearly into the political realm of coaching behaviors. The first way coaches balanced responsive and directive relationships with teachers is by shifting between the two roles in a single session. For instance, when a teacher explains why they are unable to use an expected practice, the coach demonstrates a way to overcome the obstacle. Coaches may use protocols including agendas, planning guides, or discussion protocols to balance directive and responsive relationships. Finally, coaches may share leadership roles with teachers to achieve balance. An example of this would be having administration, teachers and coaches work together to align their goals, instructional practices and evaluation mechanisms (Ippolito, 2010).

Recent research has found that even the smallest interaction between coaches and teachers has political implications because they are about instructional reform initiatives (Galey, 2016). Coaching is, therefore, a means for individual and systemic reforms. Policy makers believe that when coaches work with teachers, they are building collective capacity for the change required by the initiative (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

A 2015 mixed-method study of coaches in a small school district found that the way instructional coaching is framed by the policy makers and the provided professional development determines both teacher and systemic reform effectiveness in light of the provided training program (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). This research collected qualitative data through interviews, coach discussions, and written documentation like time allocation logs, emails and written reflections.

In this study, researchers found that coaches believed that individual coaching would aggregate systemic change, but they exhibited vast uncertainties about their ability to facilitate change. In team meetings, coaches provided large amounts of surface level training with the intention of working with teachers individually to build deeper knowledge. Interviews and logs showed that coaches spent less than six hours a week working with teachers. Coaches felt tension between supporting teacher needs in order to change and what they felt was permissible in the policy and the district requirements. The way the training program framed the change process impacted how coaches implemented policy initiatives. This survey found that coaches struggled with how to balance responsive and directive roles based on the provided framework (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Gaps in the Literature

As Honig (2006) explained, policy since the 1990s has aimed to change professional practice instead of adding services for specific populations. It has also increased attention to how and why "policy, people, and places interact to shape how implementation unfolds" (p. 10). The last 25 years have seen a drastic increase in policymaking to improve both instruction and requisite student outcomes (Woulfin, 2014). Research on coaching policy fits squarely into this paradigm. Studies have sought the most effective roles and responsibilities of coaches, the effectiveness of coaches, and perceptions of coaches by other staff. Studies in this body of literature primarily address policy intentions, policy implementation, and policy experiences. The literature also addresses coaches as implementers. Coaches balance responsive and directive actions, build teacher capacity for new practices, carry out school and district initiatives, and advance state or federal policy.

Though the literature has started to recognize the role coaches play as implementers, there is even less research on coaches as policy creators. The majority of the studies on literacy coaches view policy exclusively as governance, or authorized policy. As Levinson and Sutton (2001) ask, "What would educational policy studies look like if they reconceptualized the notion of policy itself as a complex social practice, an ongoing process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts?" (p.1).

The closest look at coaches as actual appropriators was conducted by Coburn & Woulfin (2012), even though they do not use that concept. Their study found that coaches create policy, Guba's (1982) policy-in-action, as they support school staff. This research

found that coaches pressure, persuade, or buffer staff as they choose which parts of policy they implement. Pressuring and persuading are examples of the coaches choosing policy mandates that they believe are appropriate and meaningful. When coaches buffer for specific mandates, coaches are essentially writing out specific mandates of the policy.

Several of the studies cite the use of power in coaching relationships (Ippolito, 2010; Galey, 2016, Woulfin, 2014; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). The studies have not crossed the bridge into the results of using this power. In 2012, Coburn & Woulfin call for more research on the conditions that involve political practices in coaching. None of the literature actually recognizes coaches as creators of policy, or policy appropriators.

In education, coaches are powerful policy actors (and creators) in school and district contexts. Coach positions exist at the intersection of policy formation and policy implementation, what Levinson and Sutton (2001) call appropriation. Appropriation occurs when actors take on policy and make it their own. According to this conceptualization, policy is a kind of normative decision making. Additional research is needed to understand how coaches act as policy appropriators and lead policy appropriation in their schools.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods and procedures that were used to conduct this phenomenological study. "Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first-person point of view" (Smith, 2018). The purpose of this study was to understand how coaches function as policy actors. The subjects of this study were unfamiliar with the concept of policy-in-action or their roles as policy creators and implementors.

Statement of the problem

While lawmakers develop policy of intention based on the perceived needs in society, day-to-day policy is developed organically through interactions among various actors in a social group. South Carolina lawmakers passed the Read to Succeed legislation in 2014. This law mandated the use of reading (literacy) coaches to improve instruction for students to increase the number of students reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

The South Carolina Department of Education created guidelines for the policy in conjunction with the policy creators. The state-supported districts and coaches with two

intensive years of professional development and continued support in subsequent years. The state support transitioned from understanding the requirements of the law, to focusing on best coaching and instructional practices.

The purpose of this study is to explore how literacy coaches function as policy actors from the perspectives of principals, literacy coaches, and the district literacy director. I used interviews, a focus group, and literacy plans to gather information.

Coburn & Woulfin (2012) view implementation as *policy to practice*. I want to investigate implementation as *policy in practice*, or appropriation. Based on Levinson and Sutton's conception of policy appropriation, all actions taken by the coaches, since they are mandated as a part of South Carolina's Read to Succeed (R2S) Act, are acts of policy.

Using the theory of policy appropriation and qualitative methods which I interpreted with pieces of the 4I framework, this study explores how literacy coaches create policy and identifies policies created by coaches.

Appropriateness

Qualitative methods were used in this research because of the socially created nature of reality. Appropriation exists in the interaction between individuals who hold positional power in a specific situation and those who do not. It is my theory that literacy coaches hold power to create policy through their evolving beliefs, which drive their actions and inactions, but they do not recognize that they hold power or appropriate policy. I collected literacy plans for each of the elementary schools that shared school policies that the coaches create and implement. In addition, interview and questioning

techniques used in qualitative research are well suited for testing this theory. In a focus group, I encouraged literacy coaches to share ways they interpreted state policy and actions they took based on interpretations. In individual interviews with coaches, principals, and the literacy director, I discovered how these policy interpretations were integrated into the daily operations of the schools and district.

Selection of Participants

For my research, I interviewed the elementary literacy coaches, principals, and the literacy director in a rural, Title I school district and collected reading plans that show how they have created procedures in accordance with the role of literacy coach. This neighboring county has five elementary schools, each employing a literacy coach as required by the state. The district is predominantly rural with two small urban areas. My literacy coaches and I went through the first two years of training with this district, so I was familiar with the state training they received and the way state expectations have been delivered to this group. Even though this nearby county is less affluent and had

	Neighboring County	My County
Percent with an associate's degree	8.20%	9.30%
College Graduation Rate	12.40%	17.70%
Percent with a graduate or professional degree	3.60%	6.70%
High School Graduation Rate	78.00%	78.60%
Percent who did not finish the 9th grade	7.70%	6.30%

Above charts are based on data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey | ODN Dataset | API -

Figure 3.1 Graduation Rates (Socrata, 2017)

fewer adults with college and professional degrees in 2013 reports, the graduation rate was only six-tenths of a percent higher in my county and has only 1.4% more students finish ninth grade (Socrata, 2017).

Data Collection Procedures

This research had three components: three interview groups, a focus group, and document analysis. I interviewed coaches and principals in the five elementary schools to find out what policies have been created in response to Read to Succeed and to determine whether literacy coaches see themselves as policy actors. The questions are in Appendix A. After interviewing all participating coaches and principals, I added an interview with the district director of literacy because of the systemic nature of the approach to policy in the district. After the interview with the director, I conducted a focus group with the five literacy coaches. See Appendices B and C for those questions. Finally, I conducted document analysis on the five elementary literacy plans to determine literacy policy in each of the schools. See Appendix D for a Literacy Plan template.

Research Questions

Interpretive research relies heavily on interviews, conversations that have structure and purpose (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Maxwell (2005, p. 92), "Your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain understanding." My research questions are:

- How do coaches function as policy actors?
- What policies do coaches, create and how do they institutionalize them?

Interview Protocol and Procedure

The first stage of this study was to interview principals, coaches, and the district literacy director. According to Brinkmann and Kvale, a research interview "is a conversation that has structure and purpose" (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.107). This research is best suited to discovery through conversation because I am not looking for formal policy like those created by lawmaking bodies. I wanted to understand how state requirements were embodied at the school level. Researchers conduct interviews when they "cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.108). Using interviews, I sought to discover policy in practice or, in the vernacular, “the way we do things.”

The interview questions and observation protocol in this study were developed to have inquiry-based conversations as described by Castillo-Montoya to include: “a) interview questions written differently from the research questions; b) an organization following social rules of ordinary conversation; c) a variety of questions; d) a script with likely follow-up and prompt questions” (2016, p. 813). In other words, inquiry-based conversations require the interviewer to adapt esoteric research investigations into manageable inquiries that follow societal norms of conversations.

Interviews were conducted through Zoom video conferencing because the state was under quarantine because we were still in the first stages of Covid-19 response. Four of the five literacy coaches agreed to participate in the interviews and two principals participated. After the coach and principal interviews, I added an interview with the district literacy director because of the systemic nature of policy development for the county. Interview questions are found in Appendices A and B.

Focus Group

After the interviews were conducted, all five literacy coaches agreed to participate in a focus group. The focus group was held at the conclusion of a district meeting for the convenience of the coaches. The focus group was conducted through Skype, the video platform the coaches were using for the meeting. Questions for the focus group are in Appendix C.

Document Analysis

Three types of documents used in qualitative research include public records, personal documents, and physical evidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, I used public records, official records of ongoing activities. The district literacy director gave me copies of each school's 2020-2021 Literacy Plan for Read to Succeed. These documents are public and are shared widely at the district and state levels. These literacy plans were used to create a list of policies used at each school. This data enriched the interview and focus group analysis.

Authenticity was not a concern since I requested the literacy plans through the district literacy director. I used my knowledge of Read to Succeed and school district operations to authenticate the documents I collected.

Data Analysis

I followed standard qualitative data analysis protocols to interpret interviews. Following each interview session, the recorded MP4s were transcribed. Data analysis occurred both concurrently with data collection and following data collection. Open coding was used to begin data analysis. Codes were assigned to organize data and make

connections among the sources. The 4I Framework, which was modified from a study on organizational learning, was used to interpret the data and recognize themes. This analysis process was applied to interview groups, across interview groups, and in conjunction with document analysis. The framework helped me identify emerging themes, patterns, and discrepancies in light of the *Interpreting*, *Integrating,* and *Institutionalizing* components and the levels of organizational structure. Preliminary analysis occurred between and even during interviews and the data analysis process. This helped me narrow my focus as needed and follow new themes that emerged (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

All Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and policies were followed for this research. I interviewed staff members in a small, nearby district, but privacy was not a concern for participants. All identifying information has been kept confidential. I assigned each school a number and coaches and principals were identified by that number to maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

Trustworthiness

As with all studies, validity must be considered with qualitative research. This study used triangulation and multiple sources to promote trustworthiness. I triangulated data sources as my primary means of ensuring validity. I interviewed three separate groups: literacy coaches, principals, and the district literacy director. After interviewing coaches and principals, I needed additional information, so I scheduled an interview with the literacy director. I conducted a focus group with the coaches to give them an additional opportunity to share their perspectives, and I used document analysis to gain

additional information about the policies the district has. I aspired to have the interview subjects tell their policy stories as much as possible.

Potential Research Bias

The intention of approaching this project with an open mind was not enough to prevent me from showing bias. I have opinions about policy implementation and beliefs about how it happens. I managed my biases through journaling and memos during the process. I triangulated the three sources of data to minimize potential bias.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY RESULTS

This chapter contains the results of the phenomenological study conducted to answer the research questions:

- How do coaches function as policy actors?
- What policies do coaches, create and how do they institutionalize them?

The chapter begins with a discussion of the individual interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. This chapter also includes analysis guided by the 4I theoretical framework, explained in chapter one, about how coaches function as policy actors and how they create policy. Charts are included to provide additional clarity. The codes are defined in Appendix D and are italicized in the presentation of the data.

Through this research, I discovered that coaches in this district create policy at three different organizational levels: Individual, group, and organization. They use the three social and psychological processes of organizational learning as a part of policy creation: interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing. Two important themes related to the self-understanding of coaches and their modes of working--agency and cooperation--surfaced in the analysis.

Population

Data collection included interviews with elementary school literacy coaches, elementary school principals and the district literacy director, a focus group, and

document analysis. In the interviews and focus group, I collected data about how the coaches function as policy actors. Document analysis provided examples of school policies created by the literacy coaches. Each of the five school were assigned a pseudonym, and the coaches and principals were given pseudonyms that begin with the same letter as their school's alias. The schools represented in this data are Anderson Elementary, Bingham Elementary, Clayton Elementary, Denkins Elementary, and Ervine Elementary.

Four of the five elementary literacy coaches in this district agreed to participate in an individual interview. One of the four coaches, Abby at Anderson Elementary, had just been hired for the next year, so she was unable to answer questions about the creation of policy and current practices. Abby was able to share a teacher's perspective and contributed documents that she had received as a teacher. One coach, Donna, chose to be interviewed at the same time as her principal, Dianne. I received the bulk of my data from two coaches: Evelyn and Brooke. Donna, who interviewed with her principal, participated in the interview but often deferred to Dianne. I interviewed two of the district's five elementary principals: Emma and Dianne. They were the only two to respond to my research requests.

All of the coach and principal interviews were conducted as a web conference because of Covid -19 quarantines. The literacy coach and principal interviews were conducted in the summer while schools were preparing to reopen in the fall. The literacy director interview and the focus group occurred during the following fall. Participants indicated that they were happy to help with the research. I knew two of the coaches,

Brooke and Donna, from literacy training that my district completed with this district and one of the principals, Emma, with whom I have completed two graduate programs.

The coding of the coach and principal interviews prompted additional questions about the coaches' roles in district literacy policy. I interviewed the district literacy director. I had worked with Lilith on several occasions as we both began Read to Succeed, the 2014 reading policy legislation in South Carolina, implementation in our districts. After the individual interviews were completed. I conducted a virtual focus group that included all five of the elementary literacy coaches. I analyzed elementary school reading plans to determine literacy policies in the district.

Individual Interview Findings

Open coding was used with the transcripts from the four coaches and two principals. I found twenty-three distinct codes with the coaches and twenty-two with the principals. The two groups shared all but five of the categories. The principals had two additional categories that were not mentioned by the coaches and did not use three of the ones found in the coaches' interviews.

Data are organized both by frequency and relationship. I chose to use frequency as the primary organization approach because the number of mentions indicates what the interview subjects find significant about their experiences. In several cases, codes are related by theme or context and have been shared together. Explanations were given when I used this approach.

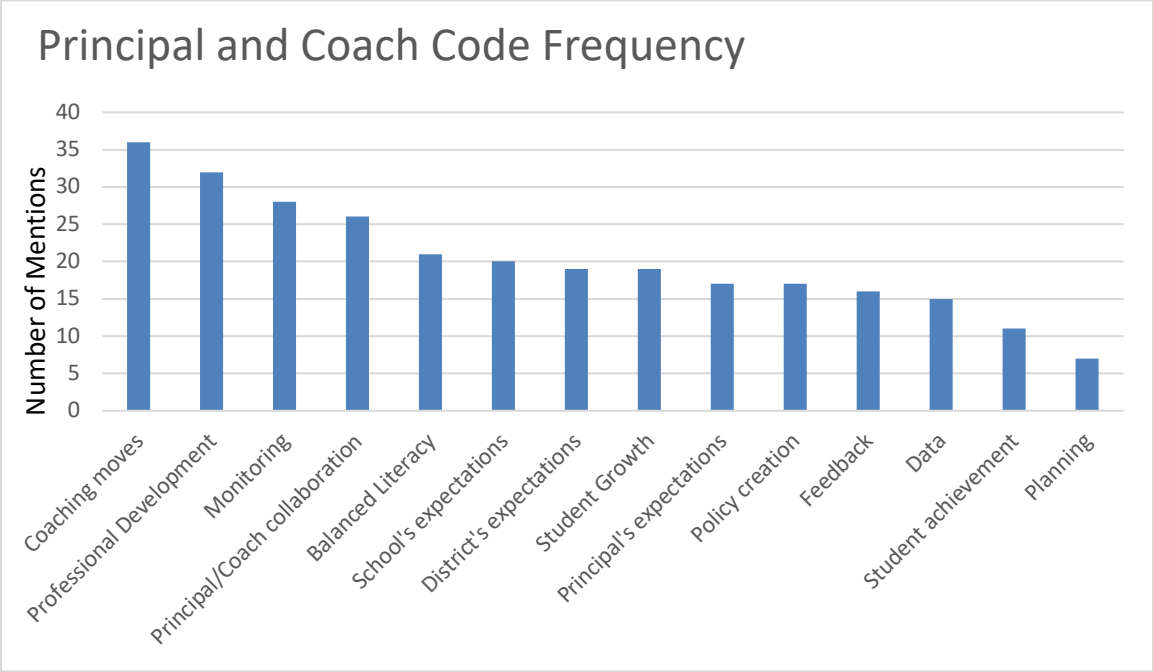

Figure 4.1 Principal and Coach Code Frequency

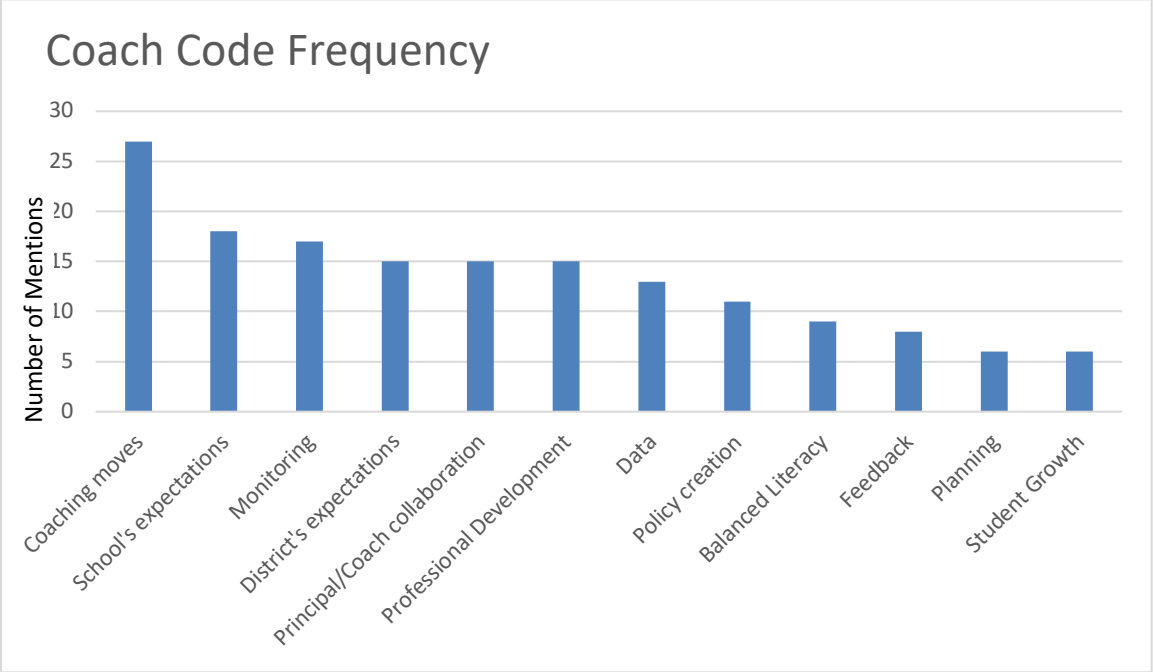

Figure 4.2: Coach Code Frequency

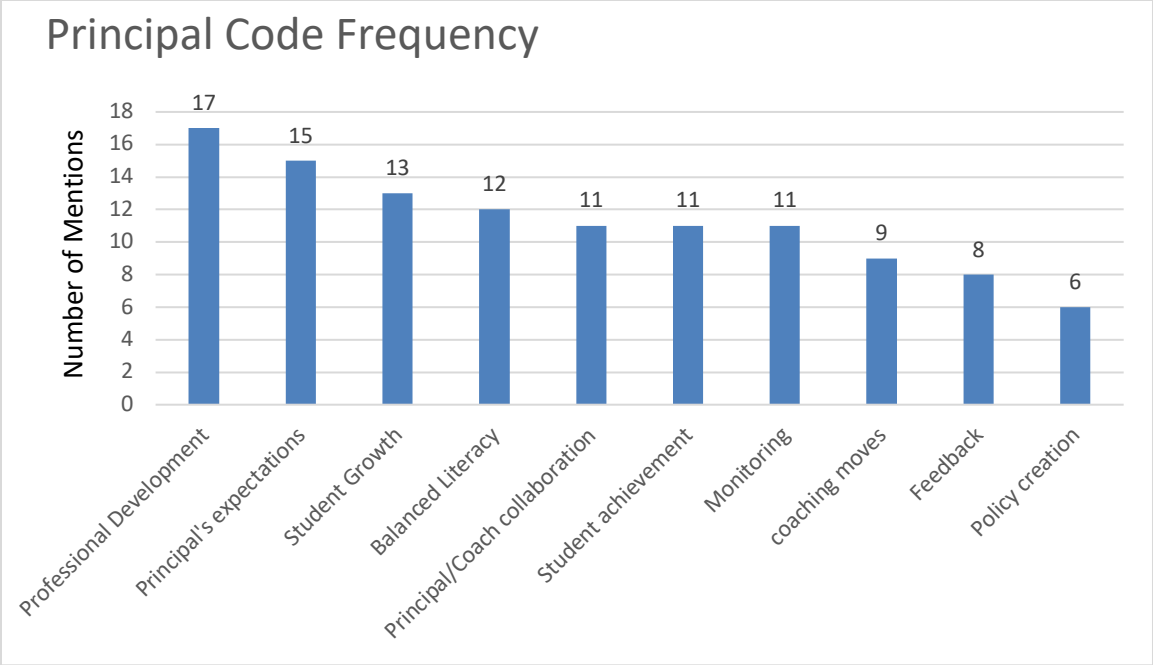

Figure 4.3: Principal Code Frequency

The school district studied for this research uses a data-driven, job-embedded coaching model where coaches provide support through a variety of coaching moves to improve teacher expertise and learning experiences for students. Principals and coaches believe that the coaching role is to support instruction to help students become better readers and writers.

The most common code for coaches and overall was *coaching moves*. This term includes actions of the coaches to help improve teacher instruction like co-teaching, modeling lessons, finding resources, observation analysis, engagement inventories, and evaluating student work. The coaches and Ervine's principal referred to this category when they described daily activities of the coaches, coaches' influence on teachers, school policies, and program development. Emma explained,

> So but anyway, her (Evelyn) day's jam packed with, as I said, whether it is classroom observations to check the level of engagement that is being seen in the classrooms or if it is modeling for teachers or co-teaching with teachers, or it could be, as I said before, she might be in a coaching cycle with a teacher where she's in there and they are working on something very intentional for that teacher, specifically for where we're trying to get him or her to look at that time (Personal communication, June 4, 2020).

Evelyn added several additional examples including planning with teachers, creating academic plans for students, collecting resources, and providing professional development. Bingham's coach, Brooke, added a different dimension by explaining her role in teacher improvement. "One of the main things that I spend my time doing is going in the classrooms and, you know, providing demonstration lessons by observing and providing that non-evaluative feedback" (Personal communication, June 16, 2020).

Planning, *student achievement*, and *student growth* were mentioned enough for independent categories, but the context often ties them to *coaching moves*. Student growth is a measure of success that drives the planning of instruction and the *coaching moves* that are used. *Student achievement*, the level of performance on standardized tests, was mentioned exclusively by principals. Brooke chooses her coaching cycle based on student growth and achievement. "And I'd choose my coaching cycles based on data. I try to use a student-centered coaching approach where I look at the data that way. I don't really pinpoint their instructional practices, but I can look at the data and say, okay, this is what the data is saying. This is the trend. And so I kind of go in from that angle and they are more accepting when I've used the data to go in and start my coaching cycles"

(Personal communication, June 16, 2020). Abby, the coach who was just hired and had no coaching experience knew, "Of course, I know that I have to work with teachers using our data to move our children" (Personal communication, June 26, 2020).

Professional development was the second-highest frequency code overall, and the most common for principals, but it was the fifth most common code for coaches. Principals and coaches used the term *professional development* to describe a wide variety of actions the coaches complete with the teachers. Some of those actions included coaches working with individual teachers' needs that had been identified during regular monitoring or observations. It also includes staff development around the school goals for the year, assistance for teachers who identified instructional deficits in their students, regularly scheduled team trainings, and the presentation of district expectations to the teachers. Because so many types of activities fall into this code, it was subdivided for analysis as needed. Lumping all of these types of professional development together is common in the discourse of principals and coaches, but distinguishing between them advances the analysis. Dianne, Denkins Elementary principal, supports Donna by making sure that, "teachers are actually putting that (professional development) in use" (Personal communication, June 18, 2020). Emma mentioned professional development thirteen times in her interview and her coach mentioned professional development five times spotlighting their school's focus on academic rigor in English-Language Arts' standards.

Monitoring was the third most frequent category overall and for the coaches and was in the top ten for administrators. *Monitoring* in this context consists of the intentional observation of expectations established for Read to Succeed. In Brooke's quote above, we learned that observations help her determine the focus of the coaching cycles she

completed with teachers. Coaches observe teachers regularly and several evaluate lesson plans to check for the components of balanced literacy. Two of the coaches emphasized the importance of giving feedback to the teachers they monitored. Evelyn stated that, "When I go into every classroom, I have a debrief with teachers. I make sure that I have them really reflect on the observations that I do in their classrooms" (Personal communication June 25, 2020). Brook explained that she spends time, "observing and providing that non-evaluative feedback. Of course, I'm not an evaluator, but I do. I try to leave them with strengths and possibilities for growth, things that are going well, things that they want to think about and improve upon" (Personal communication, June 16, 2020. All of the coaches discussed how they worked with the administrative team to address strengths and areas for growth when they observed classrooms.

Feedback was mentioned much less than *monitoring*, but it is always mentioned with monitoring. Feedback is the intentional advice and affirmation given to teachers after monitoring instruction, planning, or student assessment activities. Principals and coaches give feedback about observations. Coaches mention giving feedback on student data, classroom environment, instructional practices, and rigor of instruction. According to Brooke, she spends a lot of time establishing expectations for classroom structures and components of balanced literacy, "and those are things that we expect to see when we go into classrooms" (Personal communication, June 16, 2020). She and the principal look for these established practices and give feedback.

Principal/ coach collaboration was the fifth-highest code used for coaches and principals, and the fourth-highest overall. Emma, the principal with the literacy background, mentioned teamwork, which was coded as principal/ coach collaboration,

ten separate times and her coach mentioned it seven times. “What we do is lots of teamwork because as the principal of the school, I have to entrust that she can be the literacy leader, making sure that the things that we know teachers need, especially by way of professional development, are presented to them” (Personal communication, June 4, 2020). All of the other coaches and the other principal provided responses that falls into this category, but at a less frequent rate. This code includes meetings where the administration and coaches share observation feedback, student data, planning for professional development, and the development of procedures and school policies. Emma described the group of administrators and instructional coaches working together at Ervine as the “brain trust.”

Balanced literacy is an approach to teaching reading and writing that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. This philosophical approach to instruction uses whole-group, small-group, and individualized instructional practices that include interactive read aloud, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, independent reading and writing, and conferring. This theme rounds out the top five overall most used categories. Emma, who has a literacy background, mentioned this topic most frequently. Dianne, the other principal I interviewed explained that they monitored for these practices that the coaches teach instructional staff as they monitor and observe classrooms. “I would say that working with the balanced literacy piece and making sure that, I mean, teachers have the components of guided reading, shared reading, independent reading and writing, all of that encompassed, but making sure that they are supported in that” (Personal communication, June 18, 2020). Coaches mention this topic in conjunction with

professional development they offer, practices they expect when they monitor instruction, and policy the schools and district create.

The code, *data*, almost exclusively applies to information from the coaches' comments. Data is used very broadly for observed evidence in classroom instruction and indicators of student learning. Items in this category include inventories of student engagement, surveys of teacher talk versus student talk, professional development exit slips, progress monitoring scores, and local and state summative assessments. Coaches use data to plan professional development for groups of teachers, to guide teachers in reflection, to advise principals about school needs, and to collaborate with other coaches and the district to create policies. Brook explained, "I help them analyze their data to kind of figure out what the next steps are, what instructional strategies they need to implement are" (Personal communication, June 16, 2020). Evelyn referenced the connection of student data and monitoring teachers:

> Now, as far as our ELA data, we like I said, those monthly data meetings really helped us to really monitor what was going on in the classroom. And teachers actually have to own what they were doing or what they were not doing. So I think that we do have things in place to actually monitor what we're expecting (Personal communication, June 25, 2020).

The codes, *school's expectations* and *principal's expectations* are combined for analysis. The data for principal's expectations was derived almost exclusively from Emma. She explained that principals set the formal expectations for the school. Sometimes these expectations are created independently by the principal, but all

interview subjects discussed the joint decision-making done by school leadership teams that include the principal, assistant principal, and all instructional coaches. Coaches and principals mentioned balanced literacy, rigor, lesson plans, common assessments, interventions, professional development, the role of support staff, schedules, and classroom instructional practices as a part of school expectations. Donna gave a specific example of how Denkins Elementary created expectations for teaching writing through the cooperation of administrators and instructional coaches:

> As far as policy, also like, you know, (Dianne) and I meet and the (assistant principal) to determine what lesson plan should look like or what areas we need to focus on. Like this past year we really had a big emphasis on writing at our school. Writing was an area that we needed. Teachers needed a lot of support. We purchased the Lucy Calkin's units of study" (Personal communication, June 18, 2020).

Coaches mention the *district's expectations* four times as often as principals. In a subsequent interview with the district's literacy director, I learned that employees, including district leaders, consider the district to be top-down with policy. Ervine's principal explained that, "the district has outlined that every teacher will teach literacy through the balanced literacy model, and we're required to have a minimum of ninety minutes of literacy" (Personal communication, June 4, 2020). The district has brought in a curriculum to supplement the state materials. Interview participants also mentioned district initiatives and guidelines that include Summer Reading Camp, a district adopted curriculum, professional learning, and a list of non-negotiables.

Brooke explained, “A lot of those non-negotiables are set by the district” (Personal Communication, June 16, 2020). Donna noted, the “district decided that the first Wednesday and Thursday of every month we would have (Professional Learning Communities) PLC's for ELA with all the teachers” (Personal communication, June 18, 2020). Evelyn shared an example of adding a focus on standards and rigor at the school level to augment district expectations. This coach also referenced her school reading plan for establishing school expectations. Principals and coaches reference monitoring in conjunction with expectations established by the district.

The coaches and principals referenced the district mandates in a way that initially indicates rigid policy expectations created in a formal policy process. Interview subjects attest that the district policy is based on state policy. Even though district policy is referred to in this formal way, all of the coaches say the director of literacy, the literacy policy leader, really listens to feedback and suggestions when policy is created and modified.

Literacy Director Findings

The role of the district in policy development, implementation, and monitoring was a theme in the individual interviews with the four coaches and two principals. The literacy director for the district agreed to an individual interview. Open coding was used with the transcript of the interview. Codes are organized by frequency and relationship to other codes. Eleven codes were used four or more times in the transcript. Two of the codes, *balanced literacy* and *professional development*, were apparent in the coach, principal, and literacy director interviews. Other codes that emerged in the literacy

director interview are considered to be distinct from previous interviews even if they are related.

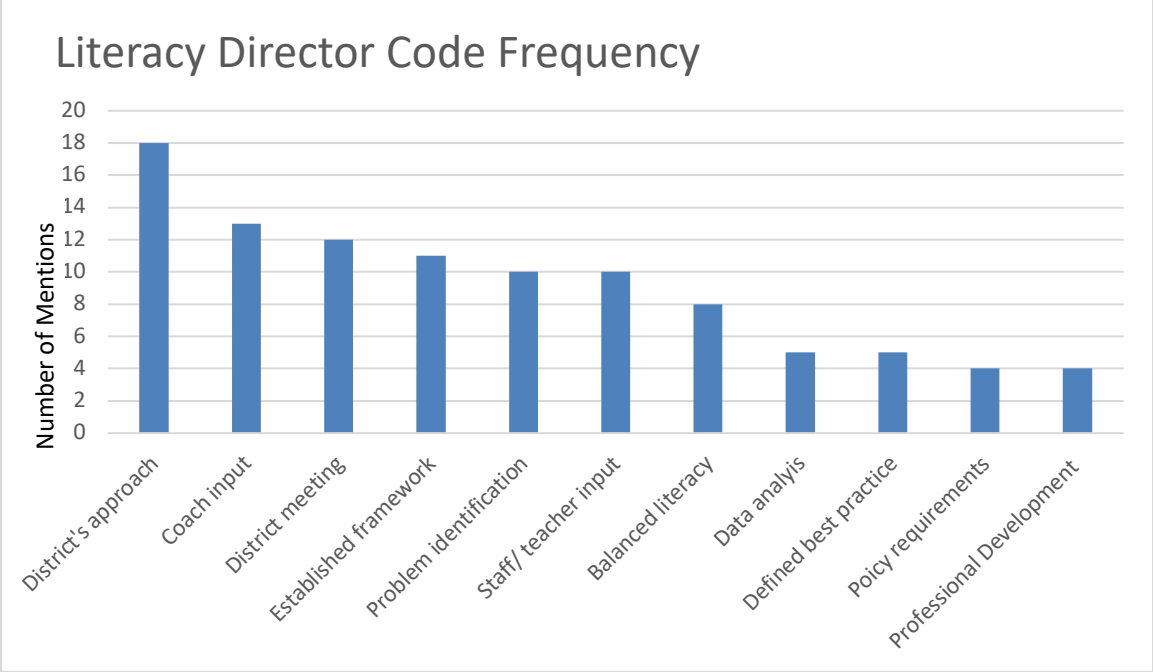

Figure 4.4: Literacy Director Code Frequency

The most frequently used code for the literacy director's interview was the *district's approach*. The director, Lilith, explained that as a small, high poverty district, turnover in district leadership happens about every three years. New superintendents have meant new policies and procedures for the district. "So every three years it seems like we get different policies and procedures and protocols that are coming from the top down" (Personal communication, November 12, 2020). The district-level staff has been assigned the responsibility of creating policies. The literacy director explained that she is, "guilty of that top-down" policy development noting that teachers and coaches are overwhelmed. The challenges of finding time to get teachers, coaches, and administrators together and minimize the impact on instruction are overcome by the efficiency of the

literacy director drafting needed policies. The literacy director shared several policies that she felt were examples of a top-down, district policy that includes a balanced literacy framework, an intervention process, and a training plan for all new elementary teachers.

District's approach is similar to the code, *district's expectation*, which appeared in the principal and coach interviews. *District's approach* deals with transcript data sharing what the literacy director and coaches put into policy. *District's expectation* deals with the perception that interview subjects had about district requirements without referencing a specific policy.

The second most frequent code for the literacy director interview was *coach input* which is closely followed by *district meetings*. The literacy director explained that she requests and uses input from her literacy coaches as she develops policy. She finds that by creating the "skeleton" of a policy, she can meet with the literacy coaches to "add the meat and make that document a little more robust" (Personal communication, November 12, 2020). Lilith used input from the coaches when creating the balanced literacy framework, progress monitoring guidelines, and the new writing curriculum. This input occurs in district meetings with the director and literacy coaches. Over her seven years in this position, the director has changed her practices for district meetings and solicits literacy coach input in forming her agenda for district meetings.

> In the beginning I set the agenda. These are things that I needed to discuss, things that I'm hearing from the State Department, from state leaders. And I had the agenda at the very end. It was anything else. That worked, but I wasn't getting the input. So, I changed it up to basically have sent the forms that survey to and

said, OK, basically, what do you want me to build into the agenda for our meeting in two weeks? You know, what are you hearing from your teachers (Personal communication, November 12, 2020)?

District meetings are currently scheduled once a month but have been held as often as weekly for the literacy director to work with coaches about policy issues. The literacy director also uses the coaches to share plans and ideas with teachers and administrators and garners feedback from them through the coaches.

Established framework was the fourth most frequent code. A framework is an established way of doing something. The literacy director highlighted her work with the coaches to create a district framework for balanced literacy and a process for sharing that framework with district staff. "We defined it (the balanced literacy structure of guided reading). What it is and what it is not, pulled the research about where we pulled it from that supported our vision. And then we broke it down into step by step what it needs to look like" (Personal communication, November 12, 2020). Similarly, the literacy director shared frameworks she initiated for progress monitoring and interventions.

The codes *problem identification* and *staff/ teacher input* were used ten times each. These codes are related. The literacy director described a process where an issue occurred in one or more of the schools, reading coaches were consulted, and the director and coaches collaborate in a district meeting to address the issue. To illustrate, "We have, for example, we have a question about F&P [Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark for reading] testing. How are we going to test F&P side by side of the child if we can't separate by six feet? So, working through some of those coaches had some suggestions" (Personal

communication, November 12 2020). The work done in the meeting is then shared with teachers who have additional opportunities to give input.

The *balanced literacy* code was used eight times for this transcript and the code *defined best practice* was used five. The literacy director shared the process she and the coaches used to establish the balanced literacy framework for the district. (See the quote for *established framework*.) The group delved into the research for the components of balanced literacy by reviewing the literature of best practice researchers and practitioners to create the district's framework.

The *data analys*is and *professional development* codes mark actions the coaches perform with teachers in their schools related to policy. Coaches guide and assist teachers in analyzing data related to a variety of policy requirements. Likewise, the coaches are responsible for the training of school staff in policies. The final code, *policy requirements* refers to state requirements that were the impetus to local policy.

Focus Group Findings

The literacy director facilitated a time for the literacy coaches to meet with me in a focus group at the end of one of their district meetings. All five coaches participated in the focus group. Open coding was conducted with the focus group transcript in the same way it was done with the interview transcripts. The codes I discovered are described below. As before, codes are organized by frequency and relationship to other codes.

Four of the codes, *district approach*, *problem identification*, *balanced literacy*, and *professional development* appeared in both the director interview and the focus group. *Balanced literacy* and *professional development* codes were used with all

interview transcripts and the focus group transcript. *Observations* and *feedback* were present in the coaching and principal transcripts but not the literacy director transcript.

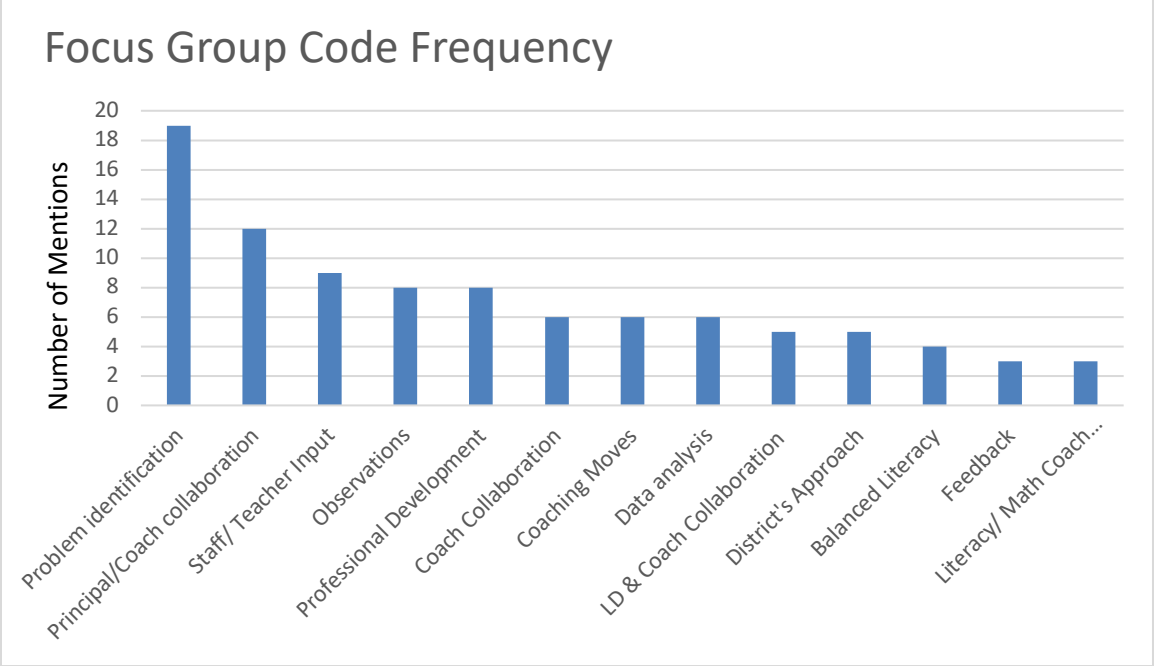

Figure 4.5: Focus Group Code Frequency

The most frequently used code for the focus group was *problem identification*. This code was also found with the literacy director interview. *Problem identification* applied to instances where coaches identified staff and school needs like scheduling issues, professional development needs, and student learning gaps based on formative and summative data. Brooke from Bingham Elementary explained. "I think when we see teachers having a difficult time with something that we've asked them to do, for example, teaching the two Lucy Caukins (Units of Study curriculum) writing lessons each day that spark some conversation with (Lilith)" (Personal communication, November 16, 2020). Coaches collaborate with the school administration, the district literacy leader, and each other to develop policies to address these issues.

Principal/ coach collaboration was the second most frequent code in the focus group and it appeared in the analysis of the coach and principal transcripts. Coaches indicated that their partnership with principals influenced all of their actions in the school. Coaches create and revise schedules, create professional development, review classroom observations, and evaluate needs in collaboration with their principals. Clara, the reading coach at Clayton Elementary who did not participate in the interviews described her professional development planning process:

> I always make sure to run my PLC (professional learning community) or PD agendas by my administration, and they're always invited to come. They try to stop in, even if it's just for one grade level or if they know that there's a certain grade level that they want to offer more support to or they want to make sure we're having certain conversations, they'll make sure they attend the PLC. (Personal communication, November 16, 2020)

Staff/ teacher input, the third most frequent code, marked teacher questions and feedback as a part of the policy process for the district. Teacher concerns and questions are taken to the district level through the coaches. Evelyn explained, "I think that that (the director of literacy) does a really good job of listening to our concerns. Our teachers are heard through us and then (Lilith) really considers that and makes decisions that affect the district" (Personal communication, November 16, 20220). As indicated in the literacy director interview, coaches share policies with teachers and offer them opportunities for feedback.

Observations and *professional development* codes were used eight times each, and *coaching moves* and *data analysis* were identified six times each. The codes for *district approach* (5), *balanced literacy* (4), and f*eedback* (3) are identified in the focus group transcript. All of these codes have been used similarly in previous transcripts.

Three related codes appear in the focus group that did not emerge from the other transcripts: *coach collaboration* (6), *literacy director and coach collaboration* (5), and *literacy/ math coach collaboration* (3). Like the code for *principal/ coach collaboration*, these codes mark instances the coaches shared about working with school and district leaders in their roles. Brooke reinforced the importance of collaboration to the coaches. "We do try to make sure that we're on the same page as far as our expectations across the district at the elementary level" (Personal communication, November 16, 2020).

The individual interviews and focus group gave insight into the roles coaches play as policy actors, my first research question. Coaches work within a variety of teams to identify needs, to brainstorm and create policy responses, and to implement policy decisions. Some insight into the policies coaches create, question 2, surfaced in these sessions. I sought additional information about types of policies through the school reading plans.

Document Analysis Findings

The state required reading plans were selected for analysis to help answer the second research question: What policies do coaches create and how do they institutionalize them? For this question, I was looking for school level policies, everyday procedures, implemented in the schools. Each year, literacy coaches lead their schools in reflecting on their literacy practices. School literacy plans have eleven sections. The state

literacy template is included in Appendix D. In sections A through H, school staff reflect on how well they are meeting the mandates of Read to Succeed and the guidance provided by the South Carolina Department of Education by rating themselves on sub-objectives as Rarely, Sometimes, or Routinely completing the listed indicators for each section. The final column for each section which includes all of the indicators is title Possible Sources of Evidence. Section I is for reflection of strengths and areas for growth, J is for progress on the previous year's goals and K is for the upcoming school year's goals. I used the indicator column, section I, and the goals in sections J and K to compile a list of school policies for Read to Succeed.

I used the reading plans for all of the elementary schools in the studied district to discover policies that the schools are using to meet the requirements of Read to Succeed. The tables list every policy referenced for all of elementary school in their reading plan. This format compares policy use by school site. The five elementary schools were assigned the following pseudonyms: Anderson Elementary School, Bingham Elementary School, Clayton Elementary School, Denkins Elementary School, and Ervine Elementary School.

The five elementary schools in the district have at least five shared policies for student assessment and interventions. These policies standardize the processes used for evaluating student reading ability, monitoring instructional engagement, and creating plans for reading assistance (see Table 4.1). Bingham and Clayton Elementary Schools list several more policies than the other schools. The other 3 schools may have similar policies, but they are not considered a primary focus for the schools' assessment and intervention plan.

Table 4.1: Policies for Assessments and Interventions

Section A: This school documents and monitors the reading and writing assessment and instruction planned for all prekindergarten through fifth grade students and the interventions be provided to all struggling readers who are not able to comprehend grade-level texts.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Running records	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engagement inventories	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading logs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading, writing, researching notebooks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anecdotal notes for small groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MAP data		✓	✓	✓	✓
Common assessment data		✓	✓		
Daily intervention data		✓	✓		
Progress monitoring data		✓			
Lesson plans		✓			
Professional development/ PLC			✓		
Data meetings in RTI and faculty			✓		

Table 4.2: Policies for Supplemental Instruction

Section B: This school provides supplemental instruction by teachers who have a literacy teacher add-on endorsement and is offered during the school day and, as appropriate, before or after school in book clubs, through a summer reading camp, or both.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Anecdotal notes for small groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anecdotal notes for student conferences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedules	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student goals, ACTION PLANS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesson plans with strategies	✓	✓		✓	✓
Student data NB		✓			
Interventions/ RTI		✓	✓	✓	
Running Records- progress monitoring		✓		✓	
Individual coaching cycles		✓			
MAP/ NWEA Learning continuum			✓		
Collaborative planning			✓		

All five of the elementary schools in the district created policies for providing supplemental instruction for students. This table shows that all schools require the use of anecdotal notes, schedules, and student action plan to meet requirements of providing supplemental instruction for students. Three of the schools use Response to Intervention (RtI) policies to document supplemental instruction. Other policies include data notebooks, running records, coaching cycles, collaborative planning, and the interactive goal setting feature of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.

Table 4.3: Policies for Parent Involvement

Section C: This school utilizes a system for helping parents understand how they can support the student as a reader at home.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Parent workshops	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Title I family literacy night, math night		✓			
Reading logs		✓			
Book wagon		✓			

The parent involvement section is the least developed part of the reading plans in all of the schools. All schools provide workshops for parents. Bingham added literacy night, readings logs, and a book wagon. The book wagon is a program the school developed to get more books into the students' homes.

Table 4.4: Policies for Improving Student Growth

Section D: This school provides for the reading and writing achievement and growth at the classroom, school, and district levels with decisions about intervention based on all available data.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Teacher observations- workshop, interventions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedules-workshop, interventions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesson plans - workshop, intervention	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Text dependent analysis				✓	
Reading and writing note books		✓	✓		
Reading response journals		✓			
Student engagement data/ use		✓			
Units of Study		✓	✓		
Coaching cycles		✓			
Common assessment data		✓			
Mini-lessons			✓		
Balanced Literacy			✓		

Writing workshop			✓		
Literacy stations			✓		
Posted objectives			✓		

As in the other tables, the district has several standard policies that all of the elementary schools use for ensuring and improving student growth. This table highlights how the schools interpret the plan requirements differently. Balanced literacy is a good example. Based on the interviews and focus group, we know that all elementary schools in the district have a shared balanced literacy policy. Clayton is the only school that considers this policy as a part of their overall improvement of student growth.

Table 4.5: Policies for Text Availability

Section E: This school ensures that students are provided with wide selections of texts over a wide range of genres and written on a wide range of reading levels to match the reading levels of students.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Engagement inventories	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedules with independent reading			✓	✓	✓
Classroom libraries/ book inventories	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classroom environment checklist		✓			
Subject area read alouds		✓			
Lesson plans			✓		

Observations			✓		
Student conferences			✓		

Engagement inventories monitor authentic engagement while reading texts. All of the schools use these engagement inventories and classroom library inventory policies to document text availability.

Table 4.6: Policies for Professional Development

Section F: This school provides teacher and administrator training in reading and writing instruction.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Professional development/ PLO/ Conferences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional reading & reflection	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Action research	✓			✓	
Teacher shared learning-PD		✓			
Lesson plans showing new learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coach schedules	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The policies for professional development are the most consistent throughout the district. In addition to traditional professional development, all of the

schools require professional reading and reflection, lesson plans showing new practices, and documented schedules for the literacy coaches.

Table 4.7: Policies for Community Partnerships

Section G: This school develops strategically planned partnerships with county libraries, state and local arts organizations, volunteers, social service organizations, community partners and school media specialists to promote reading and writing.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Business partnerships	✓			✓	
Read, Feed, Succeed summer prog- Churches				✓	
Literacy Carnival				✓	
Afterschool programs @ Churches				✓	
Afterschool programs @ School for R&W				✓	
Reading Carnival		✓			
One Book, One School		✓			
Library programs			✓		✓
Mentoring program			✓		

In contrast with the previous table, community partnership policies are the most disparate. Even the number of policies varies to a large extent with two schools only providing one policy while Denkins has five.

Table 4.8: Policies for a Literacy Rich Environment

Section H: This school embeds practices reflective of exemplary literacy-rich environments.	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Schedules with independent reading 40+ min	✓		✓	✓	✓
Schedules with independent writing 40+ min	✓		✓	✓	✓
Lesson plans- Inquiry & research	✓		✓	✓	✓
Workshop model			✓	✓	
Instructional technology			✓		
Shared reading			✓		
Classroom libraries			✓		
Independent reading			✓		
Standards			✓		

A literacy rich classroom is one where reading and writing are done authentically throughout the day and the classroom is a text rich environment. It appeared that

Bingham skipped this part of the plan when I conducted my analysis. The first three policies are evident throughout the district. Clayton added five additional examples of policies that they feel are related to having a literacy rich environment.

Table 4.9: Policies for Data Analysis

Section I: Analysis of Data	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	A ES	B ES	C ES	D ES	E ES
Shared reading- balanced literacy		✓	✓	✓	
Comprehensive formative assessments				✓	
Data and planning teams/ grade			✓	✓	✓
Content specific reading, writing and researching				✓	
Units of Study		✓	✓		
Print Rich Environment, literacy immersion		✓	✓		
Classroom libraries/ text availability	✓	✓			
Observations w/ feedback		✓			
Use of standards		✓			
Formative assessments		✓	✓		
Independent reading and writing		✓			
Family literacy and math nights		✓			✓

Professional development (PLC) participation	✓	✓	✓		✓
Targeted interventions		✓	✓		
Mini-lessons	✓				
Strategy instruction	✓				
Student goals	✓		✓		
Parent workshops	✓				
Literacy in subject areas	✓				
Common planning all grades					✓
Book room, resources			✓		✓
Common assessment					✓
Cross grade level grouping		✓			
Standards- job embedded training		✓			
Love of reading			✓		
Student comprehension			✓		
Guided groups			✓		
Student choice			✓		

In section I of the reading plan, schools shared their perceived strengths and possibilities for growth. Each of the policies listed in Table 4.9 are policies the schools

believe are a strength in the overall literacy program at the school or a policy they want to improve.

Table 4.10: Policies Used in 2019-2020 School Goals

Section J: Goals and Progress Toward Those Goals	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
SIC/PTO meetings to educate stakeholders				✓	
Increase intervention/ data based		✓		✓	
Units of Study	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Writing workshop	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Workshop model		✓	✓		
Increase student independent strategy usage		✓			
Student engagement		✓			✓
Elimination of activities that interfere with R/W		✓			
Measurable short-term goals with students		✓			
Inquiry standards- improved use and monitor		✓			
Professional development grade level	✓		✓		

Peer observations	✓				
Coaching cycles	✓		✓		
Lab classrooms			✓		
Modeling/ co teaching			✓		
Balanced Literacy district best practice			✓		
Literacy nights			✓		
Mini-lessons			✓		

Table 4.10 shows the policies that the schools used in to meet the goals the set for the 2019-2020 school year. Ervine chose not to list specific policies with the goals developed for the school.

Table 4.11: Policies for 2020-2021 Goals

Section K: Goals and Action steps	School use of policy				
Reading Plan Policies	AES	BES	CES	DES	EES
Balanced literacy approach	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Focus on grade level standards				✓	✓
Small group strategy lessons			✓	✓	✓
Individual conferring		✓		✓	✓

Remote learning strategies				✓	
Units of Study	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Professional learning/ development/ PLC ? Book study	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing workshop			✓	✓	
Increase observations admin/coach	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Literacy best practices			✓	✓	
Modeling and co-teaching	✓		✓	✓	
Professional development- remote learning				✓	
Seek additional resources- ELA and Tech				✓	
Co-planning,		✓		✓	
Weekly technology discussions and training				✓	
Coaching cycles	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Peer Observations & learning walks, post conferences	✓	✓		✓	
Literacy coach demonstrations		✓			
Lesson plans w/feedback		✓			
Engagement inventories		✓			
Student goals/ action plans		✓			
Reading workshop strategy instruction		✓			

Intervention time, support	✓	✓	✓		
Progress monitoring, data	✓	✓			
Workshop model		✓			
Elimination of activities that interfere with R/W		✓			
Grade level data team meetings, data drivin instruction	✓	✓	✓		
Cooperation with partner school 3rd	✓	✓			
Increase books in home	✓	✓			
Monthly virtual parent literacy workshops		✓			✓
Running records		✓			
Reader response journals					✓
Independent reading daily schedule					✓
Integrate ELA in all subjects, authentic R/W					✓
MAP data and learning continuum					✓
Close reading strategies			✓		✓
Mini-lessons			✓		✓
Interactive read alouds					✓
Student engagement					✓
Rigor					✓

Use tech resources			✓		

Table 4.11 shows the policies the schools are currently using to meet their goals for the 2020-2021 school year.

The document analysis helped to answer the second research question, what policies do coaches create and and how do they institutionalize them. In the analysis section, I share how these policies relate to how the literacy coaches function as policy actors.

Analysis

The primary goal of this research was to learn how coaches function as policy actors and the kinds of policies they create. In the introduction I shared the ways policy has been conceptualized in the literature. These conceptualizations include policy-in-intention, policy-in-action and policy-in-experience. For this study, policy in intention is provided by the Read to Succeed law from South Carolina legislature and the interpretations of the law provided by the SC Department of Education. This research primarily focuses on policy-in-action, the day-to-day decisions that are made by the agents in charge of implementing the goals and intents of legitimized policy of governing bodies which occur in close proximity to the point of action, and policy-in-experience, how policy is created and changed based on the experiences of school staff. Policy is the result of a recursive process in which the implementation, and reaction to such, modifies and adjusts the actual policy (Guba, 1982).

Open coding was used to begin data analysis. The 4I Framework which was modified from a study on organizational learning (Crossan et al., 1999), was used to interpret the data and recognize themes as explained in the introduction chapter. The 4I Framework exists on three levels: individual, group and organization; it uses four processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing. The four premises of the policy were modified to apply to policy creation and implementation.

Premise 1: Policy creation and implementation involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation).

Premise 2: Policy creation and implementation is multi-level: individual, group, and organization.

Premise 3: The three levels of policy creation and implementation are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing (4Is).

Premise 4: Cognition affects action and vice versa.

While I believe that all four premises apply to policy creation and implementation, premises two and three are used in this analysis. These two premises structure the analysis of the interview and focus group findings. This framework is used to bring organization and clarity to a recursive and non-linear process. Data may be interpreted with both premises and the premises are not sequential or linear.

Two major themes arose from the coding and analysis of the transcripts: agency and cooperation. Agency describes the capacity and ownership the literacy coaches experienced and exhibited as policy actors in their schools and the district. Cooperation applies to when coaches harness the expertise and authority of other district staff

including teachers, math coaches, principals, the literacy director and the other literacy coaches. These themes were found in all of the transcripts and are relevant to premise two and premise three of the 4I Framework.

Level	Process	Inputs/Outcomes
Individual	Intuiting	Experiences Images Metaphors
Group	Interpreting	Language Cognitive map Conversation/dialogue
	Integrating	Shared understandings Mutual adjustment Interactive systems
Organization	Institutionalizing	Routines Diagnostic systems Rules and procedures

Figure 4.6 Learning/Renewal in Organizations: Four Processes Through Three Levels (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 525).

Policy creation and implementation is multi-level: individual, group, and organization.

At first thought, this premise seems obvious when interpreted through a traditional policy framework. Read to Succeed legislation was passed in 2014 by the South Carolina legislature. The state department of education issued guidance, and districts created local policy. Then schools and teachers implemented the policy.

What occurs is much more nuanced due to the recursive nature of policy creation and implementation. Using the policy-in-action and policy-in-experience perspectives, I interpret the organization as the district level; the group level applies to multiple schools

or an entire school when input is given by a variety of actors; and the individual level applies to a single coach or school depending on the context. There is overlap in when a level applies and explanations are provided in the analysis.

In the literature review, I found a gap in the literature of studying literacy coaches as policy creators. It appeared to me that studies viewed the coaches almost exclusively as implementers of policy they did not help to create. Researchers documented the actions of coaches as they met legislative requirements, reviewed their qualifications, and evaluated their effectiveness much like the first wave of policy studies in education explained in chapter one. One longitudinal study (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), did find that coaches act as policy creators using the lens of policy-in-experience. The study found that coaches create policy any time they chose (or choose not) to pressure, persuade, or buffer teachers from policy requirements. The researchers explained that the power of the coaches affected the actions of the teachers, and the coaches chose what parts of the legislative policy to support.

In this study of a small, rural school district I found that the literacy coaches had a more direct role in creation of policy when viewed through the lenses of policy in experience and policy in action even though they were not aware of it. Principals and the literacy director did not conceive of coaches as policy actors. The literacy coach interviews made it clear that coaches do not conceptualize themselves as policy leaders or policy creators, but coaches do understand themselves as policy implementers. Donna spotlighted this lack of awareness when she explained her role in implementing policy. “I am supporting what we've decided as a district. One of the things (Lilith, the literacy director) does, she really listens to us as coaches. I feel like our district level, she gives us

input after" (Personal communication, June 18 2020). Brooke shared, "I'm going to be totally honest and transparent. A lot of it came from the district office level. When I started as a coach, we received tons of professional learning and a lot of… we have a list of non-negotiables" from our district (Personal communication June 16, 2020). When I asked Evelyn specifically for school policies, she explained, "the district creates it" (Personal communication June 25, 2020).

In each of the individual coach and principal interviews, the district's role in policy creation was emphasized. Emma, the principal at Ervine Elementary who I interviewed first, stated that, "Our framework for literacy as a district is balanced literacy" (personal communication, June 4, 2020) Her coach affirmed this, "We follow district guidelines" in establishing the literacy program for Ervine (Personal communication, June 25, 2020). Both the principal and coach reference the district's framework for balanced literacy as the foundation of literacy instruction in the school. Brooke, the coach at Bingham asserts, "most of our policies are set by the district depending on, you know, what's required by the state" (Personal communication, June 16, 2020). Denkin's coach, Donna shared that at least one professional development day a month was saved for district determined professional development. Donna also explained that there was some flexibility in school policies for her, but not in district policies. Her principal, Dianne, reinforced the importance of the district policy sharing that the school allocated time at the beginning of each school year to establish district expectations. Interestingly, coaches were quick to applaud the district's literacy director for listening to all of the concerns that coaches took to her and willingness to adjust

policies. Evelyn summarized the shared perspectives of the coaches. “We were very fortunate to have somebody listen to us” Personal communication, June 25, 2020).

With the coaches’ and principals’ assertions that policy was very top-down in this district, I added an interview with the district’s literacy director. Lilith quickly agreed this school district used a prescriptive and directive approach from the district level. “So I guess I'm guilty of that top down as well” (Personal communication, Novemeber 12, 2020). The director gave several examples of policies she had created at the district level. The policies include the Multi-Tiered System of Supports for students, the district’s universal screener policy, and the intervention policy. As she described her process, though, she referred frequently to the coaches’ roles in the process. The balanced literacy framework was a policy that she highlighted, as did the coaches in the focus group.

Balanced literacy combines a phonetics and whole language approach to literacy instruction. To do this effectively, teachers use a variety of structures inside the literacy class time. These structures include interactive read alouds, shared reading and writing, mini-lessons, and guided and independent practice in both reading and writing. After direct instruction, students use the remainder of the class time to practice the skills taught in authentic reading and writing. The coaches and literacy director recognized early in the implementation of R2S that not all teachers knew the structures used in a balanced literacy classroom and there was not common understanding of how to teach with these structures.

The district literacy director held meetings with the elementary literacy coaches where they reviewed research on all of the structures for a balanced literacy classroom.

The director and coaches created descriptions of the structures and how they are used. Next, they had teachers use the structures as described and solicited feedback from the teachers. Once the coaches and director were comfortable with their descriptions, they created a district handbook that shared the mandated procedures, videotaped exemplars of the structures, created professional development, and began supporting teachers in the implementation with various coaching moves. Evelyn spotlighted this during the focus group:

> Two years ago, we all got together and looked at our balanced literacy framework, so we had a lot of input on that. We were able to take it back to our teachers and let them have input on that. And then last year, with the writing, same thing, just our collaboration together as coaches really helps. (Personal communication, November 16, 2020)

I chose this policy example because it shows the multi-level approach to policy creation and exhibits the themes of agency and cooperation. This approach to creating the balanced literacy framework included all three levels of policy development and shows how policy creation is non-linear and recursive. This is a good example of recursion because coaches are seeking evaluation in order to improve the policy while it is being implemented. The work for creating this policy was largely completed at the organization level through the research of the director and the coaches because of issues they identified in the schools among a majority of teachers. This problem identification happened at the individual and group levels with individual teachers and collective groups of teachers with the same needs. The research done at the district level was taken into schools and classrooms across the district to test before the policy was shared as the

district expectation. Administrators and teachers also reviewed the policy and gave feedback before it was formalized.

Lilith explained this process:

> So, through the course of about a year, maybe about a year and a half, the coaches and I would meet about three to four times a month. And we're almost meeting weekly at this point. And then we would dive into the research about what guided reading look like according to this expert, this expert, this expert, this expert. And then from there, we created between the coaches and myself our definition from best practice, from evidence-based research, scientifically based research, what guided reading should look like in the school district. And then from there, we built a framework about we defined it. We define what it is and what is not. pulled the research about where we pulled it from that supported our vision. And then we broke it down into step by step what it needs to look like. You know, if you're doing guided reading, this is the first step. This is the very generic. And then we knew eventually our goal the following year after we taught these components, we're going to go in and videotape it and then imbed a k- two and a three five best practice video exemplar into that component page. So, again, it's been about it was about a year- two process to do it. So we built each component of balanced literacy, one component at a time. And then so after we were happy with what we believe guided reading, shared reading, independent reading should look like, sound like, act like, then they took that into the schools.

> And then when they met with grade level teams, when they met with the entire faculty and staff, we have one Tuesday a month. We did, till Covid, set aside for a literacy Tuesday where they met with their entire staff and they had a literacy agenda and that's when they would meet the entire staff. This is what we've developed so far. Give me your feedback. What are your thoughts on this? And so that's why the process took so long. So we built the skeleton, then they took it into the schools, got the feedback from those teachers, and then we would meet again and through all five schools. What did what did your folks say about this? What did your k-2 folks think? What did your three – five? What do we need to tweak? And through that process, we created a framework where everyone had buy-in and everyone had contributed to what we believe is a district, what these constructs should look like in practice. (Personal communication, November 12, 2020)

The theme of cooperation surfaced in this example. Lilith's quote above gave some insight into the cooperative process. In the focus group, coaches emphasized the importance of traversing the levels of policy development, even though they did not recognize what they were doing as policy development. Coaches expressed a sense of duty to give the teachers a voice in the process and the loyalty they feel for their school administrative teams. Coaches garner concerns and input in planning meetings with teachers and administrators. That information is addressed in the district group with the director and coaches from all of the elementary schools. Not only did the coaches form the outline of this policy in cooperation with the district literacy director, but they also ensured that individuals at all levels of implementation had a voice in creating the

balanced literacy framework. Abby explained, “I think the teachers appreciate that because they you know, they feel like their voices are being heard” (Personal communication, November 16, 2020)

In the focus group, Clara shared that the literacy coaches worked together to address issues as a group outside of meetings with the literacy director. “We also have coaching collaboration meetings where (the literacy director) does not attend. It's just the coaches where we can kind of talk together and. Have any kind of literacy discussion. (Personal communication, Novemeber 16, 2020). This is the strongest example of coaches working at the group level. In these meetings, the coaches discuss issues in their schools and how each school is currently addressing them. Other coaches concurred. Brooke states, “we're on the same page as far as our expectations across the district at the elementary level. I know this past summer we all created this PD for new teachers so that all of our new teachers in the district would receive the same information about balanced literacy, so we worked really well together” (Personal communication, November 16, 2020). The coaches work together regularly to ensure that there is a systemic approach to all literacy concerns.

Anderon, Bingham, and Clayton elementary schools share a complex. Coaches at these schools often work together and combine resources to address teacher and student needs. Conferring with students during independent practice is an essential skill for teachers. Conferring requires that teachers do a quick assessment of student work and determine a need that the student has at that time. Teachers help the students identify their needs and give a quick practice for them to see immediate improvement. Clara explained, “We all came together and decided we were going to address conferring as a

complex and allow some collaboration. So, we set up some learning labs in different classrooms and we were able to get the teachers into those classrooms to see conferring and to practice it. And we were able to have some professional learning together" (Personal communication, November 16, 2020)

Using learning labs is a non-threatening professional development practice where teachers learn about a teaching practice, watch a prepared example, and then practice with other students in the room. In addition to supporting the district policy of balanced literacy, these three coaches created a policy for the three schools in their complex to use learning labs for professional development and to use conferring as a teaching practice.

Policy creation with literacy coaches also occurs in conjunction with participation in a school leadership team. Coaches work with teachers in a variety of contexts like planning lessons, observing lessons, or coteaching. In meetings with the administration, coaches share strengths and concerns. In those meetings, the leadership teams make plans for particular teachers and the school in general. Principals and coaches mentioned some procedures they create at this level in the interviews. As stated previously, the administrators and coaches do not recognize their procedures as policy. Principals and coaches mention creating these procedures based on both the requirements from the state and district and on the needs of teachers and students.

In the interviews, coaches and principals referenced schedules, intervention procedures, professional development expectations, and data analysis protocols that function as school policies. Analyzing the school literacy plan, I found many more examples of policies that schools created and used. In many cases, schools developed

policies for how they would meet district and state policy. When one of the policies in the chart in the data description section is completed by all, or most, of the school, it is considered an organizational policy. When only one or two schools use a policy, it is considered to be an individual policy.

Section F of the literacy plans shared the policies the schools use to provide professional development in the schools. Based on the literacy plans, there is mostly an organization level, systemic approach to professional development. Bingham Elementary has a policy for teachers to present their learning to the staff when they attend professional development outside the school. Anderson and Denkins use action research as a form of professional development. Most of the policies are used by most of the schools, though. Section G, where the schools share their policies for community partnerships, has the least systemic approach. Each of the schools has created its policies for community engagement. This includes the schools that share one complex where there is an overlap in community groups.

Agency represents the capacity and ownership the literacy coaches experienced and exhibited as policy actors in their schools and the district. Agency naturally fits with the processes in premise three and are addressed in the upcoming section, but it does apply here as well. The balanced literacy policy creation episode exemplifies the theme of agency. In all of the individual interviews, coaches and principals credited the district with the creation and oversight of literacy policy. When asked directly about the coaches' roles in creating policy, they all credited the literacy director with listening to concerns and being willing to accept input, but policy was made at the district level. Evelyn explained that her school followed "balanced literacy that was set down by the district"

(Personal communication, June 25, 2020) The literacy directory reinforced the policy creation as a district process which she is responsible for completing. The balance literacy policy shared above showed that coaches completed research for the framework, shared the initial drafts with teachers and administrators, collected feedback, helped revise the original policy, and then implemented the policy in their own schools in conjunction with school leaders.

Interestingly, in the focus group, Evelyn shared the coaches role in the creation of the balanced literacy framework even though she had stated in her individual interview that the policy was created by the district. In the focus group, Evelyn explained, “Two years ago, we all got together and looked at our balanced literacy's framework, so we had a lot of input on that. We were able to take it back to our teachers and let them have input on that" (Personal communication, November 16, 2020).

The data indicate that coaches do not feel, experience agency as individual coaches in policy formation. Admittedly, coaches have limited authority for creating policies independently, but they also do not recognize their roles in creating policy at the group and organization levels. The data indicate that coaches place a higher value on institutionalization than personal agency.

The three levels of policy creation and implementation are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing (4Is).

In the district where this research was conducted, there was evidence of the third premise in the transcripts. Intuiting happens immediately in the mind of those who

experience a phenomenon. This study did not attempt to discover how the interview subjects perceived the R2S legislation or early district policy. Interpreting, seeing and expressing relationships within policy creation and implementation, happens at both the individual and group levels. This conscious contextualization occurs when individuals articulate their understandings. Individuals may adjust their understandings when they interact with others. The group creates and refines common language and creates shared meaning and understanding (Crossan, 1999, p.528).

Integrating leaves the realm of meaning-making and individual action and occurs when the group moves to a shared practice and a shared language. As in the previous processes, language is integral to this process. It is used to convey both new understandings and previous knowledge. Shared language at the group and institutional levels plays a role in policy creation and implementation. The final process, institutionalizing, happens at the organization level when rules and procedures are made for the entire district.

Before the data collection began, I believed that I was going to learn the most about how literacy coaches interpreted and integrated policy with their teachers and in their schools. Like the Coburn & Woulfin (2012) study, I was interested in how coaches create policy based on their interpretations inside their daily interactions in the school. The research does show that literacy coaches in the district create policy through interpreting and integrating, but the interview and focus group data showed this occurring largely at the group and organization levels with the intent of institutionalizing.

As in the literature, some policy is created at the school level. Coaches spoke frequently of policy expectations at the district and state organization levels and their role in implementing those established guidelines. None of the research subjects recognize school procedures as policy in the interviews or focus group. Policy-in-action refers to the result of day-to-day decisions that are made by the agents in charge of implementing the goals and intents of legitimized policy. Every decision made about how the school is meeting the state and district requirements of Read to Succeed is a policy created based on the interpretations of school policy actors. I used document analysis of the school literacy plans to find examples of these school-based policies. Some of the policies are initiated at the district (organizational) level. Others are created at the group level (partnerships among the schools); Some are created by individual schools.

In the document analysis, I found that over one hundred policies are used to meet the literacy requirements for the state literacy plan at the individual school level. For example, all of the schools progress monitor and require lesson plans, but only one school has policies for progress monitoring and lesson planning to monitor student progress and the use of interventions in section A of the reading plan. Two schools have progress monitoring policies they use for supplemental instruction. The schools' interpretations of the literacy requirements led to the creation of these expectations. Similar examples are found in all sections of the literacy plans.

The principal and coach at Ervine elementary school refer to their literacy plans when speaking about literacy in their schools. The coach, Evelyn, referenced the principal and the school literacy plan when asked how she influences literacy in her school. "So and then of course, we are governed by our reading plan that we have to

create every year" (Personal communication, June 25, 2020). She explained how she helped teachers learn the school and district expectations and how she would provide support in reaching those expectations. The coach uses her literacy and coaching knowledge to assist teachers in meeting the mandates. The principal, Emma mentions having a "plan in place," though she does not reference the physical state plan (Personal communication, June 4, 2020). The other schools did not refer to the literacy plan in the interviews.

Cooperation and partnerships seem to drive the policy creating process for this district. Cooperation in policy creation, according to the transcripts, happened between teachers and coaches, between school administrators and coaches, between math and literacy coaches, between the literacy director and the coaches, and among the five literacy coaches. According to the 4I Framework, these groups are interpreting the policy requirements of the legislation and integrating their understanding with other group members to form policy. The data indicate that the coaches value the interpreting and integration that happens at the group level to create shared practice.

Donna, the coach at Denkins, referred to her leadership role through her membership in a team. "I think the fact that we work really well as a team, an administrative team, that I have a strong voice as far as, you know, how that needs to be looking or what we should be doing…" (Personal communication, June 18, 2020). The coach continued to credit the district director of literacy for listening to the coaches as she planned and modified district policies. In the focus group, Clara praises the district meeting with just the coaches and those with the literacy director as opportunities to discuss concerns and suggestions or just have literacy discussions. Donna credits these

opportunities for the growth of the district in literacy instruction. Evelyn attributes policy development and revision to these meetings where coaches can share teacher concerns with the literacy director.

Throughout the data, institutionalization appears as a goal of the coaches. The coaches referenced district expectations and district policies in the individual interviews. As previously stated, coaches expressed that the district policy had to be strictly followed. If there are any concerns with the policy, a decision had to be made at the district level. The district literacy director affirmed this by explaining that they were a small district with frequent superintendent turnover.

According to my interpretation of the 4I framework, institutionalization is a part of policy creation and implementation. I did not anticipate the emphasis the coaches placed on this process. There were no examples in the individual interviews where the coaches said that they worked with anyone to help create policy. None of the coaches gave themselves, or other coaches credit for participating in policy development. There were no examples of agency the coaches felt as policy creators or implementers. They all preferred to emphasize that policy came from the state, district and school. Even though the coaches have limited authority to create formal policy, the coaches preferred to talk about their roles inside the group and organizational levels. When the coaches spoke of interpreting policy, they only spoke of doing it in conjunction with others. They placed a high value on the interpreting and integrating they did in district coaching meetings.

The findings of this research indicate that literacy coaches create and implement policy at the individual, group, and organizational levels through interpreting, integrating,

and institutionalizing. The coaches move among all levels of the organization to draft, implement, review and revise policy. No other policy actor reaches all of the levels. The coaches emphasize the importance of cooperation in the policy process over an individual's agency as they work together to interpret and integrate state requirements and local needs. Their collective goal is to have an institutionalized approach to literacy in their school district.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the study of how literacy coaches function as policy actors and shares conclusions drawn from the data. It provides a discussion on the significance of the findings and recommendations for additional research.

States across the nation have implemented legislation to require reading proficiency for students. In 2014, South Carolina implemented Read to Succeed (R2S) which requires: 1) state, district, and school reading plans, 2) a focus on third-grade progression, 3) summer reading camps, 4) provision of reading interventions, 5) requirements for in-service educator endorsements, 6) early learning and literacy development, 7) teacher preparation, and 8) reading (literacy) coaches.

Literacy coaches have become a frequent requirement in instructional legislation. Coaches are content experts who assist in meeting goals established by educational policy. Legislation often places coaches in the role of policy implementers. In South Carolina, literacy coaches are traditionally responsible for the professional development of teachers, advising school administrators in scheduling and planning, completing and evaluating reading plans, and monitoring interventions.

Policy implementation is not a transactional process that occurs in a vacuum. Policy implementation exists as a part of a recursive process of policy creation,

application, revision, and re-creation that occur simultaneously. Policy is the result of day-to-day decisions that are made by leaders as well as the lived experiences of those decisions. Literacy coaches work inside this policy paradigm. As content experts, literacy coaches have limited knowledge of or experience with school leadership and policy creation and implementation.

This research explored how literacy coaches function as policy actors and the types of policies they create. I interviewed the elementary reading coaches, principals, and the literacy director in a rural, Title I school district and analyzed reading plans that show how they have created school policies and institutionalized them in accordance with the roles of literacy coaches. This county has five elementary schools, each employing a literacy coach as required by the state. All elementary literacy coaches and principals were invited to participate in individual interviews. Analysis of the interviews revealed that additional information was needed from the district's perspective, so I interviewed the district's director of literacy. A focus group that included all of the elementary literacy coaches concluded the interview data collection. School literacy plans for the current school year were analyzed to determine the literacy policies used at each school.

Open coding was used to label and organize the results of the interviews and focus group for analysis. Coding allowed me to link similar insights and information to look for themes in the data. I applied the 4I Framework, which was modified from a study on organizational learning, to interpret the data and recognize themes as explained in the introduction chapter. I used two of the framework's premises in my analysis. Premise 2 of the 4I Framework explains that policy creation and implementation exist on three levels: individual, group, and organization. Premise 3 explains that policy creation

and implementation are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing (4Is). This study applied three of the processes: interpreting integrating and institutionalizing.

Major findings

The theory for how coaches function as policy actors is comprised of five themes: 1) coaches create and implement policy across three organizational levels, 2) coaches interpret, integrate and institutionalize policy, 3) policy formation is a recursive process, 4) coaches value and use cooperation in policy creation, and 5) coaches do not feel agency in their roles as policy actors.

Interpretation of the Findings

When I began this study, I expected to learn about policy creation at the individual school levels. My study of policy led me to the theory of policy appropriation, the recursive process of policy creation in which the implementation, and reaction to such, modifies and adjusts the actual policy, i.e. policy as practice. In my career, I have been a classroom teacher, a school assistant principal and a district level administrator in instruction and human resources. The theory of appropriation helped me reconceptualize my own experiences with policy with the understandings of policy I was forming through my research.

There is limited research on how coaches act as policy creators. A study found that coaches act as creators and implementers when they worked with teachers (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). The researchers found that coaches influenced policy enactment any time they persuaded or pressured teachers to complete components of a policy or when they buffered, protected teachers from less desirable components of a policy. This study

exemplified the theory of appropriation for me. I was interested in seeing how the literacy coaches in the district I studied interacted with teachers to create policies at the school level to meet the requirements of the district and state. I wanted to know how their (in)actions shaped policies at the schools.

The first literacy coach and principal interviews showed me that the story I would learn in this district would not be similar to the only study I found viewing coaches as policy creators. That study used a research team that worked inside a school district and observed teachers and students in action. My research used interviews and a focus group as the primary methods of data collection which led me to uncover unique data that I had not anticipated. Similarities to the Coburn & Woulfin study may exist in this district. Researchers would need to more closely approximate the study's methods to learn more about how coaches' policy interpretations influence teachers to create new policies.

Organizational levels.

Literacy coaches, principals, and the literacy director emphasized that policy creation occurred at the district level. The two participating principals clearly stated that they structured their school literacy program using the district policy. Emma, the principal at Ervine, mentioned going above and beyond some of the requirements because of her experience as a state literacy specialist, but she knew the district policies and made sure that she adhered to them. Dianne, the principal at Denkins, gave examples of trainings she and the literacy coach did at the beginning of each school year to establish district expectations. The four literacy coaches who participated in individual interviews repeatedly referenced how they implemented and supported district policy. All of the coach and principal interviews credited the district literacy director as the policy

creator. The literacy director agreed with this perception and even showed discomfort with the "top-down" nature of policy in the district. The interview with Lilith, however, shared an account of policy creation that balanced an organic process with formalized decision making to create a responsive systemic approach to literacy policy.

The literacy director interview and focus group painted a picture of literacy coaches spanning the individual, group, and organizational levels to create policy that is systemic and responsive. Policies are initiated at all three levels in the district. The director and the coaches in the focus group shared their formal process for creating their balanced literacy framework. Balanced literacy is an approach to reading instruction that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The coaches and director worked at the organization level to determine established practices for teaching these components and decided the approach that would be used in the district. Coaches took drafts of the policy to the group and individual levels. Instructional teams in the schools reviewed and gave feedback to the coaches. The coaches also worked with individual administrators and teachers to review the policy draft. The coaches and director made revisions and the director issued the formal policy.

Not all policy formation started at the organizational level. Coaches identify problems that were experienced by teachers and students. If the issue concerned a problem with implementing an existing policy, coaches would bring the issue to the district level to discuss with the director and the other elementary literacy coaches. Policies would be reviewed and revised and returned to the schools and teachers. In some cases, new formalized policies were created like the use of benchmark programs to determine ability levels and growth.

The literacy coaches in this district often meet as a group of five to discuss needs and questions they have in their schools. According to focus group data, coaches review the existing policy and determine ways to support their teachers. The definition of policy used for this research is the established way things are done. Coaches make decisions about how to address concerns and implement those decisions in their individual schools. Coaches also work at the individual level with teachers and administrators to create expectations of how things will be done under specific circumstances. Responsive professional development expectations and coaching moves establish expectations for teacher actions.

No other policy actor moves among all of these levels in the district to establish policy. These literacy coaches, according to the literacy director and principals, were selected because of their content knowledge and instructional expertise. None of the coaches had administrative experience before becoming a literacy coach. All leadership experience came from various roles as teacher leaders. These coaches navigate levels of policy creation without identifying as policy creators.

Coaches interpret, integrate, and institutionalize policy.

The literacy coaches used the social and psychological processes of interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing as they traversed the organization levels to create policy. The coaches did not talk about themselves as individuals and did not share personal interpretations of state, district, or school policy. They did share examples of their actions at the school level where they shared their interpretations of policy.

Monitoring teachers and giving them feedback on their implementation of policy expectations were two common situations where coaches interpreted policy expectations.

Coaches frequently observed instruction and evaluated data with teachers. Coaches would say that these coaching moves are to improve instruction and learning. This is also part of the policy creation and implementation cycle. The coaches are training teachers based on their interpretations of literacy policy established by the district. Furthermore, feedback given to teachers is filtered through the coach's understandings and interpretations of policy.

I had anticipated learning more about how coaches used their individual interpretations to influence policy creation at the school level. My data collection methods were not conducive to this result. In addition, the staff who participated had limited understanding of the influence literacy coaches had over district policy. They are seen and valued for their literacy expertise and ability to share policy expectations as implementers. The literacy director referred to these coaches as her rule-followers which unconsciously minimized their roles as leaders in the district. Lilith noted, "They are my rule followers and they don't want to do anything that has not been given prior a blessing or approval" (Personal communication, November 12, 2020).

The coaches enthusiastically shared examples of interpretation and integration that they completed as a part of a group. The literacy director in her interview and the literacy coaches in the focus group highlighted their process for interpreting the formalized R2S legislation and South Carolina Department of Education guidance by reviewing established practices by national literacy leaders, deciding which practices would be best for their district, and creating a formal balanced literacy framework. Integration occurred as the coaches and directors moved from understanding R2S to establishing best practices for the district.

Coaches completed these processes at the group level when they met together without the literacy director. When one or more coaches discovered an issue in their schools, coaches would convene to discuss how to proceed. In these meetings, coaches discuss their interpretations of the relevant policy and establish an integrated response for all five of the elementary schools to follow. Coaches also used this group process with school leaders. Coaches work closely with administrators, math coaches, and teachers to review policy expectations, discuss interpretations of the policy and create an integrated response. There are many examples of school policies in the literacy plans that show schools' independent policies. Coaches and principals mentioned examples of how they worked as a team to create policies like literacy instructional schedules, professional development plans, and progress monitoring guidelines to name a few.

I was most surprised by the emphasis on institutionalization by the coaches as a part of policy creation and implementation. Part of the surprise stemmed from my original intent to study coaching at the school level and see how their interpretations influenced their creation and implementation of policy. In addition, I work in a medium-size school district that has emphasized site-based decision-making. While my district has plenty of district policies, principals and building leaders have the autonomy to create site-based policies like the ones the studied district creates at the organizational level. My district also does not have a literacy director with the authority to create policy.

This small district I studied valued having a systemic approach to policy creation and implementation. In addition to having systemic policies, coaches met as a group when problems were identified to create an integrated response. Coaches expressed that

they wanted to have a clear and consistent message when they assisted teachers with concerns that were evident in multiple schools.

I also believed that studying elementary school policy, as opposed to policy for middle and high schools, contributed to the emphasis on institutionalization. As a teacher and building administrator, I worked in middle schools. As a literacy specialist, I worked primarily with elementary schools. Elementary staff members, as the literacy specialist in the study stated, are rule followers. In addition to following rules, I have found that elementary staff value everyone having the same expectations. Even with these factors, I was still surprised by the credit given to the organization for policy creation despite the involvement of the literacy coaches.

Recursive process.

Using the 4I framework (as described above) highlighted the recursive nature of policy formation. Policy implementation began with the Read to Succeed (R2S) mandates in 2014, and they required the use of literacy coaches to support teacher instruction and student learning. In addition to assisting teachers and students, coaches created policy as they worked to fulfill the requirements of R2S. Recursive process exists when policy creation and implementation exist simultaneously. Policy is created as policy actors strive to implement a formalized, or legislated, policy. This policy creation does not require a full policy cycle of creation, implementation, evaluation, and recreation.

The data provides multiple examples of the recursive nature of policy. The coaches worked as a team to create district policy to support teachers and students in meeting the requirements of R2S. The literacy director and coaches identified a need for a policy for instructional practice in the district. The coaches and director created a

framework and requested evaluation and input from teachers before they began the implementation process. Once the policy was enacted, the coaches continuously monitor the implementation. When concerns are found, coaches meet as a group of five, sometimes with the director, to modify and improve the policy.

This recursive process is significantly different from what an iterative implementation process would be. If policy implementation were actually iterative, each step in the process would be complete before the next step begins. In addition, policy would not be modified during implementation. Policy researchers since the second wave of policy studies have known that policy is not clearly delineated. Second wave researchers termed this, "mutual adaptation" (Odden, 1991).

While researchers have known that the normative view of policy formation was incomplete, this study underscores the complexity of policy formation at the district and school levels and showcases the roles of staff in policy creation who have not had administrative or policy training. In addition to the adaptive approach to district policy implementation, coaches work with school level teams to create policies to support the teachers and students. For example, the coaches created monitoring policies to give feedback on balanced literacy implementation. They created policies for providing feedback to teachers after observations. The coaches continuously create policies in response to the needs of the teachers and students.

Cooperation and agency.

Theme four, coaches value and use cooperation in policy creation, and theme five, coaches do not feel agency in their roles as policy actors are related and are discussed together.

Throughout the interviews with the coaches and the principals, credit for policy creation was attributed to the district. None of the coaches and principals recognized the roles the literacy coaches played in creating policy. After an additional interview and focus group, I discovered that the literacy coaches are key policy creators in the district.

The attribution of policy to "the district" shows a dehumanized understanding of policy process and the roles that individuals play in policy creation. This means that the interview subjects' understanding of policy relies heavily on Guba's policy-in-intention conceptualization where official decisions, guidelines, or strategies are determined by legislatures and secondary agents such as district officials. This understanding is problematic in two ways for understanding literacy policy creation in this district. First, literacy coaches are a part of the district team that creates policies for the schools, and second, the description of the creation of shared policies also includes input from teachers and administrators from all levels of the organization, a process that is facilitated by the coaches. Literacy coaches are imbued in this explanation of policy creation and did not give themselves any credit for contributing to any of the policies in the individual interviews. This trend indicates that the coaches do not have a sense of agency in their work as policy creators in the district.

In this context, agency refers to the awareness of one's role in policy creation and implementation and an understanding of an individual's capacity to influence policy creation and implementation. It is not my intention to explore the importance of agency in the policy roles of literacy coaches. The lack of agency expressed and experienced by these coaches as evidenced in the interviews was overwhelming, and I would be remiss to not explore it.

Literacy coaches are experienced and successful teachers chosen by administrators to become literacy coaches. Lilith identifies them as experts. "The coaches, they are your content expert in the classroom as far as literacy goes" (Personal communication, November 12, 2020). South Carolina Department of Education has invested in both literacy training and instructional coach training. This training process occurs over two years after a literacy coach accepts a position if they do not already have advanced training in those areas. Coaches learn the state's supported practices in literacy instruction, the requirements of state policy, and how to work with teachers to improve their instructional practices. This training does not include policy leadership or any study of policy implementation because R2S leaders are using the policy-in-intention viewpoint.

As this study indicates, policy formation occurs on multiple levels, and policy-in-action and policy-in-experience are more relevant conceptualizations for studying policy created in school districts. As the data suggest, instructional coaches participate in policy creation but do not have ownership in their roles in the process. The coaches rely on a collective approach to decision-making. Coaches explained that they take all issues and concerns to an administrative, coach, or district group.

This observation goes beyond authority. Since coaches are not administrators, they do not have the authority to make formal policy. In the Crossen & Woulfin study, there was evidence of independent decisions made by coaches that the district's coaches in this study took back to a group. For example, this district implemented a benchmark assessment system, any questions about the process were taken back for the entire coaching group to discuss instead of individuals deciding for the school. As I recognized previously, my data collection methods cannot (dis)prove this independent decision-making, but the coaches gave multiple examples of their process for dealing with these concerns mutually.

Cooperative decision-making is highly valued in education and has the advantage of multiple points of view and varied expertise. The lack of agency stood out as a theme because coaches did not place themselves as individuals inside these groups when they described their processes. None of the coaches said, "I participated" in the committee that established our benchmark protocols, or "I assisted" in developing the district's balanced literacy framework. When specifically questioned about their roles, coaches defaulted to "we," and often downplayed their own expertise even though they have had literacy and coaching training in addition to their teaching credentials and other advanced degrees.

Conclusions

This research indicates that coaches are instrumental policy actors that influence policy development at the individual, group, and organizational levels through interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing. My research methods did not lead me to the results I anticipated based on my review of literature, but the findings are interesting and compelling for several reasons.

Literacy coaches are the most influential policy actors in this school district. Literacy coaches are not trained in educational leadership or educational policy. They are hired for their instructional expertise and trained in coaching methods. Coaches interpret policy as they prepare and support teachers and building administrators. Coaches integrate their policy understandings with administrators, other coaches, and the district literacy director to create shared practices and organizational policies.

This district values institutionalization and a systemic approach to policy formation. The interviews and focus group indicated that coaches consulted their coaching group and the district literacy director to come to a consensus on policy issues and questions in the schools. The actions of the coaches ensure that the elementary schools create and use consistent processes and policies.

Policy formation in this district is both organic and directive and exemplifies the recursive nature of policy formation. Coaches work at the group and organizational levels to create formal policy by garnering input at the individual and group levels for new policy and policy revision. All individuals are expected to follow policy, but they are solicited for input in the original creation and input is heeded for revisions in a systematic and systemic way.

Coaches value cooperation in policy formation and work with administrators, their coaching peers, and the district literacy director to create and revise policy. Coaches eschew opportunities to make unilateral decisions when working in their schools and prefer to work as a part of a group to make policy decisions.

Finally, coaches do not see themselves as policy creators and have limited cognition of themselves as policy implementors. District and school leaders also do not see the coaches as policy actors. This does not inhibit their contributions to the policy process and may enhance the systemic approach valued in the district.

In my personal and intellectual goals, I placed a high value on equity. Placing an emphasis on literacy instruction that promotes reading and writing competency is appealing and seems to be a worthy goal for the R2S legislation. The consequential nature of it does not promote equity. Retaining students who need time beyond third grade to meet competency levels for reading and writing triggers many equity issues correlated with retention like decreased probability of graduation with a higher impact on racial minority groups. There is little evidence of the benefit of retention in academic research.

Improvements in literacy instructional practices were noted in a 2017 study by RMC Research Corporation involving interviews of state instructional leaders and teachers and teachers and literacy leaders in four participating school districts. According to this study, the perceptions of participants indicate a shift in instructional practices has occurred since the implementation of R2S in 2014 (Hensley, Turner, Drill, Hill, & Sharp, 2017). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, however, there were approximately as many fourth-grade students below reading below grade level in SC in 2019 as there were in 2013 (IES, 2020). The retention of third graders not reading at grade level began in 2017.

This was not an outcomes-based study, and equity is not a destination. National assessment scores are one indicator of academic improvements. The policy actions of the coaches in this study are grounded in and promote equity. As we know, equity involves the distribution of resources based on needs. In every interview, coaches described their roles in light of the needs of students and teachers. The coaches work to create and change policy as needs surfaced. They seek out resources and create policies to fill the needs of teachers and students based on the data they collect and analyze every day. The responsive efforts of the coaches promote equity in their school district.

Possibilities for Future Research

Scholarly research.

The findings of this study have led me to additional questions and ideas for future research. I think it is important to learn more about how the coaches act independently as policy actors. This evidence may still be present in the studied district if different research methods were used. I think there would be even more evidence of coaches acting independently in larger districts with more site-based approaches.

The results of this study would likely be different in middle and high schools in states where middle and high school coaches are used for reading policy. Middle school and high school teachers are generally considered to be more independent and less apt to be rule-followers. The district I studied does use coaches in middle and high school, but they were not studied because they are not required by the Read to Succeed policy.

The role of agency in policy is a burning question for me after this research. I wonder if coaches would have even more influence on policy if they felt a stronger sense

of agency or if the district would curb and monitor the coaches' involvement more. I am also curious to know if the coaches value cooperation because they do not feel agency as policy actors, or if the systemic nature of policy development for this district has impacted the agency of the coaches.

Culture and gender norms likely had an impact on agency with these coaches. All of the coaches in this study were women. This study was conducted in a small town in rural South Carolina. Gender norms often follow the stereotypical Southern gender paradigm. I wonder if the results of this study would be different if any of the coaches were male. As a woman, gender norms exasperate me, and I imagine that other women may agree. Often, especially in the South, gender norms define acceptable roles for individuals whether or not the person being assigned the role values it. Then, are coaches selected based on their cooperative nature, and does gender even factor into this theory?

I also believe that additional research with the 4I Framework as it applies to policy is needed. I understand that the intent of a framework is to help a researcher focus and interpret results. Are the results that I found with policy across organization levels evident in all organizations? Would a study of policy in higher education show the creation and implementation at all levels? Are there any policy actors that traverse all of the organizational levels?

Practical research.

This study focused on a small, rural, Title I district. Replicating this in districts across the state would be useful. Are coaches across the state as influential as the ones in the study? Does the size of the district affect the coaches impact on policy? Does the type

of policy created by coaches vary by the affluence of the district? Do coaches feel more agency in certain districts, and is cooperation valued differently in different districts?

Prior to R2S, the state implemented several literacy initiatives that used literacy coaches as a policy tool. Those initiatives include South Carolina Reading Initiative (SCRI), SC Reads, and SC Reading First. Using a policy – in – action view of policy creation, all of the coaches mandated by these initiatives created policy. Comparing the policies created for these initiatives may give additional insight into the coaches roles in policy creation. Researchers would need to review research on the previous initiatives and interview individuals who served as coaches during those initiatives.

Comparing these initiatives could show if policies from the early initiatives are still in existence in schools or if they have been eliminated. Are the reading initiatives recreating the same policies, or are they policies based on new practices? This would give insight into the longevity of policies created by literacy coaches. It would also be interesting to see if cooperation and agency emerge as themes in this comparison.

Implications for Policy

This research sits squarely in the larger field of policy study. Coaches in this district are influential policy actors. Far from Michael Lipsky's connotation of street-level bureaucrats who implement policy with some degree of latitude, these literacy coaches are sophisticated crafters of responsive policies that impact the district even though they are not aware of the extent of their role in policy creation and implementation. The coaches' actions influence policy at all levels of development for the organization.

Agency is is a valued concept in education. Literacy teachers work to build agency in their students as they read, write and think. The literacy coaches have created policies for their district and schools that have made an impact in the eyes of principals and the district literacy director. I think increased agency can impact future policy creation of coaches.

Qualitative researchers realize that their questions have an impact on the way interview subjects view themselves and their actions. By the end of the focus group, I could tell that the coaches had started to realize the impact they had on policy in the district. As they described the actions they took to create policies, they began to realize that their efforts helped create the policies they attributed to the district.

I believe that this new awareness will influence the policy creation practices of the coaches in this district. The coaches already act with intention when they meet as a group to react to questions from the teachers. I believe that they will have a greater sense of ownership for the policies they helped craft and will feel more confident in addressing questions about district policy. These coaches will continue to work cooperatively to create policy and reap the benefits of multiple perspectives.

Coaches feeling agency in policy making will positively influence the types of policies coaches create and how they implement them. As the literacy director indicated, coaches are content and instructional experts. Recognizing that they are creators will give them greater autonomy in responding to teacher concerns. They will feel more empowered to answer questions from teachers and principals about district policy. They

will also become more confident in establishing school-based policies to meet the needs of district policies.

Students of policy recognize that the normative, iterative view of policy formation is inadequate. Policy is created in the everyday actions of those who experience it. The linear view of policy formation that formalized policy creators hold may benefit the process. When legislators added literacy coaches to the Read to Succeed policy, the stated intent was to support teachers and improve student learning. None of the legislators recognized that coaches would be the key developers of policy in a district. These well-trained staff members who are invested in their staff and students are the ideal policy creators.

Formalized policy creators should consider the policy implications for requiring the use of instructional coaches in K-12 policy. Formalized creators should know that the policy process is recursive and instructional coaches are influential policy creators that will create policy at their schools, among groups of schools, and at the district level. This information should influence both coach selection and coach training in future policies.

In the district I studied, the five coaches had invested in themselves for content development and are committed to the district's best interests for students and staff. Coaches should be chosen for their willingness to grow in content knowledge, instructional practices, and policy formation. The responsive process used by these five couches has had a tremendous impact on instructional practices for their district. Future studies may show similarities in other SC districts. Empowering future coaches with the

knowledge of how they impact students, teachers, schools, and the district will lead to contentious policy creation in all districts.

Before I conducted this study, I had a tenuous understanding of policy as a recursive process. I recognized that policy implementation was not a nice straight row that went from creation to implementation to evaluation, but I did not realize just how messy it is. I did not discover in the literature how policy shapes, forms and reshapes across levels in an organization. I did not gain an understanding of the social and psychological processes that policy creators exhibit as they create and implement policy. Cognitively, I understood that policies are lived experiences, and as such, they are adapted, but this understanding belied a level of complexity I learned through this study.

The study of policy practice in this district contributes to policy theory. Not all policy actors, recognize that they are policy actors. Even though that statement is value neutral, there could be negative implications for unconscious policy creation. This study demonstrated that policy is a recursive process because actions and decisions lead to other actions and decisions like completing a maze, but the maze has more than one story. Policy actors, as in this district, simultaneously completing the maze and guiding others through it.

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APPENDIX A

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: LITERACY COACH AND PRINCIPALS

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the focus questions. Where appropriate, the interviewees were asked to expand upon their answers.

Literacy Coaches

1. Tell me about your responsibilities as literacy coach.
2. In what ways do you influence literacy instruction?
3. Give examples of literacy policies and procedures that you have in your school.

   *Policies and procedures are the established ways things are done like how often you meet for PD, how you plan lessons, lesson structures and templates, formative assessment guidelines, etc.

4. How are literacy policies/procedures created in your school? Who is involved in creating them?
5. What literacy policies/procedures have you crafted for your school? Did you work with anyone?
   a. In curriculum, instruction, assessment
   b. What prompted these examples
6. Are policy and procedures supported in your school; is there follow through?

Principals

1. Tell me about literacy instruction in your school
2. Describe the role(s) of the literacy coach in your school?
3. In what ways does the literacy coach influence instruction?
4. Give examples of literacy policies and procedures that are in your school.

   *Policies and procedures are the established ways things are done like how often you meet for PD, how you plan lessons, lesson structures and templates, formative assessment guidelines, etc.

5. How are literacy policies/procedures created in your school? Who is involved in creating them?
6. What literacy policies/procedures has your literacy coach crafted for your school? Did the coach work with anyone?
   a. In curriculum, instruction, assessment
   b. What prompted the formation of these examples
7. Are policy and procedures supported in your school; is there follow through?

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: LITERACY DIRECTOR

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the individual interview questions. Where appropriate, the interviewee was asked to expand upon her answers.

1. Tell me about Read to Succeed in your district. Focus on elementary.
2. Describe the role of the literacy coach in elementary schools.
3. How are literacy procedures and policies developed in elementary? School and district?
4. How do literacy coaches influence policy in your district?
5. Would you give me some examples of how coaches have influenced a specific policy for the district?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: LITERACY COACHES

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the focus group questions. Where appropriate, the interviewees were asked to expand upon their answers.

1. In what ways do you influence literacy in your schools and in the district?
2. Tell me about the process for creating literacy policies and procedures in your schools and the district.
3. Do you feel like you are responsible for creating policies and procedures?
4. Give an example of a policy and explain why it was created.
5. What are some challenging parts of creating, implementing and monitoring policies in your schools and district?

APPENDIX D

CODE DESCRIPTIONS

Balanced literacy- philosophy of reading instruction that includes a focus on phonetics and comprehension as needed for the individual learner.

Coach collaboration- any instance of 2 or more elementary literacy coaches working together without the literacy director or building principals.

Coach input- any instance of coaches sharing teacher, student, or instructional needs with school administration and the director of literacy to influence policy.

Coaching moves- a variety of professional practices performed by literacy coaches. Some examples include resource collection, co-teaching, demonstration lessons, or coaching cycles.

Data- formative or summative information about teacher practice, student growth, student achievement, or other measurable indicators of learning and improvement.

Data analysis- a variety of processes used by teachers and literacy coaches to determine strengths and needs for student and teacher growth.

Defined best practice- specific process used by the literacy director and literacy coaches to create the school districts approach to balanced literacy.

District approach- policies created for literacy at the district level. Some of the policies were made with the input of the literacy coaches. Often used to indicate that the five elementary schools embraced a systemic approach to literacy instruction.

District expectations- District policies created to have a systemic approach to literacy.

District meetings- meetings between the literacy coaches and the literacy director.

Established framework- existing policy for balanced literacy created by the literacy director and literacy coaches.

Expectations- established policies. Expectations are made at both the school and district levels.

Feedback- professional reaction to an observation or other job function from a coach or administrator to a teacher.

LD & coach collaboration- instances where elementary literacy coaches worked with the district literacy director.

Literacy/ math coach collaboration- instances where the school math coach work together to create school policy.

Monitoring- activities conducted by literacy coaches and administrators to determine if teachers are implementing literacy expectations. For example, these activities include classroom observations, lesson plan reviews.

Observations- literacy coaches or administrators watching classroom instruction for policy implementation.

Planning- literacy coaches and teachers creating instructional plans that adhere to school and district policy.

Policy creation- any part of the recursive process of creating guidelines or requirements for the school or district for literacy. This includes policy unique to a school or district policy.

Policy requirements- state regulations for Read to Succeed. This includes legislated mandates and state department of education regulations.

Principal/coach collaboration- activities where principal and literacy coach collaborate on creating, implementing or revising literacy policies at the school level.

Principal expectations- literacy policies established by a principal.

Problem identification- the recognition of challenges associated with implementing literacy policy. The issues are taken back to the district group and amendments to policies or the creation of new policies are considered and enacted.

Professional development- any activity designed for teacher training provided by the literacy coach. Coaches and principals include a variety of actions like after school trainings, grade level trainings which they sometimes call Professional Learning Communities, and data analysis meetings. Coaching cycles, individualized teacher support, are also included in this.

School expectations- the policies created by the school leadership team for literacy instruction.

Staff/ teacher input - an action where teachers or school leaders give input on policy creation. This includes problem identification and giving input on existing policies and policies being developed.

Student achievement- measure of student performance based on grade level expectations as measured by summative assessments.

Student growth- measure of student improvement in literacy performance. Formative assessments are used to measure growth.

Workshop model- an instructional model that includes a mini-lesson, time for students to work and a debrief. The majority of the time is used for student practice with teacher support.

APPENDIX E

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE READING PLAN TEMPLATE

A. This school documents and monitors the reading and writing assessment and instruction planned for all prekindergarten through fifth grade students and the interventions be provided to all struggling readers who are not able to comprehend grade-level texts.				

Lenses of Assessment
A Comprehensive System of Assessment
• Summative Assessment
  o SC Ready
• Formative Assessment
  o Fountas and Pinnell, DRA, Dominie
  o MAP
  o Star Reading
  o 4K Assessments: PALS, Gold, MyIgGDIs
• Data Teams
  o Collecting Data, Analyzing, Establishing Goals and Look-fors, Creating Action Plans
• Documentation of Data				

	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
A1. Teachers use a comprehensive formative assessment system.	☐	☐	☐	
A2. Teachers make instructional decisions for students based on data.	☐	☐	☐	
A3. Teachers work together in teams to collect and analyze data, establish goals and look-fors for students, and create action plans for students	☐	☐	☐	
A4. Teachers collect and analyze data to determine targeted, effective in-class intervention.	☐	☐	☐	

B. This school provides supplemental instruction by teachers who have a literacy teacher add-on endorsement and is offered during the school day and, as appropriate, before or after school in book clubs, through a summer reading camp, or both.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Supplemental Instruction • Reading Process • Small Group and Individual				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
B1. Teachers notice, teach, and prompt for use of strategic reading behaviors.	☐	☐	☐	
B2. Teachers and students collaborate to set measurable short term goals aimed at growing students' reading behaviors and make strategic plans outlining how these goals will be accomplished.	☐	☐	☐	
B3. Teachers provide targeted, effective in-class intervention which -must provide individual and small-group instruction; and -must be 30 minutes in addition to 90 minutes of daily reading and writing instruction.	☐	☐	☐	

C. This school utilizes a system for helping parents understand how they can support the student as a reader at home.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Family Support of Literacy Development				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
C1. Teachers provide opportunities for parent involvement with literacy development including parent workshops, parent conferences, and newsletters.	☐	☐	☐	

D. This school provides for the reading and writing achievement and growth at the classroom, school, and district levels with decisions about intervention based on all available data.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Research-Based Instructional Practices: • Reading Workshop: Read Aloud, Shared Reading Experience, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading Instruction, Reading Process, Time to read w/ conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Writing Workshop: Read Aloud, Shared/Interactive Writing, Small Group Writing Instruction, Independent Writing, Time to write w/conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Research Workshop: Mini lesson, Time to construct knowledge through reading and writing w/conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Integration of Disciplinary Literacy • Standards: South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards, Early Learning Standards for 4K				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
D1. Teachers ensure that instruction is short and focused so that students practice new behaviors and processes by reading and writing authentic texts for the majority of the instructional time.	☐	☐	☐	
D2. Teachers monitor student engagement in reading and writing and use this data to confer with students.	☐	☐	☐	
D3. Teachers use shared reading experiences (literary texts and informational texts) to scaffold success and build fluency.	☐	☐	☐	
D4. Teachers use shared writing experiences to scaffold student success and build fluency.	☐	☐	☐	

D. This school provides for the reading and writing achievement and growth at the classroom, school, and district levels with decisions about intervention based on all available data. (continued)				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Research-Based Instructional Practices: • Reading Workshop: Read Aloud, Shared Reading Experience, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading Instruction, Reading Process, Time to read w/ conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Writing Workshop: Read Aloud, Shared/Interactive Writing, Small Group Writing Instruction, Independent Writing, Time to write w/conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Research Workshop: Mini lesson, Time to construct knowledge through reading and writing w/conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Integration of Disciplinary Literacy • Standards: South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards, Early Learning Standards for 4K				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
D5. Teachers teach, guide, and support students in how to independently use strategies to construct meaning and monitor deep understandings using challenging texts.	☐	☐	☐	
D6. Teachers facilitate interactions so that students are productively and actively engaged in constructing meaning by reading, writing, listening, speaking, and inquiring.	☐	☐	☐	
D7. Teachers provide opportunities for students to develop deep conceptual knowledge in a discipline by using the habits of reading, writing, talking, and thinking, which that discipline values and uses. (McConachie et.al, 2006)	☐	☐	☐	

D. This school provides for the reading and writing achievement and growth at the classroom, school, and district levels with decisions about intervention based on all available data. (continued)				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Research-Based Instructional Practices: • Reading Workshop: Read Aloud, Shared Reading Experience, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading Instruction, Reading Process, Time to read w/ conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Writing Workshop: Read Aloud, Shared/Interactive Writing, Small Group Writing Instruction, Independent Writing, Time to write w/conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Research Workshop: Mini lesson, Time to construct knowledge through reading and writing w/conferring and using a system for collecting this data • Integration of Disciplinary Literacy • Standards: South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards, Early Learning Standards for 4K				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
D8. Teachers use the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards when planning instruction.	☐	☐	☐	

E. This school ensures that students are provided with wide selections of texts over a wide range of genres and written on a wide range of reading levels to match the reading levels of students.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Reading Engagement: • Student Choice • Large blocks of time to read, write, and research • Access to numerous books and other nontraditional forms of texts (audio books, eBooks, etc.) in the classroom that reflect a variety of genre				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
E1. Teachers provide students choice in what they read, write, and research.	☐	☐	☐	
E2. Teachers monitor reading and writing engagement and use that data to conference with students when needed to increase reading and writing volume.	☐	☐	☐	
E3. Teachers reflect on and eliminate activities that interfere with text reading and writing.	☐	☐	☐	
E4. Teachers establish and directly teach routines and procedures, so that students know what to do in order to maximize time.	☐	☐	☐	
E5. Teachers ensure there are ample texts (both informational and literary) and other materials available in their classrooms.	☐	☐	☐	

F. This school provides teacher and administrator training in reading and writing instruction.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Professional Development • Literacy Competencies for PreK-5th Grade Teachers • Literacy Competencies for Administrators • South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards • Standards for Professional Learning • Early Learning Standards for 4K				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
F1. Teachers participate in professional learning opportunities based on data through o Study groups o Collaboration with school coach o Book clubs o Teacher action research o Collaborative planning o Peer coaching	☐	☐	☐	
F2. Administrators participate in professional learning opportunities within and outside the school based on personal needs and/or school-wide data o Study groups o Collaboration with school coach o Book Clubs	☐	☐	☐	

G. This school develops strategically planned partnerships with county libraries, state and local arts organizations, volunteers, social service organizations, community partners and school media specialists to promote reading and writing.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Literacy Partnerships				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
G1. Teachers and/or schools participate in strategically planned and developed partnerships in order to promote reading and writing. • County libraries are used to increase the volume of reading in the community over the summer • State and local arts organizations • Volunteers • Social service organizations • School media specialists	☐	☐	☐	
G2. Specific actions are taken to foster partnerships.	☐	☐	☐	

H. This school embeds practices reflective of exemplary literacy-rich environments.				
Lenses of Assessment Assessing for Inquiry-based Learning: • Immersion, Investigation, Coalescing, Going Public • Read Aloud/Shared Reading • Independent reading, writing, researching • South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for Inquiry • Profile of the South Carolina Graduate				
	Rarely	**Sometimes**	**Routinely**	**Possible Sources of Evidence:**
H1. Teachers use predictable structures (Immersion, Investigation, Coalescing, and Going Public) so that students construct knowledge by reading and writing authentic texts for most of the instructional time.	☐	☐	☐	
H2. Teachers integrate content-specific reading, writing, & researching into ELA to provide the authentic experiences necessary to become proficient researchers and readers and writers.	☐	☐	☐	
H3. Teachers provide large blocks of time for instruction and practice in order for	☐	☐	☐	

Section I: Analysis of Data

Strengths	Possibilities for Growth

Section J: 2019–20 SMART Goals and Progress Toward Those Goals This section is a new addition to this year's Reflection Tool. Please provide your school's goals from the 2019-20 school year and the progress your school has made towards these goals. Utilize quantitative and qualitative data gathered prior to the closing of schools due to Covid-19 to determine progress toward the goal (s). **OR,** Utilize the most appropriate and relevant data available to determine progress toward the 2019-20 goal.	
Goal #1:	**Progress:**

Section K: 2020–21 SMART Goals and Action Steps Based on Analysis of Data All schools serving students in third grade MUST respond to the third grade reading proficiency goal. Schools that do not serve third grade students may choose a different goal. Schools may continue to use the same SMART goals from previous years or choose new goals. Utilize a triangulation of appropriate and available data (i.e. screeners, MTSS processes, benchmark assessments, and observational data) to set reasonable goal(s) for the 2020-21 school year.	
Goal #1: Third Grade Goal: Reduce the percentage of third graders performing below grade level in the fall of 2020-21 as determined by____(data source(s))_____ from _____% to _____% in the spring of 2021.	**Action Steps:**
Goal #2:	**Action Steps:**