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# A Descriptive Analysis of an Instructional Coaching Process and Its Impact on Student Reading Learning Outcomes

Frederico Leon Rowe

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A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL  
COACHING PROCESS AND ITS IMPACT ON  
STUDENT READING LEARNING OUTCOMES

by

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## DEDICATION

With the highest regard, I dedicate this work to my parents, Mr. Harold and Marilyn Woods. During my entire education career, they have demonstrated unwavering support and encouragement. To my niece, Alexia, thank you for all you did to provide me with space and time to complete the work. Lastly, to my son, Ayden Ca'Zarion, Daddy loves you.

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## ABSTRACT

Instructional coaching has become a widely used method that focuses on improving teacher effectiveness and enhancing professional growth that might help teachers focus on individual needs, growth in teaching and learning, and sharing best practices with others. Instructional coaches have the potential to bridge that gap. The mixed methods study was conducted to describe the instructional coaching process among grades 2 through 5 teachers. The qualitative differences were similarities between the literacy coach's and the mathematics coach's procedures and processes in goal setting, observations, meetings, conferences, and feedback. For grades 2 and 3, the non-coaching group had lower pre-reading scores compared to the coaching group. Coaching was not a significant factor in post-reading scores, and there was no statistical difference in reading achievement when comparing the instructional coaching group and the non-instructional coaching group. A marginally significant difference was observed when comparing the score change between the study groups. Greater achievement occurred among the non-coaching group than in the instructional coaching group. For grades 4 and 5, the non-coaching group had higher pre-reading scores compared to the coaching group. No statistical difference was found in reading achievement when comparing the instructional coaching and non-instructional coaching groups. A statistically significant difference occurred when comparing the score change between the study groups. Greater achievement was found among the non-coaching group than the instructional coaching group. Future research could show that through extensive mentoring research and

sociocultural factors, sufficient depth in discussing coaching functions and outcomes from the individual difference perspective could fill the gap in instructional coaching differences. The social change implication is that the teachers at GES Elementary School could change teaching practices and utilize instructional coaching more frequently to enhance students' reading/English language arts and mathematics.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHAMPS .....	Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation, Success
CCSS.....	Common Core State Standards
CRC.....	Culturally Relevant Coaching
ECE .....	Early Childhood Education
ESEA.....	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA.....	Every Student Succeeds Act
FAST™ .....	Formative Assessment System for Teachers
GES .....	Gamecocks Elementary School
IC.....	Instructional Coach
LEA.....	Local Education Agency
NCLB.....	No Child Left Behind
PLC .....	Professional Learning Community
PRESS.....	Pulling in Reading with Exceptional Specialist Support
RTTT.....	Race to the Top



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Instructional coaching has become a widely used method that focuses on improving teacher effectiveness and enhancing professional growth (Burggraaf, 2020; Davakos, 2018; Dillard, 2018; Green, 2020; Hoover, 2020; Kennedy, 2018; Knight, 2019a; Little, 2019; Rizzi, 2020). Instructional coaches serve in various capacities, including helping teachers focus on their individual needs in the classroom, finding resources to help with lesson planning, and assisting teachers to become conduits of information to their teammates and colleagues. DeWitt (2014) asserts that using instructional coaches might help bridge the gaps in teaching and learning by supporting teachers through observing, modeling, planning, reflecting, and providing feedback. Instructional coaches aim to facilitate new practices, change current practices, and sustain best practices to improve student achievement (Green, 2020; Hoover, 2020; Little, 2019). Instructional coaching is often a priority of districts and schools, and it is important for those involved in the coaching to understand its relevance and impact on professional learning for teachers (Kelly, 2019).

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of instructional coaching beyond student achievement outcomes. Green (2020) highlighted the concept of culturally relevant coaching as a support system that centers on the individual and specific instructional teacher needs. Understanding that support was layered and differentiated, the study focused on the impact of instructional coaching on the whole

teacher rather than the sum of its parts. Burggraaf (2020) focused on the purpose of action research, which evaluated the impact of a situated coaching model for participating teachers at Lexington School District Elementary School. In his study, Burggraaf concluded that participants valued the effectiveness of instructional coaches as a form of professional development. The study highlighted the following: welcomed professional learning outcomes: extended professional learning duration, effective feedback loop and responsiveness, meaningful learning experiences, coherence and collegial support through co-teaching and modeling of lessons.

The literature about coaching highlights several improvements over the most recent years. These improvements include teacher lesson planning (Hoover, 2020), meeting instructional objectives (Desimone & Pak, 2017), and improvement in professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Rizzi, 2020). The current literature suggests adding data to enhance the impact of instructional coaching on reading/literacy achievement in grades 2 through 5 (Davakos, 2018; Frederick-Williams, 2019; Grissom et al., 2021; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Knight, 2019a; Offutt, 2019). Local education agencies (LEAs) responded to the changes in policy initiatives facilitated by the Every Student Succeeds Act. Actions included integrating coaches as a critical element of school-based professional development designed in light of the district's reform agenda and guided by the goal of meeting schools' specific instructional needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Fallon et al., 2019; Galey, 2016; Ho & Lau, 2018).

Effective instructional coaches view coaching as a partnership or professional conversation between equals within which collaborating teachers decide what happens in their classroom (Knight, 2019a). Instructional coaches help strengthen teachers'

instruction and help connect teachers to resources that support their practice (Goe et al., 2012; Pomerantz & Pierce, 2019; Taylor, 2008). More broadly, instructional coaching supports schools in improving student achievement through a long-term commitment to building instructional capacity throughout the school year (Grissom et al., 2021; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

### **Problem of Practice**

Gamecock Elementary School (GES, pseudonym), the school of focus, implemented an instructional coaching process in 2017-2018 that continues to exist today. GES embarked on instructional coaching to improve professional learning for teachers and increase student learning outcomes. After a few years of implementation, an informed understanding was gained of the impact of the instructional coaching process and its impact on student learning outcomes. The instructional coaching team consists of the school principal, assistant principal, numeracy instructional coach, and a literacy instructional coach. The current team remains intact with members who have served for four years. The team focused concerted efforts on transforming the school and improving student learning outcomes using Cognitive Coaching and the Big Four Model components. While the coaching team developed school-based goals for focus, the team has also engaged teachers in individualized coaching to improve instructional practices and student outcomes.

Before implementation at the local school level, instructional coaching was a district-level initiative. During this time, instructional coaches were trained in coaching practices facilitated by the school district. In 2016-2017, the training ended abruptly, and instructional coaches were reclassified. The reclassification resulted in the loss of

professional learning to develop, implement, and monitor instructional coaching in schools. At that time, professional learning for instructional coaches became the responsibility of the building principals.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This mixed methods action research study used Malcolm Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy as the theoretical framework and evidence-based professional development approaches. Malcolm Knowles has defined Andragogy as the art and science of teaching adult learners (Kearsley, 2010; Knowles, 1980). Andragogy differs from pedagogy in that its focus is adult learning, while pedagogy focuses on the learning process for children (Kurt, 2020).

Many professionals, including educators and philosophers, have debated whether there is a difference between pedagogy and andragogy (Kurt, 2020). Pedagogy addresses the method of teaching children, while in contrast, andragogy examines the process by which adults learn (Kurt, 2020). While Knowles' theory initially focused on adults, the term andragogy has broadened to include any education practice with a student-driven approach (Kurt, 2020). The debate per the research continues between andragogy and pedagogy. Andragogy is relatively new, having been around for less than two centuries. The theory that adult learning differs from children is also relatively new, only existing for less than a century. The relative youthfulness of adult learning has led to questions about methods to be used for adult learners (Kurt, 2020). Criticisms of the adult learning approach is the focus on the teacher's learning experience, which critics of the theory see as too much of an individualistic approach (Kurt, 2020).

Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy is grounded in the constructivist theory of learning. A constructivist approach to learning emphasizes the construction of new knowledge based on experience and previous understandings. (as cited in Cox, 2012). Knowles (1984b) theorized that readiness to learn is linked to the relevance of learning to adults' lives. He also asserted that adult learners bring an expanding pool of experience to be used as a resource for that learning. Knowles' Six Principles of Andragogy are at the center of his theoretical framework. The six principles for adult learning are: (1) need to know principle; (2) principle of readiness to learn; (3) principle of learners' self-concept; (4) principle of learners' experience, (5) principle of orientation to learning; and (6) principle of motivation (see Figure 1.1):

1. *Need to Know Principle*: Adult learners need to know and relate to their learning content (Caruth, 2014; Knowles et al., 2011). They need to recognize the need for learning.
2. *Principle of Readiness to Learn*: Adult learners are self-directed, which implies that an individual is not influenced by others but is responsible for personal decisions. Knowles asserts that as learners mature, they are prepared to be more self-directed and autonomous (Caruth, 2014; Knowles et al., 2011).
3. *Principle of Learners' Self-concept*: Adult learners have prior life and work experiences, which act as a catalyst to inspire learning and hinder learning.
4. *Principle of Learners' Experience*: Adult learners learn when they are ready. They also learn at the highest level when they are learning things that are a priority and of relevance to them.

5. *Principle of Orientation to Learning*: Adults are life-centered in their orientation to learning. They generally like to see what they are learning so that the new learning can be applied to solving some task or problem.
6. *Principle of Motivation*: Adults can respond to external motivators, like a better job or a higher salary, but for the most part, they are internally motivated. They are motivated toward learning to help them solve problems with an internal payoff (Caruth, 2014; Knowles et al., 2011).



**Figure 1.1**

*Six Principles for Adult Learning*

Adapted from “*The adult learner*” (6th ed.) by M. S. Knowles, E. Holton, III, & R. Swanson, 2011. Burlington, MA: Elsevier.

Andragogy informs aspects of the structure and process of instructional coaching to promote learning in teachers (Knowles, 1984b). As the literature identifies, effective professional development is equally important in developing and sustaining a high-

quality instructional coaching model. The research showed that teacher participation must be sustained and focused on job-embedded practices for professional learning success (Antley, 2020; Choi & Lee, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Lindvall & Ryve, 2019; Morgan et al., 2019; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2017; Rizzi, 2020; Schmidt, 2020; Schuler, 2018). Further, the research suggests that job-embedded professional learning conducted in teachers' learning environments is more likely to succeed and lead to sustained practices (Franke & Kazemi, 2001; García & Weiss, 2019; Pacchiano et al., 2016).

As the demands for professional learning increase, instructional coaching is considered a vital component of professional learning for teachers (Brown et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Wagner, 2007). Individualized professional learning is increasing interest as a way to support the increasing need of students in the classroom. However, many teachers' professional development initiatives appear ineffective in supporting changes in teacher practices and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Instructional coaching, like professional development in its complete form, is designed to be instructionally focused, collaborative, and aimed at helping teachers in their environments (Antley, 2020; Choi & Lee, 2020; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Quintero, 2019; Wayne et al., 2008; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2006).

The literature highlighted those instructional coaches familiar with adult learning theories and who have a better understanding of coaching as a tool for professional learning for teachers (Lindvall & Ryve, 2019; Morgan et al., 2019; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2017; Rizzi, 2020; Schmidt, 2020; Schuler, 2018). Instructional coaching focuses on learning experiences and is designed to add value to professional learning (Darling-

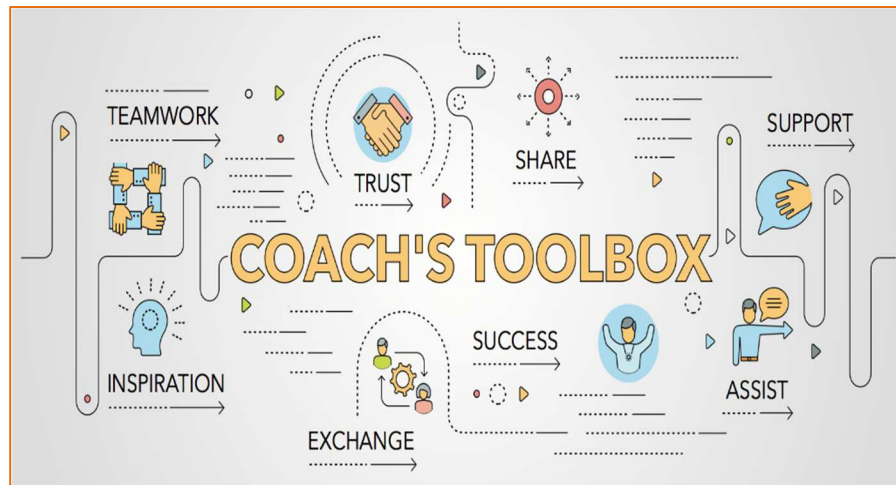
Hammond et al., 2017; Lindvall & Ryve, 2019; Morgan et al., 2019; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2017; Rizzi, 2020; Schmidt, 2020; Schuler, 2018). Instructional coaching aligns with the learning theory of andragogy (Davis, 2019; Graziano, 2017; Merriam et al., 2007).

Professional development in school districts across America was highlighted in a well-known study called *The Mirage* (TNTP, 2015). Findings showed that school districts spent an average of nearly \$18,000 per teacher per year on development efforts. One school district spent more on teacher development than transportation, food, and security combined. It is estimated that the 50 largest school districts have devoted at least \$8 billion to teacher development annually (TNTP, 2015). In this study, the surveyed teachers reported spending approximately 19 full school days a y nearly 10 percent of a typical school year, participating in professional development activities. After a decade in the classroom, an average teacher would have spent an entire school year on professional development (TNTP, 2015). These figures represented an extraordinary and generally unrecognized commitment to supporting teachers' professional growth as the primary strategy for accelerating student learning (TNTP, 2015).

Lane (2018) applied the adult learning theory to instructional coaching and explained how it could be used to engage reluctant educators in continued professional learning (see Figure 1.2). The research asserts that it is essential that instructional coaches are grounded in best practices that can support teachers while remaining focused on student learning outcomes. Instructional coaches support teachers and their instructional practices using tools from their tool kit. They are experts in knowing when to use each of their tools to make the most impact on teachers' and students learning outcomes (Lane,



2018). Those tools are teamwork, trust, sharing, support, inspiration, exchange, success, and assistance that all instructional coaches should possess to help teachers to become successful in teaching (Lane, 2018).



**Figure 1.2**

*The Coaching Approach to Adult Learning*

Adapted from "The Coaching Approach to Adult Learning," by J. Lane, 2018. The Launch Pad, Teach Boost. (<https://blog.teachboost.com/the-coaching-approach-to-adult-learning>)

Knight (2009) concluded that coaching must be specific to be successful. When coaching is specific, Knight asserted that implementation could be as high as 90%. When coaching did not occur, the implementation rate dropped to 30%. Coaching is designed to be an authentic learning opportunity based on teachers' daily experiences. Coaching provides a valuable link from a specific learning event back to the learner's professional and perhaps even personal life, along with a structured approach to reflective practice (Ciporen, 2015).

Furthermore, instructional coaches support teachers through a non-judgmental approach to support. The aim of instructional coaching does not focus on changing a teacher's pedagogical behavior (Kurt, 2020). Instead, it is built on the idea of support

for teachers and finding mutual agreement on where the coaching takes place (Costa & Garmston, 1994, 2002, 2012; Kurt, 2020). At the end of a coaching engagement, clients could be more self-directed, reflective, and intentional about their behavior and impact. Knowledge of the adult learning theory, and andragogy, supported these goals within coaching engagements (Ciporen, 2015; Knight, 2019b).

Instructional coaching continues to come under scrutiny. The focus of the scrutiny usually centers on the training process and consistency in implementation (Joyce & Showers, 1980). The most recent timeline for educational reform began in the mid-1950s. The focus of this movement was on improving educational outcomes and equitable social outcomes. Twenty years later, in the 1970s, a reality realized was that although many programs were well-funded, the expected outcomes and improvement in education rarely occurred. One of the reasons identified for the outcomes is the lack of research needed to understand how adults learn and the creation of necessary strategies to support the learning of necessary strategies to ensure student success. (Joyce & Showers). The lack of research has fueled the assumption that educators could be trained and returned to school to implement new strategies without the necessary follow-up through collective and individualized support. For years, the structure of schools has not supported the individualized professional learning support to help teachers implement strategies after traditional summer intensive training efforts yearly in school districts across the country. Initial diagnoses attributed the failure to teacher efficacy and a failure by professional learning designers to understand the impact of the organizational structure and training design. The training design must be able to support teachers after the training has occurred. (Joyce & Showers).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this mixed-methods action research study are to (1) evaluate the instructional coaching process and training among grades 2 through 5 teachers; (2) determine how instructional coaching was implemented during 2018-2019; (3) reveal how the instructional coaching process informed student learning in reading literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST™) Assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years; (4) examine how observational walkthroughs determined student progress in literacy reading during the 2018-2019 academic years; determine whether there is a statistical difference between FAST™ grade level eReading reports for screening (quantitative) because these grade levels were compared to determine the impact of individual teachers whose classes were observed during walkthroughs (qualitative); and (5) determine whether there was a statistical difference in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented for teachers during 2018-2019 at GES.

## **Research Questions**

The following qualitative and quantitative research questions guided this study:

### **Qualitative Questions**

1. Describe how the instructional coaching process was implemented during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative).
2. How did the instructional coaching process inform student learning in reading literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the FAST™ Assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years (mixed methods)?

3. How do observational walkthroughs determine whether observations and walkthroughs benefit grades 2 through 5 teachers and whether students progress in literacy reading during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative)?

### **Quantitative Question**

**Research Question 4:** Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not)?

H<sub>0</sub>4: There is no statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

H<sub>A</sub>4: There is a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

These mixed methods research questions served as the focus areas in evaluating the instructional coaching model that began in 2017-2018 and continues today. The qualitative data collected previously was an opportunity to measure the non-instructional coaching model's impact on students' literacy reading learning outcomes, and teachers' instructional capacity in the years before the pandemic. These questions served as the area of focus in evaluating the instructional coaching model currently in place at GES. The archival data served as opportunities to measure the impact of the instructional

coaching model and its impact on students' literacy learning outcomes and teachers' instructional practices. Quantitative data collection was performed during years of operation in 2018-2019. Instructional coaching is currently in place at GES, albeit with modifications based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Rationale**

Despite the wide use of instructional coaches in schools, the research on the efficacy of instructional coaching is limited (Rosato, 2019; Shidler, 2009; Tschannen-Morean et al., 1998). This action research study provided a descriptive mixed-methods analysis of the instructional coaching process and student reading learning outcomes at GES. The current study examined and analyzed quantitative data from the FAST™ in reading literacy and eReading data for students in grades 2 through 5 during the 2018-2019 academic school years. In addition, this study explored qualitative data collected from instructional coaching, training, and walkthroughs from grades 2 through 5 teachers. The academic years 2019-2020 were not analyzed due to the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Efron and Ravid (2015) defined positionality as self-awareness, or more specifically, “taking into account the potential impact of one’s values, worldview, and life experience and their influence on the decisions made and actions taken during the research process” (p. 57). Within this study’s context, my positionality is slightly different. I have a formal data collection process that includes participants during observational walkthroughs (qualitative). Data collected using grades 2 through 5 students’ FAST™ eReading Assessment database accessible to local school and district

staff were used as quantitative data. The instructional coaching data were archived in Google drive and accessible to the administrative team. Student data were accessed using sign-in and passwords. Each staff member has a unique username and a password that are accessible only to staff. There was no direct contact between the researcher and teacher participants during coaching and training as an instructional literacy coach performed the training, coaching, and collected observational data on a Literacy Coaching Observation Notes checklist, located in Appendix A.

In addition to the Literacy Coaching Observation Notes, the Classroom Walkthrough Checklist: Development Process (see Appendix D) was also used by users and impacted groups and district and site administrators (i.e., Task Force Group) during walkthroughs for three purposes: (1) to monitor the implementation of a district-adopted program; (2) to assess the level of differentiation in classroom teaching and learning; and (3) to provide peer support to professional development participants to implement the learned strategies. The Task Force Group members were able to use the checklist to identify a list of specific evidence when the focus area was fully implemented with quality; evidence might be grouped into major categories such as “What does the teacher do?”, “What do the students do?” and “What do students’ work look like?”

**Implementation and monitoring plan.** During the implementation and monitoring plan, the Task Force Group identified the details of how the checklist was used, including the timeline, frequency of the walkthroughs, roles and responsibilities, process, and procedures. Other areas of implementation and monitoring identified how the data were used from the Walkthrough Checklist and how progress was monitored for teacher accountability for effective implementation. Instructional coaching and

administrative support were provided to address teachers' identified needs through communication and collaboration.

**Positionality and bias.** As a result, my positionality and bias may still exist to a certain extent but did not impact the data collection process. In the context of this study, I cannot dismiss that when the assessments were administered, and the walkthroughs were conducted, my presence and position of authority still may have had an indirect impact on teachers' instructional performance and student literacy learning outcomes. It is also important to note that I directly influenced my actions and the instructional coaches during this time. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "Human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research" (p. 243). Therefore, it is important to examine one's value system and biases.

I have five years of experience working at this school and nine years of leadership experience in another state. The leadership roles allowed me to understand how to improve student learning outcomes in various settings. As a former elementary classroom teacher, I understand age-appropriate pedagogy for elementary students. I provided an extensive opportunity for student growth. Over the years, I also worked alongside teachers in the building while supporting professional development. I allowed them many opportunities to select areas of enhanced and needed courses to improve overall instruction abilities. However, I carefully adhered to Bourke's (2014) advice that researchers should take time to examine biases. By examining biases, the researcher presumes to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with participants (Bourke)

## **Research Design**

The research design for this study was an action research mixed methods approach. It was a systematic inquiry performed by practitioners to gather information to provide strategies for improvement in how any particular systems under study operate, how they teach, and how students learn (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). Action research is educational research used by educational practitioners and professionals to examine and improve the practice problem and impact pedagogy and student learning outcomes (Clark et al., 2020). Action research represents the opportunity for educators to focus on topics usually specific to their environment. Action research provides an opportunity for reflection and critical self-reflection to improve practices that occur in the classroom daily (Clark et al., 2020).

When early childhood teachers use inclusive teaching approaches, they demonstrate that they respect diversity, value all children's strengths, and understand their weaknesses (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). Early childhood educators can model humility and a willingness to learn by being accountable for any adverse impacts of personal biases on their interactions with children and families (Lindberg, 2019). A school is usually set up with the format of early childhood consisting of students in preschool (age 4) and younger. Elementary schools are typically students between the ages of 5-11 in graded bands from kindergarten to 5th or 6th grade (Lindberg, 2019). Teachers can ensure that all children have equitable access to the learning environment, materials, and the adult-to-child and child-to-child interactions that help children thrive (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). "Early childhood educators can recognize and



support each child's unique strengths through personal and collective reflection to avoid biases—explicit or implicit. The educator must also recognize that these biases may affect their decision-making related to children (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019, p. 5).

Action research was initiated in this study to solve an immediate problem of determining whether observations and walkthroughs benefited grades 2 through 5 teachers and whether statistically significant differences existed in teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not. Action research is a reflective process of progressive inquiry into pedagogical, social, and political aspects of teachers' work to transform their practice (Clark et al., 2020). The strength of teacher action research lies in its potential to empower practitioners to become researchers implementing research in practice and becoming agents of change (Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2017). The goal of action research is to gather and analyze the data to improve the educational setting. The action research process involved the identification of the area of focus, collection of data, analysis and interpretation of the data, and lastly, development of an action plan through instructional coaching (Mills, 2000; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2017). The data collected were qualitative and quantitative archival data.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **Qualitative Data Collection**

Data collection was in two forms: qualitative and quantitative for a mixed-methods study. Qualitative data were gleaned from semi-structured interviews with the instructional coaches and instructional walkthroughs in grades 2 through 5 teachers'

classrooms during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic school years. Qualitative data included scripted notes detailing activity patterns, shared feedback, and observed events. Accuracy is essential to ensure the credibility of the process and the instructional coach (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020).

In addition, a group of administrators and instructional coaches used a specific form to record notes taken during walkthroughs referred to as *Literacy Coaching Conversation Notes*. The notes were generated from grades 2 through 5 teachers' classrooms using this checklist (see Appendix A). The notes contained several sections observed during the walkthroughs: classroom environment, student engagement, literacy/reading instruction, and literacy content (Bates & Morgan, 2020). Notes provided data on what occurred, offering a window for a moment in time that could be easily forgotten in the business of the day or year (Bates & Morgan, 2020). Notes were taken to remember and to recall. Notes helped to organize, summarize, and synthesize information (Bates & Morgan, 2020; Morgan et al., 2019). Anecdotal notes were a means of formative assessment in teaching (Bates et al., 2019). Note-taking allowed instructional coaches to gather information in real-time that the teacher often could not capture while teaching (e.g., the pacing of the lesson, teacher, and student language; Bates & Morgan, 2020; Morgan et al., 2019). Taking and using notes during reading and writing conferences are considered essential. Note-taking is equally important in the role of instructional coaches (Bates et al., 2019). Note-taking allowed instructional coaches to gather information in real-time that the teacher often cannot capture while teaching (e.g., the pacing of the lesson, teacher, and student language; Bates et al., 2019).

## **Quantitative Data Collection**

Quantitative data were archival student data (eReading), and teacher data were FAST™ in literacy. Student data were archival data stored in the FAST™ Assessment Suite, accessible to teachers and administrators in the district. The data for eReading were generated during the 2018-2019 benchmark administration. These years were chosen because they aligned with the full implementation of the coaching process at GES. Typically, K-5 teachers administered the eReading Assessments during the Fall 2018 and Winter 2019 windows outlined by the school district. For consistency in the data, only the eReading Assessment data collected for this study covered the Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 administrations. However, this was not the case in Spring 2019 since this would have occurred the following Spring (2019-2020 school year). This study only used Fall and Winter student data and recognized the growth over about 4 to 5 months.

## **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Through semi-structured interviews, the thematic analysis used manual coding to determine themes. Thematic analysis is designed to help teachers identify patterns of themes in participants' interview responses. An advantage of thematic analysis is the flexibility method for explorative studies and deductive studies when a topic is known (Mortensen, 2021). Thematic analysis describes an iterative process of analyzing excessive data to determine the most important themes from participants' responses. The process contains six steps: (1) become familiar with the data from the interviews; (2) assign preliminary codes to describe the content; (3) search for patterns or themes in the codes across different interviews; (4) review themes several times; (5) define and name

themes; and (6) write up the themes and how they relate to the qualitative research questions (Caulfield, 2022, p. 1).

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

To compare pre-reading and post-reading scores during 2018-2019 for students in grades 2 through 5, boxplots were presented for the Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 reading scores for both instructional coaching (coaching=1) and non-instructional coaching groups (coaching=0). Descriptive statistics, specifically median, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation, are also reported for each study group of students' scores for pre-reading and post-reading scores and the score change. To address the quantitative research questions, two analyses were performed: (1) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the post-reading scores as the dependent variable, and (2) pre-reading scores as control and treatment groups (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. A significant  $F$  statistic for coaching was interpreted as the intervention is effective. Due to the small sample size and the non-normality of the data, a non-parametric test Mann-Whitney  $U$  was performed on the change score. In other words, a significant  $p$ -value provides support for the study's quantitative hypotheses.

### **Formative Assessment System for Teachers**

FAST<sup>TM</sup> is presented simply as an understanding of the individual assessment for teachers to look at for individual students. The individual student data used in this study was only for information purposes. During the Fall 2018 and Winter 2019 administrations of the FAST<sup>TM</sup>, each student was assessed individually in the classroom using personal technology devices. However, this assessment was not used in the data analysis of this study, but I felt that it was necessary to mention it because students

were individually assessed. This type of assessment would be too time-consuming to evaluate for the depth of the current study. These assessments could be projected for a future research study for a qualitative study only. The assessments were administered over a few days, with a testing window lasting 12 to 30 minutes. For the purpose of this study, the grade level results were used as aggregate or summary data for grades 2 through 5.

### **Significance and Limitations of the Study**

#### **Significance of the Study**

This mixed methods exploratory study is significant for school leaders, district leadership, and instructional coaches interested in evaluating an instructional coaching model in their building or school district. The study could also help the team plan to implement an instructional coaching model using adult learning theory as a theoretical framework. The results might be used to help schools and school districts assess the impact of instructional coaching on student learning in their building or school district. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), there are two types of qualitative designs: exploratory and explanatory. When conducting studies, there might be instances when no previous studies exist to support or help the researcher predict an outcome to the identified research problem. Through the exploratory process, the goal is to gain a level of insight and familiarity that can be used for later investigation. This is in contrast to the explanatory design, collection and analysis of qualitative data in the first phase is emphasized (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

## **Limitations of the Study**

Because I am conducting an exploratory research study, limitations existed. Efron and Ravid (2013) encouraged researchers to identify and discuss their study's limitations. In the current study, the first limitation is the inability of schools that do not receive additional funding to support instructional coaching. Another limitation is the extensive data collection and tracking of data that is required to understand instructional coaching fully but was not available in some situations. FAST™ is where each student was assessed individually in their classroom. Using personal technology devices would be too time-consuming and overwhelming for administrators; hence, they are not always done completely to evaluate the depth of the current study. These assessments could be projected for a future research qualitative study. This study's qualitative nature, including the qualitative walkthrough data and the specificity of the research goal, may not be generalized to other elementary schools in the state and throughout the nation. The research conducted applies to GES and can guide the team in further decisions and continued development of a process of supporting teachers at school.

Another limitation of this action research study may be my positionality as a school principal. Although I was not directly coaching teachers during this time, my presence during walkthroughs may have inadvertently skewed teachers' instructional performance. I conducted the interviews with three instructional coaches (two literacy and one mathematics). An instructional coach conducted the interviews with the second-grade teacher. I observed teachers, but I did not conduct an interview of a second-grade teacher for 2018-2019 and recorded several mini-lessons observations found in Appendix A and Appendix C for the qualitative phase of this study. Record-keeping was sparse, yet

for the current study, I used archival data collection for qualitative and quantitative that already existed in the school's records and school district's database.

Herr and Anderson (2015) warned researchers to be aware of "the limitations of one's multiple positionalities" (p. 58). The data collection is archival data conducted during the 2018-2019 school years. At the time of collection, the school team was unaware of its use for this study's purpose because, at that time, I had not contemplated using archival data for my study.

Mixed methods studies have limitations that are challenging to implement due to time constraints (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). The first limitation is mixed methods studies can be intensive and require resources. The time dedicated is usually more than when conducting a single method study (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). The second limitation is mixed methods studies are complex to plan and conduct. Planning must ensure that all aspects of the research, including the study sample for qualitative and quantitative phases, are fully developed. The timing and sequence of qualitative and quantitative phases must be planned for integrating data during analysis, which is often challenging (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013).

### **List of Definitions**

**Action research.** Action research centers on using various evaluative, investigative, and analytical research methods to diagnose problems or weaknesses in a school. This action research focuses on the organization's educational and instructional process. In this process, the help educator's goal is to develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently (Great Schools Partnership, 2015).

**Andragogy.** Teaching adult learners is called andragogy, which is the method and practice of teaching adult learners in adult education (Kurt, 2020). Malcolm Knowles' andragogy theory initially focused on adults' learning profiles. However, andragogy has broadened to include any education practice with a student-driven approach (Kurt, 2020).

**Coaching.** Kraft et al. (2018) characterized coaching as an observation and feedback cycle. The cycle includes modeling research-based practices while coaching teachers to implement practices in their classrooms. Coaching is individualized and specific. It counters what professional development has looked like typically. Coaching is intentional, inclusive, timely and can last for a varied duration. Lastly, it is context-specific and focused on discrete skills (Kraft et al., 2018).

**Coaching cycle.** The coaching cycle includes planning, teaching, and reflection (Suarez, 2018).

**Cognitive coaching.** Cognitive coaching is a research-based model that enhances teachers' thinking (Costa & Garmston, 2020). Cognitive coaching centers on the invisible skills of teaching. These individual skills include the thinking processes that inform teachers' choices for selection and planning for instructional decisions and their impact on the effectiveness of instruction.

**COVID-19.** COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness in humans caused by a coronavirus that results in symptoms severe enough to possibly cause death or severe illnesses (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, 2021).

**Instructional coaching teachers.** For this study, instructional coaching teachers are teachers who receive individual coaching to enhance their instructional practices to improve student learning (Culbertson, 2019).



**Non-instructional coaching teachers.** For the purpose of this study, non-instructional coaching teachers are teachers who did not receive individual coaching to enhance their instructional practices to improve student learning (Culbertson, 2019).

**Instructional coaching group.** The instructional coaching group is the group that receives coaching either individually or as a group. For this study, the instructional coaching group is the treatment group (coaching=1.00) as the main factor.

**Non-instructional coaching group.** For this study, the non-instructional coaching group is the control group (non-coaching=.00) as the main factor. The non-instructional coaching group did not receive coaching either individually or as a group.

**Reading achievement.** For this study, reading achievement is defined as the pre-reading and post-reading scores as the dependent variables.

**Instructional coaches.** Instructional coaches are leaders who serve as literacy or mathematics resource for classroom teachers and provide instructional support, resource gathering, and targeted professional development. Instructional coaches often follow a coaching model and build relationships with teachers for maximum success. A goal of having an instructional coach as a thought partner with teachers is to provide support individualized support of teacher needs (Knudsen, 2021).

**Instructional coaching.** Instructional coaching is a job-embedded form of professional development. The work of instructional coaching is aligned with the day-to-day teaching practice in the classroom. The goal of participating in the instructional coaching process is to improve teacher instructional practice to improve student learning outcomes (Culbertson, 2019).

**Professional development.** The ongoing learning that happens in schools and school districts with educators is called professional development (Rebora, 2011).

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 presented the problem of practice, showing that GES, the target school in this study, implemented an instructional coaching process to improve professional learning for teachers and student learning outcomes. Some of the teachers volunteered for instructional coaching, and others did not. These two groups of teachers were interviewed to determine whether those teachers who received instructional coaching had higher student reading scores when compared with non-instructional coaching students reading scores during the same timeframe. The theoretical framework of andragogy was presented, followed by the purpose of the study and research questions (both qualitative and quantitative). The researcher presented his positionality and bias that may affect the outcomes of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by revisiting the problem of practice. Additionally, it provides the purpose for the research and an overview of the theoretical framework and research literature to frame the problem of practice and associated intervention for this action research study. Research questions that frame this study are presented. Related research is presented about the impact of instructional coaching, common elements of effective professional development and andragogy, and the adult learning theory in this chapter. In addition, instructional coaching for educational reform efforts, teacher time and instructional coaching, instructional coaching as an intervention, teacher efficacy and student learning outcomes are discussed. Research on instructional coaching, instructional coaching versus traditional professional development, the impact of instructional coaching on teacher practices and student learning, and components of instructional coaching are included. Culturally relevant instructional coaching and the role of instructional coaches are presented. A summary ends this chapter.

#### **Statement of the Problem of Practice**

The statement of the problem of practice involved focusing on the initial goals of GES about implementing an instructional coaching process in 2017-2018 that continues to exist today. The Leadership Team, under the direction of the school principal, decided to implement instructional coaching using two coaches to inform instruction for

individuals and groups of teachers. One instructional coach is the literacy coach who works with teachers in grades 2 through 5 in reading and English/language arts. The second instructional coach is the mathematics coach who works with teachers in grades 2 through 5 in mathematics strategies.

The goal was for GES teachers to embark on instructional coaching to improve professional learning for teachers and increase student learning outcomes. The instructional coaching team consists of the school principal, assistant principal, numeracy instructional coach, and a literacy instructional coach. The team has worked closely for four years, including the current school year as of this writing (2021-2022). The team focused concerted efforts on transforming the school and improving student learning outcomes through the use of components of cognitive coaching and the Big Four Model. While the coaching team developed school-based goals for focus, the team also engaged teachers in individualized coaching to improve their instructional practices and student learning outcomes. After a few years of implementation, an informed understanding was gained of the impact of the instructional coaching process and its impact on student learning outcomes.

Before implementation at the local school level, instructional coaching was a district-level initiative. As a result, the school district leadership was trained in coaching practices. In 2016-2017, the training ended abruptly, and instructional coaches were reclassified as on-site leaders. The reclassification resulted in the loss of professional learning to develop, implement, and monitor instructional coaching in schools. Professional learning for coaches became the responsibility of building principals. Currently, the school principal is in charge of instructional coaching.

There is a French Proverb: “Children need models more than critics.” With an increasing emphasis on improving the quality of instruction in schools, it is no longer the sole responsibility of the principal to be the instructional leader (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). School principals are essential to teacher leadership by promoting teacher leadership through sharing authority and empowering teachers to influence critical organizational decisions and processes. It is also important that teacher leaders and principals model for teachers and students how to coach and become effective instructional coaches and work collaboratively with teachers (Lia, 2019).

### **Research Questions**

These mixed methods research questions served as the focus areas in evaluating the instructional coaching model that began in 2017-2018 and continues today. The qualitative data collected previously was an opportunity to measure the instructional coaching model's impact on students' literacy reading learning outcomes and teachers' instructional capacity in the years before the pandemic. These questions served as the area of focus in evaluating the instructional coaching model currently in place at GES. Quantitative data collection was performed during years of operation in 2018-2019. Instructional coaching is currently in place at GES, albeit with modifications based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following qualitative and quantitative research questions guided this study:

#### **Qualitative Questions**

1. Describe how the instructional coaching process was implemented during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative).
2. How did the instructional coaching process inform student learning in reading

literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the FAST™

Assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years (mixed methods)?

3. How do observational walkthroughs determine whether observations and walkthroughs benefit grades 2 through 5 teachers and whether students progress in literacy reading during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative)?

### **Quantitative Question**

**Research Question 4:** Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not)?

H<sub>0</sub>4: There is no statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

H<sub>A</sub>4: There is a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

### **Rationale**

This study explored qualitative data collected from instructional coaching, training, and walkthroughs from grades 2 through 5 teachers. The study examined and analyzed quantitative data collected from the FAST™ in reading literacy and eReading data for students in grades 2 through 5 during the 2018-2019 academic school years. The

academic years 2019-2020 were not analyzed due to the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The research reviewed in this chapter serves to understand the stated problem of practice for both the researcher and readers for this action research study. The andragogy theory of adult learning serves as an important framework for understanding how teachers learn. It also provides a frame for understanding the findings that surfaced in data analysis. The information might help the researchers understand how the instructional coaching process has worked at GES and guide the next steps.

### **Literature Review Methodology**

The methodology to be used is an action research mixed methods study using qualitative and quantitative archived data. This study used primary and secondary sources and is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. An action research study typically consists of a qualitative description of a phenomenon and an exploration into the *how* and *why* of the phenomenon and using quantitative data from the FAST™ archived reading data (Mohajan, 2018; Thomas, 2003). The purpose of an action research mixed methods study is to describe and interpret issues or phenomena. The research is usually done from the purview of the studied individuals or populations. It will also generate new concepts and theories (Mohajan, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework: The Andragogy Theory**

The theoretical framework of this study is the andragogy theory which focuses specifically on adult learning and education, defined as the “art and science of teaching

adults” (Knowles, 1980, p. 54). As a method of thinking for adult learners, its purpose of helping to identify how teachers are motivated to learn and participate in the learning. Merriam and Brockett (1997) defined andragogy as “a way of thinking about working with adult learners” (p. 135). As the principal instructional method for adult learners, it is necessary to understand andragogy (Rachal, 2002). Further, andragogy is the “blueprint for effective instruction for adults” (Feuer & Gerber, 1988, p. 35).

In 1968, the adult education field struggled to address the need for developing a curriculum and a methodology (Knowles 1968). With a solid background in adult education, Knowles built the theory of andragogy based on the concept that adult learning is much different from childhood learning. According to the literature, this led to the initial development of andragogy as a learning theory (St. Clair, 2002). Further, it thrusts andragogy into a legitimate research theory in academia. Later, it was determined that the initial development of andragogy was built on the art and science of teaching (St. Clair, 2002). Knowles (1980) concluded that relying on pedagogy in adult learning settings led to teaching adult learners as if they were children. Realizing that adults and children are different types of learners became the primary consideration in developing this theory.

Under the guidance of Knowles (1984a), pedagogy and andragogy began to course separate paths. The separation of andragogy and pedagogy led to a more scholarly view of andragogy in the context of educational and psychological theories. These theorists included the talents of Maslow, Lewin, and Skinner (Houle, 2006). One primary difference is that pedagogy mainly focuses on teaching, while andragogy focuses on learning. In andragogy and instructional coaching, the learner is the focus, and the coach



is the guide, facilitator, or consultant instead of a director of learning and a transmitter of knowledge (Cox, 2015; Knight, 2009).

**Six principles of andragogy.** The American educator Malcolm Knowles (1968) is best known for using the term *andragogy*. In his work on andragogy, Knowles referred to andragogy as adult learning while staying with the traditional definition of pedagogy as focused on student learning. In his *Six Principles of Andragogy* identifies six assumptions about adult learners. These six principles of andragogy are:

1. An adult learner must understand the why behind what they are learning.
2. Adult learners must be able to build on their own experiences when learning.
3. Adult learners must have ownership over their learning;
4. Adult learners learning outcomes increases when there are responsible for their learning;
5. Adult learning prefers training that will be problem-focused.
6. An adult learner's learning outcomes increase when their learner is intrinsically motivated.

*Need to know principle.* Adults must understand why they need to learn something, and a context and purpose for learning must be established (Taylor & Kroth, 2003). The need-to-know principle states that adults must know how, what, and why they are learning. There are three aspects of the need-to-know principle. The first principle is adults need to know how the learning occurred. Second, they need to know what is learned. Finally, they need to know why the learning is important or necessary (Knowles et al., 1998). Knowles et al. explained that understanding what they need to know established a rationale for the adult learning situation and “can result in more effective

mutual planning, increased motivation to learn, and more positive post-training results” (p. 133). One significant flaw of traditional professional development is that trainers teach what they want to train on, not necessarily what teachers want or need to know (Barkley & Bianco, 2001).

In teacher professional development, the need-to-know principle suggests that teachers need to know the purpose and value of their learning to engage in it. The learners need to know why they are being asked to engage in the learning, the expected outcomes, and the context and purpose of the learning (Taylor & Kroth, 2003). Communicating this rationale needs to happen early on. One way to establish a rationale with teachers is through student achievement data (Killion & Kennedy, 2012; O’Neal, 2012). Student achievement is discussed further in the second section of this literature review since student achievement is at the center of professional development policy in education.

Gould (2010) suggested that it is insufficient to state the benefits of learning or the consequences of not engaging in it. As a form of professional learning, when coaching is brought in as a component of professional development for teachers, teachers need to know why they are being coached and the value the coaching experience has to offer them. Teachers want to know how it helps them as educators and how it helps students as learners.

Barkley and Bianco (2001) shared a strategy that exemplifies this principle in action: modeling new content, allowing participants to see the new content in action (e.g., a video of classroom implementation). The practice of modeling strategies is a common coaching practice (Knight, 2009). Rather than simply explaining to teachers why or what

they are learning, modeling brings the learning to life and demonstrates the value of their learning strategies (Knowles et al., 1998). Adults need to know the why behind the expected learning. One way to do this is to share the purpose of an activity or its objectives. Adults should know in advance why they must pay attention and how paying attention personally benefits them (Knowles et al., 1998).

*Readiness to learn principle.* The learner finds the learning necessary to maintain and enhance their lives (Gould, 2010). Adult learners come with experience and readiness to learn based on their experiences. These experiences should be used as the baseline for the learning activities. The instructional coach's job is to tie adults' experiences to the new material (Brilliant Learning Systems, 2020).

*Principle of learner's self-concept.* "Adults have an innate need to be responsible for their own decisions" (Knowles et al., 1998, p. 65). Adult learners have an innate need to have ownership over their learning grounded in self-direction (Knowles et al., 1998). Instructional coaches can help a teacher's self-directed learning need by providing support that gives them control over their learning process (Brilliant Learning Systems, 2020).

*Principle of learner's experience.* Due to vast experiences, adult learners have valuable resources to bring into the learning environment and should be considered in any plan for the professional learning experience. Adults must apply existing knowledge and life experience to new learning opportunities (Fidishun, 2000). Adults learn best when the training helps them solve immediate, real-life problems such as work and personal lives. Adults should be motivated when they need to learn a new process or computer program to be able to complete work to keep their job. An immediate return on

learning is essential to increase adult learners' motivation (Brilliant Learning Systems, 2020).

*Principle of orientation to learning.* A shift from subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Adults are motivated to learn when they connect to the learning and feel that it will help them solve a relevant task (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Adults learn best when the content is focused on problem-solving. Adult learners become excited about the knowledge they learn and want to apply the skills to solve a relevant problem versus something generic and not connected (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Meaningful training will increase the level of learning for adults can be done by helping them to identify a problem of practice to solve during training. This will also increase the motivation o the adult learner (Taylor & Kroth, 2009).

*Principle of motivation.* When new knowledge is perceived as relevant and solutions-oriented, the motivation of adult learners increases around the next strategies (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Adults learn best when the motivation comes internally rather than externally, which does not mean adults cannot be motivated externally because they can (Brilliant Learning Systems, 2020). Finding the internal motivator is the preferred way of ensuring increased learning for adult learners. (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). These intrinsic motivators are, for example, learning something that makes them feel better or giving them meaningful professional growth opportunities. These motivators have more long-term motivational power (Brilliant Learning Systems, 2020). Table 2.1 briefly describes each of Knowles' six principles of andragogy (Jasso, 2018, p. 30).

**Table 2.1***Characteristics of the Six Andragogical Principles*

Andragogical Principles	Characteristics
Need to Know Principle	An adult learner needs to know what they are learning and understand the context and purpose of learning (Taylor & Kroth, 2003).
Principle of Readiness to Learn	The learner finds the learning necessary to maintain and enhance their lives (Gould, 2010).
Principle of Learners' Self Concept	"Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions..." (Knowles et al., 1998, p. 65).
Principle of the Learners' Experience	Due to their vast experiences, adult learners have valuable resources to bring into the learning environment. The history of adult learners should be considered. Adults need to apply their existing knowledge and life experience to new learning opportunities (Fidishun, 2000).
Principle of Orientation to Learning	A shift from subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). An adult learning will be motivated when the learning is viewed as being helpful to their performance of a task or solving a real-life problem (Taylor & Kroth, 2009)
Principle of Motivation	An adult learner is motivated to learn when they perceive that the new knowledge will help them perform a task or solve a real-life problem (Taylor & Kroth, 2009).

Adapted from "*Teacher perceptions of effective instructional coaching in professional development support* (Order No. 10976245), p. 30" by L. K. Jasso, 2018. [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Irvine] ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

**Cognitive Coaching**

For this study, I evaluated the current instructional coaching process in use at GES, focusing on two models that have informed the instructional coaching process at the school: Cognitive Coaching and the Big Four Model. Cognitive Coaching is a form of instructional coaching designed to support teachers in a non-judgmental, reflective, and confidential process that emphasizes the relationship between the coach and the teacher (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). The principles of trust, respect, and empathy are at the foundation of the relationship between the models. Trust increases communication, creativity, and the discipline to follow through. As Edgar Schein (2009) noted in his

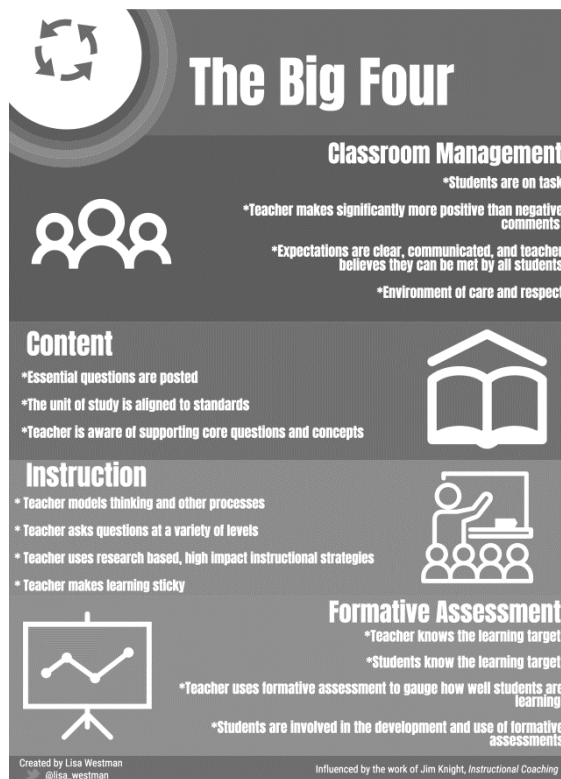
book, *Helping*, it is important to have equal status to get the most out of the conversation during communication. One up and one down does not allow for a free exchange of ideas.

In their study on cognitive coaching, Joyce and Showers (1987) found that when a theoretical concept being coached was taught, teachers' implementation rate of a new skill was approximately 5%. In contrast, when teachers were provided with a theoretical concept of cognitive coaching, the new skill increased to about 10%. The implementation rate for teachers increased to 20% when coaching practices were added to the equation. Implementation reached 25% when feedback was provided to teachers during practice. Finally, their study revealed that when cognitive coaching was used in conjunction with theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback, the implementation level increased to 90%. Cognitive coaching focuses on the self-efficacy of the teacher being coached. A self-sufficient teacher is the focus of a successful coaching conversation (Rogers et al., 2016). Banerjee-Batist et al. (2019) found that self-directed learning leads to recognizing strengths and weaknesses by mentors and mentees. Further, recognizing strengths and weaknesses leads to solutions-oriented practices and modification of behaviors (p. 159).

### **The Big Four Model**

Knight's (2007, 2009) Big Four Model is a comprehensive framework for instructional excellence. The model consists of practices that are easy enough for teachers to implement and powerful in effect on teaching and learning. The Big Four Framework builds around the following aspects of teaching: (1) classroom management (behavior), (2) content planning, (3) instruction (direct), and (4) formative assessment for learning (Knight, 2009). These aspects of teaching provide anchor points indicating instructional

coaches support teachers. Knight emphasized that instructional coaches are partners who collaborate with teachers and provide support as needed (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1**

*The Big Four Model*

Adapted from “Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction. In Knight, J. (Ed.). *Coaching approaches and perspectives* (pp. 29-55),” by J. Knight (2007). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

*Classroom management (student behavior).* If teachers’ students are on task and learning, an instructional coach (IC) and collaborating teachers can focus on other nuances in the classroom that may impact student learning outcomes (Knight, 2009). Instructional coaches can use questioning to establish starting points for coaching. The questions would be focused on the classroom management needs that could help identify and treat student behaviors promptly (Knight, 2009). When student behavior is not conducive to coaching, the coach and collaborating teacher might struggle to make

other practices work if they do not first address classroom management issues.

*Content planning.* A well-managed classroom and a deep understanding of content is necessary for coaching. The teacher must understand the content and communicate it clearly to students, have a lesson plan, and understand the most important information (Knight, 2009). Again, questions can help guide conversations and improve student learning outcomes (Knight, 2009).

*Instruction (direct).* The teacher must use teaching practices that ensure all students master the content. If teachers hold a deep understanding of the content and can manage their classroom, another consideration is whether teachers can translate knowledge to students (Knight, 2009).

*Formative assessment for learning.* The teacher and students must know if students are mastering content (Knight, 2009). A classroom with strong rituals and routines will allow the coach to shift focus to teaching practices and other nuances of the classroom. Once achieved, moving the teacher and students to understand high-quality learning is the next step (Knight, 2009).

Guiding components for coaches using the Big Four Framework include coaches building an emotional connection with teachers being coached and coaches helping teachers implement research-based practices and strategies (Knight, 2009). Instructional coaches help teachers to collaborate with their colleagues and to use interventions that make change easy for teachers. As coaches partner with teachers, they also partner with the school administrators (Knight, 2009).

### **Research Related to the Impact of an Instructional Coach**

The research on the impact of an instructional coach is not complete. However,



studies have provided data that direct the continued development, validation, and refinement of instructional coaching to improve practitioner practice (Knight et al., 2010, 2011; Knight & Cornett, 2009; Miller, 2014). The preliminary evidence indicates that coaching delivers better results for students and teachers. An evidence-based educational coaching model is needed to support educators' professional development (Shidler, 2009). Huguet et al. (2014) found that key coaching practices help build educator capacity. These practices include dialogue, questioning, modeling, observation, and feedback.

The lack of consistent data on an instructional coaching implementation process is a major factor in the differences in how instructional coaching has been implemented in the schools (Garet et al., 2008; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Marsh et al., 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). While the diversity of approaches should be celebrated, there is a need for evidence-based studies to support educators' professional development (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Shidler, 2009).

At the current GES, instructional coaches spend most of their time working with individual teachers, small groups, and presentations to the entire faculty. In contrast, Kane and Rosenquist (2019) concluded that, generally, instructional coaches are assigned non-instructional duties such as holding teachers' classes, acting as substitute teachers, making copies for teachers, and serving as so-called guidance counselors for children with discipline problems. However, those researchers surveyed and interviewed principals, school district officials, and instructional coaches in a mixed methods study. Those researchers found that coaches accountable to district leaders spent more time working with teachers on instruction; this is in sharp contrast to school-led instructional

coaches who have, according to research, spent more time on administrative duties rather than teacher duties. (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). The results showed that coaching becomes more inconsistent when opportunities to work with teachers are limited. As a result, instructional coaches were allowed to work with teachers to improve student outcomes.

In working with teachers, instructional coaches serve as collaborators to define student performance. In the meantime, instructional coaches work directly with teachers to gain their trust and confidence. Typically, instructional coaching is a trust-filling collaborative approach that involves teachers becoming self-directed and goals-driven (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Although teachers sought emotional and social learning, they reported that there is little time to support this concept for students unless a set time is devoted during the beginning or end of the school day for 30 minutes. Consequently, during this allotted time, teachers can use general teaching practices to support the whole child, coupled with feedback from instructional coaches and administrators (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

Several action research studies focused on instructional coaching (Burggraaf, 2020; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Dillard, 2018; Knight, 2019a; Miller, 2014; Rosato, 2019). Despite the demand for instructional coaches, there is little empirical evidence that instructional coaching improves teacher practice. Desimone and Pak (2017) addressed this limitation of little empirical evidence of instructional coaching within a research-based framework for professional development. This framework consists of five key features synthesized from cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, and literature reviews of experimental and quasi-experimental studies: (1) content focus, (2) active

learning, (3) sustained duration, (4) coherence, and (5) collective participation (Desimone & Pak, 2017). When examining instructional coaching through the lens of the empirically predictive elements of effective professional development, the model is a powerful tool for improving teacher knowledge, skills, and practice (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

Frazier's (2018) study supported coaching as an effective tool to increase teacher overall competency. His study revealed that teachers who participated in coaching saw greater growth in teacher competency compared to their peers who did not participate in coaching. Further, his study revealed that students of teachers who received coaching also saw great gains in academic growth when compared to students in classrooms where teachers did not participate in coaching. Significant differences were found between coached and noncoached teachers because noncoached teachers had the same opportunities for coaching available to them. In addition, the coached group completed and took advantage of professional development opportunities. The group of teachers who were not coached did not take advantage of the menu of professional development opportunities offered that could have positively impacted their instructional practices. Teachers in the control group of coached teachers felt that they grew in teacher competency, which provided evidence that instructional coaching helped them to improve their teaching.

Miller (2014) implemented a two-step professional development initiative based on Marzano's research-based instructional strategies. Instructional coaching was used as a follow-up strategy for the high school's six-week remedial summer school session. During this summer session, 28 teachers volunteered to participate in professional development to expand their instructional opportunities and improve their instructional

delivery to students (Miller, 2014) in a professional development plan for 2015-2016. Miller sought to explore teacher perceptions of the training and follow-up instructional coaching on teaching strategies. Daily instructional coaching support was provided with teacher meetings and an observation protocol, and the meeting minutes were recorded. Observations and tracking were documented through daily walkthroughs. Lesson plans were collected, one-on-one teacher interviews were held, and a research journal was kept (Miller, 2014).

Miller's (2014) study showed that most teachers implemented one or more of the strategies routinely during the six-week summer session. Positive results revealed teacher perceptions of the training and the follow-up. Nearly one-third of the teachers expressed high support for the initiative and cited changes to their teaching, renewed energy, commitment, and positive student response (Miller, 2014). The majority of teachers felt their teaching had improved. Only a small minority of teachers fought to make changes to their instruction or felt they were already exceptional teachers and did not need any improvement.

Dillard (2018) explored an action research study to determine how instructional coaching impacted the implementation of shared reading strategies in kindergarten classrooms. Four teachers with more than two years of teaching experience in a South Carolina elementary school participated. Surveys, classroom observations, lesson plans, and focus groups were collected (Dillard, 2018). The problem statement was teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators were alarmed with kindergarten students' ability to understand materials read to them and reading materials that they read independently (Dillard, 2018). As a result, the administrative team identified shared reading as the

intervention strategy to improve reading comprehension of materials read to kindergarteners and materials they read on their own (Dillard, 2018). Sustained professional development and training for kindergarten teachers occurred from the instructional coach throughout the implementation of shared reading to improve teaching practice. Weekly teacher information and bi-weekly observation of classrooms were collected by the instructional coach (Dillard, 2018). To guide bi-weekly focus groups was the goal for using this data collected. Findings showed that teachers and the instructional coach used data and discussions to collaboratively plan for best instructional practices regarding shared reading (Dillard, 2018).

In another action research study, Knight (2019a) examined how the implementation of visible learning was supported through instructional coaches by:

- (a) summarizing visible learning central tenants;
- (b) summarizing the foundational research on instructional coaching conducted at the Kansas Coaching Project at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning;
- (c) summarizing the findings and impact on effective instructional coaching practices;
- (d) summarizing how instructional coaching should be used to support the implementation of visible learning or any other educational innovations based on the research findings (Knight, 2019a).

Rosato (2019) examined and explored a mixed methods action research study to determine whether instructional coaching influenced teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Quantitative data using the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* survey examines teachers'

sense of self-efficacy. Qualitative data were explored via individual interviews for teachers' perceptions of coaching. Findings showed that one-third of the eight participants preferred instructional coaching that occurred every other month. They liked coaching as professional development activity with a day dedicated to math instruction with a math expert. The next day was spent in the classroom observing lessons and then debriefing. Individual interviews with participants were consistent with the literature, and teachers felt more confident in delivering quality instruction that produced increases in student achievement after their coaching experiences.

The purpose of Burggraaf's (2020) action research was to evaluate the impact of a situated coaching model at a Lexington School District elementary school. Burggraaf's study focused on three research questions:

- (1) How do teachers experience a situated coaching model for professional technology development?
- (2) How does a situated coaching model impact a school's digital learning environment scores and
- (3) How does a situated coaching model affect teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a digital learning environment (Burggraaf, 2020)?

An instructional coach was placed in an elementary school to work with four teachers over six weeks. The coaching cycle included the areas of modeling, co-planning, co-teaching, and observing classroom lessons while providing feedback. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews using reflection journals maintained by participants during the coaching relationship and classroom observations post-intervention (Burggraaf, 2020). Burggraaf indicated that participants perceived

coaching as an effective form of professional development due to specific characteristics of a coaching cycle. Despite having a cycle for coaching, Burggraaf could not determine how to remove barriers of time, classroom management concerns related to technology use, and outside expectations.

### **Instructional Coaching for Federal Reform Efforts**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RTTT), and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are standards-based state and federal reform efforts that emphasize the focus on improved teacher professional development to meet the demands for instruction in the classroom (Galey, 2016). In the past decades, the increased demand for teachers and instructional quality has increased (Kraft et al., 2018). As a result, instructional coaching has been the ‘go-to’ for many districts seeking to improve professional development and teacher quality.

### **Coaching Cycle**

With the instructional coach during the coaching cycle, Suarez (2018) made three essential elements (e.g., preparing and planning, coaching activity with teaching, and reflection). Yoder and Gurke (2017) added ‘debriefing and next steps’ as one of the steps. During the three weeks to fulfill the plan, Suarez found that the coaching plan is powerful and can transform teacher practice and student learning.

**Preparing and planning.** Preparing and planning is a time for collaboration and conversation to occur. The teacher and coach meet to discuss teachers’ needs in the focus area and plan for coaching support (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Anchored in teacher-selected goals, the teacher and coach can build on strengths in instruction and learning, moving toward highly effective practices.

**Coaching activity: Teaching.** As one of the main coaching activities, teaching, the second cycle stage, can look different depending on the teacher's and the classroom's goals (Yoder & Gurke, 2017; Suarez, 2018). Coaching activities may begin with an observation and then move to model, co-teaching, or co-planning (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Engaging in the teaching cycle, the coach first observes classroom instruction and scripts notes based on the agreed-upon focus determined at the planning meeting. The coach observes the teacher and students' behaviors and interactions (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). The coach should take as many notes as possible and be precise in what is written. The summaries are detailed and accurate while carefully balancing note-taking with observing nonverbal gestures and interactions. After the observation, time should be allowed to review the notes and fill in gaps (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

The teacher and coach should engage in coaching debrief (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). A coach can model a lesson while the classroom teacher observes, the coach and the teacher can co-teach lessons together, or the coach can observe the classroom teacher in a specific area to provide feedback (Suarez, 2018). The important part of the teaching stage is for the classroom teacher to have a learning objective tied to the teacher-selected goal (Suarez, 2018).

**Debriefing and next steps.** Yoder and Gurke (2017) defined what happens during the debriefing and the next steps. The teacher and coach have a post-conference to reflect, provide feedback, and determine the next steps before moving into the actual phase of reflection discussed in the final coaching cycle. An effective instructional coach's responsibility is to provide teachers with tangible feedback. Care in providing feedback is essential to building trust with teachers (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). As



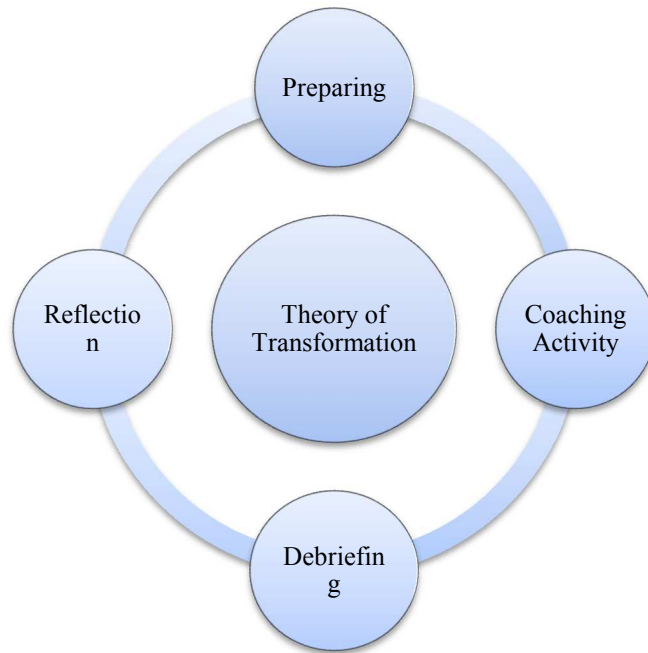
engagement in the debriefing and next steps conversation, coaches could establish a climate that encourages teacher voice and instructional risk-taking. A good climate helps the coach to create a dynamic that encourages the teacher to do most of the talking and responds to questions posed (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Feedback should focus on high-priority areas in which the teacher can act, avoiding minor details that can delay the conversation. A structured set of questions focused on continuous improvement is helpful (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

**Reflection.** The final coaching cycle is the reflection stage (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). During the coaching cycle, the instructional coach's three essential elements are preparing and planning, coaching activity with teaching, and reflection. The coaching plan is powerful and can transform teacher practice and student learning. During this time, the teacher and the coach engage in conversation regarding the lesson, observations, and student behavior. Goals are revised, or new goals are set for teacher instruction and student learning where, over time, these are transformed, creating an environment where learning is bound to occur (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

Yoder and Gurke (2017) developed a coaching toolkit that is not a robust coaching resource but provides a framework and tools for use in social and emotional learning (SEL) classrooms. The coach observes the activities and should use the data collected to inform professional learning activities. A coaching toolkit focuses on the coaching cycle, which breaks the process into four distinctive steps—a directive coaching strategy where the coach shares expertise and perhaps models a lesson or shares resources. The coach encourages teachers to reflect on or analyze experiences in

facilitative coaching. The strategies used depend on the goals and readiness of individual teachers (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

The theory of transformation focuses on support for teachers, improved instruction and connections for students, increased learning, and higher achievement. Teachers can be coached on SEL practices using the cycle regardless of the strategies chosen. This toolkit is organized around the tools associated with each step of the coaching cycle. Under the theory of transformation, the steps for coaching are preparing, coaching activity, debriefing, next steps, and reflection (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). In the preparation stage, the teacher and the coach meet to discuss teacher needs in the focus area and plan for coaching support. During the coaching activity, the teacher and the coach engage in coaching interaction. The debriefing and next steps stage are where the teacher and the coach have a post-conference to reflect, provide feedback, and determine the next steps. Finally, the teacher and the coach reflect on the progress and re-assess any future professional development and coaching needs (Yoder & Gurke, 2017), as displayed in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2**

*The Coaching Cycle*

Adapted from “Social and Emotional Learning: Coaching Toolkit,” by N. Yoder and D. Gurke, (2017). American Institutes for Research. (<https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Social-and-Emotional-Learning-SEL-Coaching-Toolkit-August-2017.pdf>)

Instructional coaches became a standard feature of educational systems (Galey, 2016). More than 90% of students attended schools with at least one instructional coach to provide support (Domina et al., 2015; Galey, 2016). Research on school organizations shows that instructional coach positions can support teacher learning and changes in classroom instruction (Camburn, 2010; Coburn et al., 2010; Quintero, 2019). The research shows that instructional coaches impact formal and informal school infrastructures in ways that frequently more strongly couple teacher practice with ongoing curricular and instructional reforms by building important capacities for implementation (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Freeman-Mack, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2013).

In the United States, school districts spend between 74 and 81 million dollars annually on professional development programs that include instructional coaching to improve teacher quality (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Despite widespread professional development programs that include instructional coaching programs, some researchers doubt they are truly effective. For example, researchers found no significant improvements in teacher instruction from year to year, and teachers continuously complained that these programs fail to fit their needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Frederick-Williams, 2019).

Coaches often work with individuals and groups of teachers to help teachers reflect on practice and use collected data from observation to improve instruction (Bean et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Instructional coaching is ongoing, job-embedded teacher professional development concerned with the quality of teacher learning opportunities (Demonte, 2013; Miracolo, 2020; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). The literature has shown that instructional coaching is consistent with research-based ideas of effective professional development, specifically with its fulfillment of five key features of effective teacher learning—content focus, active learning, duration, collective participation, and coherence (Desimone, 2009; Rizzi, 2020; Schmidt, 2020; Wilson, 2021; Xin et al., 2020).

### **Instructional Coaching as an Instructional Intervention**

Instructional coaching as an instructional intervention has become a widely used method focusing on teacher effectiveness and supporting teachers' professional growth (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Marzano & Simms, 2013; Quattlebaum, 2017; Reddy et al., 2017; Rosato, 2019). Instructional coaches usually support teachers through observing,

modeling, and providing feedback to facilitate new practices, change current practices, and sustain best practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Smiley et al., 2019). The person selected as the instructional coach is usually an identified expert or teacher leader in the building. Further, coaching is used in schools across the country to support new teacher induction, ongoing teacher learning, assist in implementing new initiatives, and, most recently, help teachers understand and adapt their instruction to new state content standards (Anderson & Wallin, 2018).

### **Types of Coaches and Coaching Approaches**

According to Knight (2011), instructional coaching's primary purpose is to help teachers identify and implement research-based best practices to improve teacher skills and student learning. The research identifies several coaching models (Aguilar, 2018; Big Rock, 2016; Costa & Garmston, 2012; Dolot, 2018; Knight, 2018, 2021; Sword, 2021; Wells, 2017). Additionally, Knight (2018, 2021) offers three coaching approaches: (a) facilitative, (b) directive, and (c) dialogical. The approaches vary according to the teacher's needs, and each has unique strengths and weaknesses (Knight, 2021).

#### **Facilitative Coach**

The facilitative coach operates as a sounding board for teachers; their goal is not to share their expertise but to listen and ask questions. The teacher does the decision-making in this approach (Knight, 2018). Facilitative coaches, like dialogical coaches, interact with collaborating teachers as equals. In these two forms of coaching, the teachers make most if not all decisions during coaching. Facilitative coaches encourage teachers to share their ideas openly by listening with empathy, paraphrasing, and asking powerful questions (Knight, 2021). Facilitative coaching is universal and can be used in

various situations. It has the unique ability to address issues that other coaching cycles may not be able to address (Knight, 2021). Research has shown that facilitative coaching is best when the teachers being coached reveal their ideas on a desired area of coaching. However, it is less effective when teachers are not prepared or lack the knowledge to address classroom issues (Knight, 2021).

### **Directive Coach**

Knight (2018) stated that the directive coach's role is to help teachers master a specific skill or set of skills. The directive coach shares specific knowledge that may be needed to improve. The directive coach and teacher relationship sees the coach as having special knowledge, and their task is to transfer that knowledge to the teacher. While the relationship is respectful, the two parties are not always equal in the coaching relationship. Instructional coaches honor teachers' professionalism by grounding coaching through a relationship that supports an authentic partnership (Knight, 2021).

### **Directive vs. Non-directive Coaching**

The number of approaches a coach can take to inspire, support, and develop teachers varies (Big Rock, 2016). Different objectives, personalities, and challenges prompt different coaching styles (Big Rock, 2016). Most developmental coaching falls somewhere in the spectrum below between what is known as *directive* and *non-directive* coaching (see Figure 2.3).



**Figure 2.3**

*Directive to Non-Directive Coaching*

Adapted from “Why Coach? Exploring the Effectiveness of Coaching and Different Coaching Styles,” A White Paper: People Performance Solutions. Big Rock, 2016. (<https://www.bigrockhq.com/wp-content/uploads/why-coach-a-white-paper-from-bigrock.pdf>)

Most instructional coaches use a blend of the directive and non-directive coaching to conform to the situation (Big Rock, 2016). In directive coaching, the coach follows a ‘show and tell” process. Directive coaching explains and demonstrates a new approach or skill for the teacher to copy and implement (Big Rock, 2016). Conversely, non-directive coaching enables a teacher’s learning journey. Individuals are encouraged to find answers or strategies. The coach provides a listening ear and guidance rather than direct instruction (Big Rock, 2016).

Coach has become a popular tool for professional learning that values a specific, non-directive communication style (Dolot, 2018). The purpose of Dolot’s study was to analyze the frequency of non-directive communication techniques coaches use in the coaching process. The non-directive character of communication techniques has a clear target as it unblocks, brings out and maximizes a teacher’s potential without giving ready solutions (Dolot, 2018). Coaching proves its effectiveness in various organizations and areas. The coaching process is analyzed less frequently, and the analysis of implemented non-directive communication techniques is an innovation (Dolot, 2018). Survey methods

and the questionnaire technique were used on 100 respondents who took part in the coaching process with at least three sessions and when the coaching process had already been finished (Dolot, 2018). The key findings were most frequently used non-directive communication technique in the coaching process is coaching tasks. Next, the shadow procedure was the least frequent one. The choice of a coach (e.g., external coach, internal coach, or direct supervisor as a coach) influenced the frequency of using particular non-directive communication techniques (Dolot, 2018).

### **Dialogical Coach**

Unlike facilitative coaches, dialogical coaches share their expertise with their coaching teachers. Dialogical coaches see coaching as a tool that is better addressed when teachers can research and understand research-based best teaching practices as a tool for their classrooms (Knight, 2021). Dialogical coaches understand the best teaching strategies and, through coaching, share with teachers these strategies to help them improve practice. Dialogical coaches do not tell the teacher what to do, which differs from directive coaches, allowing teachers to be the decision-makers (Knight, 2021). It is to be noted that dialogical coaches do not give advice. The purpose of dialogical coaches is to share with teachers possible strategies and, through a coaching cycle, help them decide which strategy they could use to meet their goals. Dialogical coaches are decision-making partners with teachers in identifying their goals and teaching strategies. Coaches describe strategies precisely while asking teachers how they want to modify the strategies to meet students' needs (Knight, 2021), as shown in Figure 2.4.



Facilitative	Dialogical	Directive
Coach does not share expertise	Coach shares expertise dialogically when appropriate	Coach's expertise is the focus of the coaching session
Teacher does most of the thinking	Coach and teacher think together	Coach does most of the thinking
Teacher-focused goal	Student-focused goal	Strategy-focused goal

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**Figure 2.4**

*Three Models to Approaching Coaching*

Adapted from “Three Approaches to Coaching,” by J. Knight, 2021.

(<https://www.instructionalcoaching.com/three-approaches-to-coaching/>)

## Cognitive Coaching

Coaching is truly a transformative process. Cognitive coaching is a form of instructional coaching designed to support teachers in a non-judgmental and confidential process (Aguilar, 2018). Cognitive coaching is the model described by Elena Aguilar of Elena Aguilar Consulting. She argued that teachers’ emotional intelligence, non-verbal communication, and underlying beliefs must be addressed (Aguilar, 2018). Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage by being aware of how to manage, interpret, and express one’s emotions (Aguilar, 2018).

Conversations are at the center of this model. Instructional coaches use strategies such as paraphrasing and asking well-placed questions to allow teachers to work out what they should do by themselves. The relationship in the process is between the coach and the teacher (Sword, 2021). At the foundation of this relationship are trust, respect, and empathy. Cognitive coaching is not designed to alter a teacher’s pedagogical behavior through coercing, telling, or advising teachers on what to do. Teachers’ practice is

observed during this process portion (Sword, 2021). Cognitive coaching is an active listening session between the teacher and the coach that involves discourse around the teacher's inner thoughts about their pedagogy (Costa & Garmston, 2012; Sword, 2021).

### **Coaching Map and Types of Conversation**

The goal of the instructional coach is to create a coaching environment that is safe and absent of judgment. A coaching map guides one of three types of conversation that can take place guiding a cognitive coaching session. The three guiding conversations identified by the research are (1) planning conversations, (2) reflection conversations, and (3) problem-solving conversations (Rogers et al., 2016).

#### **Planning Conversations**

In cognitive coaching, the session's flow should be aligned to the teacher's plan, and active listening should be present. The discourse that takes place is the coach paraphrasing and reflecting on the information provided by the teacher. Lastly, the coach must provide space for the teacher and coach to reflect on shared goals to move the process forward. Research encourages this practice as an essential part of the coaching process.

#### **Reflection Conversations and Feedback**

Another essential component of any coaching cycle is reflection conversations and feedback (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Kraft et al., 2018). Feedback from instructional coaching should never be about telling but instead involve probing questions to generate thinking and reflection. Ideas or solutions in the feedback stage should also be presented as questions. Ideally, coaching leads to self-directed teachers who are self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying (Costa & Garmston, 2012; Kraft et al., 2018).

## **Problem-Solving**

Kraft et al. (2018) characterized coaching as an observation and feedback cycle used by instructional coaches to work with teachers. Coaches use modeling of best teacher practices with teachers to help them implement them in their classrooms as a problem-solving tool to improve student learning outcomes. Unlike professional development of the past, this form of professional learning is individualized, content-specific and aimed at the continuous support of teachers over time. (Kraft et al., 2018).

The five major areas of cognitive coaching areas:

1. Efficacy – the belief you can make a difference
2. Flexibility – the repertoire of strategies to deal with diverse learning styles
3. Craftsmanship – what data indicate success
4. Consciousness – being aware of your own and others' emotions
5. Interdependency – learning from multiple sources and people

## **Instructional Coaching and Professional Development**

Instructional coaching is a research-based model of job-embedded professional development utilized to build capacity and improve teachers' instruction to impact student achievement. However, there is varying and inconsistent utilization of instructional coaching as an approach to professional learning pursued by teachers. Schmidt's (2020) study explored how administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches perceive the implementation of instructional coaching as an approach to professional development in a suburban K-12 school district. Multiple forms of data were collected to understand how instructional coaching is utilized to support a professional learning culture. The data collection sources included a document review of instructional coach

schedules, interviews with four administrators, one focus group consisting of grade K-5 elementary teachers, one focus group consisting of grades 6–12 secondary teachers, and interviews with four instructional coaches (Schmidt, 2020). An instrumental case study design was used to explore the impact of instructional coaching on the professional growth of teachers; and to understand the characteristics of the instructional coach's role as a change agent (Schmidt, 2020).

Professional development is a large undertaking by school districts all over the country. The amount of money spent on professional development is vast (Hoover, 2020). Despite being the preferred style of delivering professional development, summer training and sit-and-get session have proven to be too generic and fail to meet teachers' needs and improve student learning outcomes (Hoover, 2020). To personalize professional development, school districts hired instructional coaches to individualize professional learning to increase teacher expertise (Hoover, 2020).

Schmidt (2020) used a constructivist approach to understand the perceived effectiveness of instructional coaching through the lived experiences of study participants. A thematic analysis of the data highlights the purpose of instructional coaching, the learning culture, the role of the coach, and building capacity in an environment of trust (Schmidt, 2020). The findings from this instrumental case study identified a gap in understanding the purpose of instructional coaching at the administrative level, which sometimes impeded the authenticity of instructional coaching implemented in support of school goals. The findings also established trust and building relationships as paramount to the instructional coaching role as pedagogical knowledge and instructional strategies. Effective characteristics of the informal and formal coaching

models are identified, and the elementary and secondary teacher participants credited instructional coaching with improving teaching and learning in their classrooms. A collaborative culture that promotes trust and risk-taking can build collective capacity across the organization (Schmidt, 2020).

Kraft and Blazar (2017) analyzed a coaching model focused on classroom management skills and instructional practices across grade levels and subject areas. The design and implementation of teacher coaching among an initial cohort of 59 teachers working in New Orleans charter schools. Using a randomized block trial, these researchers evaluated the program's effect on teachers' instructional practices. Findings showed that coached teachers scored higher on effective teaching practices comprised of observation scores, principal evaluations, and student surveys.

Instructional coaching is designed to improve the instructional practices of teachers. The understanding of the role of instructional coaches by administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches have similar perceptions is unknown (Quattlebaum, 2017). A case study was conducted to gain insight into the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches regarding instructional coaching. The focus of the study was instructional coaches' impact on pedagogy and barriers that impact the effectiveness of instructional coaches. The findings indicated a need to establish or maintain shared goals for improving classroom instruction and increasing student achievement (Quattlebaum, 2017).

### **Professional Learning Communities**

Serviss (2021) posited that a professional learning community (PLC) is a team of educators who regularly meet to share ideas and practices to improve student learning

outcomes. PLCs are common in most schools across the country, with how they are organized varies. As a learning team, PLCs engage in a cycle of learning aimed at analyzing student data, setting goals, and teachers working collaboratively with each other. Lastly, the focus shifts to adjusting teacher practices to serve students better. The consistent process allows the teacher to improve and reflect on practices, which is essential to PLC work (Miller, 2020).

Fabiano et al. (2018) conducted a waitlist-controlled study investigating a teacher coaching approach that emphasized formative assessment and visual performance feedback to enhance elementary school teachers' classroom practices. The coaching model targeted instructional and behavioral management practices as measured by the Classroom Strategies Assessment System Observer and Teacher Forms. The sample included 89 general education teachers stratified by grade level and randomly assigned to 1 of 2 conditions of either immediate coaching or waitlist control. The findings showed that regarding waitlist control, teachers in immediate coaching demonstrated significantly greater improvements in observations of behavior management strategy use but not for observations of instructional strategy use. Observer- and teacher-completed ratings of behavioral management strategy use at post-assessment were significantly improved by both raters. Ratings of instructional strategy use were significantly improved for the teacher but not observer ratings. A brief coaching intervention improved teachers' use of practical behavior management strategies and self-reported use of behavior management and instructional strategies. Implications showed that a brief coaching approach helped elementary school teachers improve their use of behavior management procedures. Teachers reported that the coaching approach improved their use of effective

instructional strategies, though observations of teacher behavior did not confirm this finding (Fabiano et al., 2018).

The focus of Tolbert's (2015) study was to develop and deepen an understanding of how an elementary instructional coaching program was functioning in the participating research district. The current study was designed as action research and was a qualitative interview study. One-on-one interviews were conducted with elementary instructional coaches and elementary teachers in the research district. Fifteen elementary instructional coaches and 15 elementary teachers were interviewed, and their interview data was entered into the QSR NVivo 10 program for content analysis (Tolbert, 2015). Analysis of collected data led to multiple emerging themes, including (1) collaboration, including collaborative planning; (2) professional development; (3) relationship building, including offering support and trust; and (4) curriculum, including serving as an instructional resource (Tolbert, 2015). The themes and subcategories that emerged from the interviews of elementary instructional coaches and elementary teachers clearly illustrated that the support of an instructional coach was appreciated by educators when instructional coaching involved planning, teaching, reflecting, and sharing instructional practices (Tolbert, 2015). Findings revealed that elementary instructional coaches and elementary teachers reported a positive experience with the elementary instructional coaching program in the research district. Elementary instructional coaches and teachers in the research district supported using the elementary instructional coaching program as a form of professional development (Tolbert, 2015).

Russo (2020) implemented instructional coaching that supported elementary and middle school teachers differentiate their English Language Arts instruction. The specific

research question was, “How does engage in cycles of instructional coaching influence teachers’ differentiated instruction in the workshop/centers portion of a 90-minute literacy block?” In this case, a study conducted with four teachers, the differentiation of the instructional coaching made it possible to focus on each teacher’s teaching style (Russo, 2020). Several findings revealed that teacher mindset influenced participants’ openness to changing classroom practices. Still, with the successful implementation of new strategies, a shift in mindset toward implementing additional differentiation was possible. The second finding of this research demonstrated that the types of differentiated strategies and their frequency of use varied greatly among the participants (Russo, 2020). Next, the results showed that instructional coaching provided clear goals, created a mutual trust between the coach and teachers, and defined a collective commitment to the process. Finally, this study revealed that instructional coaching could affect a teacher’s mindset, influence the types of differentiated instruction used in lessons, and increase the frequency of differentiated instruction (Russo, 2020).

Freeman-Mack (2020) conducted a field study to evaluate how one New York urban-suburban school district implemented instructional coaching. The examination included district documents to ascertain how the district created goals to support the implementation and utilized the cognitive coaching model. It also examined teacher influence to support instructional practices in classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. The study formulated key findings in coaching implementation, cognitive coaching, coaching influence, collaboration, inconsistency, behavioral leadership traits, and coaching culture (Freeman-Mack, 2020). This study determined the district initiated an evident commitment to support instructional coaching



to support students and increase student achievement. However, the data suggested the district goal could have been more clearly identified and consistently communicated to support the implementation of instructional coaching.

Similarly, the data gathered indicated the cognitive coaching model was not identified and consistently communicated to support a shared model for coaching. Therefore, teacher influence was inconsistent. The data further supported a re-visit and re-examination of the goals for implementation and an understanding of cognitive coaching. These areas can assist the district in supporting teachers with job-embedded professional development that is non-punitive, non-threatening, and supports student learning.

In-service and coaching can increase teachers' use of research-based practices. Goodnight et al. (2020) examined the effects of in-service training plus coaching that included pre-conference, side-by-side coaching, and feedback on kindergarten teachers' use of research-based strategies during beginning reading instruction (Goodnight et al., 2020). Teachers were trained to enhance beginning reading instruction using research-based strategies, including model-lead-test, unison responding (i.e., choral responding, response cards), and systematic error correction. Results indicated that for some teachers, a half-day in-service improved delivery of the research-based strategies, while others required side-by-side coaching to demonstrate improved use of the strategies. Teachers reported the in-service and coaching support was helpful and provided information on research-based strategies that increased student engagement (Goodnight et al., 2020)

As the pressure around accountability increases, school leaders must use their resources better to support the academic needs of students and teachers to achieve desired

learning outcomes for students (Valdez, 2019). The ability of the school's instructional leader to engage the teacher in continued professional learning is impactful. It helps leverage the continued development of teachers' skills and improved student learning outcomes.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Coaching**

Researchers reported on the complexity of instructional coaching as it contributes to elementary teachers' learning (Swingle, 2018). Instructional coaching continues to increase across the coaching; however, the research is still scarce on the impact of coaching. Swingle's qualitative single case study was to be conducted to explain the role of instructional coaches and coaches balance their directive and responsive stances to contribute to teachers' transformation of learning (Swingle, 2018).

The study conducted by Swingle contributed to the research on coaching stances. It additionally expanded the literature on how instructional coaches support teacher practice. The study concluded time is essential to the effectiveness of instructional coaching to develop teachers, support professional learning and provide feedback to teachers.

Cramer's (2019) qualitative, phenomenological research study examined instructional coaches' perceptions regarding their role in empowering teachers to change or improve their teaching methods and practices. The data from Cramer's study helped to understand the strategies and relational components necessary to affect the coaching outcome positively. Findings from Cramer's study showed that participants viewed themselves as having an active role in motivating teachers to assume responsibility for their growth and development; however, they identified various barriers that made this

task challenging. The participants revealed a direct relationship between the coaching strategies utilized and improved teacher empowerment. The participants identified strategies that they found effective in empowering teachers (Cramer, 2019). The participants considered many variables that influenced how a coaching task was approached. In addition to a teacher's professional knowledge, the participants considered teacher experience and strengths and weaknesses. The coaching approach used by the participants was related to the outcome. A positive outcome resulted when certain variables and relational approaches were present. The participants provided evidence to support that they considered teachers' needs before responding to the coaching situation (Cramer, 2019).

### **Instructional Coaching and Student Achievement**

Education reforms are focused on accountability, specifically on student achievement. Meeting the needs of a diverse student population has increased teachers' responsibility (Frederick-Williams, 2019). These teachers should have the skill set to meet students' varied learning needs. Frederick-Williams conducted a quantitative quasi-experimental study that examined the impact of student-centered coaching on student learning and attitudes toward reading using a comparative and experimental group. Archival data of the comparative group of students whose teachers did not receive coaching was compared with the experimental group (e.g., 2017–2018 school year) of students whose teachers received student-centered coaching. Three teachers and 276 students were recruited from a Title I school in a suburban district (Frederick-Williams, 2019). The analysis involved a Mann-Whitney  $U$  test and repeated-measures  $t$ -test. Findings showed that student-centered coaching significantly impacted the pre-test

and post-test experimental group scores (Frederick-Williams, 2019). Coaching that was student-centered coaching did not result in a significant impact on the reading achievement of the control and experimental groups (Frederick-Williams, 2019). No significant differences were found between the scores of the control group and the experimental groups' scores. The results supported the descriptive statistical analysis indicating student-centered coaching as a method to change students' attitudes toward reading (Frederick-Williams, 2019).

### **Implementing Instructional Innovations**

Bully et al. (2006) cautioned that actual change in practice is rare, and “fewer than 10% of teachers implement instructional innovations following workshops or in-service experiences” (p. 27). It is widely recognized that few educational innovations realize their full impact without a coaching component (Elder & Padover, 2011; Schuler, 2018; Veenman & Denessen, 2010). Change in teacher practices is more likely to occur if teachers are provided with a mentor or an instructional coach who is physically present and engaged in supporting, encouraging, and guiding them (Bloom et al., 2005; Gaines, 2020; Knight, 2007; Reeves & Allison, 2009). Current best practices for effective mentoring are based on research and tools from other states, organizations, and consulting companies. The Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) Mentoring Standards Revision Team should use these best practices to guide improvements to the existing standards (Gaines, 2020). Placing teachers in professional development in-services without support is insufficient. Research showed that this method does not increase teacher implementation of strategy or yield higher student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). According to Yoon et al. (2007), teachers who received

substantial professional development increased students' reading achievement by approximately 21 percentile points.

Research suggests that teachers are the main ingredient of student achievement (Ballafkih & Middekoop, 2019; DuFour, 2007; Guskey, 2000; Roy & Hord, 2003).

Ballafkih and Middekoop conducted a study about teachers' beliefs regarding student achievement. The results revealed four beliefs about student achievement held by teachers. The beliefs centered on student efficiency, learning, enhancing skills, personal development, and active citizenship.

An earlier study by Byington and Tannock (2011) advocated for increased quality and quantity of professional development for early childhood education (ECE) teachers. Teachers' thoughts were that improvement and increased professional development benefit them. Study results indicated that the ECE profession would benefit from strengthening the quality and quantity of professional development offered to instructors. Verbal instruction and activities for small and large groups. ECE instructors expressed an interest in participating in roundtable discussions and receiving monthly emails with tips for instructors (Byington & Tannock, 2011).

Cornett and Knight (2009) noted the absence of research on the impact of coaching on those being coached and the students they teach. They attributed this deficiency to the variability of methods, the context in which coaching occurs, and interpretations of the term coaching (Desimone & Pak, 2016). Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) asserted that teachers are supported to implement evidence-based practices by coaching methods that include multiple observations, feedback, and modeling. The coaching cycles are research designed and include components aligned

to formal observations of teachers to performance aimed to improve practice and positively affect coaching.

### **Instructional Coaching and Teacher Development**

Shilder (2009) conducted a study that examined the correlation between time spent coaching for teacher self-efficacy and student achievement. In Year 1, teachers were provided professional development that consisted of 40 hours of college coursework on emergent literacy. The three instructional coaches assigned to the study visited classrooms to reinforce concepts and model instructional practices taught in the emergent literacy class. The instructional coaches focused their time in the teachers' classrooms on emergent literacy. During Years 2 and 3, the participating teachers engaged in professional learning opportunities around general teaching topics (Shidler, 2009). The instructional coaches expanded their work with teachers to include general teaching related to mathematics, science, and literacy. The coaching time in Year 2 increased and decreased in Year 3.

Shidler's (2009) study showed a significant correlation between time spent coaching for teacher self-efficacy and student achievement in Year 1, but no significant correlation in Years 2 and 3. The researcher concluded that instructional coaching that used a more focused and targeted approach is more effective than a broader, less focused approach. Implications for coaching included recommendations for achieving balance among four components of effective coaching: (a) teaching for targeted content, (b) including modeling of strategies and practices, (c) observing teacher instruction, and (d) meeting with teachers to reflect on teacher practice.

## **Components of Instructional Coaching**

The time spent in interaction and types of interaction between a coach and a teacher often determines the outcomes for building efficacy. Coaching conversations are focused and specific in a coaching cycle (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Toll (2006) used the time spent with teachers and interactions in distinguishing between coaching and co-teaching and between the two in student outcomes. According to Toll, coaching engages the teacher and the coach for 1 to 2 hours per week or every other week. Comparatively, co-teaching expects professional development personnel to interact with the teacher in the classroom two or more hours per day, over days and or weeks.

Instructional coaching has clear components that enable participants to respond to personal change challenges (Knight, 2007). The eight components are enrolling, identifying, explaining, modeling, observing, exploring, refining, and reflecting. To enroll means getting people to buy into the goals of instructional coaching by using some of these methods: (1) one-to-one interviews, (2) small-group presentations, (3) large-group presentations, (4) informal conversations, and (5) administrator referral (Knight, 2007).

### **One-to-one Interviews**

One of the most effective ways for instructional coaches to enroll teachers is through one-to-one interviews to help instructional coaches achieve at least three goals (Knight, 2007). First, these goals gather specific information about teacher and administrative challenges, student needs, and cultural norms specific to a school. Coaches use cultural information to customize coaching sessions and other professional learning to teachers' and students' distinctive needs. Second, interviews facilitate instructional

coaches educating participants about instructional coaching, philosophy, methods, and opportunities (Knight, 2007).

Interviews provided an opportunity for ICs to develop one-to-one relationships with teachers that are most effective when conducted for at least 30 minutes and more effective when they are 45 minutes to one hour long or teachers' planning time. It should be noted that although a longer interview can yield more information, the value of a 15-minute interview should not be underestimated as a tool for gathering sufficient information (Knight, 2007). Finally, during interviews, ICs explained their partnership approach to coaching, listened to teachers' concerns, and explained that as coaches, they helped, not evaluated (Knight, 2007).

### **One-to-one Informal Conversations**

Instructional coaches may enroll teachers through casual conversations around the school (Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches are skilled at getting teachers to commit to collaboration and are skilled relationship builders. An IC should not feel compelled to get every teacher on board immediately. Instead, the initial focus should be on getting a few teachers on board by providing high-quality instructional coaching as a professional learning tool. The focus should be on helping teachers through collaboration and providing high-quality solutions to a problem. (Knight, 2007). When instructional coaches respond to a real challenge a teacher is facing with a real solution, word travels through the school, and teachers might commit quicker to working with instructional coaches (Knight, 2007).

### **Individual Instructional Coaching**



Few empirical studies used a randomized controlled design to evaluate the impact of coaching (Junker et al., 2016). When comparing coaching with other forms of intervention, the number of studies dwindles even more. Junker et al. investigated the relative effectiveness of coaching as an intervention to reduce deferment. In a randomized controlled study, 84 participants were assigned to individual coaching, self-coaching, group training, or control group conditions. The study's results indicated that individual and group coaching was most effective at increasing teacher buy-in and achieving successful goal-setting. Ultimately, individual coaching led to increased satisfaction, goal attainment and skill acquisition relevant to teacher practice (Junker et al., 2016). The results for the self-coaching condition showed that goal attainment was lower for teachers who performed exercises independently without support (Junker et al., 2016). Transformational and transactional leadership behavior significantly influenced coaching participants' intrinsic motivation and feeling of autonomy. (Junker et al., 2016). A teacher's performance results will determine the selection of resources used to develop teachers. (Junker et al., 2016). Working conditions and goals will determine the need for instructional coaching, but further research is needed to understand the overall impact of instructional coaching when coupled with other interventions and various contexts (Junker et al., 2016).

### **Small-group Presentations**

Sometimes, one-to-one interviews are time-consuming, not practical, or necessary. Small group presentations are alternatives to one-to-one interviews (Knight, 2007). Typically, an instructional coach meets with teachers during team meetings, grade-level meetings, or small group meetings. During the informal meeting, an

instructional coach's goals are to explain the opportunities for teachers' professional growth and clarify the partnership perspective that underlies the coaching relationship. In addition, the IC should explain other basic issues related to instructional coaching and getting teachers onboard. To maintain teacher interest, small group presentations should be concise and respectful of teachers' needs and time. The initial conversation should be respectful of the complexity of teaching and a window into how instructional coaching support can be of assistance (Knight, 2007).

To maintain teacher interest after the small group meeting, instructional coaches should have a plan for the next steps in a one-page document or some other form to allow teachers to access the instructional coaches. Jim Knight recommends a form as a tool to allow the teacher to communicate their interest privately (Knight, 2007).

Instructional coaches should be familiar with the needs of the teacher (s). Kenyon (2019) conducted a study where a local high school administration encouraged their teachers to use formative assessment to help determine students' educational needs. After a few years of implementation, discrepancies in implementation were discovered. (Kenyon, 2019). The study revealed that the inconsistency in implementation was directly related to teachers' knowledge of implementing formative and using data to help students. The recognition of the problem of practice and steps taken by the administration is essential for the eventual creation of positive school change through professional learning for teachers aimed at increasing their formative assessment knowledge and interpretation of the data to meet students learning goals (Kenyon, 2019).

## **Large-group Presentations**

Instructional coaches could enroll teachers through a single presentation to a large group, possibly the entire staff (Knight, 2007). In contrast to the small group presentation, the large group presentation usually proceeds from the small group presentation. This format is best when introducing the concept of instructional coaching to all teachers. It serves the purpose of all teachers hearing the same message. Large group presentations are helpful when teachers are interested in collaborating with others in the school. Knight asserted that the level of resistance determines the size of the group. Lastly, when there is any concern that teachers resist collaborating with instructional coaches, one-to-one interviews are recommended (Knight, 2007).

## **Administrator Referrals**

Administrator referrals can be a powerful way to accelerate the impact of instructional coaching in a school. Sometimes teachers volunteer to work with instructional coaches; other times, a teacher may receive a referral from the principal to work with an instructional coach. When an instructional coach and a principal collaborate, admin referrals are normally an expected part of the process (Knight, 2007). The teacher will be more responsive when led to coaching in a manner that is respectful and supportive of their growth. Knight (2007) cautions that admin referrals without establishing partnership principles can lead to the instructional coach being seen as punishment for the referred teacher. This could lead to resentment of the coach and the help they can provide (Knight, 2007). The principal must establish the coach as a tool for improvement, not punishment. (Knight, 2007).

Instructional coaches should reply promptly to every teacher expressing an interest in working with them (Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches waiting too long may discourage the teacher from seeking support in the future. Moody's (2019) research found that one-on-one coaching programs effectively improve teachers' instructional practice and, in turn, improve students' academic achievement (Kraft et al., 2018). Consequently, many school districts are resorting to instructional coaching. For coaching programs to be effective, it is suggested that they must be individualized, intensive, sustained, context-specific, and focused (Kraft et al., 2018).

### **Culturally Relevant Instruction and Coaching**

Culturally relevant coaching (CRC) is an instructional coaching support system that considers teachers' individual and unique needs. The model is focused on supporting the professional and personal needs of the teacher to improve effectiveness in the classroom (Green, 2020). The level of specificity allows for the support to be layered and differentiated to meet the needs of the whole teacher versus individual parts of the teacher's needs (Green, 2020). The inclusiveness designed to help novice teachers grow at the forefront of culturally relevant coaching.

Banerjee-Batist et al. (2019) examined sociocultural and individual difference variables' possible roles in fostering mentoring relationships. Four themes constituting sociocultural factors were identified that examined mentoring relationships: gender, ethnicity, culture, and age. Nine broad themes constituting individual differences examined in mentoring relationships emerged: cognitive styles, personality, locus of control, attachment styles, interpersonal orientation, organizational orientation, learning goal orientation, social judgment capacity, and achievement and avoidance orientation.

The findings showed that although mentoring research extensively studied sociocultural factors, it lacked sufficient depth in discussing mentoring functions and outcomes from an individual perspective. Individual differences should be independently incorporated into future mentoring research and research with sociocultural factors.

### **The Role of Instructional Coaches**

An instructional coach shares the leadership for instructional reform with the principal (Culbertson, 2019; Knudsen, 2021; Taylor, 2008). A coach's job varies, but a few traits that must exist in a coach include dispositions that include listening and collaborating, leadership qualities, in-depth knowledge of excellent teaching and willingness to model their teaching as a learner (Lia, 2019). The instructional coach works cooperatively and collaboratively with teachers as a problem solver (Lia, 2019). Instructional coaches assume this role to support teachers in improving instruction. The impact of instructional coaching empowers teachers to increase their knowledge of instruction, curriculum, and data. This way, instructional coaches and teachers learn and improve together (Lia, 2019).

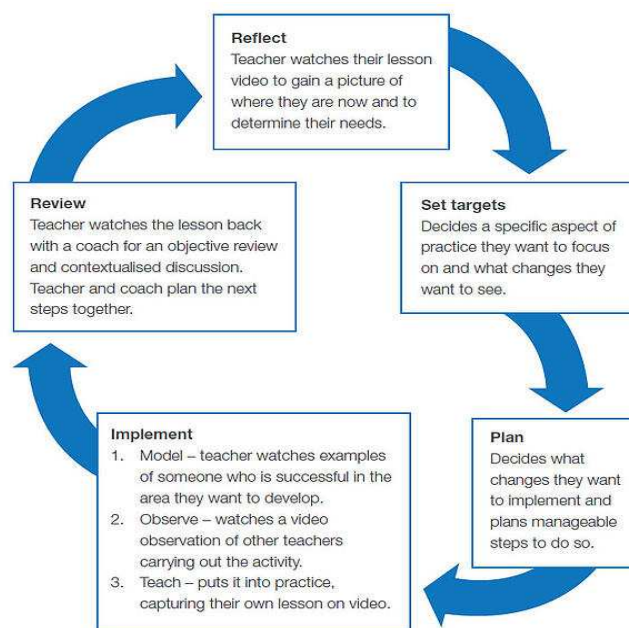
Instructional coaching, a job-embedded professional development approach, is a means of overcoming the limitations of workshop-based professional development to transfer knowledge and skills into classroom practices (Gulamhussein, 2013; Miracolo, 2020). However, instructional coaching is essential for maximizing effective instruction. Tools to develop research-based coaching skills are few. The number of coaching measuring tools and resources that develop coaching skills and interaction is even more scarce (Reddy et al., 2019). Increased popularity in coaching has outpaced credible research that could help practitioners understand the necessary essential components for

implementing an effective coaching cycle (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Glover & Reddy, 2017). The lack of research has led to inconsistency in the implementation of coaching and continues to plague the measure of coaching effectiveness and its impact on teacher development and overall professional development (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Glover & Reddy, 2017).

In an earlier study, Joyce and Showers (1996) created a model that emphasizes the important role of instructional coaches in professional development. In their research, five kinds of support for teachers are set targets, plan, implement, review, and reflect. The support by Joyce and Showers aligns through the system of adult learning in observing instructional coaching as a means of conveyance, supporting the movement of a teacher from where the teacher is to where the teacher wants to be. The support offered through instructional coaching may be one approach to sustainable change in the classroom environment. However, sustainable change is difficult to achieve and requires altering habits and creating new routines (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Dillard, 2018; Evered & Selman, 1989; Knight, 2007).

As shown in Figure 2.5, Joyce and Showers (1996) created a model that emphasizes the important role of instructional coaches in professional development. In their research, five kinds of support for teachers are set targets, plan, implement, review, and reflect. The first kind of support is to set targets and decide on a specific aspect of teaching practice to focus on and decide on the changes to be observed (Joyce & Showers, 1996). The second type of support is to plan what changes should be implemented and plan manageable steps to meet those changes. The third kind of support is to implement the plan by having the teacher observe examples of the instructional

coach or someone successful in the area to be developed (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Next, the teacher should view videos of other teachers carrying out the lesson. Finally, the teacher should teach the lesson and put it into practice by capturing it on video (Joyce & Showers, 1996). The fourth kind of support needed is to review the lesson by reviewing and watching the teacher's video lesson with the instructional coach for an objective review and contextualized discussion. The teacher and instructional coach could plan the next steps together (Joyce & Showers, 1996). The final kind of support is to reflect on the video viewed after watching the videoed lesson to gain a picture of what has happened and the next steps based on specific instructional needs (Joyce & Showers, 1996).



**Figure 2.5**

*The Important Role of Instructional Coaches in Professional Development*

Adapted from “The evolution of peer coaching,” by B. R. Joyce and S. Showers, 1996.

*Educational Leadership*, 53(6), 12-16.

(<http://www.edlabgroup.org/sites/default/files/documents/peercoachinglf.pdf>)

Instructional coaching (IC) provides intensive, differentiated support to teachers to implement proven practices (Dillard, 2018; Knight, 2007). Instructional coaches could be successful and work in a context that supports a focus on instruction. A few actors might make all the difference in the effectiveness of any coaching program (Knight, 2007). When administrators assign instructional coaches duties outside of assisting teachers in the classroom, their effectiveness dwindles and becomes ineffective for teachers. To improve the effectiveness of an instructional coaching program, administrators could increase the number of times coaches are coaching. Because instructional coaches' job descriptions are often vague or non-existent and their schedules are more flexible than teachers' schedules, they are often asked to do many clerical and non-instructional tasks. The more than 2,000 instructional coaches surveyed raised a common concern about the number of non-instructional tasks that left little time to work with teachers.

Figure 2.6 shows that instructional coaches should not be asked to perform non-instructional tasks such as copying and binding standards documents, shopping for classroom furniture, and serving as substitute teachers. Non-instructional tasks are not ways to improve school teaching practices (Segner, 2020). Knight (2019a) noted that instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet the intended and planned goals, and provide support until goals are met.



DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL COACH	
The Instructional Coach <u>IS</u>	The Instructional Coach <u>IS NOT</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized professional development</li> <li>• The facilitator of data-based decision making</li> <li>• In service to and support of teachers' needs</li> <li>• Someone to model a lesson or co-teach with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent to "fix" teachers</li> <li>• The one in charge of PLCs/team planning meetings</li> <li>• The creator of lesson plans</li> <li>• A substitute teacher when short staffed</li> <li>• The eyes and ears of administration</li> </ul>
WWW.BETHSEGNER.COM	

**Figure 2.6**

*Defining the Role of the Instructional Coach*

Adapted from "What instructional coaching is and is not?" by G. Segner, 2020.

(<https://bethsegner.com/what-instructional-coaching-is-and-is-not/>)

Research on instructional coaching supports instructional coaching as an effective professional learning tool to improve teacher practice (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Culbertson, 2019; Rosato, 2019; Rozanski, 2017; Sword, 2021). Research consistently demonstrated that teachers have a powerful and positive impact on students' learning (Davakos, 2018; Green, 2020; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Hoover, 2020; Reddy et al., 2017). Thus, enhancing teacher effectiveness has become a major concern (Culbertson, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Knudsen, 2021). Instructional coaching as a professional learning tool has improved teacher effectiveness and support (Reddy et al., 2017). Instructional coaching typically encompasses a literacy coaching expert who works with teachers using a coaching cycle (Smiley et al., 2019).

## **Types of Walkthroughs**

The purpose of a walkthrough is to give targeted, evidence-based feedback to teachers and serves as a means for evaluators to visit classrooms more frequently and purposefully (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). There are three types of walkthroughs: (1) walkthrough type 1: implementation support, (2) walkthrough type 2: coaching, and (3) walkthrough type 3: instructional rounds (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Qualitative data in the current study used walkthroughs to document how these three types of walkthroughs impacted instructional coaching at GES. A walkthrough or informal observation is used to gather instruction evidence over short classroom visits (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). This method allows evaluators to gather additional evidence on identified focus areas to enhance teacher practice (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020).

### **Walkthrough Type 1: Implementation Support**

Walkthrough Type 1: Implementation Support is a walkthrough focused on supporting teachers in implementing school improvement strategies. It is a practical way to collect data on a school's progress toward its goals (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). When the school's Leadership Team and faculty join forces to identify this kind of walkthrough, it sends a message that "we are a partnership, and we are in this together." The process then centers on data collection and naming the type of data to be collected and the purpose of data collection. The data collection increases the range of possibilities to support school improvement. For example, GES implemented a walkthrough form to observe student engagement and learning levels.

Further, teachers' use of tools from professional learning was also looked for during the walkthrough (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). The administrative and leadership

team share schoolwide data about observations and align teacher professional development with observed needs. Teachers focus their efforts on developing greater precision in their teaching practices.

This type of observation at GES resulted in the principal, instructional coaches, and Leadership Team meeting with grade-level teams. In these meetings, the focus was on implementing the schoolwide reading initiative. The grade-level teams were asked to determine the help needed to improve their practice. Next, they identified the area of the expected improvement in time increments leading to the end of the year. The goals identified were aligned to the reading goals on the eReading Fast Assessment test, which they taught students to use as they responded to text-dependent questions.

The meetings were designed to allow the administration to shared trend data and gather input from teachers. After visiting each grade-level team, the principal and instructional coaches proposed a set of skills for each grade level. After reviewing the data, the teacher suggested items to look for during the walkthrough. Professional learning communities were used for the principal to share an observation and next steps. Lastly, the information was used to encourage team collaboration (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

### **Walkthrough Type 2: Coaching**

The coaching walkthrough is less about the school as a whole and more about the individual teacher. Walkthrough Type 2: Coaching departs from using a checklist in a formal evaluation system and offers opportunities for principals, instructional coaches, and colleagues to join forces to identify resources and strategies that are important to improving teacher practices to help students improve in reading (Rouleau & Corner,

2020). The skills sought may be related to goals the teacher, principal, or instructional coach has identified or may be entirely teacher-driven (see Rouleau & Corner, 2020). What is important is that these walkthroughs are about coaching, regardless of who is doing the observing. They are not evaluative but focus on feedback to support teachers' professional development growth.

At GES, for example, the instructional coach and a second-grade teacher agreed that the teacher and students would be well-served by “aligning lesson objectives with the learning task student have to complete.” The selected staff recognized that students needed to know why they were doing what they were doing. The teacher planned to explain learning objectives and linked lesson activities to them, explaining to students how each activity would advance their learning. When the principal or instructional coach visited, they observed posted learning objectives. If students were already engaged in a learning task, they would talk with students to ascertain what they were learning. Each walkthrough allowed the principal to give anecdotal feedback to the teacher that guided the next steps. The principal or instructional coach did not take notes because these walkthroughs were not part of the teacher's formal evaluation record but rather an informal process of collecting and sharing data to contribute to teacher and student learning (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

### **Walkthrough Type 3: Instructional Rounds**

The third type of walkthrough resembles a group of teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches visiting various classrooms in search of specific skills to observe related to a significant finding from a school's data. For example, GES's reading data show that fourth-grade teachers' students perform better than expected among other

grades. Fourth-grade teachers participated vigorously in group and individual coaching more frequently and as a team than other teachers. The principal and instructional coaches used this data to share with the Leadership Team. The principal viewed this data as a gap in the learning curve for other teachers whose scores were not as high and whose teachers were not as actively engaged in instructional coaching as a group and individually.

An instructional round was organized to find out why in hopes of identifying practices that can be replicated in other classrooms. The commonality of instructional rounds is that they focus on using a data review process to inform the goal pursued at GES. Instructional rounds are regularly scheduled part of GES's routine, or they could be situational, arising in response to a newly discovered opportunity (see Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

Walkthroughs are not the only type of evaluation; one of the most common is the informal type used for teacher growth and collecting tend data (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Most notable is the formal evaluation observation that leaders conduct in positional authority, typically a principal, district leader, teacher leader, or instructional coaches, to gather data on teachers' classroom practices, usually through a district's teacher evaluation system. Formal observations are too often used as compliance tools, and teachers tend to view them as such. However, in an administrator or team that uses evaluations as a tool for continuous improvement, the opinion on evaluation shifts and is better received by teachers. Finally, the improved perception helps leaders use the evaluation tool as a useful component of professional growth. (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

The study's conclusion from the literature review was that research studies found inconclusive results that instructional coaching improved teachers' instruction. However, some studies found significant differences in the impact of instructional coaching on teachers' strategies in quantitative and qualitative studies. Even with the demand for instructional coaches increasing, the research supporting the effectiveness of coaching to improve teacher practice remains limited.

### **Summary**

Chapter 2 presented the restatement of the problem of practice and research questions, both qualitative and quantitative, for this mixed methods action research study. The purpose of the study was given, and the literature methodology. A theoretical framework of andragogy by Knowles (1980) was discussed. Chapter 3 presents the research design and methods, followed by an overview of the study. The research setting and sample participants will be presented. Actually, there were no participants in this study because all data were archival or extant data collected during 2018-2019. Data collection measures, instruments, and tools were presented, along with the research procedures and data analysis. A summary ends this chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### **Overview of Study**

This mixed methods exploratory study explores the implementation and impact of an instructional initiative. The current study used quantitative and qualitative with a descriptive analysis. The focus was mixed-methods, wherein the first phase involved qualitative data followed by the quantitative data that supported the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Both data types allowed for a deeper understanding of the investigated problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

#### **Research Design**

This study used an exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The assessments occurred during the year of focus of the research: 2018-2019. This exploratory sequential design first involved collecting qualitative data, analyzing the information, and using the findings to inform the analysis of a previously administered assessment of the sample under study (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). According to Crowe et al. (2011), an action research approach allows for a multi-faceted exploration of complex ideas. The action research approach allows for a more exploratory approach where the researcher can focus on how and why questions. “Action research offers one path to a more deliberate, substantial, and critical reflection that can be documented and analyzed to improve an educator’s practice” (Clark et al., 2020, p. 8).

“In action research, findings emerged as the action develops and takes place; however, they are not conclusive or absolute, but ongoing” (Koshy, 2010, p. 2). Rosala (2019) defined “thematic analysis as a systematic method of breaking down and organizing rich data from qualitative research by tagging individual observations and quotations with appropriate codes, to facilitate the discovery of significant themes” (p. 2). Rosala described a theme, “A theme is a description of a belief, practice, need, or another phenomenon that is discovered from the data that emerges when related findings appear multiple times across participants or data sources” (p. 1).

Qualitative studies deal with common themes while analyzing transcripts through interviews, diary studies, field studies, and focus groups (Rosala, 2019). A diary study involves participants writing narratives about their daily, weekly, and monthly life events about participants’ behaviors, experiences, and activities over an extended period (Salazar, 2016). Action research improves educational practice through a process that includes action, evaluation, reflection, and data collection that supports a change in routine (Rosala, 2019). Individuals undertaking research with a common purpose and situation and context-based develop reflection practices from interpretations (Rosala, 2019). Knowledge creates action and application. Action research based on problem-solving and expectations produces outcomes to improve practice (Rosala, 2019). Action research is iterative, with specific plans created, implemented, revised, and implemented through an ongoing process of reflection and revision (Rosala, 2019).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This mixed methods exploratory research study aimed to evaluate the instructional coaching process and training among grades 2 through 5 teachers to determine how instructional coaching impacts the instructional coaching process



implemented during 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. In addition, observational walkthroughs decided students' progress in literacy reading during two academic years to determine whether there is a statistical difference between FAST™ grade level eReading reports for screening in 2018-2019 (quantitative). Finally, comparing these grade levels determined the impact of individual teachers' classes during walkthroughs (qualitative) at GES. The current study analyzed quantitative data collected from the FAST™ assessment in reading literacy and eReading data for students in grades 2 through 5 during the 2018-2019 academic year. In addition, this study explored qualitative data collected from instructional coaching, training, and walkthroughs from grades 2 through 5 teachers. The following qualitative and quantitative research questions guided this study.

### **Research Questions**

These mixed methods research questions served as the focus areas in evaluating the instructional coaching model that began in 2017-2018 and continues today. The qualitative data collected previously was an opportunity to measure the instructional coaching model's impact on students' literacy learning outcomes and teachers' instructional capacity in the years before the pandemic. These questions served as the area of focus in evaluating the instructional coaching model currently in place at GES. The data collected previously was an opportunity to measure the impact of the instructional coaching model and its effect on students' literacy learning outcomes and teachers' instructional practice. Quantitative data collection occurred during the years of operation in 2018-2019. Instructional coaching is currently in place at GES, albeit with modifications based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Qualitative Questions**

1. Describe how the instructional coaching process was implemented during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative).
2. How did the instructional coaching process inform student learning in reading literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the FAST™ assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years (mixed methods)?
3. How do observational walkthroughs determine whether observations and walkthroughs benefit grades 2 through 5 teachers and whether students progress in literacy reading during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative)?

### **Quantitative Question**

Research Question 4: Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not)?

H<sub>0</sub>4: There is no statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

H<sub>A</sub>4: There is a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

This study explored qualitative data collected from instructional coaching and training, walkthroughs from grades 2 through 5 teachers, and individual interviews with three instructional literacy coaches and a teacher. The academic years 2019-2020 were not analyzed due to the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed. The qualitative data collected previously was an opportunity to measure the instructional coaching model's impact on students' literacy reading learning outcomes and teachers' instructional capacity in the years before the pandemic. These questions served as the area of focus in evaluating the instructional coaching model currently in place at GES. Instructional coaching is now in place at GES, albeit with modifications based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Research Setting, Sample/Participants**

#### **Research Setting**

This mixed-methods exploratory research study took place at GES, a pre-kindergarten through 5th-grade public school located in a first-tier suburb of a midwestern city. However, the researcher collected only grades 2 through 5 archival data because kindergarten through first grades did not take the eReading FAST™ assessment.

#### **Sample and Participants**

*Students.* Although no students participated in the current study, the researcher used archival reading achievement data. The number of archival student data included 301 student records. There were 68 grade 2 students, 53 grade 3 students, 112 grade 4 students, and 68 grade 5 students (see Table 3.1). The GES student body is diverse, with students from all over the world. Currently, 31% of the GES student body are English Language Learners (ELL), and over 250 GES families identified Spanish as their first

language. In addition, the majority (80%) of GES are minority students, and the free and reduced lunch participation rate is approximately 80%.

**Table 3.1**

*Number of Student Records*

Grade Level	Fall 2018	Winter 2018-2019	Total
2	48	20	68
3	17	36	53
4	83	29	112
5	46	22	68
Total	194	107	301

*Teachers.* The current study focused on 15 teachers in grades 2 through 5. GES had 24 homerooms during the 2018-2019 academic school year. Each homeroom teacher received instructional coaching as collective coaching and was eligible to receive instructional coaching one-on-one. About 15% of the teachers were in their first years of teaching. All (100%) of the teaching staff are fully licensed as outlined by the State Department of Education, and 43% of teachers have advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's degree. Table 3.2 shows the number of teachers who received individual and group coaching during 2017-2018. Grades kindergarten and first grade indicated that these students were administered the early reading composite and did not take eReading tests scheduled for grades 2-3 and 4-12. However, K-1 teachers participated in instructional coaching, but there were no student data to compare with coaching

participation. Therefore, grades kindergarten and first-grade data were for illustrative purposes only.

**Table 3.2**

*Number of Teachers Who Received Coaching During 2017-2018*

Grade Level	Number of Teachers	General Coaching	Individual Coaching
K	4	4	4
1	4	4	3
2	4	4	4
3	4	4	3
4	4	4	3
5	3	3	1

Table 3.3 shows the number of teachers who received coaching during 2018-2019. The teacher identified as .6 is an itinerant teacher who is assigned a part-time schedule at GES and works at several schools.

**Table 3.3**

*Number of Teachers Who Received Coaching during 2018-2019*

Grade Level	Number of Teachers	General Coaching	Individual Coaching
K	4	4	2
1	4	4	2
2	4	4	3
3	3	3	2
4	3	3	3
5	3	3	1
ELL Teacher	4.6	4.6	3
Special Education	3	3	2

## **Instructional Coaching Team**

The instructional coaching team consists of the school principal, assistant principal, numeracy instructional coach, and a literacy instructional coach. For this study, three instructional coaches were interviewed to answer three qualitative questions and one quantitative research question about student outcomes. The team focused its concerted efforts on transforming the school and improving student learning outcomes. While the coaching team developed school-based goals for focus, the team also engaged teachers in group and individualized coaching to enhance student instructional practices and outcomes. The team has existed with its current members for the past four years. GES, the school of focus, implemented an instructional coaching process that began in 2017-2018, and data collection was taken from the 2018-2019 school years that continues to exist today. GES embarked on instructional coaching during the two academic school years to improve professional learning for teachers and student learning outcomes. After a few years of implementation, an informed understanding of the impact of the instructional coaching process is needed.

Before implementation at the local school level, instructional coaching was previously implemented at the district level. During this time, district leadership ensured the training of instructional coaches around coaching practices. In 2016-2017, the training for coaches ended abruptly from the district policy, and instructional coaches were reclassified due to Board policy changes for that responsibility to be at the local level instead of the district level. The reclassification resulted in the loss of professional learning to develop, implement, and monitor school instructional coaching. Professional learning for coaches became the responsibility of the building principals.

### **Data Collection Measures, Instruments, and Tools**

Aspers and Corte (2019) described qualitative research as an approach to studying the situations and events unfolding naturally in a school setting. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand how an educational experience was understood by those impacted. Qualitative research brought about the change needed and preceded quantitative research. A mixed-methods approach with a predominant qualitative focus is the type of action research best suited for this topic.

The qualitative data were enhanced by quantitative student assessment data using triangulation in the research study. Both types of research give the researcher a more in-depth understanding of the investigated problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Additionally, quantitative triangulated data collection consisted of several methods (i.e., eReading FAST™ student data for grades 2 through 5 only, walkthroughs, and observations (see Appendix D). Other quantitative data included group and individual literacy coaching and training (see Appendix A) and Quick-Check Focus on Mini-lessons (see Appendix B). As a result, the study's reliability and validity are informed (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

Numerous data sources strengthen the action research and allow educators to study their schools, classrooms, and personal practice to better understand how to improve instruction quality or effectiveness (Manfra, 2019). Creswell and Creswell (2018) shared that data collection from multiple sources and data collection methods analyses informs the researcher of the study's reliability and internal validity. A descriptive analysis of the instructional coaching process and its impact on student

learning outcomes is the goal of this study. Chapter 5 consists of recommendations, Implications, and conclusions based on the analyses.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

The researcher collected qualitative data through interviews and classroom observations from the full implementation of walkthroughs from instructional coaching modules and training conducted during the 2018-2019 academic years. Multiple researchers have described walkthroughs as practical ways for instructional leaders such as principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches to play an active role in generating focused, qualitative data to inform schoolwide improvement efforts (Rouleau & Corner, 2020; Rozanski, 2017; Russo, 2020; Schmidt, 2020; Suarez, 2018; Sword, 2021).

**Interviews.** The researcher conducted individual interviews with three instructional coaches who were involved in individual coaching in 2018-2019.

**Document analysis.** The researcher used archived documents related to walkthroughs in the 2018-2019 academic year. These documents included one of the three types of walkthroughs: walkthrough coaching, which is less about the school and the individual teacher. The instructional literacy coach and teacher agreed on personal coaching followed by observations of teaching that provided substantial evidence when assessing a teacher's performance and effectiveness. The instructional coach and teacher scheduled a formal observation that lasted an entire period based on the agreement between the teacher and the evaluator and involved individual pre-observation and post-observation conferences with an evaluator. Informal observations lasted a minimum of 15



minutes and may have been unannounced. Conferencing after conducting a classroom observation is essential to instructional coaching (Rozanski, 2017).

Three types of walkthroughs. Of the three types of walkthroughs used at GES, this study focused on walkthrough coaching, which is less about the school and the individual teacher. Walkthroughs are not part of a formal evaluation system, yet they offer opportunities for principals, instructional coaches, and colleagues to collaborate around resources and strategies that are important to improving student instruction (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Walkthroughs are not evaluative, focusing on coaching regardless of who is observing. Feedback to support a teacher's professional growth is essential to the walkthrough (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

Instructional literacy coach and teacher agreement are used at GES. For example, the instructional coach and a fourth-grade teacher (Ms. Pace, pseudonym) agreed that the teacher and students would be well-served by a better alignment between lesson objectives and the learning tasks. The teacher instructed students to complete specific lessons recorded on the Quick Check: Focus on Mini-Lessons (see Appendix B). Further, students need to know why they were doing what they were doing. The teacher planned to explain learning objectives and link lesson activities to them, explaining to students how each activity would advance student learning. When the instructional coach visited the classroom, the teacher posted learning objectives on the board. Some students seemed partially engaged in a learning task as the instructional coach talked with them, asking what they were learning. With each walkthrough, the instructional coach gave anecdotal feedback to the teacher that guided the next steps. Observation notes were taken and discussed with the teacher after the walkthrough. These walkthroughs were not recorded

to teachers individually but instead coded by grade level and school as tools for improving practice. However, individual walkthroughs looked at trend data for individual teachers as needed. The goal is not to use walkthroughs for anything outside of professional growth.

**Observations.** At GES, teaching observations provided significant evidence when assessing a teacher's performance and effectiveness (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020). As an instructional coach observes an engaging teacher's students in learning, the coach collected valuable evidence using various tools. However, evidence of teachers' practice was observed in more formal and informal instructional settings (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020). Some teacher behaviors were observable in the classroom, while other evidence sought traditional conferences, informal conversations, and proof of practice (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020). Ongoing communication and collaboration between the instructional coach and teacher are essential to help foster a productive and supportive professional and enhance teachers' professional growth and development (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020).

*Types of observations.* There are two types of observations: formal and informal (United Federation of Teachers, 2021). At GES, the principal and assistant principal observed teachers through formal observations as part of annual evaluations. Informal observations lasted a minimum of 15 minutes and were often unannounced. Teachers did not require pre- and post-observations conferences. Nothing precludes an administrator from conducting such seminars (United Federation of Teachers, 2021)

## **Conferencing After a Classroom Observation**

An essential part of instructional coaching is conferencing after conducting a classroom observation (Rozanski, 2017). This part of instructional coaching explored strategies to help a teacher provide clear post-observation feedback during the conference. For example, instructional coaches observed new teachers who struggle with classroom management and have difficulty getting all students focused on learning (Rozanski, 2017). Upon the principal's suggestion or referral, the instructional coach assigned to observe a teacher can give some insight on discipline, focused learning, and on-task teaching. An essential part of being an instructional coach is conducting observations. Since instructional coaches are experienced teachers, they can provide constructive feedback about observed teaching practices. Therefore, coaches should generally perform a post-observation meeting to debrief and offer help (Rozanski, 2017). Figure 3.1 shows instructional coaches' steps to build a trusting relationship with teachers: observe, plan, reflect, and enact change.



**Figure 3.1**

*Model of Instructional Coaching and Planning*

Adapted from “Five Practices to Do Today for More Effective Instructional Coaching,” by J. Culbertson, 2019. (<https://www.insighteducationgroup.com/blog/five-practices-to-do-today-for-more-effective-instructional-coaching>)

**Observe: I Watch You.** Instructional coaches (IC) at GES preferred to use a pre-observation with teachers before identifying an area of focus. A pre-observation conference increases collaboration and facilitates co-identification of an area of growth for the teacher (Culbertson, 2019). Once identified, the instructional coach will clarify any questions the teacher may have about the teacher’s practice. The next step is usually modeling a lesson with the teacher to discuss. The final step is for the instructional coach to observe the teacher in action (Culbertson, 2019). While observing the teacher, the instructional coach watches behavior and practice trends and notes the finding on the co-constructed coaching form. The observation form is already familiar to the teacher as the coach and teacher created the form together (see Appendix A).

**Plan.** Teaching has many layers, and plans can sometimes become a lower priority on the never-ending to-do list of educators. Nevertheless, effective planning is essential for implementing strategies (Culbertson, 2019). The last phase of the

improvement stage is planning the following steps—the more robust the planning, the better.

**Reflect.** Reflection is integral to coaching and building a trusting relationship between the instructional coach and teacher. I should encourage collaborating teachers to consider ideas before adopting them. I should recognize that reflective thinkers, by definition, must be free to choose or reject ideas, or they are not independent thinkers who rely on others to think for them (Culbertson, 2019).

**Enact change.** Cognitive coaching is the typical model found in many American schools. Because this model consists of beliefs that change before actions, coaches help teachers reflect on their thoughts as a way to change their behaviors. Instructional coaching involves coaches assisting teachers in “incorporating research-based instructional practices” (p. 12). Kurz et al. (2017) offer a multidisciplinary framework, combining some of the models mentioned by Knight (2019a).

### **Instructional Walkthroughs (2017-2018 and 2018-2019)**

Walkthroughs include teachers who received either individualized or group coaching. In addition, the instructional coaching team conducted additional walkthroughs for teachers who requested additional individualized coaching. Walkthroughs did not evaluate individual teachers. In addition, principals did not identify walkthroughs by teachers’ names in post-observation reports. Instead, walkthroughs aim to help administrators and teachers learn more about teachers’ instructional strategies and identify training and support teachers might need (see David, 2008).

The instructional walkthrough was a first-hand look at what occurred in classrooms. The goal was to get a picture of occurrences in the building, determine

professional development and individualized teacher support that is needed, and get an idea of implementing various instructional strategies. The qualitative data collected decide professional learning needs for the staff and individual staff. Before conducting the walkthrough, the dialogue focused on the walkthrough as part of the evidence. Then, the collected information was analyzed and shared with staff and others (Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

All teachers in grades 2 through 5 participated in the walkthroughs and observations. However, teachers in grade 5 resisted walkthroughs and observations and did not want to participate. They believed they did not need to be observed based on their years of teaching experience, yet administrators evaluated all teachers annually using formal observations.

**Teacher group differences.** There were observed differences between and among teaching groups regarding teaching experience or years in the profession. For example, in grades 2 and 3, the non-instructional groups of students had higher scores as the non-coaching teachers were veterans and coaching teachers were novice teachers. In addition to new textbooks for literacy, veteran teachers had more training and resources, and novice teachers were gaining coaching on a new curriculum. Grade 4 teachers were a team that had been working together for a while. The coaches attended the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) or collaborative meetings. They took advantage of the instructional coaching.

Grade 5 teachers were the oppositional and defiant group who did not want to participate in instruction coaching because they had all the answers. Their instructional growth was the lowest among all of the grade levels. How does a leader impact that?

First, I had to show that teachers of all grade levels should buy into instructional coaching. As an instructional leader of the school, I even participated in training and was there. The instructional coaches are part of all teachers' instructional teams, not consultants. The purpose of the walkthroughs was for teachers to show their genuine selves. Walkthroughs gathered trend data. During adult learning discussions, teachers only buy into professional learning that is relevant to the work they are doing. Building buy-in for what they were doing and building for the empire were the goals. Having an administrator in the room where the discussion took place sent clear signals that everyone should be on board for instructional coaching designed to improve student achievement in reading.

However, regardless of their choices, all teachers participated in observations and walkthroughs, according to the school district's teacher evaluation system, but not all participated in instructional coaching. Walkthroughs were not part of teachers' formal evaluation (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). The goals of walkthroughs were to help improve professional learning, implement instructional strategies, and the instructional coaching process at the school.

Teachers received informal feedback in grade-level meetings. In addition, teachers requested individual feedback. Walkthroughs occur monthly in reading literacy and math numeracy and can be announced or unannounced depending on the direction of the leadership team. However, the main focus was monthly literacy walkthroughs of teachers in grades 2 through 5. The walkthroughs frequently covered the entire school, but there were times when the walkthroughs impacted selected teachers.

**Differences between instructional coaches.** Although instructional coaches used similar techniques and strategies when working with individual teachers, small groups, or ample group coaching. One coach was in her 18th year in the building and her 24th year in teaching. Many external relationships supported teachers in providing critical feedback. Some of the non-performance of students was spending a lot of time getting the instructional coaches confident with their colleagues and friends. Some teachers did not recognize instructional coaches as part of their grade-level teams. Teachers believed that instructional coaches spied and reported to the principal what they found. For some teachers, trusting the instructional coaches took many years to build a team relationship.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Interviews and observations via walkthroughs addressed the research questions. During qualitative theme d analysis, themes emerged based on constant comparison with interviews and walkthrough data. All data were archived and were easily accessible from the school district after IRB approval and not necessary since no students or teachers were study participants. The researcher used only archival or existing data. Therefore, I sought themes based on a constant comparison with interview and walkthrough data.

Observations through walkthroughs (i.e., archival walkthroughs) are tools used to assist in data collection to measure classroom teachers' level of coaching training implementation. A walkthrough and an informal observation are tools to inform evaluation and provide opportunities with evidence on classroom practice. This method allows instructional coaches to gather additional evidence on identified focus areas to enhance teacher practice. Walkthroughs are a process for giving targeted, evidence-based



feedback to teachers and a means for instructional coaches to visit classrooms more frequently and purposefully (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020).

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Quantitative data were collected from grades 2 through 5 students' test results in the FAST™ Literacy Suite using the test scores from the eReading Test (Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-Spring 2019). The 2018-2019 school year focused on changes that occurred in 2019-2020 based on the COVID-19 pandemic. The assessment was cross-validated to the National Common Core Standards (National Governors Association, 2010).

Substantial research evidence provides a robust estimate of reading achievement in grades K-12. The eReading assessment predicted students' performance on high-stakes assessments (e.g., state tests). The eReading assessment received the highest possible rating for validity, reliability, and diagnostic accuracy from the National Center for Response to Intervention (2022).

GES's computer program automatically scored student performance, and the data were available to teachers and administrators immediately when a student completed the assessment. The data were loaded into several selectable spreadsheets that provided individual, classroom, and grade level results. In addition, the school district's technology system disaggregated the data. The literacy assessment selected is the eReading test, also known as the *Benchmark for the eReading evaluation*, a computer-administered adaptive measure. The literacy assessment covers a broad range of reading assessments for students administered individually and collaboratively and requires 15-30 minutes to administer. The test covers the reading domains of concepts of print, phonemic

awareness, phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary. Questions varied in types from multiple choice to fill-in-the-blank.

In addition, students in grades third through eighth complete the *Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment* (MCA) in reading and mathematics at the end of the academic year. The MCAs are the statewide standards-based accountability tests used by the state of Minnesota. The items aligned with the curricular standards for the state of Minnesota to determine which students have mastered grade-level content (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017).

Students received a scale score after the assessment. Based on the scaled scores, students' rankings were *on track from the MCA, with some risk* and *high risk* for statewide testing. The results showed that students in grades 2 through 5 improved reading as on track MCA from Fall 2018 to Spring 2019. The range for being on track adjusts for each quarter that a student is in the classroom—the performance scores of students determine which instructional strategies to use for students (see Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4** *Benchmark for eReading Assessment*

Grade	Metric	Risk Level	Fall 2018	Winter 2019	Spring 2019
2	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 488.0$	$\geq 499.0$	$\geq 505.0$
		Some Risk	$< 469.0$	$< 481.0$	$< 490.0$
		High Risk	$< 445.0$	$< 462.0$	$< 469.0$
3	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 505.0$	$\geq 512.0$	$\geq 517.0$
		Some Risk	$< 490.0$	$< 498.0$	$< 503.0$
		High Risk	$< 468.0$	$< 477.0$	$< 483.0$
4	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 517.0$	$\geq 522.0$	$\geq 526.0$
		Some Risk	$< 502.0$	$< 509.0$	$< 513.0$
		High Risk	$< 484.0$	$< 493.0$	$< 496.0$
5	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 528.0$	$\geq 532.0$	$\geq 536.0$
		Some Risk	$< 513.0$	$< 517.0$	$< 520.0$
		High Risk	$< 496.0$	$< 501.0$	$< 504.0$

Table 3.5 shows the aMath data for illustrative purposes only since the current study focused on eReading for students in grades 2 through 5. However, it is presented for information and illustrative purposes only, and teachers also receive coaching in this area. The aMath test is a computer-administered adaptive measure and covers a broad range of mathematics skills for students and is administered individually and collaboratively and can take between 6-12 minutes. Questions varied in type from multiple choice to fill-in-the-blank. Students received a scale score after the assessment. Based on the scaled scores for statewide testing, students' scores were adjusted for each quarter.

**Table 3.5**

*Benchmark aMathematics*

Grade	Metric	Risk Level	Fall 2018	Winter 2019	Spring 2019
2	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 203.0$	$\geq 206.0$	$\geq 209.0$
		Some Risk	$< 197.0$	$< 201.0$	$< 205.0$
		High Risk	$< 191.0$	$< 195.0$	$< 197.0$
3	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 209.0$	$\geq 213.0$	$\geq 215.0$
		Some Risk	$< 204.0$	$< 207.0$	$< 209.0$
		High Risk	$< 196.0$	$< 198.0$	$< 201.0$
4	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 214.0$	$\geq 217.0$	$\geq 222.0$
		Some Risk	$< 209.0$	$< 211.0$	$< 213.0$
		High Risk	$< 201.0$	$< 204.0$	$< 205.0$
5	Scaled Score	On Track MCA	$\geq 220.0$	$\geq 225.0$	$\geq 229.0$

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The analysis of quantitative data came from the FAST™ Assessment Tool using 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 scores. COVID-19 and school closures did not impact the 2018-2019 academic year scores. Each data source showed trends and changes in teachers' performance and student learning outcomes. The analysis informed the

researcher regarding how instructional coaching impacted student learning outcomes and teacher performance. The data warehouse officials provided student data to the researcher from FAST™ students' scale scores. The eReading Assessment's data used an action research methodology focusing on a descriptive analysis of what the data reflected from Fall 2018 to Winter 2019.

All quantitative data were archived and easily accessible because the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of South Carolina (see Appendix E) was approved. On August 3, 2021, the Office of Research Compliance, an administrative office supporting the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB), approved my study. The referenced research study, IRB protocol # Pro00112922, was not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations per the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq. Therefore, no further oversight by the USC IRB was required. However, I should inform the Office of Research Compliance before making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the project's status and require another review.

### **FAST™ and eReading Assessment Data**

The data analysis informed the researcher on how instructional coaching impacted student learning outcomes and teacher implementation of strategies. The data analyzed were downloaded from the school district's data warehouse that provides student data to district staff through FAST™. The eReading assessment's data were analyzed using an action research methodology focusing on a descriptive analysis of what the data reflected pre- and post-data scores during 2018-2019. However, the academic year 2019-2020 was

not fully available due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the schools were closed to engage in virtual learning at home by teachers for students and their parents.

Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics and an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to determine pre-and post-test eReading scores of grades 2 through 5. The eReading assessment's data were analyzed using an action research methodology focusing on a descriptive analysis of what the data reflect from Fall 2018 to Winter 2019. De-identification occurred with all student data. First, I analyzed covariance (ANCOVA) with the post-reading scores as the dependent variable, pre-reading scores as control, and treatment group (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. A significant  $F$  statistic for coaching interpreted the intervention as effective. Second, due to the small sample size and the non-normality of the data, I conducted the non-parametric test Mann-Whitney  $U$  on the change score. Likewise, a non-significant Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances  $p$ -value for each grade did or did not support the quantitative study hypothesis.

Third, I conducted a test to see if the means of two paired measurements, such as pre-reading and post-reading test scores, were significantly different within grade levels. Next, teachers who received individual and group instructional coaching at two other times during Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 assessments (e.g., pre-test and post-test eReading scores). Finally, an analysis of the findings used a descriptive format specifically, median, mean, and standard deviation that was also reported for each study group (coaching vs. non-coaching) for pre-reading scores, post-reading scores, and the score change.

### **Assessment Tools to Monitor Reading Progress**

FAST™ is a suite of assessment progress monitoring tools designed to help educators screen, monitor progress, and analyze students' reading skills from kindergarten to fifth grade. Each question in the adaptive assessment is individually tailored to each student. Due to the individualized nature of these adaptive tests, they are more efficient and effective than traditional testing methods (Zoheb & Weiss, 2021).

### **Oral Reading Assessment Tool**

The first assessment tool that FAST™ provides is Curriculum-Based Measurement for Reading (CBM-Reading). FAST™ is an oral reading assessment that allows educators to monitor students' progress and evaluate students' oral reading fluency and rate. This assessment is a simple and efficient procedure whereby teachers listen to and assess student performance while reading aloud from grade-level passages (Zoheb & Weiss, 2021).

### **Early Primary Reading Assessment Screening**

EarlyReading is the second assessment tool FAST™ provides. It is an evidence-based reading progress monitoring assessment used to screen and monitor student progress. The focus is on students in the early primary grades (kindergarten to third). There are 12 optional tests to analyze skills that span concepts of print, letter sounds/names, phonological awareness, blending/segmenting, decoding sight words, and sentence reading in the assessment screening tool (Zoheb & Weiss, 2021).

### **Adaptive Computer-based Test**

The FAST™ assessment accommodates the Adaptive Reading (eReading) tool, an adaptive computer test of broad reading skills individualized for each student from kindergarten to fifth grade. The eReading instrument measured students' reading

achievement in grades 2 through 5. This assessment's questions and response format are similar to many statewide assessments (i.e., multiple choice, fill in the blank). Each question includes auditory and visual stimuli (Zoheb & Weiss, 2021). This study used only FAST™ grade level eReading reports for screening (quantitative). These grade levels were compared to determine the impact of individual teachers whose classes were observed during walkthroughs (qualitative).

### **eReading Adaptive Reading Assessment**

Each year teachers in grades 2 through 5 use the eReading assessment, also known as FAST™, as a screener in the Fall, Winter, and Spring (Illuminate Education, 2021). The purpose of screening is to identify students who might need more diagnostic information. These students were also administered the Developmental Reading Assessment (2nd edition; DRA2). All students took on-grade level eReading electronically (Illuminate Education, 2021). DRA2 enables primary teachers to observe, record systematically, and evaluate changes in student reading performance (Illuminate Education, 2021). DRA2 provides information that helps teachers determine each student's independent reading level and identify what the student needs to learn next. If a student has a unique education alternative assessment plan, that student's team may decide the most appropriate assessment tools (Illuminate Education, 2021). Students whose national percentile on the eReading was at or below the 60th percentile were administered the DRA2. Individual results were reported in the student's literacy portfolio (Illuminate Education, 2021).

## **Administration and Scoring FAST™**

An extensive set of materials supports the administration and scoring of FAST™ to help teachers and students. Teachers can access self-directed training modules that allow them to become certified to administer each assessment (Christ et al., 2018). Teachers administered the FAST™ alongside special education teachers, school psychologists, and other individuals such as paraprofessionals. Administration times varied depending on which test. The online administration is done in a hard copy format with the student materials (one copy per student). The teacher and student need access to the FAST™ system (i.e., iPad or computer). Internet connection is required. A training and resources section provides access to the paper-and-pencil assessment administration materials and instructions (Christ et al., 2018).

## **Interpretation of Test Results**

**On-track students and low-risk range.** Scores on the assessment range between the 30th and 84th percentile. This range consists of more than one-half of the national norm population and represents three levels: (1) on-track, (2) low-risk, and (3) advanced-performance students (Christ et al., 2018). Using a full spectrum of standards-aligned skills when measuring performance strongly correlates to future predictions of success and support for the college and career readiness Benchmark status for students (Christ et al., 2018). For eReading, the *low-risk range* contains two levels: Low-risk = 40th – 70th percentile and Advanced learners = 71st – 99th percentile (FastBridge Learning, 2019). Support for students with scores in the low-risk range should be provided because these students are more likely to fall behind from tedious and less challenging activities (FastBridge Learning, 2019).



**Advanced-performance students.** Students who score at the 70th percentile or advanced-performance level indicate a student is on track for success on college and career readiness standards. With high-quality and challenging core instruction, students in the advanced level categories should remain on track (FastBridge Learning, 2019). Competent readers should read with at least 95% accuracy to understand the text. For this reason, the FAST™ CBM reading reports include indicators of student accuracy whenever it falls below 95% (Christ et al., 2018).

Shernoff et al. (2017) examined teachers' attitudes and experiences with instructional coaching. Data analysis was conducted in advance of a planned randomized controlled trial of a coaching intervention better to align the model with teachers' needs and goals. Using thematic analyses helped to identify barriers to teacher participation in the planned intervention, according to Shernoff et al. General education teachers, special education teachers, and educational support staff working in two high-poverty schools participated in focus groups. The data were used to improve the existing coaching model. The themes focused on the advantages and disadvantages of coaching and the characteristics of effective coaches and coaching models (Shernoff et al., 2017).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Protecting human participants as part of a study is a complex process. Providing intervention strategies to protect participants' identities and enhance their well-being to succeed further complicates the process. In contrast, research activities should include hypothesis testing, drawing conclusions, and contributing to generalizable knowledge (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). The Belmont Report distinguished three ethical principles and guidelines between research and practice and

discussed applying the principles (The Belmont Report, 2014; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). Research refers to activities involving hypothesis testing, concluding, and contributing to generalizable knowledge. Practice refers to interventions designed to enhance the well-being of clients and which can reasonably be expected to succeed (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979).

The Belmont Report described three principles: (1) respect for persons, (2) beneficence, and (3) justice. Respect for persons means to treat participants as autonomous agents or provide protection for those with diminished capabilities (The Belmont Report, 2014; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). The second principle is beneficence the researcher should be obligated not to harm participants but rather increase benefits while minimizing possible harm. Finally, justice means that each participant should have an equal distribution of benefits provided to others (The Belmont Report, 2014; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979).

## **Summary**

Chapter 3 presented the study overview, research design, research setting, and sample/participants. Information regarding the instructional coaching team and their responsibilities were presented. Data collection measures, instruments, and tools were discussed for qualitative and quantitative. Data analysis strategies included the methodology, walkthroughs, eReading data, reliability and validity of the instrument, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the interpretation of the findings of this study, an overview of the study, the problem of practice, the significance of the study, data collection methods, and a summary of the sample characteristics. An intervention and

strategy to address the problem of practice will be included. Finally, general qualitative and quantitative findings and results are presented.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### **Overview of Study**

GES, the school of focus, implemented an instructional coaching process in 2017-2018 and exists today. GES embarked on instructional coaching to improve professional learning for teachers and increase student learning outcomes. After a few years of implementation, the school's Leadership Team understood an informed understanding of the instructional coaching process and its impact on student learning outcomes. The team focused concerted efforts on transforming the school and improving student learning outcomes through the use of components of Cognitive Coaching and the Big Four Model. The instructional coaching team consists of the school principal, assistant principal, numeracy instructional coach, and a literacy instructional coach. The current team remains intact with members who have served for four years.

While the coaching team developed school-based goals for focus, the team has also engaged teachers in individualized coaching to improve instructional practices and student outcomes. Before implementation at the local school level, instructional coaching was a district-level initiative. During this time, the district leadership trained GES staff in coaching practices. However, in 2016-2017, the training ended abruptly, and the reclassification of instructional coaches occurred. The classification resulted in the loss of professional learning to develop, implement, and monitor school instructional coaching.

At that time, professional knowledge for instructional coaches became the responsibility of the building principals.

The results can help schools and school districts assess the impact of instructional coaching on student learning in their building or school district. The study is significant for school leaders, district leadership, and instructional coaches interested in evaluating an instructional coaching model in their building or school district. The study could also help the team plan to implement an instructional coaching model using adult learning theory as a theoretical framework.

The data collected previously was an opportunity to retrospectively measure the instructional coaching model's impact on students' literacy/reading learning outcomes and teachers' instructional capacity in the years before the pandemic. These research questions served as the area of focus in evaluating the instructional coaching model at GES. Instructional coaching is currently in place at GES, albeit with modifications based on the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings based on the retrospective data provide insight into improving the model in light of new circumstances.

The study addressed qualitative data collected from instructional coaching, training, and walkthroughs from grades 2 through 5 teachers. The study presented and showed quantitative data from the FAST™ in reading literacy and eReading data for students in grades 2 through 5 during only the 2018-2019 academic school years. Typically, the tests are administered again in the Spring. However, I chose to explore Fall 2018 to Winter 2018/2019 due to the Fall to Winter-focused period that allowed impacts of coaching to reflect coaching that occurred in the fall and Winter of the school year preceding the pandemic. The study was a retrospective review based on a lack of data and

compressed/revised coaching structures in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 due to COVID-19. In preparation for a return to the full-scale coaching model, the 2018-2019 coaching model offered the most similar comparison to the 2022-2023 plan.

### **Intervention/Strategy**

The data analysis informed the researcher about how instructional coaching impacted student learning outcomes and teacher implementation of strategies to address the practice problem. The researcher collected qualitative data through archival walkthroughs, interviews, and teachers' responses. I downloaded the quantitative data from the school district's data warehouse that provides student data to district staff through FAST™. The eReading Assessment's data were analyzed using a descriptive approach of comparing pre-assessment and post-assessment scores during 2018-2019. During the analysis of the findings, I used a descriptive format such as the median, mean, and standard deviation for each study group for pre-reading scores, post-reading scores, and the score change. In addition, I used exploratory inferential statistics to understand group differences better. A mixed methods design uses qualitative and quantitative because the study allows for an in-depth study of the data to provide detailed information to inform the researcher's analysis of the instructional coaching process at GES. I must note that I used the school's archival student data.

### **General Findings/Results**

The general findings and results are reported by grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 based on the research questions for qualitative and quantitative results. Data included qualitative and quantitative data except for partial or incomplete records. In other words, I excluded

those data for which there was no information about the pre-reading and post-reading scores.

## **Analysis of Data Based on the Research Questions**

### **Qualitative Questions**

1. Describe the implementation of the instructional coaching process during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative).
2. How did the instructional coaching process inform student learning in reading literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the FAST™ Assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years (mixed methods)?
3. How do observational walkthroughs determine whether observations and walkthroughs benefit grades 2 through 5 teachers and whether students' progress in literacy reading during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative)?

### **Research Question One: Implementation of Instructional Coaching Process**

RQ1: Describe the implementation of the instructional coaching process during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative). At GES during 2017-2018, teachers in grades 2 through 5 received group coaching and, by choice, individual coaching based on expressed specific needs from teachers to the literacy instructional coach. To date, such coaching still exists. The researcher interviewed two literacy coaches and one mathematics coach to provide a more descriptive view of the instructional process implemented during the 2018-2019 academic school years. In addition, I used data from a literacy coach to address Research Question 1. Although I included only one coach's perspective in this section, the following areas include other coaches' perspectives. The

three coaches have the following names: Instructional Coach 1, Instructional Coach 2, and Instructional Coach 3.

**Instructional Coach 1.** When asked the question to Instructional Coach 1, “What were the differences between individual and group coaching?” He replied, “Group coaching happened during professional development sessions. Individual coaching involves teacher interest, coach’s observation, or administrative observation. I asked, “Is there documentation to show which teachers received coaching ?” He responded, “Yes, we keep attendance records regarding who attended and the focus of the coaching session. We also kept records of the dates of the training the Leadership Team received and the process of coaching.”

I added, “The purpose of this study initially was to look at the gaps in the school’s process that contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the coaching process on Grades 2 through 5 students’ eReading test scores. In other words, did those teachers who attended instructional coaching have students whose eReading scores were higher than those teachers who did not attend instructional coaching?” The literacy coach stated, “The issue is not that we have not done an outstanding job of keeping data. The problem of practice was initially the instructional coaching process.”

When asked whether teachers require instructional coaching, the literacy coach replied, “Group coaching requirements is a professional learning activity. However, individual instructional coaching is voluntary. Instructional coaches are teachers on special assignments (TOSA). Only the administrator can require teachers’ coaching, usually responding to an observed need through mini-lessons or walkthroughs.”



I queried, “Do teachers have to ‘make up’ missed coaching sessions?” He stated, “The mandatory sessions are professional development. Individual coaching is on an ‘as-needed’ basis. Our system for monitoring instructional coaching is why coaching was ineffective at GES.”

### **Research Question Two: Instructional Process Informs Student Learning**

RQ2: How did the instructional coaching process inform student learning in reading literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the FAST™ Assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years (mixed methods)? At GES, the instructional coaching process informed student learning in reading literacy as measured by FAST™. Some of the teachers with low-class scores were referred based on their scores, and others sought assistance to improve their reading literacy scores. This study focuses on literacy for students in grades 2 through 5 as measured by the FAST™ Assessment administered during the 2018-2019 academic years. I interviewed three coaches: two literacy coaches and one mathematics coach (Instructional Coach 1, Instructional Coach 2, and Instructional Coach 3). However, from a different perspective of Instructional Coach 2, the interview focused on the content area of mathematics for grades 2 through 5 to compare how the mathematics coach’s strategies were similar or different from the literacy coaches’ strategies.

**Instructional Coach 2.** Instructional Coach 2 stated,

“The process used for coaching during 2018-2019 was based on the teacher and the selection process for individual coaching. Some teachers came needing help, usually in mathematics instruction. They would sit down and discuss what was happening and their goal. Then the instructional coach and teacher developed a

plan to provide support in meeting their goal. I modeled lessons, provided co-teaching, and recommended resources to add to the lessons. The school administration allotted sufficient time to allow teachers to work on their goal individually before meeting again to reflect on their progress, and either adjust or conclude accomplishing the goal.”

When asked, “What were the most common areas of coaching?” The mathematics coach replied,

“Math instruction, teaching math in small groups, number talk, anchor tasks, building number sense in K-2, fluency in math in grades 3-5, and math interventions. Through verbal feedback and conferencing, the instructional coach informed teachers of the progress or regression.”

When asked, “Which teachers were most interested in receiving coaching?” Instructional Coach 2 replied, “Teachers who were highly interested in receiving coaching were highly reflective, self-motivated, and wanted to see growth in their students but were not experiencing success. In addition, teachers who wanted to ensure that they were following the framework and teachers who loved teaching math!”

**Instructional Coach 3.** The final interview was with Instructional Coach 3, who worked with teachers in grades 2 through 5. I interviewed Instructional Coach 3 to understand how the instructional coaching process informed student learning in reading literacy. When asked about teacher referrals, she replied, “Some teachers’ referrals came from administrators’ observations of mini-lessons and walkthroughs. The administrative type of referral was a formal coaching process when documentation of the coaching tools

occurred in either a Google document or a coaching binder later given to the teacher on needed skills that the administrator recommended.

The question for Instructional Coach 3 was about literacy/reading, “How did coaching connect to and determine professional development?” Instructional Coach 3 responded,

“When I saw a schoolwide need based on the school’s performance data in reading, I provided professional development for teachers who volunteered for assistance in specific reading areas during professional learning units and common planning times. After professional development, I offered my services to visit classrooms and work individually with teachers to implement specific skills and modeling lessons. In other words, professional development usually drove instructional coaching.”

Afterward, the instructional coach met with the teacher to examine the data to discuss the principal’s observations. Next, the coach and the teacher set goals to determine what needed to be changed. Later, data collection began, and another meeting was held within two weeks to assess progress, adjust the goal, or work on another goal. The reading literacy coach acknowledged that, in some cases, teachers need support but do not ask for help or realize that they need help. In those instances, the coach informally visited the teacher’s class, modeled a lesson, and then discussed what she observed with the literacy coach. The goal was to help change a teacher’s instruction by observing something different.

When asked how the coaching process impacted her perspective, Instructional Coach 3 responded,

“The coaching process I used over the last few years was essentially either through an administrative referral, teachers requested support and coaching from me, or I selected new teachers who were either new to the school and teaching to get them going. I used a “get to know you” form with new teachers to learn more about them and develop what they sought in support. We talked about goals they had or areas they wanted to improve. We selected somewhere to start with and assigned a date to begin an observation. I took brief notes and scheduled a meeting for a feedback session. From that point, the focus was on the literacy instruction model. After a modeling session, the teacher taught a lesson without interruption. Next, I observed the teacher teach a lesson. When teachers felt comfortable with a lesson review, I released them from my schedule and considered that skill mastered. Sometimes the coaching session led to continuing work with that teacher because the teacher requested continued support. If the administration referred a teacher, I found it more difficult to connect with them because I felt like they had their ‘guard up.’ The coaching process usually began with the teacher revealing what was needed to work on, and we talked through it. Then, I scheduled a time to visit and observe to determine a better feel and understanding of the teacher’s request. I usually attempted to do what was needed for me, too, because teachers seemed to accept me better in a partnership.”

When asked, “What goal setting or other strategies did you use?” Instructional Coach 3 stated that she used strategies from different resources, such as the following: (1) Reading Strategies, Reading Conferences, and Teaching in Small Groups by Jennifer Serravallo; (2) Balanced Literacy by Fisher and Frey; and (3) Next Steps

in Guided Reading by Jan Richardson. I used coaching strategies from *The Heart of Coaching* by Thomas G. Crane and *The Art of Coaching* by Elena Aguilar. As a literacy coach, the most common areas of coaching were guided reading in small group instruction, conferring and conferring binders, read aloud, and mini-lessons.”

I asked, “How were teachers informed of the progress or regression?”

Instructional Coach 3 replied, “After observations, we set up feedback sessions to review notes and data and discuss the next steps.” Next, “How did coaching connect to and determine professional development?” was the next question. First, she stated, “Professional development is often generated from skills that the school district may have implemented. Then she followed up with additional professional development that led to coaching.” She continued, “Sometimes professional development was about things that I had added that I felt from research that would help to increase student achievement at GES such as conferring. It also worked the other way where I spent time in classrooms and observations and realized a need for certain professional development such as small group instruction strategies.” Finally, “Which teachers were most interested in receiving coaching?” She replied, “Without a doubt, the teachers who were most interested in coaching were new teachers, teachers who were already effective but wanted to continue to improve teaching and instruction, and teachers who were open-minded and willing to try something new.”

### **Research Question Three: Observational Walkthroughs**

RQ3: How do observational walkthroughs determine whether observations and walkthroughs benefit grades 2 through 5 teachers and whether students’ progress in

literacy reading during the 2018-2019 academic years (qualitative)? All teachers participated in walkthroughs. If they did not, it was because they were absent from school, in a meeting, or did not teach the specific subject. Only grade 5 teachers worked in a departmental environment, meaning teachers taught specific subjects of reading, English language arts, social studies, and mathematics and submitted lesson plans for only one content area. The department format helped teachers to teach a specific subject to all grade 5 students. In grades 1 through 4, teachers taught all topics. There was no differentiation between new or experienced teachers because every teacher is part of the walkthrough process.

A walkthrough or informal observation is a tool to inform evaluation and professional growth, evidence gathering, and classroom observations. This method allows evaluators to gather additional evidence on identified focus areas to enhance teacher practice (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020). The purpose of a walkthrough is to give targeted, evidence-based feedback to teachers and serves as a means for evaluators to visit classrooms more frequently and purposefully. The primary guideline for walkthroughs is to informally observe teachers with a minimum of two walkthroughs in less than 30 minutes, announced or unannounced. The presence of evaluators should send a positive message to teachers during the morning and afternoons with a positive impact on teacher practice and student learning. In addition, evaluators should provide follow-up during planning time by communicating to walkthroughs, either in writing or face-to-face, to enhance teacher practice (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020). Data collection of walkthroughs for this study was qualitative by interviewing literacy and mathematics coaches and reviewing mini-lessons discussed in the latter portion of this

discussion. Themes were created by and developed from three instructional coaches' interviews.

### **Qualitative Themes: The Impact of Instructional Coaching Implementation**

Thus far, the information has addressed aspects of Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. The themes involved the culmination of the three research questions and the three participants. Thematic analysis is an appropriate research approach to discover instructional coaches' views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from qualitative data, for example, interview transcripts, social media profiles, or survey responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis. Still, the most common form follows a six-step process developed by Braun and Clarke: (1) familiarization, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the interpretation of common themes. In this section of the qualitative analysis from the three instructional coaches' interviews, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) first familiarization step when I read through the text, took initial notes, and generally looked through the data to get familiar with it. The next step is coding the data, which involves highlighting sections of the interview text, usually selecting phrases or sentences with shorthand labels or codes to describe their content. The third step is to examine the codes created, identify patterns among them, and develop themes that are generally broader than codes. The fourth step is to review themes to see if they are helpful and accurately represent the data. Finally, I divided, combined, discarded, and developed some themes to make them more valuable and accurate. The fifth step is to name and define each of them, which involves formulating the meaning of each theme and figuring out how it helps understand the data or qualitative

research question. Finally, the last step is writing up a thematic analysis requires an introduction to establish the three qualitative research questions, aims, and approach.

First, I briefly reviewed the methodology section describing how I collected the data through semi-structured interviews with three instructional coaches and explained how I conducted the thematic analysis. The theme analysis is from the walkthroughs and the semi-structured interviews with the three instructional coaches in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Next, the results or findings section addressed each theme to describe how often the themes appeared and what they meant, including examples from the data as evidence. Finally, a conclusion explained the main takeaways and showed how thematic analysis answered the three qualitative research questions.

### **Qualitative Themes for Research Question One**

During the semi-structured interviews with Instructional Coach 1, three themes emerged. Research Question 1's central theme was "Implementing the instructional coaching process." Three themes were found in Research Question 1: Group Coaching by Grade Levels: Professional Development Sponsored by School District or School, Theme 2: Individual Coaching: Self-Referrals, and Theme 3: Individual Coaching: Administrative Referrals.

#### **Theme 1: Group Coaching by Grade Levels: Professional Development Sponsored by School District or School**

When asked whether teachers require instructional coaching, Instructional Coach 1 replied, "Group coaching is a professional learning activity. Instructional coaches are teachers on special assignments." When asked, "What were the differences between individual and group coaching?" He replied, "Group coaching included professional



development sessions. Individual coaching consists of teacher interest, coach's observation, or administrative observation." I asked, "Is there documentation to show which teachers received coaching?" He responded, "Yes, we keep attendance records regarding who attended and the focus of the coaching session. We also kept records of the dates when the training of the Leadership Team in the process of coaching."

I added, "The purpose of this study initially was to look at the gaps in the school's process that contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the coaching process on grades 2 through 5 students' eReading test scores. In other words, did those teachers who attended instructional coaching have students whose eReading scores were higher than those teachers who did not attend instructional coaching?" The literacy coach stated, "The issue is not that we have not done an outstanding job of keeping data. The problem of practice was initially the instructional coaching process."

When asked whether teachers require instructional coaching, Instructional Coach 1 replied, "Group coaching is a professional learning activity. However, individual instructional coaching is voluntary. Instructional coaches are teachers on special assignments. Only the administrator required teachers' coaching, usually responding to an identified need through mini-lessons or walkthroughs." I posed, "Do teachers have to 'make up' missed coaching sessions?" He stated, "Mandatory sessions are professional development. Individual coaching occurred on an 'as-needed' basis. Our system for monitoring instructional coaching was the reason coaching was not effective at GES."

### **Theme 2: Individual Coaching: Self-Referrals**

Individual coaching happens on an 'as-needed' basis. However, personal instructional coaching is voluntary. Instructional Coach 2 stated, "The process used for

coaching during 2018-2019 was at a teacher's request for individual coaching. Some teachers came needing help, usually in reading and mathematics. Together, we sat down and discussed what was happening and what was the goals. Then, the instructional coach and teacher developed a plan to support achieving goals. I modeled lessons, provided co-teaching, and recommended resources to add to the classes. Sufficient time allowed teachers to work on the goals individually before meeting to reflect on their progress and adjust the plan."

### **Theme 3: Individual Coaching: Administrative Referrals**

Individual coaching included teacher interest, the coach's observation, or administrative observation. Only the administrator can require coaching for teachers, usually as a response to an observed need through evaluation or walkthroughs. According to Instructional Coach 2, "Mandatory sessions are professional development. Our system for monitoring instructional coaching is why coaching was ineffective at GES."

### **Qualitative Themes for Research Question Two**

Research Question 2's central theme was "How the instructional coach's process informed student reading literacy learning." Four themes were found in Research Question 2: Theme 1: Instructional Reading Strategies for Teachers, Theme 2: Professional Development in Specific Reading Areas, Theme 3: Classroom Visitations and Modeling Lessons, and Theme 4: Provided Feedback on Progress or Regression.

### **Theme 1: Instructional Reading Strategies for Teachers**

During the semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches, several themes emerged. First, all instructional coaches kept records of teacher attendance, the focus of the coaching session, and the Leadership Team's training dates.

## **Theme 2: Professional Development in Specific Reading Areas**

Instructional coaches kept records of teacher attendance, the focus of the coaching session, and the dates when training of the Leadership Team occurred in the coaching process. Instructional Coach 3 said,

“When I saw a schoolwide need based on the school’s overall performance data in reading, I provided professional development for teaching to volunteers who sought assistance in specific reading areas during professional learning units and standard planning times. After professional development, I offered my services to visit classrooms and work individually with teachers to implement specific skills and modeling lessons. In other words, professional development usually drove instructional coaching. The teachers who were highly interested in receiving coaching were highly reflective and self-motivated, and those who wanted to see growth in their students but were not experiencing success were more than likely requesting individual coaching.”

I asked, “How were teachers informed of the progress or regression?”

Instructional Coach 3 replied, “After observations, we set up feedback sessions to review notes and data and discuss the next steps.” She noted that professional development was sometimes generated from skills that the school district may have implemented. Then she followed up with additional professional development that led to coaching. She continued,

“Sometimes professional development was about things that I added that I felt from research that would help to increase student achievement at GES such as conferring. It also worked the other way where I spent time in classrooms and

observations and realized a need for certain professional development such as small group instruction strategies.”

### **Theme 3: Classroom Visitations and Modeling Lessons**

The coaches discussed support provided related to the process. For example, according to Instructional Coach 3, “I offered my services to visit classrooms and work individually with teachers to implement specific skills and modeling lessons after professional development. The teachers who were highly interested in receiving coaching were highly reflective and self-motivated, and those who wanted to see growth in their students but were not experiencing success were more than likely requesting individual coaching.” In other words, professional development usually drove instructional coaching.

### **Theme 4: Provided Feedback on Progress or Regression**

The theme is the feedback on progress or regression to determine how well teachers have progressed. Instructional coaching provided feedback and encouraged progress according to the walkthrough analysis and the interviews. Some teachers regressed, and further coaching was needed and provided. For example, instructional Coach 3 indicated, “After observations, we set up feedback sessions to review notes, data, and confer about the next steps.” She continued, “Professional development sometimes came from skills the school district may have implemented.” Then she followed up with additional professional development that led to coaching. She continued, “Sometimes professional development was about things that I added that I felt from research that would help to increase student achievement at GES, such as conferring. It also worked the other way where I spent time in classrooms and

observations and realized a need for certain professional development such as small group instructional strategies.”

### **Qualitative Themes for Research Question Three**

For Research Question 3, the central theme was “How observational walkthroughs determined student progress in reading literacy.” During the semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches, several themes emerged. For Research Question 3, there were two themes: Theme 1: Classroom Walkthroughs Checklist and Theme 2: Instructional Coaching Process.

#### **Theme 1: Classroom Walkthroughs Checklist**

First, all teachers participated in walkthroughs or short informal observations for approximately 30 minutes; teachers in grades 1-4 taught all subjects. Grade 5 teachers departmentalize content subjects such as reading and English/language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies.

A Classroom Walkthrough Checklist (see Appendix D) for the development process of determining student progress in reading literacy is used to monitor the implementation of a district-adopted program. The users of this checklist are site administrators, the impacted group of all teachers, and the Leadership Team. This checklist provides peer support to professional development participants to implement the learned strategies, and the users and impacted group are teachers who participated in the professional development.

#### **Theme 2: Instructional Coaching Process**

The instructional process included referrals and a plan to meet the teachers’ goals. The interviews and walkthrough documents helped to clarify the implementation of the

process in 2018-2019. According to Instructional Coach 3, “Some teachers are referred based on the administrator’s observations of mini-lessons and walkthroughs.” The instructional coach documented a formal coaching session either in a Google document or a coaching binder given to the teacher. Based on conferences held with the teacher, the following procedures completed a formal coaching process.

Data were collected on needed skills recommended by the administrator. The instructional coach and teacher set goals to determine what needed change. The teacher held a meeting to examine and discuss the data based on what happened when the principal observed the classroom. Later, data collection began, and another meeting was held within two weeks to determine progress, change goals, or work on another plan. The reading literacy coach acknowledged that teachers sometimes need support but do not ask for help or realize they need help. In those instances, the coach informally visited the teacher’s class, modeled a lesson, and then discussed what she observed with the literacy coach.

The goal was to help change a teacher’s instruction by observing something different. Instructional Coach 3 stated,

“The coaching process that I used over the last few years was essentially either (1) referred to me by the administration, (2) teachers requested support and coaching from me, or (3) I selected new teachers who were either new to the school and teaching to get them going. I used a get to know you” form with new teachers to learn more about them and develop what they sought in support. We talked about goals they had or areas they wanted to improve. We selected somewhere to start with and assigned a date to begin an observation. I took brief notes and scheduled

a meeting for a feedback session. From that point, the focus was on the literacy instruction model.”

Instructional Coach 3 continued to describe the process asserting,

After a modeling session, the teacher was allowed to teach a lesson without interruption. I observed the teacher teach a class. When the teacher was comfortable with the assignment, I released them from my schedule and considered that skill mastery. Sometimes the coaching session led to continuing work with that teacher because the teacher requested additional support. If the administration referred a teacher, I found it more challenging to connect with them because I felt like they had their ‘guard up.’ The coaching process usually began with the teacher revealing what was needed to work on, and we talked through it. Then, I scheduled a time to visit and observe to determine a better feel and understanding of collective plans. I usually attempt to make what was also needed for me because teachers seemed to accept me better if we were in it together, as a partnership.”

Table 4.1 represents the qualitative themes for Research Questions 1, 2, and 3.

**Table 4.1**

*Qualitative Themes for Research Questions 1, 2, and 3*

Research Questions	Themes
Research Question 1: Implementation of the instructional coaching process	1. Group coaching by grade levels: Professional development sponsored by the school district or school 2. Individual coaching: Self-referrals 3. Individual coaching: Administrative referrals
Research Question 2: Inform student learning in reading literacy	1. Instructional reading strategies for teachers 2. Professional development in specific reading areas 3. Classroom visitations and modeling lessons 4. Provided feedback on progress or regression
Research Question 3: Observational walkthroughs	1. Classroom Walkthrough Checklist 2. Instructional coaching process

To better understand the process through the experience of a teacher, conversations and walkthrough notes were analyzed based on the expertise of a second-grade teacher who was new to GES. Instructional Coach 1 was the interviewer of the second-grade teacher. The instructional coach conducted the interview, but the researcher conducted the conferences and walkthroughs. The researcher used archival notes from the coaching experience to generate themes based on the process that occurred in 2018-2019 with this teacher, Ms. Hampton (pseudonym).

**Qualitative Themes: Literacy Coaching in Practice**

**Theme 1: Helping a New Teacher Not to “Feel Lost”**

As part of the qualitative analysis, these walkthrough conversations indicated a year-long investigation of how a series of informal discussions with a second-grade teacher described her outlook on coaching before and after lesson demonstrations. I followed a second-grade teacher for a semester (i.e., pre-coaching conversation and through the end-of-the-year interview in a post-coaching discussion). The coach observed



Ms. Hampton, a second-grade teacher's mini-lesson during pre-coaching. Then, the coach interviewed and asked questions about her teaching experience. Ms. Hampton had been a teacher for a year and taught second graders for only three weeks. She taught English language arts last fall in this school district. She has relatives who influenced her to enter the teaching profession. When asked, "What do you think is the best thing about being a teacher at this school?" She replied that she "did not know about this school before the interview," which meant that she did not know the school's administration, teachers, and students. She continued, "In contrast, the most difficult things about being a teacher at this school were having nothing to set up or draw from and feeling lost."

## **Theme 2: Lack of Organization and Classroom Management**

When asked to describe her current management style, strengths, and weaknesses, she replied that her strengths are "positives to negatives ratio are good" and her weakness is "lack of organization." Ms. Hampton stated, "There are classroom rules, and I have not yet begun training in the CHAMPS discipline program." Kindergarten through grade 5 students at GES participate in the CHAMPS program, a classroom management system that encourages students to be responsible for their behavior through motivation and engagement. The behavior management system outlines expected behavior for students in each activity throughout the daily schedule. The acronym CHAMPS describes C-Conversation (Voice Level), H-Help (What to do if you need help), A-Activity (What tasks the students should be doing), M-Movement (What is the level of movement required), P-Participation (How can a teacher tell if they are participating in the activity), and S-Success (If the students meet the expressed expectation then their behavior is

considered a success. Throughout the day, teachers review the expectations with students to ensure student responsibility in controlling their behavior (Walma, 2022).

### **Theme 3: Student Conduct and Misbehavior**

Ms. Hampton said she handled misbehavior with “a buddy room set up and positive phone calls to parents.” She mentioned, “past consultation experiences with coaching were not helpful.” However, she continued,

I liked everything about feedback because that helped me a lot. Anyway, I get feedback, whether face-to-face, printout, or email summary of data collected on my teaching. I readily want and accept feedback because I need special help forming literacy groups, organization, and lesson planning.

### **Theme 4: Observation Coaching Session to Receive Feedback**

During the second Reading Literacy conversation on September 21, 2018, Instructional Coach 1 observed A. Hampton. I took brief notes on that observation regarding her instructional focus goal, which was conducting a mini-lesson on text-to-text connections. The processes for instructional coaching that would best meet her goal were demonstration, co-teaching, observation, and a combination of these processes. Ms. Hampton requested an observation coaching session to receive feedback on literacy instruction. During the pre-coaching conversation, she stated that she planned a mini-lesson on text-to-text connections with no pre-assessment and student engagement.

### **Theme 5: Additional Supports of Small Group Instruction**

During the post-coaching conversation, Ms. Hampton stated, “The students were attentive, the lesson flowed nicely, and the lesson took a while to get through.” But, first,

she needed additional support about “organizing small group instruction and differentiation.”

Instructional Coach 1’s conversation occurred on September 27, 2018. Ms. Hampton taught a mini-lesson on *text-to-text connection* as the instructional focus. There are four areas of the mini-lesson on which I focused: Classroom Environment, Student Engagement, Literacy Instruction, and Literacy Content. Under Classroom Environment, I looked for routines, groupings, culture, access to text, materials, resources, and learning targets posted. I noticed that students were seated on the carpet in front of the teacher, learning targets were assigned, and book boxes were labeled and spread around the room.

#### **Theme 6: Classroom Expectations and Dismissal Procedures**

Instructional Coach 1 questioned the restroom expectations, extra talking during the lesson, and dismissal expectations for seating and lining up. However, I loved the teacher’s “positive attitude, quick reminders to correct their behaviors, and infectious energy and spirit.”

#### **Theme 7: Lack of Student Attention During Lesson**

Under Student Engagement, Instructional Coach 1 looked for active engagement, varied methods, available teaching tools, and teacher and student talk. I enjoyed the teacher’s use of the discussion, the connections between text-to-text and self, and allowing students to share. I noticed the “boy that came back from a class when the teacher began reading, a student self-selected an activity, and students shared a lot.” I questioned whether Ms. Hampton made a “more direct talk and brought it back, would it have been more effective, had she used CHAMPS for discipline expectations, and how she felt about the timing of students being seated?”

Under Literacy Instruction, Instructional Coach 1 sought a balanced literacy framework, differentiation, teacher language, pacing, materials, and Assessment. “I noticed Ms. Hampton stopped and modeled a ‘think aloud’ and allowed students to talk about the pictures and not just read the words. I appreciated how “the teacher constantly modeled thinking, made connections, and had great visuals in the slide presentation.” I questioned whether there was a pre-assessment and how the teacher and students communicated.

Under Literacy Content, I looked for skills taught and reinforced, strategies taught and reinforced, alignment of instruction, and appropriate text levels. I noticed the excellent choice of a mini-lesson, well-preparedness, and making connections during self-reading. However, I questioned the appropriateness of Ms. Hampton’s 20-day plan and how students prepared for self-reading stamina.

The fourth literacy coaching conversation occurred on October 26, 2018. Ms. Hampton taught a mini-lesson on *comprehension* as the instructional focus. There are four areas of the mini-lesson that I focused on: Classroom Environment, Student Engagement, Literacy Instruction, and Literacy Content. Under Classroom Environment, I looked for routines, groupings, culture, access to text, materials, resources, and learning targets posted.

### **Theme 8: Learning Objectives Visibly Posted**

As Instructional Coach 1 noticed a description of how characters respond to events and challenges, she questioned if Ms. Hampton wrote the learning objectives larger on the board so the students could access and reference them throughout the day. Additional comments were, “The objectives seemed small from where I was sitting. I

also questioned the same color of the words to visually show the students the differences and locate the objectives better on the board. I loved the teacher's *engaging energy*."

Under Student Engagement, Instructional Coach 1 looked for active engagement, varied methods, available teaching tools, and teacher and student talk. I observed when Ms. Hampton said, "Class, let's chat about *call and response*," which helped students to return to active listening. The coach questioned whether Ms. Hampton switched from **Pulling in Reading with Exceptional Specialist Support (PRESS)** to the comprehension mini-lessons. PRESS is a new approach that is an inclusive, highly collaborative, differentiated guided reading model that maximizes classroom instruction while minimizing the need for pull-out reading support and services. GES Elementary teachers use PRESS. I heard the teacher give three directions. I questioned whether visual/picture cues would help with the 3-step directions or if the teacher could write "First, Next, and Then" on the board. I appreciated how the teacher got students excited and engaged because of the story regarding 'think aloud.'

The fifth literacy coaching conversation occurred on February 4, 2019. Ms. Hampton taught a mini-lesson on *small group reading* as the instructional focus. There are four areas of the mini-lesson that I focused on: Classroom Environment, Student Engagement, Literacy Instruction, and Literacy Content. Under Classroom Environment, I looked for routines, groupings, culture, access to text, materials, resources, and learning targets posted. I noticed that the teacher reviewed CHAMPS discipline expectations. For example, students knew how to get their possessions right away, and sticky notes were on the back wall and the filled book boxes. I questioned seeing students use post-it notes, which I have always enjoyed; what were the

expectations with them, when did Ms. Hampton review the procedures with the students to arrange them into groups and did they already have a mini-lesson? I heard her remind them that the sticky notes were to ask and answer questions. Is that standard right now?

Under Student Engagement, Instructional Coach 1 looked for active engagement, varied methods, teaching tools available, and teacher talk/student talk. I noticed that students reading at their desks were definitely into their books and seemed on task; it seemed like a long time for them to do the same thing. I questioned whether the teacher used a post-it chart before posting their thinking on the spot. I wondered if Ms. Hampton could use the table up front as your place to meet with reading groups. A place for reading materials would be helpful and provide more structure for students.

Under Literacy Instruction, Instructional Coach 1 looked for a balanced literacy framework, differentiation, teacher language, pacing, materials, and assessment. I noticed that Ms. Hampton taught them to ask and answer questions related to writing. I suggested that students write queries to the author, who would respond. I questioned if she had used a guided reading template before. I asked, “Did you take notes on the students when you met in groups, and did you have a planned strategy and standard of teaching when you met with groups?”

Under Literacy Content, Instructional Coach 1 looked for skills taught and reinforced, and strategies taught and reinforced, alignment of instruction, and appropriate text levels. I noticed Ms. Hampton asking/answering students’ questions about fiction and non-fiction texts to help students to understand the text. The teacher focused on completing sentences and using proper punctuation when writing, reading responses, and

asking/answering questions. The teacher posted the day's schedule on the board. I questioned and liked that students wrote about their books. However, did they get to share afterward? Could they have shared with a peer instead of waiting in line to share with the teacher?

### **Theme 9: Observe an Experienced Teacher**

Instructional Coach 1 suggested that Ms. Hampton should visit Ms. C. Burch's room to observe how she teaches a lesson, dismisses groups, and brings it back together each time. Watching another teacher is one way of doing it, such as completing all groups during the 60-minutes of small group instruction, so it is different than the recommendation below, but it works for her class. The classroom organization is based on the grade level's schedule this year.

### **Theme 10: Schedule Blocks of Time for Reading Groups**

Instructional Coach 1 understood that Ms. Hampton has a unique schedule where the times are at different places each day. For example, Ms. Hampton could have a 2-hour reading block with an 8-10 minute comprehension mini-lesson focused on the standard, a 10-15 minute release so the students could practice skills independently, and two 20-minute guided reading groups at students' instructional levels. Others could do "Reading to Someone, Listen to Reading, Work on Writing,"; 20-minute conferring sessions where all students are *reading to self*. Ms. Hampton could easily pull them 15-minute Word Work and a 20-minute modeled writing lesson. The teacher has incredible activities in place. What is needed is more structure, planning, and rigor; more specifically, "explicit reading instruction." I believe the teacher is getting the children to think about their reading.

## **End-of-the-Year Interview with Ms. Hampton**

Instructional Coach 1 randomly interviewed Ms. Hampton on March 30, 2019, to verify her perspectives on instructional coaching. The coach asked a series of questions in Appendix C during a face-to-face interview with Ms. Hampton. The interview consisted of two sections. Section 1 was an *individual literacy reflection* with three questions: What do you think has been your most outstanding achievement in literacy this year? What would it be if you could change one thing about your literacy instruction this year? What is your number one goal for literacy instruction next year? Section 2 was a *coaching reflection* with three questions: What has worked best for you from a coaching perspective? Observations? Modeling? Learning new strategies? Data review? Just chatting? How could I improve my support of you in literacy instruction? Anything else you would like to share about your year, literacy, or coaching?

### **Section 1: Individual Literacy**

Question 1: What do you think has been your most outstanding achievement in literacy this year? Ms. Hampton responded, “I achieved greater clarity around small groups and targeted assessments. My greatest achievement in literacy this year means having worked hard but not as efficiently as I am capable at teaching this year.”

Question 2: What would it be if you could change one thing about your literacy instruction this year? Ms. Hampton responded, “My small groups would have been more organized, tailored to student's skills and needs, and more effective at strengthening and maximizing students’ reading and comprehension skills.”

Question 3: What is your number one goal for literacy instruction next year? Ms. Hampton responded, “My small groups would have been more organized, tailored to



student's skills and needs, and more effective at strengthening and maximizing students' reading and comprehension skills.”

## **Section 2: Coaching Reflection**

Question 1: What has worked best for you from a coaching perspective?

Observations? Modeling? Learning new strategies? Data review? Ms. Hampton responded,

“As the literacy coach, you were always willing and open to listening, helping, and supporting individual and team levels through suggestions and modeling. It has meant the world to me. Thank you for working hard, sharing your vision of what you want for a unified literacy community at this school, and sharing your expertise!! And of course, thank you always for your huge heart and great sense of humor!!”

Question 2: How could I improve my support of you in literacy instruction? Ms. Hampton responded, “I cannot think of any way you could have supported me more as a literacy coach.”

Question 3: Anything else you would like to share about your year, literacy, or coaching? She replied that she had nothing else to share.

Table 4.2 contains three categories based on the pre-coaching observations during the school year, 2018-2019, with Ms. A. Hampton, a second-grade teacher. Qualitative themes consist of three areas: (1) Classroom Management and Organization; (2) Student Discipline and CHAMPS; and (3) Release Time Needed.

**Table 4.2***Instructional Plan for a New Teacher*

Instructional Support Areas	Themes
Classroom Management and Organization	1. Helping new teachers not to “feel lost.” 2. Lack of organization and classroom management 8. Learning objectives visibly posted 10. Schedule blocks of time for reading groups
Student Discipline and CHAMPS	3. Student conduct and misbehavior 6. Classroom expectations and dismissal procedures 7. Lack of student attention during the lesson
Release Time Needed	4. Observation coaching session to receive feedback 5. Additional supports for small group instruction and differentiated instruction delivery
End-of-the-Year Reflections	9. Observe an experienced teacher Section 1: Individual Literacy Greatest achievement: Worked hard but not as efficiently as she would have liked. Change <i>one</i> thing: MORE! More organized small groups, more tailored skills/student needs, and more effective strengthening and maximizing students’ reading comprehension skills. Number 1 goal next year is to be a better teacher but do more!  Section 2: Coaching Reflections What worked best: Listening, helping, supporting, modeling, and sharing with her. Administrative support: Continue to listen, help me, support me, share with me, and model lessons for me.

**Research Question Four: Quantitative FAST™ Reading Assessment**

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not)?

H<sub>0</sub>4: There is no statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

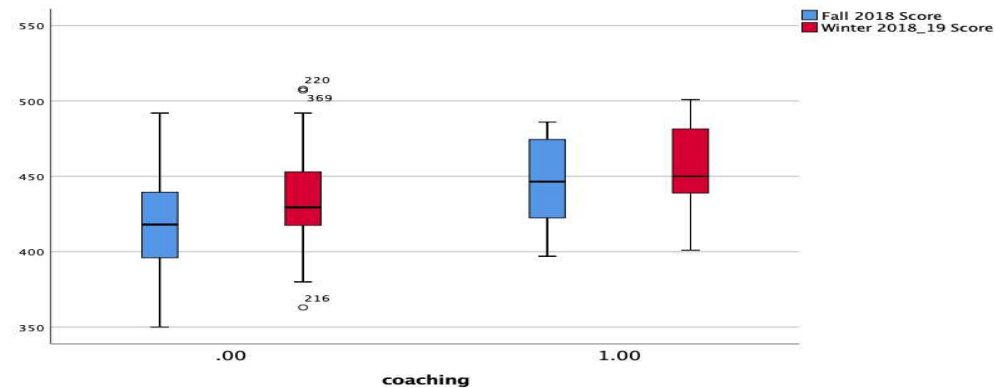
H<sub>A</sub>4: There is a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not).

### **Quantitative Results: eReading Scores Grades 2 through 5**

For the quantitative phase of the current study, I analyzed Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 reading assessments to determine student progress based on instructional coaching for grades 2 through 5. This analysis addressed Research Question 4.

#### **Grade 2**

The researcher used only completed cases in the analysis for which there was information about pre-reading and post-reading scores ( $N=68$ ). For grade 2, Boxplots for the Fall 2018 (pre-reading scores) and Winter 2018-2019 (post-reading scores) consist of instructional coaching (coaching=1.00) and non-instructional coaching groups (non-coaching=.00). I observed that the distribution of the pre-reading scores was relatively symmetric while the post-reading scores had some positive asymmetry and even the presence of outliers in the non-coaching group. The non-instructional coaching group is .00. and the instructional coaching group is 1.00, as depicted in Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1**  
*Boxplots for Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 Reading Scores for Grade 2 Non-instructional and Instructional Coaching Groups*

### Descriptive Statistics for Grade 2

Descriptive statistics for grade 2, specifically, median, mean, and standard deviation, are also reported for each study group for pre-reading scores, post-reading scores, and the score change. For example, Table 4.3 shows that students in the non-coaching group had lower pre-reading scores compared to the coaching group (Median=418 vs. Median=446.5). However, the former non-coaching group shows a more significant score change (Median=16 vs. Median=8).

This table also compares the means and standard deviations of grade 2 non-instructional coaching group with the grade 2 instructional coaching group. The non-instructional group for grade 2 shows higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 ( $M=434.19$ ,  $SD=32.14$ ) than fall of 2018 ( $M=416.54$ ,  $SD=32.09$ ), which indicates improvement among the non-instructional group's post-reading scores. The instructional group for grade 2 shows higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 ( $M=455.25$ ,  $SD=28.74$ ) than fall of 2018 ( $M=445.50$ ,  $SD=29.77$ ), which indicates improvement in the instructional group's post-reading scores. However, when comparing the non-instructional group for grade 2 with the instructional group's post-reading performance,

students in the non-instructional coaching group ( $M=434.19$ ,  $SD=32.14$ ) had lower post-reading mean scores compared to the instructional coaching group ( $M=445.25$ ,  $SD=28.74$ ). Table 4.3 represents pre-reading and post-reading scores for grade 2.

**Table 4.3**

*Pre- and Post-Reading Scores for Grade 2 Non-instructional Coaching vs. Instructional Coaching*

		Report		
Instructional Coaching		Fall 2018 scores	Winter 2018-2019 scores	Score Change
.00	<i>N</i>	48	48	48
	Median	418.00	429.50	16.00
	Minimum	350	363	-29
	Maximum	492	508	89
	Mean	416.56	434.19	17.62
	Std. Deviation	32.086	32.143	21.582
1.00	<i>N</i>	20	20	20
	Median	446.50	450.00	8.00
	Minimum	397	401	-18
	Maximum	486	501	62
	Mean	445.50	455.25	9.75
	Std. Deviation	29.765	28.736	16.546
Total	<i>N</i>	68	68	68
	Median	423.00	438.50	10.00
	Minimum	350	363	-29
	Maximum	492	508	89
	Mean	425.07	440.38	15.31
	Std. Deviation	33.910	32.441	20.431

### Analysis of Covariance Results for Grade 2

To better understand the grade 2 results, I analyzed covariance (ANCOVA) with the post-reading scores as the dependent variable, pre-reading scores as control, and treatment group (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. First, a significant  $F$  statistic for coaching was interpreted as an effective intervention. Second, due to the small sample size and the non-normality of the data, I conducted the non-parametric test Mann-Whitney  $U$  on the change score. Likewise, a non-significant Levene's Test of

Equality of Error Variances [ $F(.869), p=.355$ ]  $p$ -value for grade 2 did not support hypothesis 4, as shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4**

*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for Grade 2*

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances <sup>a</sup>			
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018_19 scores			
<i>F</i>	df1	df2	Sig. $p<0.05$
.869	1	66	.355
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.			
a. Design: Intercept + Fall2018Score + coaching			

Levene's Test of Equality of Variances, one of the ANCOVA assumptions, is accepted. The Test of Between-Subjects Effects shows that after controlling for pre-reading scores, coaching is not a significant factor in the post-reading scores ( $F=.088, p=.768$ ), as depicted in Table 4.5. Partial eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) are effect sizes that express the amount of variance accounted for by one or more independent variables. These indices are generally used with ANOVA (Plonsky, 2013). In other words, there is no statistical difference in grade 2 reading achievement when comparing instructional coaching teachers versus non-instructional coaching teachers.

**Table 4.5***Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Grade 2*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018-2019 scores						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. $p<0.05$	Partial Eta Squared ( $\eta_p^2$ )
Corrected Model	46437.812 <sup>a</sup>	2	23218.906	62.691	.000	.659
Intercept	3951.097	1	3951.097	10.668	.002	.141
Fall 2018 scores	40174.815	1	40174.815	108.471	.000	.625
Coaching	32.510	1	32.510	.088	.768	.001
Error	24074.247	65	370.373			
Total	13258202.000	68				
Corrected Total	70512.059	67				

a. R Squared = .659 (Adjusted R Squared = .648)

According to the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test, as shown in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7, there was a marginally significant difference when comparing the score change between the study groups ( $U=337.5$ ,  $p=.055$ ). This  $p$ -value suggests somewhat but not significant achievement among the grade 2 non-coaching group ( $N=48$ ) than the instructional coaching group ( $N=20$ ).

**Table 4.6***Mann-Whitney U Test for Grade 2*

Ranks				
	Instructional Coaching	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Score Change	.00	48	37.47	1798.50
	1.00	20	27.38	547.50
	Total	68		

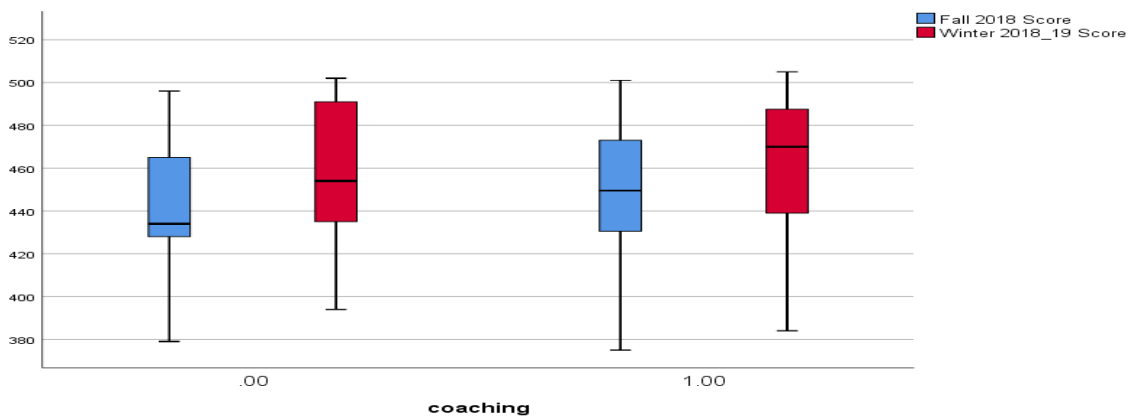
**Table 4.7***Mann-Whitney U Test Score Change for Grade 2*

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Score Change
Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	337.500
Wilcoxon <i>W</i>	547.500
<i>Z</i>	-1.920
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.055
a. Grouping Variable: Instructional coaching	

**Grade 3**

The researcher used only completed cases in the analysis for which there is information about pre-reading and post-reading scores ( $N=53$ ). For grade 3, boxplots are presented for the Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 reading scores for both instructional coaching (coaching=1.00) and non-instructional coaching groups (non-coaching=.00). The researcher observed that the distribution of the pre-reading scores was relatively asymmetric. In contrast, the post-reading scores have some positive asymmetry and no presence of outliers in either the instructional or non-instructional coaching group. Boxplots are helpful as they show outliers within a data set. Figure 4.2 shows that for Fall 2018, non-instructional coaching is skewed compared to Winter 2018-2019. In fall 2018, instructional coaching was generally symmetric compared to Winter 2018-2019, which is slightly skewed.





**Figure 4.2**

*Boxplots for the Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 Reading Scores for Grade 3 Non-Instructional and Instructional Coaching Groups*

### Descriptive Statistics for Grade 3

Descriptive statistics for grade 3, specifically, median, mean, and standard deviation, are also reported for each study group for pre-reading scores, post-reading scores, and the score change. For example, in Table 4.8, I observed that students in the non-coaching group had lower pre-reading scores than the instructional coaching group (Median=434 vs. Median=449.5). However, the non-coaching group shows a more significant score change (Median=12 vs. Median=10).

This table also compares the means and standard deviations of grade 3 non-instructional coaching group with grade 3 instructional coaching group. The non-instructional group for grade 3 shows higher means in the Winter 2018-2019 ( $M=458.60$ ,  $SD=36.49$ ) than in Fall 2018 ( $M=442.89$ ,  $SD=34.87$ ), which indicates improvement among the non-instructional group's post-reading scores. The instructional group for grade 3 shows higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 ( $M=461.64$ ,  $SD=31.12$ ) than Fall of 2018 ( $M=449.90$ ,  $SD=30.45$ ), which indicates improvement in the instructional group's post-reading scores. However, when comparing the non-instructional group for grade 3

with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group ( $M=458.60$ ,  $SD=36.49$ ) had lower post-reading mean scores compared to the instructional coaching group ( $M=461.64$ ,  $SD=31.12$ ). Grade 3 students also had lower pre-reading scores. Table 4.8 represents pre-reading and post-reading scores for grade 3. It is more about score change than pre- and post-reading scores since there are differences in where they started (on average).

**Table 4.8**

*Pre- and Post-Reading Scores for Grade 3 Non-instructional Coaching vs. Instructional Coaching*

		Report		
Instructional Coaching		Fall 2018 scores	Winter 2018-2019 scores	Score Change
.00	<i>N</i>	17	17	17
	Median	434.00	454.00	12.00
	Minimum	379	394	-21
	Maximum	496	502	63
	Mean	442.88	458.59	15.71
	Std. Deviation	34.873	36.486	23.449
1.00	<i>N</i>	36	36	36
	Median	449.50	470.00	10.00
	Minimum	375	384	-18
	Maximum	501	505	44
	Mean	449.89	461.64	11.75
	Std. Deviation	30.445	31.123	13.462
Total	<i>N</i>	53	53	53
	Median	449.00	468.00	10.00
	Minimum	375	384	-21
	Maximum	501	505	63
	Mean	447.64	460.66	13.02
	Std. Deviation	31.764	32.614	17.165

### Analysis of Covariance Results for Grade 3

In addition to the descriptive statistics, I conducted exploratory hypothesis testing. First, I performed an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the post-reading scores as the dependent variable, pre-reading scores as control and treatment group (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. A significant  $F$  statistic for coaching was interpreted as an effective intervention. Second, due to the small sample size and the non-normality of the data, I conducted the non-parametric test Mann-Whitney  $U$  on the change score. Likewise, a significant Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances [ $F(5.309)$ ,  $p=.025$ ]  $p$ -value for grade 3 supported that the coaching made a difference, as shown in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9**

*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance for Grade 3*

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances <sup>a</sup>			
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018_2019 scores			
$F$	df1	df2	Sig. $p<0.05$
5.309	1	51	.025
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.			
a. Design: Intercept + Fall2018Score + coaching			

Levene's Test of Equality of Variances, one of the ANCOVA assumptions, is not accepted. The Test of Between-Subjects Effects shows that after controlling for pre-reading scores, instructional coaching is not a significant factor in the post-reading scores ( $F=.393$ ,  $p=.533$ ) for grade 3, as depicted in Table 4.10. Partial eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) are effect sizes that express the amount of variance accounted for by one or more independent variables. These indices are generally used with ANOVA (Plonsky, 2013). In other words, there is no statistical difference in grade 3 reading achievement when comparing instructional coaching teachers versus non-instructional coaching teachers.

**Table 4.10***Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Grade 3*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018-2019 scores						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. $p<0.05$	Partial Eta Squared ( $\eta_p^2$ )
Corrected Model	40844.562 <sup>a</sup>	2	20422.281	70.590	.000	.738
Intercept	1081.974	1	1081.974	3.740	.059	.070
Fall2018Score	40737.098	1	40737.098	140.809	.000	.738
Instructional Coaching	113.833	1	113.833	.393	.533	.008
Error	14465.325	50	289.306			
Total	11302333.000	53				
Corrected Total	55309.887	52				

a. R Squared = .738 (Adjusted R Squared = .728)

According to the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test results, as shown in Tables 4.11 and 4.12, there were no statistically significant differences when comparing the score change between the study groups ( $U=287.5$ ,  $p=.724$ ). This figure suggests that there was less reading achievement among the non-coaching group ( $N=17$ ) than in the instructional coaching group ( $N=36$ ); hence, there were no statistically significant differences when comparing the score change between the study groups.

**Table 4.11***Mann-Whitney U Test for Grade 3*

	Ranks			
	Instructional Coaching	$N$	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Score Change	.00	17	28.09	477.50

1.00	36	26.49	953.50
Total	53		

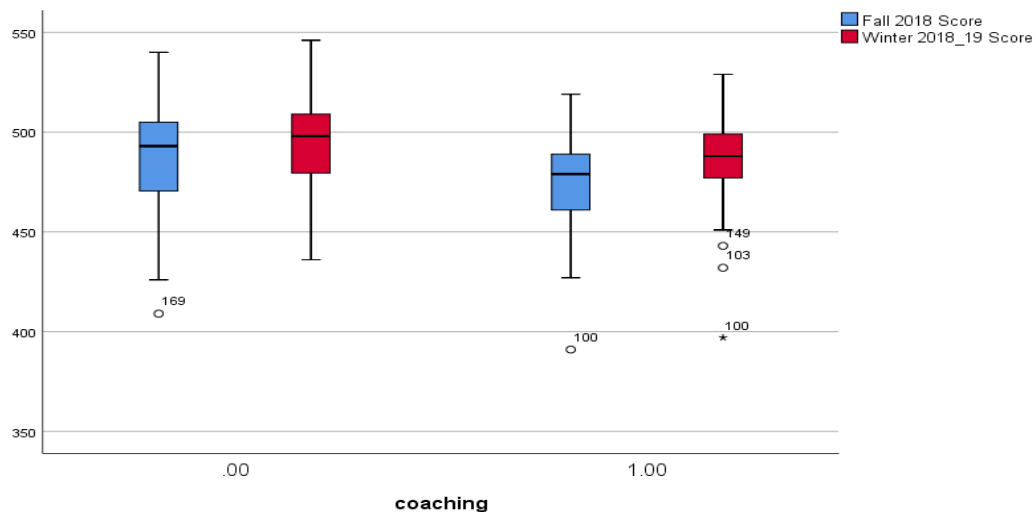
**Table 4.12**

*Mann-Whitney U Test Score Change for Grade 3*

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Score Change
Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	287.500
Wilcoxon <i>W</i>	953.500
<i>Z</i>	-.353
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.724
a. Grouping Variable: Instructional coaching	

#### **Grade 4**

The researcher used only completed cases in the analysis for which there was information about the pre-reading and post-reading scores ( $N=112$ ). For grade 4, boxplots are presented for the Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 reading scores for both instructional coaching (coaching=1.00) and non-instructional coaching groups (non-coaching=.00). I observed that the distribution of the pre-reading scores is relatively symmetric while the post-reading scores have some positive asymmetry and even the presence of outliers in the non-coaching group, as depicted in Figure 4.3 that shows for Fall 2018, the non-instructional coaching group is skewed with outliers compared to Winter 2018-2019, which is also skewed with no outliers. Fall 2018, instructional coaching is skewed with outliers compared to Winter 2018-2019, which is symmetric with outliers.



**Figure 4.3**

*Boxplots for Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 Reading Scores for Grade 4*

*Non-Instructional and Instructional Coaching*

### **Descriptive Statistics for Grade 4**

Descriptive statistics for grade 4, specifically median, mean, and standard deviation, are also reported for each study group for pre-reading scores, post-reading scores, and score change. For example, Table 4.13 shows that students in the non-coaching group had higher pre-reading scores than the coaching group (Median= 493 vs. Median=479). However, the former non-coaching group shows a lower score change (Median=5 vs. Median=7).

Table 4.13 also compares the mean and standard deviations of grade 4 non-instructional coaching group with grade 4 instructional coaching group. The non-instructional group for grade 4 shows higher means in the Winter 2018-2019 ( $M=493.70$ ,  $SD=9.75$ ) than in fall 2018 ( $M=487.45$ ,  $SD=24.85$ ), which indicates improvement among the non-instructional group's post-reading scores. The instructional coaching group for grade 4 shows higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 ( $M=484.55$ ,  $SD=28.29$ ) than fall

of 2018 ( $M=474.07$ ,  $SD=30.11$ ), which indicates improvement in the instructional group's post-reading scores. When comparing the non-instructional group for grade 4 with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group ( $M=493.70$ ,  $SD=9.75$ ) had higher post-reading mean scores compared to the instructional coaching group ( $M=484.55$ ,  $SD=28.29$ ). Table 4.13 represents pre-reading and post-reading scores for grade 4.

**Table 4.13**

*Pre- and Post-Reading Scores for Grade 4 Non-instructional Coaching vs. Instructional Coaching*

		Report		
Instructional Coaching		Fall 2018 scores	Winter 2018-2019 scores	Score Change
.00	<i>N</i>	83	83	83
	Median	493.00	498.00	5.00
	Minimum	409	436	-18
	Maximum	540	546	39
	Mean	487.45	493.70	6.25
	Std. Deviation	24.849	22.314	9.747
1.00	<i>N</i>	29	29	29
	Median	479.00	488.00	7.00
	Minimum	391	397	-4
	Maximum	519	529	48
	Mean	474.07	484.55	10.48
	Std. Deviation	30.110	28.295	10.228
Total	<i>N</i>	112	112	112
	Median	490.00	496.50	6.00
	Minimum	391	397	-18
	Maximum	540	546	48
	Mean	483.98	491.33	7.35
	Std. Deviation	26.823	24.207	10.002

#### **Analysis of Covariance Results for Grade 4**

To explore these results more thoroughly, I analyzed covariance (ANCOVA) with the post-reading scores as the dependent variable, pre-reading scores as control, and treatment group (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. First, a significant  $F$  statistic for coaching was interpreted as an effective intervention. Second, due to the small sample size and the non-normality of the data, I conducted the non-parametric test Mann-Whitney  $U$  on the change score. Likewise, Table 4.14 shows a non-significant Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances [ $F(.416)$ ,  $p=.355$ ]  $p$ -value for grade 4 did not support hypothesis 4.

**Table 4.14**

*Levene's Test of Equality for Error Variances for Grade 4*

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances <sup>a</sup>			
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018-2019 scores			
$F$	df1	df2	Sig. $p<0.05$
.668	1	110	.416
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.			
a. Design: Intercept + Fall2018Score + coaching			

Levene's Test of Equality of Variances, one of the ANCOVA assumptions, is accepted. The Test of Between-Subjects Effects shows that after controlling for pre-reading scores, instructional coaching is not a significant factor in the post-reading scores ( $F=1.171$ ,  $p=.282$ ), as depicted in Table 4.15. In contrast, there is no statistical difference in fourth-grade reading achievement when comparing instructional coaching teachers versus non-instructional coaching teachers. Partial eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) are effect sizes that express the amount of variance accounted for by one or more independent variables.



These indices are generally used in conjunction with an analysis of variance and an analysis of covariance (Plonsky, 2013).

**Table 4.15**

*Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Grade 4*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018-2019 scores						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. $p<0.05$	Partial Eta Squared ( $\eta_p^2$ )
Corrected Model	56138.886 <sup>a</sup>	2	28069.443	343.622	.000	.863
Intercept	2238.408	1	2238.408	27.402	.000	.201
Fall2018Score	54340.752	1	54340.752	665.231	.000	.859
Instructional coaching	95.685	1	95.685	1.171	.282	.011
Error	8903.891	109	81.687			
Total	27102461.000	112				
Corrected Total	65042.777	111				
a. R Squared = .863 (Adjusted R Squared = .861)						

According to the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test, as shown in Table 4.16 and Table 4.17, there is a statistically significant difference when comparing the score change between the study groups ( $U=887.5$ ,  $p<.036$ ), which suggests that there was greater achievement among the non-coaching group ( $N=83$ ) than the instructional coaching group ( $N=29$ ) for grade 4 students.

**Table 4.16***Mann-Whitney U Test for Grade 4*

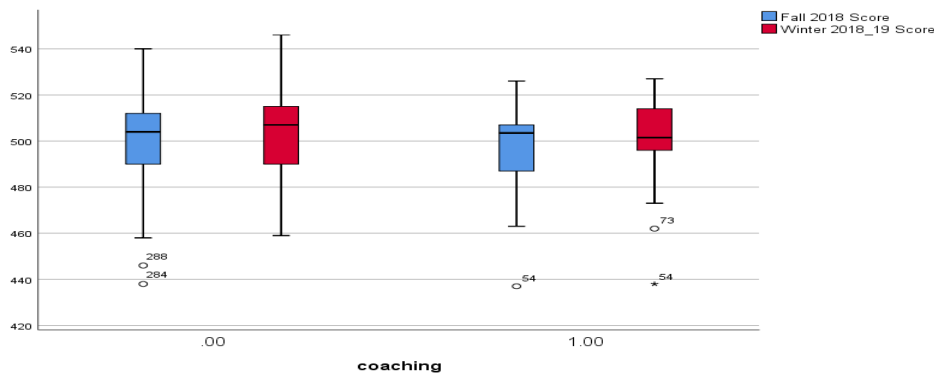
	Instructional Coaching	Ranks		Sum of Ranks
		<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	
Score Change	No	83	52.69	4373.50
	Yes	29	67.40	1954.50
	Total	112		

**Table 4.17***Mann-Whitney U Test Score Change for Grade 4*

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Score Change
Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	887.500
Wilcoxon <i>W</i>	4373.500
<i>Z</i>	-2.102
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.036
a. Grouping Variable: Instructional coaching	

**Grade 5**

The researcher only used completed cases in the analysis for which there was information about pre-reading and post-reading scores ( $N=68$ ). For grade 5, boxplots are presented for the Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 reading scores for instructional coaching and non-instructional coaching groups. I observed that the distribution of the pre-reading scores was skewed while the post-reading scores were also skewed with outliers in the instructional and non-instructional coaching groups. Figure 5.4 shows that for Fall 2018, non-instructional coaching is skewed compared to Winter 2018-2019, which is also skewed. For Fall 2018, instructional coaching is severely skewed compared to Winter 2018-2019, which is also severely skewed.



**Figure 4.4**

*Boxplots for Grade 5 Fall 2018 and Winter 2018-2019 Reading Scores for Non-instructional and Instructional Coaching Groups*

### Descriptive Statistics for Grade 5

Descriptive statistics for grade 5, specifically, median, mean, and standard deviation, are also reported for each study group for pre-reading scores, post-reading scores, and the score change. For example, in Table 4.18, I observed that students in the non-coaching group had higher pre-reading scores than the instructional coaching group (Median=507 vs. Median=501.50), and the non-coaching group showed a more significant score change (Median=4.50 vs. Median=2.00) than the instructional group.

Table 4.18 also compares the mean and standard deviations of grade 5 non-instructional coaching group with Grade 5 instructional coaching group. The non-instructional group for grade 5 shows higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 ( $M=503.85$ ,  $SD=19.73$ ) than in Fall 2018 ( $M=498.65$ ,  $SD=21.55$ ), which indicates improvement among the non-instructional group's post-reading scores. The instructional group for grade 5 shows higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 ( $M=499.23$ ,  $SD=21.08$ ) than Fall of 2018 ( $M=497.23$ ,  $SD=20.79$ ), which indicates improvement in the instructional group's post-reading scores.

When comparing the non-instructional group for grade 5 with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group ( $M=503.85$ ,  $SD=19.73$ ) had higher post-reading mean scores compared to the instructional coaching group ( $M=499.23$ ,  $SD=21.08$ ). This finding may mean that the non-instructional coaching group participated more frequently as a group and individually than the instructional group that did not participate in coaching as frequently. The implication is that instructional coaching may not be as beneficial as anticipated for grade 5 students' reading scores because grade 5 teachers (departmentalized) believed they did not need instructional coaching. Grade 5 teachers relied more on their teaching experience using reading strategies and instead focused on feedback as needed from the instructional coach. Like grade 4 results, grade 5 students in the non-instructional coaching group had higher post-reading mean scores than the instructional coaching group. Table 4.18 represents pre-reading and post-reading scores for grade 5.

**Table 4.18**

*Pre- and Post-Reading Scores for Grade 5 Non-instructional Coaching vs. Instructional Coaching*

Instructional Coaching		Report		Score Change
		Fall 2018 scores	Winter 2018-2019 scores	
.00	<i>N</i>	46	46	46
	Median	504.00	507.00	4.50
	Minimum	438	459	-13
	Maximum	540	546	39
	Mean	498.65	503.85	5.20
	Std. Deviation	21.555	19.736	8.926
1.00	<i>N</i>	22	22	22
	Median	503.50	501.50	2.00

	Minimum	437	438	-18
	Maximum	526	527	17
	Mean	497.23	499.23	2.00
	Std. Deviation	20.798	21.082	8.569
Tota	<i>N</i>	68	68	68
l	Median	504.00	505.50	4.00
	Minimum	437	438	-18
	Maximum	540	546	39
	Mean	498.19	502.35	4.16
	Std. Deviation	21.168	20.141	8.877

### Analysis of Covariance Results for Grade 5

I conducted two analyses to address Research Question 4. First, I analyzed covariance (ANCOVA) with the post-reading scores as the dependent variable, pre-reading scores as control, and treatment group (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. Second, due to the small sample size and the non-normality of the data, I conducted the non-parametric test Mann-Whitney *U* on the change score. Likewise, Table 4.20 shows a non-significant Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances [ $F(4,88), p=.487$ ] *p*-value for grade 5 did not support a difference based on participation in coaching. Overall, the scores are lower and demonstrated less change among the coaching group of students compared to the non-coaching. However, the difference is not statistically significant, as the ANCOVA and the Mann-Whitney *U* test show.

**Table 4.19**

*Levene's Test of Equality of Variances for Grade 5*

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances <sup>a</sup>			
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018-2019 Score			
<i>F</i>	df1	df2	Sig.
<i>p</i> <0.05			
.488	1	66	.487
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.			
a. Design: Intercept + Fall 2018 Score + instructional coaching			

Levene's Test of Equality of Variances, one of the ANCOVA assumptions, is not accepted. Table 4.21 Test of Between-Subjects Effects shows that after controlling for pre-reading scores, instructional coaching is not a significant factor in the post-reading scores ( $F=2.43$ ,  $p=.123$ ) for grade 5. Partial eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) are effect sizes that express the amount of variance accounted for by one or more independent variables. These indices are used in conjunction with variance and covariance analyses (Plonsky, 2013). In other words, there is no statistically significant difference in grade 5 reading achievement when comparing instructional coaching teachers versus non-instructional coaching teachers.

**Table 4.20***Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Grade 5*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Winter 2018-2019 Scores						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig. $p<0.05$	Partial Eta Squared ( $\eta_p^2$ )
Corrected Model	22620.688 <sup>a</sup>	2	11310.344	161.263	.000	.832
Intercept	628.353	1	628.353	8.959	.004	.121
Fall 2018 Score	22302.957	1	22302.957	317.996	.000	.830
Instructional Coaching	171.040	1	171.040	2.439	.123	.036
Error	4558.841	65	70.136			
Total	17187556.00	68				
	0					
Corrected Total	27179.529	67				
a. R Squared = .832 (Adjusted R Squared = .827)						

According to the Mann-Whitney *U* test results, as shown in Tables 4.21 and 4.22, there were no statistically significant differences when comparing the score change between the study groups ( $U=425.5$ ,  $p=.284$ ).

**Table 4.21***Mann-Whitney U Test for Grade 5*

		Ranks		
	Instructional Coaching	<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Score Change	.00	46	36.27	1668.50
	1.00	22	30.80	677.50
	Total	68		

**Table 4.22***Mann-Whitney U Test Score Change for Grade 5*

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Score Change
Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	424.500
Wilcoxon <i>W</i>	677.500
<i>Z</i>	-1.071
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.284
a. Grouping Variable: Instructional coaching	

**Summary**

The data analysis informed the researcher about how instructional coaching impacted student learning outcomes and teacher implementation of reading strategies. The data analyzed were downloaded from the school district's data warehouse that provides student data to district staff through FAST™. The eReading Assessment's data were analyzed using an action research methodology focusing on a descriptive analysis of what the data reflected pre-data and post-data scores during 2018-2019. However, the academic year 2019-2020 was not fully available due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the schools were closed to engage in virtual learning at home by teachers for students and their parents. Therefore, the researcher utilized an analysis of the findings in a descriptive



format. Action research mixed methods design using qualitative and quantitative was chosen because the study allows for an in-depth study of the data to provide detailed information to inform the researcher's analysis of the instructional coaching process at GES. It is essential to note the researcher collected archival or extant data.

Summing up, with the ANCOVA, I did not find statistically significant differences between study groups for grades 2 through 5. However, the Mann-Whitney *U* test results suggested that for grade 4, there were significant differences in post-reading achievement scores. There was a greater reading achievement for the grade 4 instructional coaching group. Grade 5 also showed that the scores were worse for the coaching group of students compared to the non-coaching although the difference was not statistically significant as the ANCOVA and the Mann-Whitney *U* test showed.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Overview of Study**

Instructional coaching enhances teaching practices and improves student achievement. This type of professional development is more effective than intermittent professional development sessions that may not connect to teachers' needs (Quintero, 2019). GES began using an instructional coaching model facilitated by a team including the administration and instructional coaches in 2017-2018 to better meet the instructional needs of teachers and the school. This model was selected when the decentralization of instructional coaching began from a district-level initiative to a school-level initiative. Since the school is now responsible for all aspects of the instructional coaching approach, this study sought to retrospectively understand the implementation and impact of this model during the 2018-2019 academic year to inform current and future implementation of instructional coaching. The rationale for the retrospective approach is that 2018-2019 is when the full implementation of the instructional coaching model began. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has closed all schools in the nation.

The anticipation was the instructional model would return to full-scale implementation in 2022-2023. This mixed methods exploratory study is significant for school leaders, district leadership, and instructional coaches interested in evaluating an instructional coaching model in their building or school district. Additionally, the results might help schools and districts assess the impact of instructional coaching on student

learning. Lastly, the study underscores the need for an instructional coaching cycle for instructional coaching to be effective. The researcher used an exploratory design because when a research problem is difficult to predict an outcome due to a few or limited earlier studies. The focus of the exploratory design is to gain insight and familiarity for later investigation. Exploratory design can also be undertaken when the research is just beginning. In contrast to the explanatory design, the exploratory design prioritizes collecting and analyzing qualitative data at the beginning (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The theoretical framework draws on the andragogy theory, which focuses on adult learning and education and is the “art and science of teaching adults” (Knowles, 1980, p. 54). As a method of thinking for adult learners, its purpose helps identify how teachers are motivated to learn and participate. Merriam and Brockett (1997) defined andragogy as "a way of thinking about working with adult learners" (p. 135). Therefore, as the primary instructional method for adult learners, it is necessary to understand andragogy (Rachal, 2002). Further, andragogy is the "blueprint for effective instruction for adults" (Feuer & Gerber, 1988, p. 35).

### **Discussion of Qualitative Results**

Three qualitative research questions guided this study. First, to gain details about the instructional coaching process, I interviewed participants via Zoom conference due to the COVID pandemic, including two instructional literacy coaches and one instructional mathematics coach. I also interviewed a second-grade teacher in an end-of-the-year teacher interview. Second, Swingle’s (2018) study confirmed the use of teacher interviews as in the current study. Swingle used teacher interviews and an instructional

coach focus group to provide perspectives (Swingle, 2018). Third, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process to conduct thematic analysis: (1) familiarization, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the interpretation of common themes.

### **Research Question One: Qualitative Themes**

Research Question 1's central focus was on implementing the instructional coaching process. During the semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches, several themes emerged: (1) Group coaching by grade levels: Professional development sponsored by the school district or school; (2) Individual coaching: Self-referrals; (3) Individual coaching: Administrative referrals. Junker et al.'s (2016) study confirmed the finding in the current research that group coaching and individual coaching were effective in reducing procrastination and facilitating goal attainment. In addition, individual coaching created a high degree of satisfaction and was superior in helping participants attain their goals, whereas group training successfully promoted the acquisition of relevant knowledge.

Malling et al. (2020) found that the participants' communication skills improved because of the increased awareness of other people's perspectives. The improved communication coupled with good relations led to increasing self-efficacy among participants in shared leadership, level of contributions, and delegation of tasks (Malling et al., 2020). During the implementation and monitoring plan, the Task Force Group at GES identified the details of how the Classroom Walkthrough Checklist: Development Process (see Appendix D, III: Task Force Group, Section C: Communication and Collaboration) included the timeline, frequency of the walkthroughs, roles and

responsibilities, process, and procedures. Other areas of implementation and monitoring that the researcher had were using data from the Walkthrough Checklist and progress monitoring for teacher accountability for effective implementation. The administration provided support to address teachers' identified needs through communication and collaboration.

### **Research Question Two: Qualitative Themes**

Research Question 2's central focus was the use of the instructional coach process to inform student learning in reading literacy. The current study school has implemented instructional coaching from 2017-to 2018 rather than a six-week intervention period. Teachers in the present study also received feedback and classroom observations throughout the process. During the semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches, several themes emerged: (1) Instructional reading strategies for teachers; (2) Professional development in specific reading areas; (3) Classroom visitations and modeling lessons; and (4) Provided feedback on progress or regression.

Burggraaf (2020) confirmed instructional coaches' activities in the current study. Coaches interviewed in this study also reported being involved in co-planning, co-teaching, and observing classroom lessons while providing feedback. In addition, Burggraaf found that instructional coaches need time to learn about the professional learning support needed to improve their practices in responsive coaching approaches. The results of the current study confirmed this finding.

### **Research Question Three: Qualitative Themes**

The current study contributed to the differentiation of coaching viewpoints by expanding the knowledge of how instructional coaches support teacher learning and

improve instructional practices (see Swingle, 2018). For Research Question 3, the central focus was observational walkthroughs. Two themes emerged during the semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches: (1) Classroom Walkthrough Checklist; and (2) Instructional coaching process. A Classroom Walkthrough Checklist (see Appendix D) was used for the development process of determining student progress in reading literacy. Additionally, the tool monitored the implementation of district-adopted programs and local school initiatives. The users of this checklist were site administrators, instructional coaches, and occasional district staff. The walkthrough impacted all teachers at various times during the process. The checklist collected trend data to provide peer support and school-wide and individual professional development planning. All teachers participated in the walkthrough and short informal observations for approximately 30 minutes. The structure of grade levels currently has teachers in grades 1-4 teaching all core content subjects. Departmentalization of the 5th-grade team used core content areas: Literacy/ELA, Science/Social Studies, and Numeracy.

Malling et al. (2020) confirmed using the walkthrough checklist as a tool for data collection by the site administrators and leadership team members. The evaluators who conducted walkthroughs provided peer support using the checklist to help participants implement learned strategies during professional development (Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, 2020; Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Malling et al. (2020) found that inter-professional communication, conflict management, and emerging leadership skills emerged in the trend data. Noted in the study is the improvement in participants' communication skills due to an increased awareness of other peoples' perspectives and preferences (Malling et al., 2020). The study concludes with participants realizing the

importance of good relations, active contributions in their departments, and commitment to practice leadership skills through the involvement of their team, the delegation of work, and negotiation of obligations (Malling et al., 2020).

#### **Research Question Four: Quantitative Results**

To better understand the relationships between instructional coaching and student achievement, student assessment scores were used to determine if improvement occurred among those who participated in individual coaching. Research Question 4 was: Is there a statistically significant difference in teachers in grades 2-5 student achievement in literacy reading when comparing instructional group coaching for teachers compared to non-instructional group coaching implemented during 2018-2019 (e.g., teachers who received instructional coaching versus those who did not)?

The non-instructional and instructional groups for grades 2 through 5 showed higher means in the Winter of 2018-2019 than Fall of 2018, indicating improvement in post-reading scores for both groups. However, when comparing the non-instructional group for grades 2 and 3 with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group had lower pre-reading mean scores than the instructional coaching group. However, when comparing the non-instructional group for grade 4 with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group had higher pre-reading mean scores than the instructional coaching group. Like grade 4 students, I observed that grade 5 students in the non-coaching group had higher pre-reading scores than the instructional coaching group. However, the former non-coaching group shows a more significant score change than the instructional coaching group.

Desimone and Pak's (2017) study is similar to the findings in this study. These researchers note that despite the demand for instructional coaches, there is little empirical evidence that coaching improved teacher practice. Desimone and Pak addressed this limitation by conceptualizing instructional coaching within a research-based framework for professional development. This framework comprises five key features synthesized from cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, and literature reviews of experimental and quasi-experimental studies: content focus, active learning, sustained duration, coherence, and collective participation. When examining instructional coaching through the lens of the empirically predictive elements of effective professional development, the model is a powerful tool for improving teacher knowledge, skills, and practice (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

In addition to reviewing means, I conducted two analyses to understand more significant differences in reading scores between non-instructional and instructional coaching teachers. First, I explored the differences between the groups using an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the grades 2 through 5 post-reading scores as the dependent variable, pre-reading scores as control, and treatment group (coaching or non-coaching) as the main factor. In addition, a non-parametric test Mann-Whitney *U* on the change score, was used based on the small sample size and, in some cases, skewness of the data. For the most part, a non-significant *p*-value for grades 2 through 5 did not provide support for the study hypothesis 4.

### **Results Related to the Research Literature**

Burggraaf (2020) found that participants perceived coaching as ineffective, which contradicted the finding in the current study that participants perceived coaching as an



effective form of professional development. A factor in the difference in finding may be due to specific characteristics (e.g., extended duration, responsiveness to needs, active learning experiences, coherence) and activities (e.g., modeling, co-teaching, and collaborating) identified participants in the study as meaningful learning. Frederick-Williams (2019) confirmed the current study's findings as this study also found no significant differences between the scores of the control group and the experimental group that used coaching. However, student coaching significantly impacted the pre-test and post-test experimental group scores.

GES's reading data showed that grade 4 and grade 5 teachers' students performed better than expected among other grades. Fourth-grade teachers participated vigorously in group and individual coaching more frequently and as a team than other teachers. However, grade 5 teachers did not participate in individual coaching. The principal and instructional coaches used this data to share with the Leadership Team. The principal viewed this data as a gap in the learning curve for other teachers whose scores were not as high and whose teachers were not as actively engaged in instructional coaching as a group and individually.

In contrast, there is no statistical difference in grade 4 and grade 5 reading achievement when comparing instructional coaching teachers versus non-instructional coaching teachers. On the other hand, according to the Mann-Whitney *U* test, there is a statistically significant difference when comparing the score change between the study groups, which suggests that there was more extraordinary achievement among the non-coaching group than the instructional coaching group for grades 4 and grade 5 students.

However, when comparing the non-instructional group for grade 4 and grade 5 with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group had higher post-reading mean scores than the instructional coaching group. This finding may mean that the non-instructional coaching group participated more frequently as a group and individually than the instructional group that did not participate in coaching as frequently. The implication is that instructional coaching may not be as beneficial as anticipated for grade 5 students' reading scores because grade 5 teachers (departmentalized) believed that they did not need instructional coaching since they were more experienced in reading strategies, modeling, and thus did not need as much feedback on their instruction by frequent coaching. Additionally, the structure of classes in grade 5 provided students with a double dose of reading in the social studies and science content areas.

Evidence in Hammond and Moore's (2018) study did not confirm the current study's findings because the focus in the present study was on four areas of classroom environment, student engagement, literacy instruction, and literacy content. In contrast, Hammond and Moore (2018) made a video presentation of teachers' ability to use non-verbal cues (i.e., hand gestures, verbal cues, call and response, praise statements and students' responses). The finding shows that although teachers follow a script, many of the instructional strategies pre-service teachers demonstrated after a coaching period were common to explicit instruction (Hammond & Moore, 2018). An area similar to the current study's findings was modeling by the peer coach. Other findings were videoed lessons, peer coach modeling, and practice opportunities and contributed significantly to

how the pre-service teachers' implemented the direct instruction model (Hammond & Moore, 2018).

De Jager et al. (2002) used direct instruction strategies to examine the effects of in-service training and coaching on teaching reading comprehension. Likewise, the current study emphasized direct instruction strategies to examine the effect of literacy coaching on grades 2 through 5 reading instruction, which was significant in grades 4 and 5 of the current study. For the study, the school district provided participants with five three-hour training sessions (15 hours) of professional learning. The training covered five of the six elements of direct instruction—three individual coaching sessions with an expert at three-monthly intervals. The researcher identified two groups in the study. The goal was to have the teacher successfully implement the identified instructional model. Unfortunately, the control group and the five teachers who took up direct instruction strategies failed to implement the full scope of the instructional model. Three factors served as barriers to the implementation of the instructional model: (1) lack of intensity to support the teacher by the coach, (2) training time, and (3) constraints assigned to implementing the strategies in the reading comprehension lessons. The current study groups of non-instructional coaching vs. instructional coaching had statistically significant differences based on grades 4 and 5. However, in grades 1, 2, and 3, non-instructional groups were not as significant as instructional groups of teachers. As a result, De Jager et al. (2002) did not confirm the findings in the current study.

Similar to the current mixed methods study, Rosato's (2019) mixed methods study determined if teachers' sense of self-efficacy using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale survey influenced instructional coaching. The current study's purpose was not self-

efficacy, and a teacher scale was the survey instrument in the quantitative phase of the study. While Rosato used a paired t-test and an analysis of variance (ANOVA), the current study used analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to analyze quantitative student data. The quantitative analysis of Rosato's study found that overall, teachers' sense of self-efficacy did not significantly influence coaching. Rosato's investigation confirmed the mixed methods research design but did not confirm the self-efficacy of the current study, which was not the focus.

## **Recommendations**

### **Practice Recommendations**

Despite the lack of research and definition, the popularity of instructional coaching as a teacher development strategy remains unparalleled (Desimone & Pak, 2016). The interest in instructional coaching as a teacher development tool was fueled by studies confirming instructional coaches' critical role in increasing the likelihood that teachers transfer newly learned skills to the classroom (Bush, 1984; Cornett & Knight, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). However, professional development opportunities are not created equally, especially in their ability to achieve sustainable growth in teachers and students.

Bentley (2020) examined the benefits of an effective instructional coaching program for teachers as learners. The focus was on the importance of conversation and reflection. Bentley found that instructional coaching is an effective tool for professional development and asserted that knowledge and proper implementation are essential to its effectiveness. In an earlier study, Matsumura (2006) concluded that is no consensus on

the roles of an instructional coaching position since the tasks vary. At GES, the coaching approach is based on teachers' individual and group needs and the school's goals.

A classic study by Joyce and Showers (1996) supported the use of video lessons by having teachers teach and use those lessons for video presentations for other teachers. While the present study did not use video-based data, a recommendation supported by Hammond and Moore (2018) was to use video presentations of the teacher's ability to use verbal and non-verbal cues to coach teachers in engagement and pacing. Video use also allowed teachers to view unedited versions of themselves in action. Others can view the video for support and suggestions (Joyce & Showers, 1996). This kind of support might be needed to review the lesson and watch the teacher's video lesson with the instructional coach for an objective review and contextualized discussion. The teacher and instructional coach could plan the following steps together (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Next, the teacher and coach should reflect on the video viewed after watching the videoed lesson to gain a picture of what has happened and the next steps based on specific instructional needs (Joyce & Showers, 1996).

### **Coaching Recommendations**

#### **Coaching Cycle**

The Leadership Team at GES created a coaching cycle similar to the one that includes planning, teaching, and reflection (Suarez, 2018). Suarez made three essential elements with the instructional coach during the coaching cycle (e.g., preparing and planning, coaching activity with teaching, and reflection). In addition, Yoder and Gurke (2017) added 'debriefing and next steps' as one of the steps. During the three weeks to

fulfill the plan, Suarez found that the coaching plan was robust and could transform teacher practice and student learning.

### **Time for Coaching**

At GES, we will prepare and plan time for collaboration and conversation among grades 2 through 5 teachers and the instructional coaches. Teachers and coaches will meet to discuss teachers' needs in the focus areas and plan for coaching support during planning times, pre-planning days, and post-planning days, and compensated days on Saturdays when financed by the school district or the use of Title I funds for professional development (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Anchored in teacher-selected goals, teachers and coaches can build on strengths in instruction and learning, moving toward highly effective practices for improved instruction and student achievement.

### **Clear Format for Coaching**

As one of the leading coaching activities (Yoder & Gurke, 2017), teaching, which is the second stage of the cycle, can look different depending on the goals of the teacher and the classroom (Suarez, 2018). Coaching activities may begin with an observation and then move to model, co-teaching, or co-planning (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Engaging in the teaching cycle, the coach first observes classroom instruction and scripts notes based on the agreed-upon focus determined at the planning meeting.

### **Teacher, Student Behaviors, and Their Interactions**

The coach observes the teacher and students' behaviors and interactions (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). The coach should take as many notes as possible and present a thorough report. The summaries should be detailed and accurate while carefully balancing note-taking with observing nonverbal gestures and interactions. After the observation, time

should be allowed to review the notes and fill in gaps (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). The longer time delays completing this part of the process, the less is accurately recalled during the observation (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

The teacher and coach engaged in a coaching interaction (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). For example, a coach can model a lesson. At the same time, the classroom teacher observes, the coach and the teacher can co-teach lessons together, or the coach can monitor the classroom teacher in a specific area to provide feedback (Suarez, 2018). The critical part of the teaching stage is for a learning objective for the classroom teacher tied to the teacher-selected goal (Suarez, 2018).

### **Debriefing and Next Steps**

Yoder and Gurke (2017) defined what happens during the debriefing and the next steps. The teacher and coach have a post-conference to reflect, provide feedback, and determine the next steps before moving into the actual phase of reflection discussed in the final coaching cycle. Usable and actionable feedback is a task that every effective coach should provide to the individual they are coaching (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). As engagement in the debriefing and next steps conversation, coaches could establish a climate that encourages teacher voice and instructional risk-taking. A good climate helps the coach to create a dynamic that enables the teacher to do most of the talking and responds to questions posed (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). Feedback should focus on high-priority areas in which the teacher can act, avoiding minor details that can delay the conversation. A structured set of questions focused on continuous improvement is helpful (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

## **Reflection Stage**

With the instructional coach, during the coaching cycle, the three essential elements are preparing and planning, coaching activity with teaching, and reflection. The coaching plan is robust and can transform teacher practice and student learning. The final coaching cycle is the reflection stage (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). During this time, the teacher and the coach engage in conversation regarding the lesson, observations, and student behavior. Goals are revised, or new goals set for teacher instruction and student learning where, over time, these are transformed, creating an environment where learning is bound to occur (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

## **Collaborative Opportunities for Teachers through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

Yoder and Gurke (2017) developed a coaching toolkit that is not a robust coaching resource but provides a framework and tools for use in social and emotional learning (SEL) classrooms. The coach observes the activities and should use the data collected to inform professional learning activities. A coaching toolkit focuses on the coaching cycle, which breaks the process into four specific steps—a directive coaching strategy where the coach shares expertise and perhaps models a lesson or shares resources. The coach encourages teachers to reflect on or analyze experiences in facilitative coaching. The strategies used depend on the goals and readiness of individual teachers (Yoder & Gurke, 2017).

Teachers can be coached on SEL practices using the cycle regardless of the strategies chosen. This toolkit organizes around the tools associated with each step of the coaching cycle. The transformation theory focuses on teacher support, improved



instruction and connections for students, increased learning, and higher achievement. Under the transformation theory is preparing, coaching activity, debriefing, next steps, and reflection (Yoder & Gurke, 2017). In the preparation stage, the teacher and the coach meet to discuss teacher needs in the focus area and plan for coaching support. During the coaching activity, the teacher and the coach engage in coaching interaction. The debriefing and next steps stage are where the teacher and the coach have a post-conference to reflect, provide feedback, and determine the next steps. Finally, the teacher and the coach reflect on the progress and re-assess any future professional development and coaching needs (Yoder & Gurke, 2017)

### **Promoting Collaborations, Observations, Feedback, and Support from Peers**

The present findings revealed that peer coaching is a program teachers might implement within GES. School leaders recommended that all teachers receive peer coaching training more consistently to enhance teachers' instructional practices and student academic achievement (McBride, 2019). All teachers could benefit from peer coaching because it allows them to grow in their craft by promoting collaborations, observations, feedback, and peer support (McBride, 2019). McBride investigated the impact of peer coaching on instructional practices when preparing to teach. Collaborative meetings and a survey captured teachers' perceptions of peer coaching. The school district should continue to use the eReading assessment, which helps predict performance on high-stakes state tests. The eReading assessment received the highest possible rating for validity, reliability, and diagnostic accuracy from the National Center for Response to Intervention.

### **Continued Professional Learning for Coaches**

Lane (2018) applied the adult learning theory to instructional coaching and explained how it engages reluctant educators in continued professional learning. Possessing a solid knowledge base of the current best practices and trends in education allows coaching support to remain student-focused. As instructional coaches develop instructional practices and strategies, they could use such resources in a toolbox that they discuss and present to teachers. Such tools are teamwork, trust, sharing, support, inspiration, exchange, success, and assistance that all instructional coaches should possess to help teachers to become successful in teaching (Lane, 2018). Knowing when to use the various tools is essential to coaching by having the best impact on student and teacher learning (Lane, 2018).

### **Administrative Recommendations**

GES teachers used an implementation support walkthrough to observe teachers for student engagement levels, student ownership of learning, teacher use of learning objectives and success criteria, effective use of collaborative groups in the classroom, the quality of student work produced under the direction of a particular teacher, and student management strategies (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). In addition, the administrative and leadership teams share schoolwide data about observations and align teacher professional development with observed needs. As a result, teachers focus on developing greater precision in their teaching practices.

This type of observation at GES resulted in the principal, instructional coaches, and Leadership Team meeting with grade-level teams to discuss the implementation of their schoolwide reading initiative. The grade-level teams were asked what would help

them improve and what they expect to see improvement in a month, semester, and end of the year related to reading goals on the eReading Fast Assessment test, where they taught students to use as they responded to text-dependent questions.

At GES, the principal and instructional coaches proposed a set of skills for each grade level after visiting each grade-level team. Teachers reviewed and added to the list the principal provided for use during coaching walkthroughs. During collaborative meetings, the principal or coaches shared their observations (see Rouleau & Corner, 2020). Each team reviewed the data and discussed the next steps to address the areas of concern. The principal at GES held professional learning sessions at monthly faculty meetings based on shared schoolwide observations. Doing this allowed the school to maintain momentum with the schoolwide reading goals and monitored implementation and progress in teaching and learning (see Rouleau & Corner, 2020).

### **Policy Recommendations**

Policy recommendations might be made regarding high-need schools like GES, where some students of English as a Second Language could be at risk of school failure. These high-risk situations are often schools where a large percentage of students are on free and reduced-price meals, living in economic disadvantage neighborhoods, from racially diverse backgrounds, identified as having a disability, or underperforming academically (Fallon et al., 2019). In addition, many teachers working in high-need settings may be new to the field or have experienced persistent challenges demonstrating effective classroom management. As a result, these teachers might benefit from intensive data-driven coaching to improve classroom management practice (Fallon et al., 2019).

On a national level, 60% of the students enter school performing below grade level, have language problems, and may have parents with language problems (Johnson et al., 2020). Students identified as low-income and children of color and in poverty are more likely to fall behind grade level (Johnson et al., 2020). To address these statistics, some educators and policymakers advocate for more access to higher-quality instructional materials, grade-appropriate curriculum, and content that are standards-aligned, coherent, and easy for teachers and students to use (Johnson et al., 2020).

### **Implications of Results Based on Transferability**

When comparing the non-instructional group for grade 4 and grade 5 with the instructional group's post-reading performance, students in the non-instructional coaching group had higher post-reading mean scores than the instructional coaching group. This finding may mean that the non-instructional coaching group participated more frequently as a grade-level group than the instructional group that did not participate in coaching as frequently. Group instructional coaching and individual instructional coaching were two approaches used at GES. Grades 2 through 5 teachers were required to participate in group coaching; however, individual instructional coaching was optional based on the administrator's recommendation, coaching suggestions, and volunteer teachers who requested personalized and individualized coaching. The implication is that instructional coaching may not be as beneficial as anticipated for grade 5 students' reading scores because grade 5 teachers (departmentalized) believed that they did not need instructional coaching since they were more experienced in reading strategies, modeling, and thus did not need as much feedback on their instruction by frequent coaching. Therefore, it may be necessary better

to understand the composition and structure of grade levels when determining the most effective instructional coaching process.

Shidler (2009) concluded that instructional coaching that uses a more focused and targeted approach is more effective than a broader, less concentrated one 2017.

Implications for coaching included recommendations for achieving balance among four components of effective coaching such as (a) teaching for targeted content, (b) including modeling of strategies and practices, (c) observing teacher instruction, and (d) meeting with teachers to reflect on teacher practice.

At GES, principals are responsible for instructional coaches' training and professional development. The school district is no longer responsible for that training. Professional development training sessions were developed to increase their awareness of how their leadership and understanding of their coaching roles can create barriers for instructional coaches (Quattlebaum, 2017). As a result, administrators should be trained to work with instructional coaches and apprised of the benefits of instructional coaching. Implications for positive social change include increasing educators' understanding of collaborative partnerships among administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches. Such agreements may result in using professional learning communities to establish or maintain shared goals for improving classroom instruction and increasing student achievement (Quattlebaum, 2017).

Ratings of instructional strategy use were significantly improved for a teacher but not observer ratings. A brief coaching intervention improved teachers' use of practical behavior management strategies and self-reported use of behavior management and instructional strategies. Implications showed that a straightforward coaching approach

helped elementary school teachers improve their use of behavior management procedures. In addition, teachers reported that the coaching approach improved their use of effective instructional strategies, though observations of teacher behavior did not confirm this finding (Fabiano et al., 2018).

### **Limitations**

Several limitations should consider in the results when interpreting the current study. First, data collection was limited to grades 2 through 5 teachers in Minnesota, which restricted the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation was experienced when I visited the school district to collect 2018-2019 data for the eReading Fast assessment for grades 2 through 5 in November 2021. I had the opportunity to meet with the Research, Evaluation, and Accountability team in the school district, which was a daunting experience. The new team has not yet learned how to use the student system and could not manipulate the data for those grades. As a result, we could pull the data from the teacher. Still, I reviewed each teacher's test scores individually and then created and combined the spreadsheets into one before downloading the data into SPSS for data analysis. In addition, I manually identified teachers and placed students in each teacher's class. While this was possible, it would be ideal for principals to have easy access to data to explore the effectiveness of interventions such as instructional coaching.

Instructional coaching, a job-embedded professional development approach, is a means of overcoming the limitations of workshop-based professional development to transfer knowledge and skills into classroom practices (Gulamhussein, 2013; Miracolo, 2020). However, instructional coaching is essential for maximizing effective instruction. Unfortunately, few research-based coaching models and even fewer coaching measures

and resources can assess and develop coaching skills and interactions (Reddy et al., 2019). Many school districts use instructional coaching among teachers to help them implement an effective coaching cycle (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Glover & Reddy, 2017). Part of the problem is a lack of research that leads to inconsistent coaching implementation. In addition, the lack of a research-based defined process continues to plague the measure of coaching effectiveness and its impact on teacher development and overall professional development (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Glover & Reddy, 2017).

The action research study was conducted to provide a descriptive analysis of the instructional coaching process and student reading learning outcomes at GES. The long-term goal is to make a recommendation to assist the school in improving its instructional coaching process and results.

**Anecdotal records.** Anecdotal notes were a means of formative assessment in teaching (Bates et al., 2019) and may in some way have been a limitation to the results in the current study. Note-taking is equally essential in the role of coaches (Bates & Morgan, 2020; Morgan et al., 2019). Note-taking allowed instructional coaches to gather information in real-time that the teacher often could not capture while teaching (e.g., the pacing of the lesson, teacher, and student language; Bates & Morgan, 2020; Morgan et al., 2019). With each walkthrough, the principal gave anecdotal feedback to the teacher that guided the next steps. The principal or instructional coach did not take notes because these walkthroughs were not part of the teacher's formal evaluation record but rather an informal process of collecting and sharing data to contribute to teacher and student learning (Rouleau & Corner, 2020). At GES, instructional coaches and the administrator team recorded notes of teachers' observations. After each walkthrough, those observation

notes were discussed with teachers. Walkthroughs are informal and do not become part of teachers' summative evaluation but are used as a process of collecting and sharing data with teachers.

Anecdotal records could be a limitation to the results of the current study. Part of the limitation depended on teachers, and the amount depended on the instructional coaches. At any rate, some of the data point to this observation. The lack of instructional coaching and a transparent process accounted for the *ahs* that the coaches used different approaches with individuals, small groups, and large groups based on specific instructional needs. No two coaches used the same processes and procedures during instructional coaching. No two teachers or no two principals teach or use administrative strategies in precisely the same manner, nor do they do these things the same way every day. The takeaway is no two people are exactly alike.

Moving forward with cycles might help standardize how instructional coaching occurs in the building. There were times when there may not have been interviews because they were not required. When I started with a particular teacher, I could track progress to see if there was progress or lack of progress. Determining a teacher's progress is vital because it is needed to see if any differences were made in instructional coaching.

At GES, there are good coaches, but we throw people into coaching because they are good teachers but do not give them the tools to be great coaches. Is there possibly an issue with vision and vision casting—with the district taking this on—was there a broader vision for success? Has the idea been articulated at the school level? Is there any possibility between what the district envisioned and what happened? Do you think the answer would have been different from a district level? The vision was lost in the



transition from the district to the school. The district had an idea, but then it went to the administrative team, but there was a lack of process. The vision fell short because there was a disconnect. We are great party planners, but we were not attending to our guests. The problem is the lack of a straightforward instructional coaching process and how to measure it.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is a growing consensus that coaching is not about “telling, it is about asking and focusing that separates mentoring from coaching” (Allison & Harbour, 2009, p. 2). Research is needed to operationalize better, assess, and evaluate the implementation of essential coaching components (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Glover & Reddy, 2017). Future research could show that through extensive mentoring research and sociocultural factors, sufficient depth in discussing mentoring functions and outcomes from the individual difference perspective could fill the gap in coaching and mentoring differences. Individual differences are independently incorporated into future mentoring research and research with sociocultural factors.

In-service teacher training needs to move from courses and workshops with little impact to new forms of professional development that integrate mentoring by highly skilled teachers and between teachers and lifelong learning (Gomendio, 2017). Significant funds allocated in the United States at the federal, state, and local levels provide teacher professional development to bring about instructional change and improve student achievement (Xin et al., 2020). Changing teaching practice is an important indicator of quality and effectiveness in professional development (Xin et al., 2020). It is anticipated that teachers at GES will shift in teaching practices and utilize

instructional coaching more frequently to enhance students' reading/English language arts and mathematics.

## **Summary**

This retrospective mixed methods study focused on implementing an instructional coaching program at one elementary school. The purpose of the study was to understand better the implementation and impact of the instructional coaching program during the 2018-2019 academic year in preparation for a full-scale return to the model in 2022-2023. Findings suggested that the model GES used an instructional coaching model facilitated by a team including the administration and instructional coaches in 2017-2018 better to meet the needs of teachers and the students. This model was selected when instructional coaching was decentralized from a district-level initiative to a school-level initiative. Since the school is currently responsible for all aspects of the instructional coaching approach, this study sought to retrospectively understand the implementation and impact of this model during the 2018-2019 academic year to inform current and future implementation of instructional coaching. Student achievement results suggest that teachers in grades 2 through 5 received valuable knowledge from the walkthroughs and observations that helped to improve their instruction to students. The second conclusion is that individual and group coaching sessions were helpful and productive for teachers in grades 2 through 5. Based on the findings, I suggested that the leadership team use this data to share with grades 2 through 5 teachers. Earlier, the principal viewed this data as a gap in the learning curve for other teachers whose scores were not as high and whose teachers were not as actively engaged in instructional coaching as a group or individually.

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## APPENDIX A

### Literacy Coaching Observation Notes Ann Hampton (Pseudonym), Grade 2 (9/27/18)

Instructional Focus: Mini-lesson on text-to-text connections

	Classroom Environment		
Look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Routines</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Groupings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Culture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Access to text</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Materials/Resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learning Targets Posted</li> </ul>	I notice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students are seated in front of you on the carpet</li> <li>● Learning targets are posted</li> <li>● Book boxes are labeled and spread around the room</li> </ul>	I wonder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are there using the bathroom expectations</li> <li>● How do you feel about the extra talking during the lesson</li> <li>● What are the expectations for dismissal to seat/lining up</li> </ul>	I love: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You are so positive</li> <li>● You give quick reminders to fix behaviors</li> <li>● Your energy and spirit are infectious</li> </ul>
	Student Engagement		
Look for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Active engagement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Varied methods</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Tools available</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher talk/Student Talk</li> </ul>	I notice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The boy that came back from TAB when you started reading</li> <li>● A student self-selected TAB</li> <li>● Students shared a lot</li> </ul>	I wonder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If you made a more direct turn/talk and brought it back, would it be more effective</li> <li>● Have you used CHAMPS? expectations</li> <li>● How you felt about the timing of students being seated</li> </ul>	I love: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Your use of turn/talk</li> <li>● The connections of text/text and text/self</li> <li>● Students have an opportunity to share</li> </ul>
	Literacy Instruction		

<p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Balanced literacy framework</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Differentiation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher language</li> </ul>	<p>I notice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You stopped and modeled a think aloud</li> <li>● You allowed students to talk about the pictures/not just</li> </ul>	<p>I wonder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was there a preassessment?</li> <li>● How will you know they understood?</li> </ul>	<p>I love:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You were constantly modeling your thinking</li> <li>● Always making connections</li> <li>● Great visuals in</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pacing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assessment</li> </ul>	the words you read		your slide deck presentation
	Literacy Content		

<p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Skills taught and reinforced</li> <li>● Strategies taught and reinforced</li> <li>● Alignment of instruction</li> <li>● Appropriate text levels</li> </ul>	<p>I notice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Excellent choice of a mini-lesson</li> <li>● You were well prepared</li> <li>● Going to make connections during read to self today</li> </ul>	<p>I wonder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Where are you in the 20-day plan?</li> <li>● How are your students doing for read to self-stamina?</li> </ul>	<p>I love:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The text/text connections students were making</li> <li>● Repeating the learning target at the end of the lesson again</li> </ul>
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Name: A. Hampton (Pseudonym), Grade 2

Date: 9-21-18

Goal: What is your instructional focus?	Conducting a mini lesson on text-to-text connections
Process: What kind of coaching will best meet your goal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Demonstration</li><li>● Co-teaching</li><li>● Observation</li><li>● Combination</li></ul>	Would like an observation coaching session to give feedback on literacy instruction?
Pre-coaching conversation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What do you have planned?</li><li>2. What pre-assessment have you used to help plan instruction?</li><li>3. Anything specific you would like me to watch for or focus on?</li><li>4. Anything else I should know before the observation?</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A mini lesson on text-to-text connections</li><li>● No pre-assessment</li><li>● Student engagement</li></ul>



<p>Post-coaching conversation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What went well/felt good?</li> <li>2. Anything that did not feel quite, right?</li> <li>3. How did students respond? How do you know?</li> <li>4. What do students need next?</li> <li>5. What additional supports are needed?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students were attentive Flowed nicely</li> <li>2. Lesson took a while to get through</li> <li>3. Want support in small group instruction/differentiation?</li> </ol>

## APPENDIX B

### Quick Check: Focus on Mini-Lessons

Name: M. Pace (Pseudonym) Grade: 4      Date: 1-15-20 Time: 1:40-2:10 p.m.

Expectations	Observed Yes/No	Notes
<u>Focus:</u> Teacher/Students read and discuss posted learning target and sets the purpose for learning	Yes	1:40 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LT- We can draw inferences</li> </ul> Students on the carpet. Teacher- inferences are what you read and what you know 75% of students seem engaged Teacher- looking for raised hands Student reads. Teacher stops behavior of another student
<u>Model:</u> Teacher models strategy/skill using a mentor text (I do), generates questions (including varying DOK levels), and cocreates anchor charts with students		1:45 p.m. Ss start getting antsy, they want to share T has Ss listen to My Name Is Violet on SB 70% seemed engage 1:50 p.m. T asks question---why does.... Calls on individual Ss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My wonder-----could they have done a Turn and Talk so they can all process and share</li> </ul> Noises/bodies moving, playing with hair, hands looking around 55% seem engaged Did those 2 Ss warrant a TAB? Could it have been done more quietly?

<u>Guided Practice:</u> Teacher/Students practice skill using various forms of interaction (we do)		
<u>Bridge to Transfer:</u> Teacher revisits learning target before releasing students and students independently practice the skill (you do)		1:55 p.m. T goes over CHAMPS for Individual Work Time Sent students back separately, instead of all at once. 2:00 p.m. Student Work Time S whistling---asked to stop---call to the office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wonder---could you have gone over there quietly and talked to him instead of out loud in front of everyone. He kept at it to save face.</li> </ul> 2:05 p.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to find a way to set your expectations, mean it, and stick to it</li> <li>• Voice levels are way too loud</li> <li>• Do they have incentives?</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What motivates some of your children? Calling the office isn't changing anything.</li> </ul> 22% are on task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your volunteer have anything specific he could do? Maybe do Sight Words, Fluency practice, listen to kids read?</li> </ul> 2:10 p.m. 28% are on task 2:15 p.m.
Teacher assesses students' knowledge of the strategy/skill taught through various strategies (conversation, exit tickets, etc.)		
<u>Share &amp; Reflect:</u> Teacher provided an opportunity for sharing and reflection at the end of learning		
Teacher uses Big Books (K-1) or student mentor text (2-5) and BU online resources to deliver mini-lesson		

Teacher kept mini-lesson to about 15-20 minutes.		
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Future Considerations:

- Re-establish how/where to sit on the floor, they need more space up front
- Before releasing Ss to their work, post on the board who you are seeing. Those Ss get what they need to return to the carpet or table, wherever you are meeting with them, so they don't need to get started, only to leave their work after a minute

## APPENDIX C

### GES Elementary School End-of-the-Year Teacher Interview

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Name: A. HAMPTON (PSEUDONYM), GRADE 2 Date: March 30, 2019

#### Individual Literacy Reflection

1. What do you think has been your greatest achievement in literacy this year?  
Having worked hard--but not as efficiently nor effectively as I'm capable--at teaching this year, my greatest achievement has been achieving greater clarity around small groups and targeted assessments.
2. If you were to change one thing about your literacy instruction this year, what would it be?  
My small groups would have been more organized, more tailored to students' skills & needs, and more effective at strengthening & maximizing students' reading & comprehension skills.
3. What is your number goal about literacy instruction next year? \*\* Please see #2)

#### Coaching Reflection

1. What has worked best for you from a coaching perspective? Observations? Modeling? Learning new strategies? Data review? Just chatting? Jamie, you are always willing & open to listening, helping, supporting (at the individual and team level), suggesting, and modeling, and it has meant the world to me. Thank you for all your hard work, for sharing your vision of what you want for a unified Northport literacy community, and for sharing all of your expertise!! And of course, thank you always for your huge heart & your great humor!!
2. How could I improve my support of you in literacy instruction? I literally can't think of any way you could have supported me more or better as a Literacy Coach.
3. Anything else you would like to share about your year, literacy, coaching? No

## APPENDIX D

### Classroom Walkthrough Checklist: Development Process

- I. Identify:
  - A. Purpose and Focus Areas
  - B. Users and Impacted Groups
    - 1. To monitor the implementation of a district-adopted program
    - 2. To assess the level of differentiation in classroom teaching and learning.
    - 3. To provide peer support to professional development participants to implement the learned strategies.
- II. Form a Task Force Group with Representation from:
  - A. District and Site Administrators
  - B. Representatives from Users and Impacted Groups
- III. Task Force Group:
  - A. Checklist Development
    - 1. Identify a list of specific evidence when the focus area is fully implemented with quality.
    - 2. Evidence may be grouped into major categories such as “What does the teacher do?” “What does the student do?” “What does student work look like?”
    - 3. Choose a format based on the type of amount of written information to be included on the checklist.
  - B. Implementation and Monitoring Plan:
    - 1. Identify the details how the checklist will be used, including timeline, frequency, roles and responsibilities, process, and procedures.
    - 2. Identify how the data collected from the Walkthrough Checklist will be used.
    - 3. Identify how progress will be monitored and how all concerned parties will be held accountable for an effective implementation.
    - 4. Identify how support will be provided to address the identified needs.
  - C. Communication and Collaboration
    - 1. Share draft checklist and implementation plan with all users and impacted groups to solicit input.
    - 2. Make necessary revisions and refinement based on input received.
    - 3. Share final checklist and implement with all concerned parties.
  - D. Implementation Monitoring and Refinement
    - 1. Continue to monitor implementation progress and make necessary refinements and revisions based on progress data.

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DECLARATION of NOT RESEARCH

Re: Pro00112922

Dear Mr. Frederico Rowe:

This is to certify that research study entitled *Evaluation of an Instructional Coaching Process and Its Impact on Student and Teacher Outcomes* was reviewed on 8/3/2021 by the Office of Research Compliance, which is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). The Office of Research Compliance, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board, has determined that the referenced research study is not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq.

No further oversight by the USC IRB is required. However, the investigator should inform the Office of Research Compliance prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the status of the project and require another review.

If you have questions, contact Lisa M. Johnson at [lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu) or (803) 777-6670.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Johnson  
ORC Associate Director and IRB Manager