

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to the two people I love most in this world. Nayeli and Diego you are brilliant, imaginative, and enlightening (my greatest creations yet), every day you inspire me to be a better me. All of my years in education and you have been my best teachers, your creativity, humor, and words of wisdom...Priceless! Continue to strive to be your personal best...remember life isn't about finding yourself it is about creating yourself; so make sure to use up the whole canvas. Like you for always...Love you both forever.

### In Memory of Profé Dennis Sayers...

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## ABSTRACT

Expectations for student achievement are at an all time high, as is the scrutiny over teacher effectiveness (Maskit, 2011). School districts are tasked with the job of determining best practices for improving teacher quality (Britton & Anderson, 2010). Instructional coaching is considered an effective best practice for the professional development of teachers (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Primarily instructional coaches are to build capacity among teachers and support teachers in improving their instruction (Knight, 2007). Unfortunately, many teachers are against the idea of receiving feedback from a coach (Britton & Anderson, 2010). This sequential mixed methods study was designed to engage both new and veteran teachers in a deep examination of their acceptance of and experiences with instructional coaching. Most teachers in the study reported their support for Instructional Coaching. Additionally, this study also aimed to better understand factors in the educational environment that contribute to teachers' views of instructional coaching. Themes that emerged from the interviews with regard to factors contributing to teachers' views towards coaching were: support, relationships, and willingness to change. Moreover, teachers with 16-25 years of experience reported more support for Instructional Coaching than any other group of teachers.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1900s, educational reformist and progressive John Dewey suggested that the factory model of education, which was implemented at the time, was misleading. He thought that the main task of schools should be to reawaken the power of democracy (Stevens et al., 2004). His idea of education and curriculum has in a way been rekindled. He believed that learning occurred when children experienced an integrated curriculum, built their critical thinking skills, and had opportunities to enhance their decision-making skills (Stevens et al., 2004). Dewey's vision aligns with the ideals of the most recent educational reform, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Educators and the organizations they represented along with the Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers developed the CCSS as a grass-roots effort. The purpose of CCSS was to ensure that there was a consistent set of standards across the states, and to make certain that students were being prepared with necessary skills to succeed in college and career (CCSS Initiative, 2015). To assure positive educational results, an undertaking of the Superintendent's California P-16 Council included recommendations for closing the achievement gap by developing a more inclusive learning system. The Council's objective was to make certain that effective strategies were being integrated into the school system to improve education for all students (California Department of Education, 2009). Ensuring that teachers receive quality professional development

opportunities is essential in executing the Council's objectives successfully.

Stevens et al. (2004) suggested that during the commencement of the twentieth century educators began taking on an array of responsibilities aside from teaching, along with a push for increased teacher training. During their leisure time today's teachers are also expected to keep up with current educational practices by maintaining professional growth. According to Knight (2009b) teachers face the reality that when student learning falls short, they end up being blamed. There are a variety of professional development (PD) opportunities that teachers can utilize to implement change. There is professional development centered around teaching curriculum or teaching diverse students, and other PD that focuses on how to reach the English language learner or other specific groups of students. Professional development in these areas can arm teachers with tools to assist students and in turn address the achievement gap. Usually a trend of literature and professional development modules correspond with any new educational reform. The trail of literature and expert opinions has affirmed itself when accounting for professional development and the Common Core. Trainers have shared good teaching practices, ideas to implement creative and critical thinking, and rigorous opportunities for students to learn.

Administrators and teachers alike need to see the value in professional development, in order to give students the needed skills to be academically successful with the most recent reforms. It is essential that administrators investigate the types of professional development that work best for teachers and will directly impact the

success of students. Moreover, it is critical that a positive, collaborative culture is promoted at school sites and within districts. Teachers need to be offered on-going support, so that they can provide an effective, high quality education for students (Gulamhussein, 2013). This idea of professional development is imperative, not because of reform, but because teachers need to keep abreast of current practices, and have opportunities to refine their craft. Teachers play a role in molding society's next generation of citizens, innovators, and leaders.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Unmet expectations of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 have educational leaders searching for more effective ways to educate students. The newest reform in education, the Common Core State Standards, was intended to ensure that students are equipped with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, demonstrating their knowledge and ability to be successful in college and career. Expectations for student achievement have never been higher, nor has the scrutiny over teacher effectiveness (Maskit, 2011). According to Britton and Anderson (2010), school districts across the nation have the ambiguous task of determining best practices for improving teacher quality. Instructional coaching has become an effective best practice for offering job-embedded professional development to teachers (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The primary goal of an instructional coach is to build capacity among teachers and support teachers in improving their instruction (Knight, 2007). Unfortunately, many teachers are opposed to the idea of receiving authentic feedback from a coach (Britton & Anderson, 2010). Instructional coaching can be utilized as an effective means of

on-going, job-embedded professional development that can potentially support teachers in a nonthreatening manner facilitating reflection and change of current instructional practices (Knight, 2009). In order for coaching to be an effective form of professional development, it is imperative that educational leaders understand the barriers keeping teachers from fully accepting coaching support.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) depicted the realities of teachers across the country as being challenged with a “press of immediacy.” This phrase illustrates the extensive list of management obligations that teachers must manage daily. Along with these management duties, teachers are faced with large class sizes, culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, revolutionized state standards, and often they do not have the opportunity to dedicate time to the professional development needed to meet the press of immediacy of these challenges (Devine, Houssemand, & Meyers, 2013). Even worse, according to Flint, Zisook, and Fisher (2011), when teachers are given professional development trainings they are not offered choices with regard to what they deem beneficial to meet their professional needs. Utilizing effective professional development (PD) practices is imperative for implementation of new knowledge (Knight, 2007). Traditional one-shot trainings have been proven inefficient PD for teachers usually with no more than 10% of teachers implementing new knowledge (Bush, 1984). Instructional coaching is an effective approach to support teachers’ learning and to support the implementation of their new learning to better teach their students (Knight, 2007).

When school districts implement an instructional coaching model they are proposing a professional development model or a partnership approach that can allow differentiated learning opportunities for teachers that offer alternatives when it comes to their professional growth. The ultimate purpose of utilizing an instructional coach is to support teachers so that they impact academic success of students (Devine et al., 2013). It is essential for educational leaders to gain knowledge of best practices for professional development and implement these practices in a model that is conducive for teachers, students and the culture of the school.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of teachers who have worked with instructional coaches. This sequential mixed methods study was designed to engage both new and veteran teachers in a deep examination of their acceptance of and experiences with instructional coaching. Additionally, this study also aimed to better understand factors in the educational environment that contribute to teachers' views of instructional coaching. Moreover, there was an investigation to consider how the number of years of teaching experience affected teachers' views about instructional coaching.

### **Research Questions**

This sequential mixed methods study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1: What are teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching?
- 2: What factors influence the way teachers view instructional coaching?

3: How do the views of coaching change dependent upon number of years of experience?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Andragogy (also called adult education) has been defined as a method for teaching adults (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Lindeman coined the term in the mid-1920s; it described elements to consider when understanding and designing learning experiences for adult learners. Knowles described the difference between adult learners and student learners and the need to treat them as different entities (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Knowles (2007) proposed some specific assumptions about adult learners. He described them as independent and self-directed learners, with a rich resourceful bank of knowledge more complete than that of a child. Other things to consider about adult learners include their dedication to their social roles and how that plays a part in their learning, and that learning should be problem centered and immediately applicable to their lives. Lastly, adults are internally motivated and new learning needs to be justified. The process in which teachers are taught is key to the andragogy model, and this process is imperative to take into consideration when providing professional development opportunities for educators. Instructional coaching offers a method of professional development that could potentially incorporate all the key elements of adult learning described by Knowles.

### **Significance of the Study**

In order to implement a successful coaching model, it is essential for educational leaders to investigate reasons why teachers are in opposition to or in

favor of receiving coaching support. Utilizing instructional coaching as a consistent and ongoing support could potentially have positive outcomes for students, teachers, and administrators. The findings in this study will contribute to the knowledge base of educators with regard to their understanding of the implications of instructional coaching. Findings from this study will also provide information for instructional coaches to improve their practices when working with teachers and delivering professional development opportunities. Better-informed leaders can make more effective decisions about implementing a successful instructional coaching program or when providing other types of effective professional development for teachers.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Achievement gap.** The disproportion in academic performance between White students and ethnically diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

**Coaching.** Coaching is an effective job-embedded, non-evaluative, method of professional development that offers a safe environment for teachers to collaborate and reflect on new integrated skills and strategies that are being implemented in the classroom (Knight, 2007).

**Instructional coach.** A teacher leader trained to support colleagues as he or she employs research-based instructional strategies into the classroom. The prime goal of an instructional coach is to help teachers build capacity and improve teaching practices (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

**Peer coaching.** Peer coaching is a non-threatening form of professional development where self-directed peers with a collegial relationship offer guidance

and support to each other through collaboration, communication, and reflection (Vidmar, 2006, p. 136).

**Professional development.** Learning activities in which educators take part to learn new skills and knowledge, or enhance current abilities to develop their practice (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

### Summary

Chapter I gave a brief history of education and educational shifts due to educational reform. Additionally, assumptions about adult learners were illustrated, along with an overview of the need for quality professional development experiences for teachers. The duties of a teacher have transformed tremendously over the years, and it is imperative that administrations offer teachers ample opportunities to participate in professional development. In order to minimize the achievement gap, teacher development will be key. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of teachers who have worked with instructional coaches. Understanding teachers' perceptions about instructional coaching and modes of teacher learning could inform district and site administrators and coaches when addressing teacher learning.

Chapter II includes a review of literature discussing research on adult learning and transformational learning, followed by an analysis of professional development of teachers. Additionally, the chapter will include a section about best practices for teacher professional development, and relevant research on coaching models and how coaching impacts teacher learning and student achievement.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II examines existing research on adult learning and transformational learning followed by an analysis of the professional development of teachers. This study further investigates best practices for teacher professional development and how teacher perceptions impact personal learning and sustainability of new learning. Finally, there is a review of relevant research on coaching models and the impact of coaching on teacher practice and student achievement.

#### **Adult Learners and Transformational Learning**

If the needs and interests of adult learners are not taken into consideration when supporting professional growth, resentment builds and adults resist new learning opportunities (Knowles, 1973; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Adults participate in learning activities depending on where they are in their stage in life, and usually they seek development linking to their social roles and learning that could improve their life circumstances (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Learning activities for adults ideally are designed to consider the learners' "age, social roles, or self-perception, [that] define them as adults" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 11). Adults differ from children in their learning experiences because they have acquired diverse and coherent experiences, values, and assumptions that make meaning of their world (Mezirow, 2000). Additionally, adults have responsibilities that children have not yet acquired. According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), the profile of a typical adult

learner has not changed much in over 40 years. Adult learners are described as usually having obtained at least a high school degree, are under the age of 40, are married with children, and work full-time (p. 14). Moreover, learning can occur in settings sponsored by educational institutions, opportunities sponsored by other institutional agencies (for profit), or through community organizations (church or clubs). Adult learning opportunities often occur as training or professional development for the workplace where learning is typically self-directed (Cranton, 2006; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

In adults, learning is motivated by the situation; learning interests tend to be centered on their experiences, desires, and social roles (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Knowles (1997) described five key aspects that research has identified as unique to adult learners and adult learning. First, adult learners are self-directed and experienced with a diverse collection of knowledge. Furthermore, for learning to occur it is necessary for adult learners to take part in tasks that will support the development of social roles. Moreover, adults possess a problem-centered orientation to learning. Lastly, adult learners need to be able to apply new learning immediately (Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1997). Other assumptions described that adult learners are internally motivated and need to know the reasoning behind learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). In order for adults to put new learning into practice or change past practice, they need to be in control of their learning (Cranton, 2006). Knowing these assumptions about adult learning, it is critical that educators teaching adult learners

engage learners by facilitating rather than dominating the learning environment (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

The most powerful form of learning is transformational learning. Transformational learning occurs when one changes his or her behaviors, feelings, and not only what he or she knows, but how he or she knows (Poutiantine & Conners, 2012). Individuals make meaning of the world over time and through a series of phases, and this meaning grows and changes or transforms as one accumulates experiences and makes connections between known knowledge and new knowledge (Cranton, 2006; Keegan, 1994; Poutiantine & Conners, 2012). Being aware of one's assumptions is a key part of transformational learning, because an individual's assumptions directly affect actions. However, changing one's beliefs and practices can be a difficult process, in some cases the transformational learning can be "unexpected, hurtful, or devastating", and not always a deliberate process (Cranton, 2006, p. 6; Poutiatine & Conners, 2012).

Transformational learning means changing previous attitudes and thinking, according to new knowledge realized through a reflective occurrence. Today's "knowledge society" is one where information doubles every few years, and on the "World Wide Web" information can double as quickly as every 90 days; it can be difficult to keep up with these rapid changes (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 4). The educational system is not immune to this predicament of rapid change. Education is in a constant state of modification; educators investigate best instructional practices, learn to implement new technologies and curricula, and they grapple with

understanding new content standards (Trotter, 2006). Educators are faced with the challenging task of ensuring that no child is left behind, and that every student is prepared for college or career. They are charged with the duty of grooming the next generation of learners to obtain jobs, utilize technologies, and resolve worldly issues that are yet to be realized (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Teachers continually face this challenge by shaping their instructional practices and developing as professionals to meet the needs of students (Trotter, 2006). Trotter (2006) stressed the need for districts to consider adult learning theories when providing effective professional development. Deliberate planning of professional development offers support to teachers and a chance to successfully confront these changes.

### **Professional Development of Teachers**

In the following section a review of articles about the professional development of teachers will be explored. First, the importance of transformative teaching is presented, followed by significant information regarding important aspects of teacher learning, and sustainability for the professional learning of teachers. In their examination of school-related teacher learning, Kose and Lim (2010) conducted a study to understand how professional learning predicts the perceptions and practices of teachers in transformational teaching. The authors believe that transformative teaching is demonstrated by the teacher's capacity to decrease deficit thinking, or thinking that blames the students or parents for their failure in school (Kose & Lim, 2010). Additionally, transformative teaching is illustrated by an increased value and understanding for diversity in teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students,

and an increased occurrence of teaching for social justice in the classroom (p. 204). Professional learning has been distinguished as a necessary factor attributing to school and teacher improvement (Darling Hammond, 1997; Elmore 2002; Kose & Lim, 2010; National Commission on Teaching, America's Future, 1996). Kose and Lim (2010) focused on non-traditional types of professional learning or "school-related teacher learning such as study groups, mentoring, and peer planning and observation" (p. 197). Researchers studied transformative professional learning survey data (305 teachers surveyed), along with other data informed by fieldwork and interviews that took place over three years. In 2008, survey data were gathered from 25 elementary schools from eight public school districts in small urban cities in a large Midwestern state (p. 198). Five teacher outcome (dependent) variables were utilized: transformative beliefs, transformative practices, curricular diversity representation, expertise, and teaching for social justice (p. 209). In addition, nine professional learning process (PLP) (independent) variables were examined in the study: English language learner collaboration time, mentor time, study group time, peer observation time, planning days per year, team collaboration quality, staff meeting/in-service quality, special education collaboration time, and team collaboration time (p. 206). Five transformative professional learning (TPL) (independent) variables were also investigated: teaching for English language learner professional learning, special education professional learning, students in poverty professional learning, students of color professional learning and teaching for social justice professional learning.

Kose and Lim (2010) found that when teachers participated in staff meetings and in-service collaboration days, there was a reported decrease in deficit thinking ( $r = -0.65, p < 0.05$ ) (p. 200). Unfortunately, researchers could not link any of the independent variables to the increase in transformational thinking. Results indicated that the *Professional Learning Process* model (PLP) and *Transformative Professional Learning* model (TPL) explained a low to moderate difference in transformative change in teaching beliefs, practices, and the expertise of teachers. When analyzing the relationship between PLP and teachers' beliefs with regard to deficit thinking, the PLP explained 5.6% of the variance. The factor that seemed to make a difference in changing teacher beliefs about deficit thinking was the quality of professional development offered in staff meetings and in-service trainings (-0.65) (p. 211). TPL only explained 3% of the deficit thinking variance; however, there were no independent variables significantly associated with this decrease. Furthermore, researchers investigated the relationship between PLP and teaching practices. They found that the PLP model explained variance of about 4-8% for curriculum diversity representation (CDR) and 14.8% for teaching for social justice (TSJ) (p. 210). The variance described for the TPL model ranged from 9.7 to 27% for CDR and 13.44% for TSJ (p. 210). Additionally, they found that the relationship between professional learning and teachers' expertise explained 2 to 11% of variance for expertise outcomes; however, PLP did not positively account for any type of perceived transformative expertise (p. 206). Transformative factors explained 3 to 16% of the variance for the dependent variables. Overall, researchers found that the PLP model

better predicted transformative beliefs and the TPL model better predicted transformative teaching practices and expertise (p. 211). Kose and Lim (2010) asserted that professional learning is effective for teachers when sustained, comprehensive, and content-specific in order to maintain effective transformational teaching outcomes. The sustained professional learning was a critical element of improving teaching and achievement. Researchers also implied that professional learning content should be differentiated according to teachers' needs.

Educational innovations often fail because educational leaders overlook the importance of teaching teachers and the need to help teachers understand the innovation (Bakkeness, Vermunt, & Wubbels, 2010). Bakkeness et al. (2010) conducted an exploratory study to better understand and assist in forming a conceptual framework to describe how teachers learn. The study consisted of 94 participants (53 male and 41 female) with teaching experience ranging from 3 to 40 years ( $M = 18.55$  years,  $SD = 9.67$ ). Selected teachers from 30 schools in the Netherlands taught in all core subject areas in upper level secondary education. Digital logs were collected every six weeks for one year, and analyzed with regard to learning activities and learning outcomes. Frequencies and percentages were calculated, along with cross-tabulations using chi-square tests to determine significance in "association between learning activities, learning outcomes and learning environments" (p. 539). About one-third of the teachers ( $n = 32$ ) were not engaged in any type of organized learning environment at their school. Approximately one-third of the teachers ( $n = 34$ ) engaged in a peer-coaching project,

and another one-third ( $n = 34$ ) took part in collaborative project groups at their school site. The study focused specifically on observable and unobservable learning behaviors that secondary school teachers engage in and report when faced with new learning. Researchers looked specifically for how secondary school teachers reported learning outcomes in terms of changes in knowledge, beliefs, emotions and practice.

They found that teachers reported that they engaged in “considering own practice” 33% of the time and “experimenting” 31% of the time for all learning activities (Bakkeness et al., 2010, p. 539). Researchers suggest that participants in the study learned less when getting ideas from others, even though teachers mainly reported changes in “knowledge and beliefs” as 50% of all instances, “changes in practice” were rare and were only reported in 1.4% of the all instances (p. 541). Their findings revealed that “increased awareness” (when teachers intentionally recognized that something was important to them) was mainly associated with “considering own practice” but least with “getting ideas from others” (p. 542). Researchers also found that “intention to try new practice” associated significantly with “intention to continue new practices” (p. 542).

Participants were asked to use digital logs to describe experiences, which could mean that findings may possibly be incomplete, as teachers may not have reported all information needed to make a more complete picture. Despite this limitation Bakkeness et al. (2010) found noteworthy links between learning activities and learning outcomes that add to the knowledge base of how teachers learn. For example, when a teacher became aware of the learning activity she was able to

verbalize her experience of friction, due to reflective practices. This teacher said, “I have noticed that writing skills do not get enough attention in my lessons. I hardly put into practice the intended lesson format...that is not good because writing is a process” (p. 543). Such information is important when creating professional development opportunities for teachers. Professional development opportunities should have built in time for teachers to reflect on their practice.

When offering professional learning to teachers it is essential to consider how adults learn and what makes learning important. de Vries, van de Grift, and Jansen (2014) asserted that learning and working should be interconnected for teachers because they are closely connected to beliefs about teaching and learning. Researchers investigated teachers' beliefs about learning, whether these teachers could be grouped by identified belief structures, and how belief profiles impact/relate to continuing professional development (CPD). de Vries et al. (2014) surveyed 260 teachers in April and May of 2010, with a response rate of 25%. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were female and 51% were male. The average number of years of experience was 18.8 years (ranging from 1 to 42 years), and the average age of participating teachers was 46.7 years (ranging from 21 to 63 years). Respondents were from four secondary schools in the Netherlands, and all were associated with the *School of Education*, a school for perspective teachers with the intention of enhancing participation in CPD of pre-service and in-service teachers (p. 343).

Results from the study by de Vries et al. (2014) revealed that teachers had strong feelings about learning and teaching when analyzing student-oriented and

subject-matter oriented beliefs. In this investigation researchers also discovered that teachers were significantly more likely to participate in CPD when the activities were updating knowledge activities or collaborative activities, than they were to participate in reflective activities. After analyzing teachers' beliefs, researchers found that participation in CPD was mostly related to high levels of student orientation (p. 351). When teachers had a high rank score in subject matter beliefs and a low rank score in student orientation they were less likely to participate in CPD, but if scores were high in subject matter and student orientation, teachers were more likely to participate in CPD. In conclusion, de Vries et al. (2014) asserted that subject matter orientation was equally as important as student orientation beliefs, and in order to enhance teacher participation in their own learning and teaching, they must realize the value in participating. It is crucial that teachers recognize the importance of participating in continued professional development, and that they take control of their learning. CPD offers the opportunity for growth in teaching practices (de Vries et al., 2014).

### **Best Practices for Teacher Professional Development**

Teacher quality is one of the most important variables (if not the most important variable) affecting student achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wenglinsky, 2000). Creating effective professional development opportunities for teachers is essential as they are at the center of educational reform efforts, and required to hold students accountable to high standards (Cuban, 1990; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, Mundry, Love and Hewson (2010) asserted that teachers are not given adequate opportunities with

quality professional development. Time to collaborate, observe in other classrooms, engage in sustained learning with coaches and time to reflect on their teaching is not the norm (p. 7). Furthermore, Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) stated that current forms of one-shot trainings are ineffective and do not allow teachers ample time, activities, or focused content essential to build teacher knowledge and develop meaningful changes in practice. It is essential that teachers participate continually in deepening the knowledge and skills required to be effective practitioners (Garet et al., 2001).

Garet et al. (2001) collected teacher survey data investigating the relationship between identified best practices features of professional development and self-reported change in knowledge, skills, and classroom practices among teachers. The data were analyzed as part of a national evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. The Eisenhower program provided funds to school districts through state education agencies (SEAs), state agencies for higher education (SAHEs), and to not-for-profit organizations (p. 918). Funding was mainly provided to support professional development initiatives in mathematics and science (p. 919).

Sampled teachers were a national representation of those who attended Eisenhower-assisted activities in 1997-1998. Supported activities included a wide range of opportunities such as "workshops and conferences, study groups, professional networks and collaboratives, task force work, and peer coaching". Overall, the survey response rate was 72%; a total of 1,027 teachers took part in the survey representing 358 districts and SAHE grantees (Garet et al., 2001).

Researchers examined data including the type of activity, the duration of the activity, and the degree of collaboration or collective participation emphasized in the activity (p. 920). Core features of professional development were also examined, such as: focusing professional development on content, offering activities for teachers to be actively engaged in “discussion, planning, and practice”, observing expert teachers and being observed, lesson planning, reviewing student work, and presenting, leading and writing (p. 926). Additionally, Garet et al. (2001) found that of the level of coherence of professional development programs was important. Other factors that had an impact on coherence were teachers’ perceptions, the enhancement of the knowledge, skills, and change in teaching practice due to the professional development. Researchers found that the type of activity teachers took part in influenced the duration of participation (p. 930). Teachers’ knowledge and skills were typically enhanced when more time was spent participating in reform activities. The amount of time and contact hours teachers spent professionally developing also had a positive influence on active learning and coherence (p. 933). The specific activities that benefited teacher learning were professional communication and collaboration with other teachers, lesson planning, observing and being observed by others, reviewing student data, and giving presentations that aligned with individual goals, teacher experiences, and content standards. Time and contact hours positively influenced content knowledge because teachers were able to focus on mathematics or science content for longer periods of time and more frequently (p. 933). Furthermore, content focus and coherence reported to have a positive effect on increased

knowledge and skills, when professional development opportunities were content specific. Also, when professional development opportunities were connected to teacher goals, experiences of teachers, or connected to reform efforts, teacher's knowledge and skills were heightened (p. 933). Lastly, researchers reported that when teachers perceived an increase in knowledge and skills it positively influenced change in teacher practice ( $r = .44$ ) (p. 934). It is important that school districts offer teachers content focused, "hands-on", job-embedded learning opportunities to support teachers in enhancing their knowledge and skills (p. 935).

When teachers are presented with appropriate opportunities for learning they are more likely to continue their professional development and implement new learning. Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, and Geijsel (2011) offered data that support the idea that teachers who engage in collaboration and professional learning opportunities are more likely to improve their teaching practice and the quality of instruction that they offer to students. Thoonen et al. (2011) conducted a survey in the Netherlands to offer school boards insight about improving teaching and learning. Five hundred two participating elementary school teachers responded to the questionnaire (20% male, 80% female); their demographic make up varied. New and veteran teachers participated in the survey, and years of experience ranged from less than one year to more than 45 years. Survey items focused on teaching practices, teacher engagement in professional learning, teacher motivation, school organizational conditions, and transformational school leadership (Thoonen et al., 2011, p. 510).

Researchers reported that teachers who participated in collaborative opportunities were more likely to engage in experimentation and reflection, and take part in professional learning activities. Thoonen et al. (2011) also reported that when teachers had a strong sense of self-efficacy they were more adept at personalizing the goals of the school and more motivated to participate in professional learning (p. 514). Their findings suggested that when teachers perceive a culture of trust, they appear to be more motivated to collaborate with their peers (p. 515). They also found it imperative that administrators offer teachers support in experimenting and encourage them to self-reflect. They concluded that these actions would lead to autonomous teachers who are motivated practitioners.

Desimone et al. (2002) conducted a three-year longitudinal study with the intention of contributing to the body of knowledge regarding the characteristics of professional development and how these characteristics affect teaching. Two hundred seven purposefully selected math and science teachers at three points in time, from 1996-1999, completed a longitudinal teacher survey. Participants were selected from 30 schools in 10 school districts (one elementary, middle, and high school participated from each of the 10 districts). Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was used to separately approximate coefficients for each level of the data (strategy-level and teacher activity level). Individual analyses were also conducted for the three areas being studied (technology, higher order instruction, and alternative assessments). Data showed significant effects for three teaching strategies, “on the set of four technology practices ( $b = 0.342, p < .05$ ), the set of five higher order instructional

strategies ( $b = 0.233, p < .05$ ), and the set of six alternative assessments ( $b = 0.494, p < .001$ )” (p. 100). Overall, the coefficients were positive (p. 100). These findings validated significant findings from a national study on “best practices”. Five features of professional development that were predicted to improve teaching practice were identified in the study. Findings revealed that professional development that increased teachers’ practice and ongoing implementation in the classroom were focused on specific teaching of technology, specific instructional practices, assessment practices, acquired collective participation, and active learning opportunities (Desimone et al., 2002, p. 102). This study offered insight as to which factors contribute to increased praxis among classroom teachers suggesting, “change in teaching would occur if teachers experienced consistent, high-quality professional development” (p. 105).

### **Coaching Models**

Educators have a new vested interest in “reform” types of professional development that take place during the school day, and some during the instructional process, allowing teachers to make connections to their teaching (Garet et al., 2001). “Reform” types of professional learning opportunities are offered in a range of formal and informal learning methods, and are continued over time (Garet et al., 2001). Wenglinsky (2000) asserted that professionally developing teachers, and the essence to which they teach has a direct impact on student achievement (p. 11). Coaching is a “reform” type of professional development that has been utilized to impact teacher practice and student achievement. In their review of 254 documents on coaching, Cornett and Knight (2009) asserted that there are different possible outcomes of

coaching depending on the type of coaching model being implemented (Knight, 2009a, p. 193). There are four common uniquely distinct approaches to coaching that offer support to teachers in their professional development (p. 193). Peer Coaching, Cognitive Coaching, Literacy Coaching, and Instructional Coaching all render different results (p. 193). Peer Coaching and Instructional Coaching will be examined further in this literature review.

It is imperative that educational leaders provide continuous support to teachers as they are faced with changing standards and accountability measures. One method of providing support is Peer Coaching. Peer Coaching involves the collaboration of at least two colleagues who work together and reflect upon current teaching practices (Shields, 2007, p. 01). Pollara (2012) described Peer Coaching as a confidential, non-evaluative professional development approach where teachers regularly and mutually work together to develop teaching practices through collaboration, observing one another and providing feedback, and supporting each other as needed (p. 46). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) stressed the importance of teachers needing to access their colleagues to learn from them.

Pollara (2012) conducted an action research study that explored the effects of Peer Coaching on instructional practice as a method for professional development. Exploratory research was employed to understand how faculty, staff, and principals felt about the professional development model that had been implemented at the site (Pollara, 2012). Participants ( $N = 15$ ) were selected from a PreK-5 elementary school in New Jersey; they participated in a pilot Collaborative Peer Coaching that Improves

Instruction: *The 2 + 2 Performance Appraisal model* (p. 76). *The 2 + 2 Performance Appraisal model* focused on collaboration to improve instruction, through support, open dialogue, and peer feedback (p. 68). This model utilized a protocol for observations so the observer could take up to a class period for an observation, and could offer two compliments and two ideas for development (Pollara, 2012). Data were gathered through pre and post surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The district was implementing Professional Learning Communities and had block scheduling to encourage common planning time for each grade level. Teachers role-played in a number of scenarios to practice the observation and feedback protocol during the pilot study (p. 76).

Pollara (2012) found that as a result of Peer Coaching, time was productively used for collaboration and teacher reflection (p. 116). According to survey data, participants conveyed that the use of Peer Coaching resulted in adjustments to their instructional practice, showing a slight increase from six who “agreed” in the pre survey to seven who “strongly agreed” in the post survey (p. 100). Research participants also indicated positive impacts in classroom management and content knowledge because of their participation in the Peer Coaching program and the opportunities provided to observe other teachers (p. 105). Pollara found that participants reported having an increase in their common planning time (they took more time to lesson plan and collaborate), compared to the beginning of their experiences with Peer Coaching (p. 114). Overall, there were positive impacts due to the implementation of Peer Coaching at the site. Teachers reported the effectiveness

of Peer Coaching as a method of professional development that allowed the opportunity to build trust, collaboration and communication amongst each other. This finding supports the importance of considering Peer Coaching as an effective professional development model to foster teacher learning.

Another known effective coaching approach is Instructional Coaching, also known as the “partnership approach” (Knight, 2007; Knight, 2009a). In this approach, the instructional coach and the classroom teacher work toward the goals of the individual teacher, where the coach provides differentiated support in the areas of classroom management, content planning, instruction, and assessment (Devine, Meyers, & Houssemand, 2013). An authentic relationship is built between the coach and the participating teacher. Principles established within this relationship include: equality, choice, dialogue, praxis, voice, and reciprocity between the teacher and the coach (Knight & van Nieuweburgh, 2012, p. 104). Instructional Coaching is a job-embedded approach to professional development where teachers can consistently collaborate during lesson planning, and practice implementation of new strategies with a coach utilizing his or her own classroom (Devine et al., 2013, p. 1385). Instructional coaches regularly provide model lessons or demonstrations, observe classroom teachers and provide reflective feedback, and simplify information provided to teachers about shared teaching practices (Knight, 2009a, p. 30). This approach to coaching has demonstrated positive impacts on teacher-efficacy and student achievement (Devine et al., 2013, p. 1385).

Cornett and Knight (2009) suggested that one-time professional development

without coaching to support learning does not result in school wide implementation (Knight, 2009a). Using a coaching approach could increase teacher implementation, or skill transfer from 10-15% implementation of new practices with only one high quality professional development to 85-90% implementation with professional development followed by ongoing coaching support (Knight, 2009a, p. 209).

Coaching models offer continued support for classroom teachers fostering learning and raising implementation outcomes.

Kohler, Crilley, and Shearer (1997) examined outcomes to evaluate effective peer coaching programs attempting to understand what causes changes in teachers' practices or refinement. Furthermore Kohler et al. (1997) investigated the range of instructional processes associated with newly learned instructional practices. There were four voluntary participants in the study; one teacher was beginning her second year of teaching at the time of the study, the other three teachers each had more than 19 years of teaching experience. All teachers were trained in a cooperative learning model adopted by the district along with a direct instruction model. The peer coach was a 32-year retired veteran who had utilized both models of instruction; prior to the study the coach did not know the four teachers, and worked in a different district. An integrated instructional approach (IIA) was utilized in this coaching model which included mini lessons to present new content, feedback and checks for understanding, reciprocal learning (where students are guided through lessons collaboratively working with peers), closure activities, and reteaching as necessary (Kohler et al., 1997).

Throughout the study four dependent measures were collected and analyzed: organization and conduct of integrated activities, teachers and children's instructional processes, focus of teachers' coaching interactions, and teachers' satisfaction and concerns with the integrated approach (Kohler et al., 1997, 243). Researchers found that with the focus of teachers' coaching interactions, where discussion and collaboration occurred with regard to instructional modifications each teacher had a different focus. This result is important to note because it points out that professional development is most effective when differentiated according to the needs of individual teachers. Additionally, results with regard to teachers' implementation of components that focused on Peer Coaching showed that each teacher elaborated or improved his or her practices after collaborating with the coach (p. 245). When analyzing duration of integrated instructional activities, researchers found that teachers' instructional activities per session increased in length during their mini lessons, showing little variation across different conditions. Additionally, elements of teachers' instructional efforts were analyzed and researchers found that teachers sustained instructional changes after the coach was no longer supporting them. Moreover, when analyzing teacher and student instructional processes, researchers found that reciprocal learning caused higher levels of student interaction, and a decrease in off topic talk during closure activities (Kohler et al., 1997). The nonthreatening approach by the coach in this study was credited as being a part of the positive outcomes in this Peer Coaching model. The relationships between teachers and coaches will be important to the success of any coaching model. Additionally, it

was reported that organizational structures promoted the continual learning of teachers, and were effective in tending to student learning (Kohler, Crilley, & Shearer, 1997); however, it is important to note that changes in teachers' practices are usually reported by teachers without direct observations by researchers.

Stichter, Lewis, Richter, Johnson, and Bradley (2006) conducted a study utilizing two professional development models, Peer Coaching and one time in-service trainings where a combination of direct observations were made by researchers and teachers' reported perceptions. Researchers investigated the effects of opportunities to respond (OTR) instructional strategies on students' academic and social behavior and teachers' behaviors. OTR strategies included: teacher talk, prompts, wait-time for student response, and praise for correct responses (p. 666). Sixteen participating teachers from two schools in a Midwest district were separated into two groups. Building 1 was classified as having a lower socio-economic status (SES) than building 2. Each school had participating teachers who taught in grades kindergarten to five, and the average number of years of experience for teachers from building 1 was 13 years. The average from building 2 was 14 years. The majority of participating teachers from both sites had a degree higher than a Bachelors degree. Both schools agreed to implement four specific OTR instructional strategies (Stichter et al., 2006).

Data were also collected from 16 total students chosen to participate by their teachers due to concerns about both their academics and social behaviors (Stichter et al., 2006). Participating students from building 1 consisted of six African American

and two Caucasian students, with an equal representation of males and females. None of the participating students from building 1 had Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Building 2 consisted of one African American and seven Caucasian students; this included seven male students and one female student. In building 2 there were four participating students who had an IEP and received special education services (Stichter et al., 2006). Data were collected during literacy instruction in four phases over a 16-week period. Prior to beginning the study, teachers received in-service on the four instructional strategies or “Teacher Cool Tools” and OTR. The in-service included a 2-hour training video that discussed OTR and a timeline for the experiment (Stichter et al., 2006, p. 672). Trainings also included when, how, and for how long teachers were to deliver each instructional strategy. Eight core teachers (4 teachers from each building) acted as peer coaches and received an additional three hours of training related to observing peers, observation conferencing and feedback, and data collection. Peer coaches were placed in pairs and they each engaged in eight Peer Coaching sessions, two sessions per each of the four “Cool Tools”. Additionally, a software program was utilized to collect data for the subset of eight participants. Codes for both teacher and student behaviors were analyzed, along with codes for behavior and frequency of each of the strategies implemented. Four researchers collected observation data during literacy instruction, two times a week, for 45-60 minute periods, for a total of 256 hours (Stichter et al., 2006). In addition, direct observation data were collected that focused on disruptive student behavior, off-task student behavior, and on-task student behavior (p. 675).

Stichter et al. (2006) compared the four instructional strategies to optimal levels of effectiveness according to the literature. Researchers found that instructional talk had a positive effect on student achievement in this study; it occurred 46% of the time, and 45% was the goal according to literature. The mean for prompts per minute (2.2) did not meet literature recommended levels (3.63). However the feedback ratio for positive to negative feedback (4.5:1) was almost accurate to the optimal ratio set by the literature (4:1). Furthermore, the average wait time during instruction was 5.6 seconds, which was higher than what the literature recommended (a wait time of 3 to 5 seconds) (p. 677).

Researchers found that most of the teachers showed improvements in the use of instructional talk and feedback. Five out of eight participants met the criteria for use of instructional talk, half of the teachers met the criterion goal for feedback, one-fourth of the teachers met the goal for wait time; however none met the criterion for prompting (Stichter et al., 2006, p. 677). One teacher demonstrated improvements in all areas and met the criteria for three of the four instructional strategies. Building 2 (high SES) had a mean of 81% of teachers who met the goals when relationships among instructional variances were measured for potential opportunities for all instructional strategies, compared to building 1 teachers who met only 38% of the goals. When analyzing improvements for OTR, Building 2 made 63% improvement, but building 1 met more goals and showed more improvements in strategy implementation (by one). Teachers who received Peer Coaching met six goals and showed more improvements than the teachers without coaching who met only five

goals across the instructional domains (p. 677). When examining student work samples, Stichter et al. found that the majority of students showed improvement as compared to the baseline, and data showed that when teachers' behaviors changed, student behavior and work also changed for the better. Students whose teachers participated in Peer Coaching ( $M = 2.77$ ) showed almost equal improvements to those who did not participate in coaching ( $M = 2.52$ ). All but one student showed an increase in positive behavior throughout the study. Off-task behavior was more apparent for students whose teachers received coaching compared to the non-peer coaching group, with 37% and 20.5% respectively of behaviors being off-task. Disruptive behavior occurred 9.25% of the time for students in the Peer Coaching group and 9.75% of the time for the students in the non-Peer Coaching group. Additionally, the problem behavior was significantly higher in the non-peer coaching group (30.7% of the time), as compared to 9.1% of the time for students in the Peer Coaching group (p. 682).

Two teachers from each building indicated that Peer Coaching increased their awareness of their teaching practices. Three teachers reported the positive change in their practice and attitudes towards students as a result of Peer Coaching, and a majority of the participating teachers indicated that they would recommend Peer Coaching to their colleagues. Even though there were not great improvements in academic growth, the majority of students demonstrated growth due to the opportunities to respond (OTR) strategies and the change in teacher behavior. According to Stichter et al. (2006) addressing one limitation of this study, to fully

measure the implications a Peer Coaching model and its effects on student achievement, this study would have needed to be replicated on a much larger scale (p. 687). However, it is important to note that because teachers' perceptions changed their beliefs and in turn their instructional practices and attitudes towards their students, it could be implied that academic achievement could be attributed to Peer Coaching.

Murray, Ma and Mazur (2008) conducted a study utilizing an experimental design to determine the effectiveness of peer coaching on student achievement and teacher interaction (p. 206). Participants included 14 teachers from four school districts. Nine teachers formed the experimental group, each of whom participated in the Appalachian Mathematics and Science Partnership (AMSP). Five teachers were not part of the AMSP and they formed the control group. Teachers in the control group were recruited to participate in the study from school districts with comparable student populations. The AMSP is a partnership designed to enable students and educators to share and support their continued learning through professional development. Mathematics and science, and mentoring training programs were offered over the summer. The AMSP and Mentored Implementation Program (MIP) were supported by the National Science Foundation, the University of Tennessee, University of Kentucky, University of Virginia, and by a number of school districts in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia (p. 203). All teachers participated on a voluntary basis, and received a \$1000 stipend for attending the summer institute. Teaching experience for those in the control group ranged from 2 years to 16 years, and they

had a total of 202 students (students ranged from grades 7 to 9). The range of teaching experience for teachers in the control group was 1 year to 32 years and they had a total of 105 students (students ranged from grades 7 to 9) (p. 206).

The experimental group took a short survey that was designed to understand teachers' perceptions with regard to benefits and barriers of the MIP. Due to the lack of common curriculum, researchers used 19 assessment questions from The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). These 19 questions were piloted at one middle school; scores from 19 students were analyzed and 16 questions were kept as a result of the analysis (p. 207). Audio taped post-observation sessions were analyzed and transcribed to evaluate teacher collaboration interactions and reflections (Murray et al., 2008). Additionally, teachers who participated in the MIP responded to a survey that questioned their perceptions about the MIP. Researchers also used a multiple-regression approach to analysis of covariance to understand differences in posttest scores between the two groups.

Results indicated that teachers perceived "the opportunity to share ideas, techniques, and strategies with their peer partners" as the most beneficial aspect of MIP (Murray et al., 2008, p. 207). In addition, teachers reported that getting feedback from another teacher was a benefit. Results indicated that scheduling and distance were barriers that impacted their commitment to collaborate. Teachers found it difficult to plan a convenient time for observations, and post-conferences did not take place immediately following the observation. Usually it took days or weeks before partners were able to debrief their session. The ANCOVA revealed that there were no

statistically significant effects between pre-test and post-test scores, indicating a lack of interaction between the treatment and the scores (Murray et al., 2008, p. 208). MIP (Peer Coaching) treatment did not have a statistically significant effect on student achievement, but it did have a positive effect on teachers' experience with regard to professional development. One drawback from this Peer Coaching model was that peer teachers did not challenge or question each other's practices, so there was a lack of reflection and true analytical collaboration between the partners (p. 209).

Logistical variables such as setting up time to observe and debrief can be challenging if both peers are teaching, the structure of the coaching process can impede or enhance the effect. In order to better understand the impact or effect of coaching on student achievement there will need to be further research on the matter.

Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) conducted a review of research with the purpose of identifying the impact of coaching strategies on changes in classroom practices of teachers. The study examined research published from 1989 to 2009 (p. 282). All studies under review were published in peer-review journals, and the participants were pre-service or in-service preK to grade 12 teachers. The dependent variable was an observable measurement of instructional practice, and the independent variable was related to coaching with a specific focus on academic performance. Practices included in the study also had to have a moderate to high effect size, so it was greater than 0.20. Of 457 articles retrieved, 13 studies fit the criteria and were reviewed, ten of which involved in-service teachers, and three involved pre-service teachers. Participating teachers had a range of years of

experience from 1 to 32 years (p. 283). Teachers who participated in the selected study were general education and special education teachers, and the grade of students spanned from preschool to middle/secondary school. A total of 110 teachers received coaching support. The coaching arrangements or characteristics in each of the 13 studies had unique attributes, but the majority of coaching described in the studies began with a training or in-service and then was followed up with personal coaching sessions. In some of the research, coaching began with an observation and then followed up coaching sessions (p. 290).

Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) found that the majority of the literature discussed “supervisory coaching and side-by-side coaching” (p. 290). Supervisory coaching began with an in-service or observation followed by a debrief or feedback session, and the observation-debrief cycle repeated. In studies where coaching was in a side-by-side model, coaching elements also began with an in-service or observation, followed by a feedback session. Additionally, coaches taught demonstration lessons, carried out follow-up observations, and at least one more feedback session (p. 290). Even though accuracy was defined differently in each of the studies, researchers measured teaching accuracy as the primary variable. Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) found that coaching support or interventions improved teaching accuracy. When teachers were surveyed and interviewed to understand perceptions of coaching, eight studies found that teachers rated coaching activities positively, and suggested more one-on-one coaching sessions. According to the authors these finding indicated that the reviewed studies promoted coaching and evidence for the effectiveness of

coaching, along with the need for teachers to utilize evidence-based practices with fidelity (p. 291). Student outcomes for Academic engagement, spelling performance, and district created measures for literacy increased. Researchers found that there were important aspects similar to both supervisory coaching and side-by-side coaching, or a combination of both. They concluded that critical components of an effective coaching program were: an initial engaging group training, multiple individualized follow up observations with a specific focus and a debrief session where coaches provide feedback over a period of time. Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) further asserted that teachers were more likely to implement strategies more regularly when they knew they would be regularly observed and would be offered individualized feedback.

### **Summary**

In order for teachers to further pursue expanding their professional practice, it is imperative that they are offered choice in their professional development. Utilizing a coaching approach to support the professional development of teachers could offer opportunities for growth and long lasting transfer of skill into instructional practice. Coaching is an effective approach for ongoing teacher improvement and has demonstrated influential in transferring learning in teacher professional development (Devine et al., 2013; Knight, 2009a; Shower & Joyce, 1987). Further research will need to be conducted to understand true impacts of coaching on student achievement, however, teachers have shown that they were more likely to implement new learning knowing that they would be participating in regular coaching sessions. Finding the

coaching model that fits the need of the school site and teachers is key for school and district administrators to determine.

In Chapter III, the research design is presented. Details of the participants, district's coaching model and coaches, research design, instrumentation, analysis, are provided.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of teachers who have worked with instructional coaches. This mixed methods study was intended to engage both new and veteran teachers in an examination of their acceptance of and encounters with instructional coaching. Additionally, this study also aimed to better understand factors in the educational environment that contribute to teachers' views of instructional coaching. Furthermore, this investigation considered how the number of years of teaching experience impacts changes in teachers' views about instructional coaching.

#### **Participants**

This study was limited to one TK-8 public school district in the Central Valley of California. In 2013, high school graduation rates for the county where this district is located were reported as 82.5% (California Department of Education, 2013a). The percent of the population who completed a bachelor's degree or more in 2009 in California was 29.9%; between the years of 2009-2013 for those living in the district's county a completion of a bachelor's degree was reported considerably lower at 16.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

During the 2013-2014 school year, four of the six schools in the district received Title I funding, 75.9% of students received free or reduced lunch, and the district's enrollment was approximately 2,974 students. Of these students

approximately 76% were classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) (California Department of Education, 2013b). SED classifications were assigned if a student was eligible for free or reduced lunch, or when both parents of a student failed to receive a high school diploma (California Department of Education, 2010). Additionally, 27.3% of students were classified as limited English proficient (LEP, also referred to as English Language Learners, ELL) (California Department of Education, 2013c). Students are considered ELL according to the information reported on students' Home Language Survey, which is completed when parents or guardians enroll their child in school for the first time. When the primary or home language is one other than English students are considered ELL (California Department of Education, 2010).

In the 2011-2012 school year there were 133 teachers in the district. The demographic make up of the teachers was as follows: 88% White, 6.8% Hispanic, 2.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 2.3% Asian, and .8% American Indian or Alaskan Native (Ed-Data, 2012a). The average number of years of teaching experience in 2012 was 19 years (Ed-Data, 2012b). In spring of 2015, a survey was disseminated to all 134 teachers in the district whether they did or did not receive coaching during the 2014-2015 school year. From the teachers who completed the survey eleven teachers were chosen to participate in semi-structured interviews. Teachers who took part in the interviews were selected from each school site, included from a span of grade levels, and had varying levels of teaching experience. Purposeful sampling was employed to choose participants who took part in semi-

structured interviews. Utilizing purposeful sampling indicates that the researcher deliberately selected participants to take part in the interviews to best illustrate different perspectives about the phenomenon [instructional coaching] (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Nine of eleven teachers chosen to interview did not work directly with the researcher. The selection of interviewed teachers provided an in-depth understanding of teachers' views of instructional coaching and factors contributing to those views.

### **Coaching Model**

In the 2014-2015 school year there were 134 teachers in the district; 109 teachers or 81% of these teachers received support from one of two district coaches. During the 2012-2014 school years, the district coaches only offered support to three schools in the district. Two of the three schools had the highest number of students classified as SED and ELL, and the coaches visited each site consistently on a four-day cycle (rotating from one site to another every four days). At this time, teachers received coaching services or support on a voluntarily basis. Teachers put in requests to meet with the coaches related to instructional strategies, lesson planning, assessment and data, technology, or a topic chosen by the teacher. Coaches modeled lessons for teachers, co-planned and co-taught lessons, observed and offered opportunities for reflective feedback and conversation, and collaborated with teachers. Between 2012-2014, coaches provided more than 200 demonstration lessons, and more than 250 observation and feedback sessions. Additionally, they provided 72 professional development (PD) opportunities that included topics such as

engagement strategies, academic discourse, vocabulary development, text features and close reading, data systems support, and technology use in the classroom. The support was differentiated according to teacher requests.

In the winter of the 2013-2014 school year, the district adopted an instructional model, Direct Interactive Instruction (DII), and every teacher in the district received DII training provided by the coaches from the Action Learning Systems (ALS) consulting agency. Every teacher received two days of Common Core Building Background training, where the new CCSS were addressed, two days of how to integrate mathematics and English language arts with DII, one group demonstration lesson from the ALS coaches using a host teacher's classroom (where ALS coaches modeled the planning and implementation of a lesson using DII strategies), and teachers received two co-planning days with the ALS coaches (where a small group of teachers worked with an ALS coach to plan a lesson and carried out the lesson with students). The district's instructional coaches received over 300 hours of training from the ALS coaches, and they received coaching from their personal ALS coach during the following school year. The ALS coach worked with the district coaches to assess and build on their DII knowledge. He delivered a DII demonstration lesson during which the coaches critiqued him on DII components. Additionally, the ALS coach discussed different strategies about how to work with teachers, and they discussed the importance of understanding teachers' concerns and hesitations toward embracing coaching. He also took the coaches through a coaching observation cycle: each coach planned, pre-briefed the lesson they planned, taught the lesson in a host

classroom, and the other coach practiced debriefing the lesson with the ALS coach offering feedback on the process and delivery of each district coach. At the request of the requests of the district coaches, support from the ALS coach will be continued during the 2015-2016 school year.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the coaches began supporting all six sites in the district. After the adoption of DII, the district coaches followed the model of the ALS coaches, and trained all teachers new to the district in a two-day workshop setting. The co-plan/co-teach cycle for the 2014-2015 school year allowed the coaches to offer teachers support once a semester or three times a year (unless teachers requested more time); however, new teachers and teachers new to the district were given extra support throughout the year. During the 2014-2015 school year, the coaching model was mandatory. The instructional focus for the co-plan/co-teach cycles was DII. Coaches modeled lessons, co-planned and co-taught lessons with teachers, observed lessons and provided opportunities for reflective feedback. When the district coaches were not at individual sites they were available via email, by phone, or by appointment, and through their district coaching website.

### **Instructional Coaches**

I was one of the two full-time instructional coaches in the study's district. I was an intermediate teacher (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades) in my current district for eight years before becoming an instructional coach. My coaching partner had also taught in the district for 10 years as a primary teacher (K-2<sup>nd</sup> grades) before becoming an instructional coach. The district had only employed instructional coaching for the last

three years, and our positions have evolved since our induction. Our primary job was to support teachers with curriculum and instruction, specifically supporting teachers in utilizing DII the instructional model adopted by the district. I primarily supported 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, and my partner supported Transitional Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers. We worked together to support teachers at the middle school.

It is important to note that because I was the researcher and also a coach in the participating district, participant responses might have been biased. Depending on the opinions teachers held of the coaches, the self-reported responses on the survey and the responses during the interviews might have been skewed to favor or reject the concept of instructional coaching. Keeping in mind that the accuracy of response results is dependent upon the truthfulness of the respondents; objectivity was important. When framing the questions I was mindful of the fact that I work with these teachers on a regular basis, and kept the conversations straightforward and objective. When asking questions during the interviews and asking teachers to elaborate on responses, it was critical that I paid attention to my body language and facial expressions that were approving or disapproving in nature. Another factor to which I had to be mindful during the analysis of data and the interpretation of interview responses was to report data objectively, setting aside any personal beliefs. I also utilized participant observations to supplement interview data.

### **Research Design**

This sequential mixed methods design, or “two-phase study” utilized elements from both quantitative and qualitative approaches, conducting each phase of the study

separately (Creswell, 1994; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008, p. 21). Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches affords the researcher the ability to work between various frames of reference to connect theory and data, and to draw inferences from the data (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). A mixed methods approach was utilized with the intentions of acquiring a more comprehensive understanding, which individual approaches could not produce exclusively (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008).

This study was divided into two phases, beginning with the quantitative phase. The quantitative phase provided the essential components of analysis presenting survey data about teachers' perceptions regarding instructional coaching and factors contributing to those perceptions. Site administrators were asked to explain the purpose and benefits of completing the survey, and provided time during a staff meeting for teachers to take the survey. The survey was sent to teachers via a Qualtrics survey link that was emailed to teachers directly from my email. The qualitative phase followed the quantitative phase. This phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers to elicit teacher insights regarding their experiences with instructional coaching. Semi-structured interviews gave the interviewer the option to add or replace pre-established questions during the course of the interview to obtain a better understanding of the interviewees' perspectives (Glesne, 2011). The researcher met teachers in their classrooms after school and conducted face-to-face interviews. Additionally, a request and approval from California State University Stanislaus' Institutional Review Board (IRB) was

completed to get consent for the participation of teachers to take part in this study. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Instrumentation**

A survey was designed to collect information regarding teachers' views about instructional coaching and gather insight about factors that might contribute to their perceptions. This survey was field tested by teachers and experts in the field of education who did not participate in the study. Three educators completed the survey and gave feedback commenting on the comprehensibility of the questions, and whether the questions addressed the research questions appropriately. Modifications were made to the survey according to feedback received during the field test, to establish appropriateness and validity of the survey. The survey took a maximum of 15 minutes to complete. Qualtrics was used for distribution of the survey. Survey questions are included in Appendix A.

Interview questions were also field tested by teachers and experts in the field of education who did not participate in the study. Two people analyzed the interview questions and provided feedback commenting on the comprehensibility of the questions, the length of time that it took to answer the questions, and whether the questions addressed the research questions appropriately. Modifications were made to the interview questions according to feedback received during the field test to establish appropriateness and validity of the questions. Interview questions are included in Appendix B. Interviews were carried out after school in teacher's

classroom; all interviews were conducted in 30 minutes or less. Interviews were digitally recorded, and audio recordings were reviewed multiple times by the researcher after each interview. A professional transcriber was utilized to transcribe the audio recordings. In order for me to fully participate in this process, I read all of the transcriptions and sent a copy to interviewees for member checking; participants reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. All transcriptions were uploaded into Dedoose to analyze interview data. Dedoose is an online application used to analyze qualitative and mixed methods research ([www.dedoose.com](http://www.dedoose.com)).

### **Data Analysis**

The survey data collected were entered into the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences, v. 22, and were analyzed using descriptive statistical processes. An alpha level of .05 was used for all inferential analyses. Response frequency, and percentages of responses were examined. Chi Square Test of Independence analyses were run to determine whether there were differences in frequencies between groups of teachers according to number of years teaching.

I initially coded the qualitative data by identifying and tagging descriptors (Charmaz, 2006). I looked for themes and patterns that emerged in the data and grouped them together into major categories of information. Themes were coded and put into groups and subgroups that were generated from the collected data (Creswell, 2003). Coding helped to define, make meaning, and show relationships between data (Gibbs, 2007).

### **Summary**

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine teachers' perceptions about instructional coaching, factors that contribute to their perceptions, and investigate how differences in years of experience may attribute to teacher perceptions. Results are presented in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Phase One: Quantitative Analysis**

Survey items examined gender, grade level, teaching experience, and age of teachers who participated in the survey. Of those who participated in the survey, the majority, 72.3%, reported being female. Transitional kindergarten to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers made up 35.9% of participants, 34.4% of participants taught 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 29.7% of teachers taught 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Most of the survey participants had more than 5 years of teaching experience. Teachers with 6 or more years of experience accounted for 73% of respondents, and 67.2% reported being 35 years of age or older. Eighty five percent of teachers reported that they have worked with an instructional coach during their teaching career ( $N = 109$ ). Of the teachers who responded to the question regarding the extent that the Instructional Coach supported them in making changes in their instruction prior to the 2015-2016 school year ( $N = 87$ ), 19.5% of them had not received prior support from an instructional coach. Of those responding, 49.4% received support 1 to 2 times, 24.1% received support 3 to 5 times, 4.6% received support 6 to 8 times, and 2.3% received support 9 or more times. See Table 1 for results.

Table 1  
*Demographics of Survey Participants (N = 114)*

	Percent
Gender	
Male	13.8
Female	72.3
Prefer Not To Say	13.8
Grade Level Taught	
Transitional Kindergarten-2 <sup>nd</sup>	35.9
3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup>	34.4
6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	29.7
Teaching Experience	
5 or Fewer Years	27.0
6-15 Years	28.6
16-25 Years	31.7
26 or More Years	12.7
Age	
20-24	1.6
25-34	31.3
35-44	15.6
45-54	20.3
55-64	31.3
65 or Above	0.0
Support from IC Prior to 2015-2016	
1-2 Times	49.4
3-5 Times	24.1
6-8 Times	4.6
9+ Times	2.3
None	19.5

Of the teachers who responded to the question, “To what extent do you support the instructional coaching program” ( $N = 109$ ), 81.7% of teachers reported “Supporting or Fully Supporting” Instructional Coaching. When asked a similar question about their support for Direct Interactive Instruction, 80.7% reported “Supporting or Fully Supporting” Direct Interactive Instruction. See Table 2 for results.

Table 2  
*Means and Frequency Distribution of Participant Support for DII and the Instructional Coaching Program (N = 109)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Distribution, By Percent <sup>A</sup>			
			DNS	SS	S	FS
Instructional Coaching Program	3.17	0.743	0.9	17.4	45.0	36.7
Direct Interactive Instruction	3.12	0.778	2.8	16.5	46.8	33.9

<sup>A</sup> DNS = Do not support, SS = Slightly support, S = Support, FS = Fully support

A Chi-Square analysis was run to determine whether there were differences in level of support for the Instructional Coaching Program and Direct Interactive Instruction according to number of years teaching. The Chi-Square analysis revealed a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2(N = 63) = 16.97, p = 0.049$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.300$ ) for support of the Instructional Coaching Program. All groups were positive and supportive of Instructional Coaching. Teachers with 16-25 years of experience were the most supportive, with 70% supporting and 20% fully supporting IC. Of teacher respondents with 26 or more years of experience 37.5% supported and 50% fully supported IC. Additionally, of the teacher respondents with 6 to 15 years of experience 50% reported supporting and 33.3% fully supporting the IC program. Moreover, among teachers new to the profession with 5 years of experience or fewer 23.5% reported supporting and 58.8% fully supporting the IC program, less positive than the other groups of teachers. A Chi-Square test reported no statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2(N = 63) = 11.37, p = 0.251$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.245$ ) with regard to support for DII. See Table 3 for results.

Table 3  
*Difference in Support for DII and the Instructional Coaching Program According to Years of Teaching Experience (N = 63)*

	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Instructional Coaching Program	16.97	.300	.049
Direct Interactive Instruction	11.37	.245	.251

Of the participants who responded to the item regarding whether their instructional coach(es) exhibited various qualities, all responses were favorable. For all sub-items, 80% or more of teachers reported “Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing” that the instructional coach exhibited the described qualities. Results from the sub-items showed that 98.5 % ( $M = 3.66$ ) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the instructional coach “Maintains composure and positive attitude” and 97.7% ( $M = 3.72$ ) indicated coaches demonstrated an attitude of “Respectfulness”. Additionally, respondents reported lower percentages with regard to the sub-item referring to the qualities that describe the IC labeled “Helps me adapt my teaching practices according to analysis of student achievement” with 88.5% ( $M = 3.31$ ) agreeing or strongly agreeing. Furthermore, the least favorable response that was reported with regard to the qualities of the IC was the sub-item stating that the IC “Has strong knowledge of my needs as a teacher” with only 80.9% ( $M = 3.20$ ) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. See Table 4 for results.

Table 4  
*Participants' Responses Regarding Whether Their Instructional Coach(es) Exhibits Various Qualities*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Distribution, By Percent <sup>A</sup>			
				SD	D	A	SA
Respectfulness	88	3.72	0.586	2.3	0.0	21.6	76.1
Maintains Composure and Positive Attitude	89	3.66	0.542	1.1	0.0	30.3	68.5
Provides Feedback in a Nonthreatening Way	88	3.63	0.649	2.3	2.3	26.1	69.3
Values Continuous Improvement	89	3.60	0.578	1.1	1.1	34.8	62.9
Has Strong Knowledge of Best Practices in Direct Interactive Instruction	89	3.56	0.656	2.2	2.2	32.6	62.9
Credibility	88	3.56	.0623	1.1	3.4	34.1	61.4
Has Strong Knowledge of How to Incorporate Technology into Instruction	88	3.53	0.660	2.3	2.3	35.2	60.2
Is Someone I Trust to Help Me and Provide Support	87	3.49	0.626	1.1	3.4	40.2	55.2
Has Strong Knowledge of Best Practices of Instructional Strategies	88	3.49	0.661	2.3	2.3	39.8	55.7
Empowers Teachers	89	3.45	0.657	1.1	5.6	40.4	52.8
Builds Collaboration and Collegiality	89	3.38	0.731	2.2	7.9	39.3	50.6
Helps Me Adapt My Teaching Practices	87	3.31	0.704	1.1	10.3	44.8	43.7
According to Analysis of Student Achievement							
Has Strong Understanding of My Needs as a Teacher	89	3.20	0.800	2.2	16.9	39.3	41.6

<sup>A</sup> SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly agree

Chi-Square analyses were run to determine whether there were differences in response frequencies regarding whether the instructional coach exhibited various qualities according to number of years teaching. The analyses were not statistically significant. See Table 5 for results.

Table 5  
*Comparison of Participants' Responses Regarding Whether Their Instructional Coach(es) Exhibits the Following Qualities Based on Years of Teaching Experience*

	<i>n</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Respectfulness	54	9.67	.299	.139
Credibility	54	11.31	.264	.255
Maintains Composure and Positive Attitude	54	5.85	.233	.440
Values Continuous Improvement	54	5.97	.192	.743
Empowers Teachers	54	5.69	.187	.771
Builds Collaboration and Collegiality	54	3.30	.143	.951
Provides Feedback in a Nonthreatening Way	54	5.31	.181	.807
Helps Me Adapt My Teaching Practices According to Analysis of Student Achievement	53	5.81	.191	.758
Is Someone I Trust to Help Me and Provide Support	54	7.32	.213	.604
Has Strong Knowledge of Best Practices in Direct Interactive Instruction	54	8.77	.233	.459
Has Strong Knowledge of Best Practices of Instructional Strategies	54	8.51	.229	.484
Has Strong Understanding of My Needs as a Teacher	54	7.83	.220	.551
Has Strong Knowledge of How to Incorporate Technology Into Instruction	54	2.75	.160	.839

Of the teachers who responded to the item asking how often an instructional coach provided them various services ( $N = 87$  or  $88$ ), teachers reported they received the most support in sub-item 1, "Information about instructional strategies at a professional development session". Teachers reported receiving the least amount of support in sub-item 9, "Review of student assessment data with me". See Table 6 for results.

A Chi-Square analysis was run to determine whether there were differences in how often a coach provided various supports according to number of years teaching.

The Chi-Square analyses were not statistically significant. See Table 7 for results.

Table 6  
*Participants' Responses Regarding How Often an Instructional Coach has Provided Them with Various Supports*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Never	<i>Distribution, By Percent</i>			
					1-2 Times	3-5 Times	6-8 Times	9+ Times
Information About Instructional Strategies at a Professional Development Session	88	2.95	0.87	2.3	26.1	52.3	12.5	6.8
Feedback on My Teaching Practice	88	2.58	0.94	10.2	39.8	35.2	11.4	3.4
Assistance in Planning a Lesson or Unit	88	2.52	0.88	9.1	44.3	34.1	10.2	2.3
Classroom Visit to Observe My Instruction	88	2.41	0.92	14.8	43.2	29.5	11.4	1.1
Help with Locating or Creating Classroom Resource or Curricular Materials	88	2.35	1.10	22.7	39.8	22.7	9.1	5.7
Classroom Visit to Model a Lesson	87	2.34	0.95	19.5	39.1	29.9	10.3	1.1
Classroom Visit to CoTeach a Lesson	87	2.32	0.77	10.3	55.2	26.4	8.0	0.0
Support with Classroom Management Strategy Ideas	87	2.06	0.99	32.2	41.4	17.2	6.9	2.3
Review of Student Assessment Data with Me	87	1.87	0.97	49.4	26.4	18.4	4.6	1.1

Table 7  
*Comparison of Participants' Responses Regarding How Often an Instructional Coach has Provided Them with Each of the Following Since the Onset of The Instructional Coaching Program Based on Years of Teaching Experience*

	<i>n</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
Information About Instructional Strategies at a Professional Development Session	54	13.34	.287	.345
Classroom Visit to Model a Lesson	53	14.18	.299	.289
Classroom Visit to CoTeach a Lesson	53	8.05	.225	.529
Assistance in Planning a Lesson or Unit	54	12.32	.276	.420
Classroom Visit to Observe My Instruction	54	15.20	.305	.236
Feedback on My Teaching Practice	53	19.05	.343	.087
Review of Student Assessment Data with Me	54	7.52	.218	.821
Help with Locating or Creating Classroom Resource or Curricular Materials	53	12.57	.279	.401
Support with Classroom Management Strategy Ideas	53	12.94	.286	.371

Almost 90% of responding teachers ( $n = 87$ ) reported that they have made improvements to their practice as a result of working with the district's instructional coaches ( $M = 3.23$ ), and 88.5% ( $n = 88$ ) agreed or strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of Direct Interactive Instruction and each of its phases because of the ICs ( $M = 3.16$ ). However, only 69.3% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their students are directly benefiting from Instructional Coaching ( $M = 2.94$ ). See Table 8 for results.

Table 8  
*Participants' Responses Regarding How Much They Agree with Each Statement as a Result of Working with the District's Instructional Coach(es)*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Distribution, By Percent <sup>A</sup>			
				SD	D	A	SA
I Have Made Improvements in My Practice	88	3.23	6.56	1.1	9.1	55.7	34.1
I have a Better Understanding of Direct Interactive Instruction and Each of its Phases	87	3.16	0.68	2.3	9.2	58.6	29.9
I Feel More Confident in My Ability to Teach Using DII	88	3.10	0.70	2.3	12.5	58.0	27.3
I Am More Willing to Share and Collaborate with Other Teachers	88	3.09	0.77	2.3	18.2	47.7	31.8
I Believe that My Students are Showing Academic Growth	88	3.09	0.72	1.1	18.2	51.1	29.5
I Stop and Reflect on Specific Instructional Practices	88	3.07	0.66	1.1	14.8	60.2	23.9
I Am Better Able to Transfer New Learning Into My Practice	88	3.07	0.74	2.3	17.0	52.3	28.4
I Am Better Able to Plan and Organize DII Lessons	88	3.01	0.70	2.3	17.0	58.0	22.7
I Feel that My Students are Directly Benefiting from Instructional Coaching	88	2.94	0.84	3.4	27.3	40.9	28.4

<sup>A</sup> SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly agree

Chi-Square analyses examined whether there were differences in frequencies of responses to statements about ICs according to number of years teaching. The Chi-Square analyses were not statistically significant for any of the listed statements. See Table 9 for results.

Table 9  
*Comparison of Participants' Responses Regarding How Much Do They Agree with Each Statement as a Result of Working with the District's Instructional Coach(es) Based on Years of Teaching Experience*

	<i>n</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>	<i>p</i>
I have a Better Understanding of Direct Interactive Instruction and Each of its Phases	53	12.20	.277	.202
I Feel More Confident in My Ability to Teach Using DII	54	11.02	.261	.274
I Am Better Able to Plan and Organize DII Lessons	54	15.44	.309	.080
I Have Made Improvements in My Practice	54	14.82	.302	.096
I Stop and Reflect on Specific Instructional Practices	54	7.85	.220	.550
I Am More Willing to Share and Collaborate with Other Teachers	54	14.27	.297	.113
I Am Better Able to Transfer New Learning Into My Practice	54	9.38	.241	.403
I Feel that My Students are Directly Benefiting from Instructional Coaching	54	11.37	.265	.251
I Believe that My Students are Showing Academic Growth	54	13.15	.285	.156

Teachers were asked to specify the degree to which various potential challenges impacted their efforts to improve the academic performance of students. Items identified as being most challenging included “Lack of curricular resources” ( $M = 3.14$ ) and “Lack of student motivation” ( $M = 2.98$ ). Moreover, the least challenging items were “Lack of coherence or consistency across grade levels” ( $M = 2.34$ ) and “Lack of sufficient knowledge/expertise among teachers with regard to content” ( $M = 1.97$ ). See Table 10 for results.

Table 10  
*Participants' Responses Regarding the Extent to Which Each of the Following Is A Challenge To the Overall Efforts in Their School or District to Improve Academic Performance of Students*

	Distribution, By Percent <sup>A</sup>						
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	NC	SC	MC	GC
Lack of Curricular Resources	104	3.14	0.97	7.7	17.3	27.9	47.1
Students' Inadequate Basic Skills or Prior Preparation	103	3.09	0.84	2.9	22.3	37.9	36.9
Large Class Size	104	3.04	0.91	4.8	25.0	31.7	38.5
Lack of Support From Parents	104	3.03	0.84	1.9	27.9	35.6	34.6
Lack of Student Motivation	104	2.98	0.90	5.8	24.0	36.5	33.7
Lack of Technology to Support Student Learning	104	2.93	0.92	8.7	19.2	42.3	29.8
Lack of Time to Devote to Instruction in Specific Content Areas	104	2.78	0.91	7.7	31.7	35.6	25.0
Other	104	2.60	1.51	40.0	10.0	0.0	50.0
Lack of Teacher Training to Use Currently Available Technology	104	2.55	1.01	17.3	31.7	29.8	21.2
Frequent Changes or Additions in School or District Priorities or Leadership	103	2.49	0.98	18.4	31.1	34.0	16.5
Lack of Coherence or Consistency Across Grade Levels	102	2.34	0.93	20.6	35.3	33.3	10.8
High Transient Student Population	104	2.31	0.86	14.4	51.9	22.1	11.5
Lack of Sufficient Knowledge/Expertise Among Teachers with Regard to Content	104	1.97	0.95	37.5	36.5	17.3	8.7

<sup>A</sup>NC = Not a challenge, SC = Somewhat a challenge, MC = Moderate challenge, GC = Great challenge

Chi-Square analyses were run to determine whether there were differences in frequencies of reported challenges based on teaching experience. The only statistically significant result was with respect to large class size ( $\chi^2(N = 63) = 16.92$ ,

$p = 0.050$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.299$ ). Fifty percent of respondents with 16 to 25 years of experience and 50% of respondents with 26 or more years of experience reported "Large class size" as a great hindrance. Newer teachers were less likely to report this as a hindrance, with 44% of teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience and 35% of respondents with 5 years or fewer reporting class size a great hindrance. See Table 11 for results.

Table 11  
*Comparison of Participants' Responses Regarding the Extent to Which Each of the Following Are A Challenge To the Overall Efforts in Their School or District to Improve Academic Performance of Students Based on Years of Teaching Experience*

	$n$	$\chi^2$	$V$	$p$
Large Class Size	63	16.92	.299	.050
Lack of Curricular Resources	63	8.66	.214	.469
Lack of Technology to Support Student Learning	63	7.85	.204	.550
Lack of Teacher Training to Use Currently Available Technology	63	10.84	.239	.287
High Transient Student Population	63	7.30	.197	.606
Students' Inadequate Basic Skills or Prior Preparation	62	12.70	.261	.177
Lack of Student Motivation	63	6.76	.189	.662
Lack of Support From Parents	63	6.02	.178	.738
Lack of Time to Devote to Instruction in Specific Content Areas	63	3.52	.136	.940
Lack of Coherence or Consistency Across Grade Levels	62	7.48	.200	.588
Lack of Sufficient Knowledge/Expertise Among Teachers with Regard to Content	63	10.23	.233	.332
Frequent Changes or Additions in School or District Priorities or Leadership	63	12.16	.254	.204
Other	7	1.56	.471	.459

## Phase Two: Qualitative Analysis

In addition to quantitative data and analysis, qualitative data were acquired through semi-structured interviews that were analyzed using Dedoose. Data were collected from interviews with 11 teachers who worked with instructional coaches within their district. Teachers selected to participate in the interviews had a range of teaching experience from 1 year to 21 years. Interviewed teachers taught in grade spans from kindergarten to eighth grade. Nine of the 11 interviewed did not work directly with the researcher, and there was only one male teacher interviewed in this study. The amount of time each teacher accessed the coach is represented in Table 12. See Table 12 for participant demographic information.

Table 12

*Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Years of Experience	Grade Span	Use of IC
Participant 1	16+ years	K -2	Medium
Participant 2	16+ years	3-5	Low
Participant 3	16+ years	6-8	High
Participant 4	16+ years	K-2	Low
Participant 5	16+ years	K-2	Medium
Participant 6	6-15 years	K-2	Medium
Participant 7	16+ years	3-5	Low
Participant 8	6-15 years	6-8	Low
Participant 9	0-5 years	K-2	High
Participant 10	0-5 years	K-2	High
Participant 11	0-5 years	K-2	High

Purposeful sampling was employed to collect different perspectives and an in-depth understanding of teachers' views of instructional coaching (IC) along with factors contributing to those views. Perceptions about utilizing an IC were mostly positive. Key themes that emerged from the collected data were both interpersonal and outside factors that contributed to teachers' perceptions of IC: support, relationships, and willingness to change.

### **History of Professional Development in the District**

Findings provide insight into teachers' perspectives of instructional coaching and factors that contribute to those perceptions. As participants shared their views of IC, it was insightful to learn of both the positive and negative views with regard to their experiences and feelings about the subject. When the topic of professional development (PD) was addressed, all teachers shared that they eagerly participated in whatever PD was offered by the school district or their school site. Veteran teachers with 16 or more years of experience described how professional development has changed tremendously over the years. These participants discussed how the district used to send teachers away to places like San Diego and Monterey for conferences when the economy was better. They insisted that there was a short span of time where there was no PD at all, because there was no money. The majority of participants stressed their positive feelings about the efforts that the district has made over the years to keep teachers current with best instructional practices. Most of the PD offered over the years has been in core subjects such as English language arts and mathematics. Teachers affirmed that professional development in the form of

Instructional Coaching was a new idea for the district. Their views varied about the implementation of IC, the amount of time coaches should spend at each site, whether IC should be voluntary or mandatory, and teachers gave some insight as to hindrances and receptiveness towards IC.

### **Support**

Support was a key theme that emerged from the collected interview data.

Support in this analysis refers to teachers' needs and wants when it comes to professional development. When participants discussed their experiences with professional development, they all acknowledged IC as a form of PD, mentioning the most recent professional development that ICs delivered such as Direct Interactive Instruction, engagement strategies, and support with technology integration. Despite recognizing IC as PD, participants were more likely to discuss the different types of trainings that they attended over the years rather than discuss PD offered by ICs. When asked about PD they had attended, participants shared that they had attended trainings related to English Learners, CELDT (California English Language Development Training), reading, spelling, math, and technology. They felt that they have experienced enough PD in some areas and not enough PD in other areas.

Even though teachers discussed the idea of having the coaches offer support in technology and other areas of instruction, their opinions about receiving the support differed dramatically. One teacher stated that working with the ICs “has been the best professional development experience since I have worked in the district...I have found it a very helpful tool.” A second teacher shared,

The instructional coaches I have worked with have really helped me with direct instruction, with engagement strategies, with lesson planning, DII (Direct Interactive Instruction), and if it wasn't for them I would be behind. They have been role models, showing me what I need to do and guiding me through it step-by-step.

Participants shared many positive opinions about the support they have received from ICs, and one teacher felt strongly enough to affirm, "I think that this support benefits all children and not just certain schools." Although 10 out of 11 teachers shared that they would like the support of ICs on their school sites more often, there were participants who shared contrasting opinions. One teacher said:

I'm not going to go and seek out the support. I will just do what I'm going to do and if we are told we have to use the coaches then I will, but I'm not going to seek out the coaches.

Another teacher said that she supported having IC in the district but said, "I'm not going to ask someone to come in my room to observe me." This particular teacher shared the views of a few others that they preferred getting support from the ICs in the form of small group professional development opportunities or ICs modeling instruction instead of being pulled out of their classrooms for co-planning and co-teaching or having the coaches observe them teaching.

Teachers appreciated the demonstration or model lessons that took place during the school year. Teachers provided the ICs with a standard and objective so that the ICs could create a lesson to model for the teacher. Most of the teachers

received one or two demonstration or model lessons during the 2014-2015 school year that focused primarily on Direct Interactive Instruction. A new teacher with 0 to 5 years of experience stated, “It is good to see how the IC does things, different strategies she uses that I don’t use...it’s nice just to see new things.” Another new teacher said she appreciated the modeling, “Sometimes I need to be able to see what is being explained because I’m not...I can’t picture what it is being asked of me to do or how to apply things.” A few of the teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience shared the sentiment that they liked the demonstration lesson and that it is nice to be able to watch the lesson happen with students in their classrooms.

Teachers who sought out the ICs’ support received more model lessons and time with the ICs, in planning lessons or units, writing, science or technology integration, usually their choice. If teachers did not seek out extra support from the ICs, they received two to three mandatory sessions with the coaches. These appointments could have been a model lesson, the co-plan and co-teach of a lesson, or an observation. Each coaching session began with a pre-brief or planning of the lesson, and ended with a discussion or feedback session.

A veteran teacher with 16 or more years of experience emphasized that all of the pieces of IC have made a direct impact on his teaching. He said, “The planning process, being able to watch someone else do it, and then do it myself have all been helpful pieces.” A new teacher shared that it was beneficial to have a coach come in and not only show her how to break up writing lessons but model the different lessons

and take the time after to compare what worked, what didn't work and what could be tweaked for the next school year.

All 11 of the participants acknowledged that they needed or wanted the Instructional Coaches to provide more support in technology integration. One teacher described her technology use in the classroom as "trial and error" and stated that she needs more direction. Another teacher admitted that when it comes to technology she was on "a little bit slower learning curve" and stated "I don't implement [technology] as consistently as I probably should." Another teacher confessed that she was "scared of tech" and stated that she wants and needs lots of practice and repetition using technology before she will be comfortable. Technology support will continue to be a need in the district because during the 2015-2016 school year the district will be going 1 to 1 with student and teacher laptops in the classroom. All students will have their own laptop to work with in the classroom.

All of the participants who interviewed agreed that it was important that IC support stay mandatory. Some felt that if teachers had the option of not using it, many would opt out because of lack of knowledge about the type of support that it can offer. Some believed that teachers would opt out because working with a coach is time consuming and more work. Many participants who interviewed shared that they have had good experiences working with the ICs. One teacher asserted,

Our ICs have been very supportive even when giving feedback that maybe we didn't want to hear. I think they have given it in a positive and an encouraging

manner. A manner to help us think how can we take what we are doing and make it a little better.

She said, “as professionals we are all trying to make our practice better; utilizing instructional coaching is another means of support.”

### **Relationships**

The concept of relationships was a theme discussed in every interview.

Relationships in this study are defined as interactions between the teachers and the coaches, teachers and school site administration, and teachers and district management. Teachers shared how working with an IC could be intimidating and that it was really important that there was a trusting relationship between the teacher and the coach. One teacher shared that it could be difficult to work with a coach without having a good relationship with that person because the interaction could feel evaluative or they would worry about the coach disclosing their teaching performance to other teachers or administrators. Three of the six school sites had instructional coaching at their school sites for two years prior to the 2014-2015 school year, so the relationships with coaches that some of the teachers discussed in their interviews had been built over multiple years; at other sites, the relationships were not as well established. Teacher views of and comfort levels in working with an IC have changed over time based on developing relationships. A veteran teacher shared, “I think at first I was a little nervous because I didn’t know you guys and it was new, but you have both been very professional, helpful, and courteous.” A second veteran teacher who had IC at her site previously stated, “I really think if you can build a relationship

before you ever get to that coaching stage, it helps.” At a site where there was previous IC support, another veteran teacher shared that the amount of time the IC was at the site really helped build the relationships with staff, and would contribute to a trusting rapport so that coaches could just pop in to their classrooms to observe, co-teach, or lesson plan. Teachers who did not previously have coaching at their site also felt there could be benefits if relationships were built between the coach and the teacher and expressed the need to have the coaches at the sites more.

Additionally, participants discussed how administrative and management change affected the teacher-coach relationship. One veteran teacher discussed how teachers at her site were a little anxious to utilize coaching because of all the changes that occurred from year to year at the district level. Participants discussed ever-changing district expectations that make it difficult to get into a comfort zone. Because things changed so often they expressed that it was difficult to know what was expected of them. Some teachers felt that there had historically been a lack of trust between district administrators and the teachers, so if teachers viewed ICs as part of the district administration they were less likely to trust the motives and intentions of the coaches.

A veteran teacher discussed the importance of teachers viewing IC as a tool to support them and not evaluate them. A few participants attributed the lack of trust between some teachers and the coaches as being the district’s fault because historically when another adult entered their classroom it was usually to evaluate them. One participant felt that if teachers knew that IC was here to stay and if it

stayed around for more than a year or two, teachers would just get used to it, question its motives less and welcome it more. The 2014-2015 school year was the third year of IC in the district but only the first year for half of the sites in the district. Each year the responsibility and focus of the ICs has changed due to change in administration and management.

### **Willingness to Change**

An idea that was shared by multiple teachers throughout the interviews was that some teachers might not be receptive to the support of coaches because of the teacher's feelings about the coach's age. One participant expressed that it is difficult being critiqued by a teacher with less years of experience. A few veteran participants shared that some teachers might feel like, "What can an IC teach me that I don't already know, I have been doing this for a long time." Another participant expressed, "Most teachers I talk to don't want a coach in the room." It was shared that even though the coaches are seen as good teachers and supportive peers, their role puts them in a position where they are going to have to continually prove their expertise before teachers will willingly want and seek out their support.

### **Confidence or Ego**

A sub-theme that emerged from interview data was how the confidence or ego of the participating teacher contributed to their perception of IC. Confidence in this case refers to the self-assurance of teachers when it comes to their teaching practices and working with an IC. Ego is a personality characteristic described by many participants as a self-image that some teachers hold about themselves that makes

them accept or reject coaching support. Participants described why they felt and why other teachers might feel anxious or hesitant about working with an IC. Many participants expressed the difficulty of having another adult in the room while they were teaching. One participant said that some teachers handle it better than others; because most teachers want to perform at their best when there is a visitor in the room it can become a stressful event for the teacher. Another stated,

I think it depends on how much confidence you have and what you know; if you know what your weaknesses are, you have to be comfortable enough to talk with a coach...but there are so many factors that go into that.

Another shared that teachers might not be receptive to coaching because they do not want to be told what to do in their classrooms. Teachers may not want to be told that they are doing something wrong. Instead, according to one participant, “I think teachers need to look at it as a chance to be able to grow and these coaches are here to help you grow and to give you positive feedback so you can become better...a better teacher.”

A veteran teacher asserted that above all it is the idea of coaching that makes teachers weary, “If you have been teaching for 20 years and you have always done it a certain way and now you have to go in and work and change what you’re doing, it is hard for people.” Many participants shared the sentiment that utilizing ICs was more work and time out of class. “Sometimes it just comes down to laziness...I think that teaching the way we did before is just easier than having to work and change.”

Another teacher shared,

I think more than anything else, it is ego that makes people reluctant to utilize coaches. They may feel like I don't need anyone else to help me. I have been doing this for so long, and who are you to come in and tell me how to do things.

She said there are many people who support coaching, but then there are others who say, "I don't want it. I don't need it. I don't like it. It is a waste of time." This participant went on to discuss how people sometimes make assumptions, and yes ego can get in the way, but some of it may be that they just don't know and are too intimidated to understand.

### **Intimidation or Fear**

Even though most of the participants supported instructional coaching, many still expressed feelings of intimidation or fear of getting support from an IC. One teacher stressed the idea that admitting to being a life long learner is a tough thing and hearing that improvements can be made in one's practice is hard too. Teachers shared that fear of having others in their classrooms and thinking that they are only there to critique them could leave a person feeling uncomfortable about the whole idea of IC. The reality as one teacher put it is that, "I think for a lot of people, they will continue to fear the unknown; unless they try it they won't know any better." It was shared that teachers are expected to know their jobs and know how to teach, but as professionals teachers will improve their practice to a greater degree if they can get past fears and learn from each other.

## **Summary**

Chapter IV presented quantitative and qualitative results of this study.

Research questions examined teachers' perceptions of IC, factors that contribute to their perceptions, and investigated differences in perceptions according to teachers' years of teaching experience. Survey data along with interview data were reported. Two findings were statistically significant from survey data and three key themes developed from the data collected from participant interviews that contributed to teachers' perceptions of IC: support, relationships, and willingness to change.

Chapter V provides a discussion of the research findings of this study, along with limitations of the results and recommendation for further research.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter V is presented in four sections. The first section summarizes the research findings related to teachers' perceptions of Instructional Coaching. The second section includes a discussion of results. The third section describes the limitations of the study. The final section discusses recommendations for future research.

#### **Summary of Findings**

This sequential mixed methods design conducted each phase of the study separately with the intention of obtaining a more comprehensive picture of teacher perceptions of instructional coaching. This study was designed to engage teachers in an examination of their acceptance of and experiences with instructional coaching. Furthermore, this study aimed to enhance the understanding of factors that contributed to teachers' views of instructional coaching. Additionally, there was an investigation that considered how the number of years of teaching experience affected teachers' views about instructional coaching. This mixed methods study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1: What are teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching?
- 2: What factors influence the way teachers view instructional coaching?
- 3: How do the views of coaching change dependent upon number of years of experience?

### **Phase One**

Teachers reported favorable perceptions with regard to the qualities held by the ICs, with 80.9% of respondents reporting that the ICs had a strong understanding of their needs as teachers. A Chi-Square analysis was used to determine differences in responses about instructional coaching according to years of teaching experience. There was only one statistically significant finding. Most teachers favored having IC support but those with 16-25 years of teaching experience were more supportive of IC than those with 0-5 years of experience. When teachers were asked about potential challenges that impact their teaching efforts in an effort to determine factors influencing their view of instructional coaching, lack of curricular resources and student motivation were the top two challenges identified by participants. Teachers with more experience (16+ years) felt that large class size was a challenge. Fifty percent of respondents with 26 years or more of experience felt that class size was a great hindrance. Teachers with less experience did not identify this factor as frequently.

### **Phase Two**

Phase two acquired qualitative data through semi-structured interviews to try and further understand teachers' perceptions about instructional coaching and factors that influence those perceptions. Key themes that emerged from the data collected were both interpersonal and outside factors that contributed to teachers' perceptions of IC: support, relationships, and willingness to change.

Support in this study refers to teachers' wants and needs when it comes to professional development. Teachers reported different opinions about the support received from Instructional Coaches. Some felt that Instruction Coaching had dramatically impacted their teaching and without support from coaches they would not be up to par with current instructional strategies. Other teachers insisted that DII or other supports offered by the coaches were not much different from what they were already doing. During the school year during which data were collected, ICs were directed by district administration to focus on Direct Interactive Instruction (DII), and support teachers as they became more adept within the stages of DII. The progression started with a whole group training delivered by trainers from the company adopted by the district. During the PD training trainers discussed stages of DII, then provided small group or individual demonstration lessons. Additionally, most teachers took part in multiple co-planning and co-teaching of lessons with these trainers. Lastly, teachers took part in observations where the district coaches and teachers discussed the DII lesson planned by the teacher or they planned a lesson together that the teacher would later deliver. The district coaches then observed and provided feedback through collaborative conversations. Without additional support from the district coaches, it is unlikely that the teachers would have become more proficient with DII. After the trainers from the company went through their cycle, the district's ICs were the only support teachers had to practice and refine their skills with this new instructional model. The professional development cycle delivered by the trainers became the responsibility of the district coaches for the DII training of all new

teachers. Several teachers agreed that they liked the stages of DII but said it was not possible to implement DII all day long. Others asserted that they would continue their teaching practices and put in DII as they saw fit.

Another theme that emerged in every interview was the concept of relationships. Relationships in this study are defined as interactions between teachers and coaches, between teachers and school site administration, and between teachers and district management. It is critical that the relationships involving the teacher are taken into consideration by district management, administrators, and the coaches when providing professional development opportunities. Teachers work directly with students, therefore, the way they feel about the people and the nature of their environment could strongly affect their teaching. If teachers feel that they have supportive and understanding relationships with people who can help them be effective teachers, there is likely to be an impact on student achievement.

The last key theme that emerged as a factor contributing to teachers' perceptions about Instructional Coaching was willingness to change. There were negative perceptions that teachers associated with coaching, such as intimidation or fear, and confidence or ego.

## **Discussion of Findings**

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

Most of the data from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study were positive. Teachers mostly support Instructional Coaching, they see the benefits from the job-embedded support, and they appreciated the support and the

relationships that have been built among the teachers and the coaches. Many of the teachers who interviewed described how the idea of working with a coach was initially intimidating but later admitted that it was unnecessary to have those feelings in the first place. When respondents were asked about the types of things that might hinder a teacher from wanting to work with a coach, many reasons were given. Interviewees shared that position title of IC, intimidation or fear, and confidence or ego were reasons teachers hesitate or feel anxious about the idea of working with an IC. When teachers discussed the position title of the IC, they did not think of the coach as a support, but instead as someone who was there to tell them what they were doing wrong or someone who was there to “fix” their teaching. This negative view of the coach had many teachers fearing the idea of having to work with the IC. In some cases the intimidation or fear factor was so exaggerated that teachers avoided the coaches by calling in sick every time they had a coaching appointment. When confidence or egos were discussed during interviews, interviewees said that the comfort level of working with a coach depended on the confidence level of the teacher. Some teachers asserted that they were comfortable in their practice, so they didn’t mind working with a coach. Other teachers described how they had been teaching for more than 15 years, and there was not anything that an IC could offer them, especially an IC with fewer years of teaching experience. This finding was consistent with Thoonen et al. (2011) who reported that when teachers had a strong sense of self-efficacy they were more motivated to participate in professional learning. Moreover, Knight (2007) described how teachers do not appreciate training

without follow-up and professional development that fails to acknowledge their expertise. It is imperative that ICs acknowledge the expertise of the teacher. Many teachers come with an abundance of experience and knowledge about their content and their students, experience and knowledge that is valuable when collaborating. An IC should utilize the teacher's prior knowledge to connect to new learning, new instructional practices, or new ideas.

### **Factors that Influence Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Coaching**

**Building Relationships.** The relationship among the teachers and the district's management in this study was described as being unstable. Teachers did not always trust the information or motives of personnel in the district office. Some teachers in this study described that it was difficult to know what was expected of them because there were so many expectations being mandated at any given time. These sentiments were shared in Knight's (2007) research. Knight reported that teachers expressed negative attitudes about changes in initiatives because teachers are often left unaware of the purpose behind the initiative or because there is poor professional development related to the new initiatives to support teachers. Teachers in this study described the lack of communication from the district and lack of direction from their administrators as reasons that they found it difficult to build trusting relationships with district personnel. A few respondents affirmed that it was difficult to be effective when expectations were unclear. Other teachers found it difficult to trust the motives of the coaches because they felt that the coaches were an entity of the district office.

Most of the interviewees agreed that in order for there to be positive interactions between the ICs and the teachers, and for learning to occur, a good working relationship involving the IC and the teacher needed to be established. Teachers described the importance of being able to be honest with their coach. They wanted to be able to trust the coach, and know that things that were discussed or observed were not going to be shared outside of the relationship. According to Mayer, Woulfin, and Warhol (2014), forming collaborative partnerships could form ties that lead to trusting relationships. An IC could accomplish this partnership by listening, validating the background of the other teacher, and finding and sharing common interests (Mayer et al., 2014).

All participants felt that it was important to be able to trust the ICs. Respondents who had a trusting relationship with their IC felt that coaching support was positive, beneficial, appreciated, and a great resource. Teachers who had not built a strong relationship with their IC felt that Instructional Coaching was a waste of time, a waste of funding, not suitable to their learning needs, and extra work. It is important for ICs to build a trusting and supportive relationship with every teacher, but it can be challenging due to limited time constraints. It is important that management at the district and site level focus their curricular and technology initiatives on a manageable number annually, and keep lines of communication open between themselves and their teachers.

The coaches in this district have worked on building trusting relationships with teachers over the last three years. They made sure to keep all of their interactions

with teachers confidential. Building trust means maintaining confidentiality and having a non-evaluative approach. ICs did everything possible to make sure that teachers were walking away from each interaction feeling valued, an idea that Knight (2007) deemed essential in the partnership approach between teacher and coach. Despite these efforts, some of the teachers did not fully trust the ICs, an indication that efforts need to continue in an attempt for that to happen.

Even though 2015-2016 was the first official year that the entire district had regular access to the coaches, coaches did what they could in previous years to reach out to all teachers in the district. For instance, after doing short trainings during staff meetings coaches would post information and screen cast tutorials on the coaching website for all teachers to access. Screen casting is a method of video recording and narrating steps to perform a task on the computer screen, offering a set of digital instructions. When teachers emailed or called with questions about instructional resources, instructional practices, technology integration, lesson planning or any other instructional need, the coaches made time to meet with them. In 2014-2015, even though the district was focused on DII, the coaches supported all instructional needs including technology needs. During the 2014-2015 school year the district did not have a standards-aligned curriculum; teachers were forced to piecemeal different programs to create usable materials to teach the Common Core Standards. Creating curriculum proved a challenging task. Instructional Coaches supported teachers by helping them with these tasks. ICs gathered free online high quality curricular

resources for teachers, and supported them with deconstructing standards and lesson planning.

As a coach I find myself constantly repeating to teachers that I am not an evaluator. I have to remind them that I am a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) and that I am there to support them, to collaborate and brainstorm. I have to frequently convey that I am not there to help write their evaluations or report back to their administrators. Even though these were statements on the coaches' website, and regularly shared with teachers by their administrators and ICs, it is still difficult for some teachers to believe. The title of Instructional Coach is the first barrier to overcome; there seems to be a negative connotation associated with the words. Many teachers believed that coaches were quasi-administrators because the district office created and funded the Instructional Coaching position. This could not have been further from the truth. Coaches in this district were considered teachers on special assignment, and there was not a pay raise associated with the position. The coaches were paid according to the salary schedule negotiated for teachers, even though the job description of a coach was different than that of a classroom teacher.

**Working Together.** Building a relationship is the first step to making that partnership positive, especially when a teacher is intimidated or has some type of fear associated with working with a coach. Lu (2010) asserted that the relational structure is likely the foundation of peer coaching because it deals with mutual respect and trust. Additionally, Lu (2010) stated that creating relationships minimized the feeling of one person dominating the other. As a coach, it is important to make myself

vulnerable to the teachers and start the relationship by teaching first. After initial professional development trainings, we followed up by doing demonstration lessons for teachers, lesson planning with teachers, and admitting that we do not know it all, but that we can work together to figure things out. It was important to be humble, open-minded, and collaborative. We as coaches desired these same qualities from our colleagues. A relationship based on trust is an essential component in overcoming the fear, anxiety, or the negative connotation that can sometimes be associated with working with a coach. Knight's research (2007) suggested that relationship building is vital, similar to an emotional dance that needs to happen in order to strengthen the connection between the coach and the teacher. There are many teachers who want the ICs to prove that they have something to offer before accepting their support. In the district under study many teachers were veteran teachers; these teachers had been around long enough to experience shifts in education, changes in leadership, and changes in instructional vision. A few teachers shared that they have been teaching for 20 years and they were outraged because now they were being expected to change their practice. They questioned the change, and the benefits of changing. Knight (2007) asserted that changing teaching practices requires that teachers change habits of behavior. Change is a process that can be difficult because people are habitual by nature and are apt to protect the status quo. This is a reason why there is sometimes an unwillingness to work with a coach (Knight, 2007).

As a coach, it is important to accept these thoughts and then determine how to build a positive working relationship with these teachers. Coaches need to help

teachers understand that we value their experiences and want to build on their experiences to make the transition to the new change initiatives. According to Knight (2007), it is essential that coaches keep up to date on research, best practices, and technology. Additionally, it is critical for a coach to utilize all of the strategies, routines, procedures, and knowledge that are learned when working with teachers. Being knowledgeable, humble, and collaborative are important in overcoming negative perceptions and the unwillingness of some teachers to change.

**The Coaches' Job.** The job of an IC varies depending on the Instructional Coaching program and the needs of the school and teachers, but the goal is the same. The goal of an IC is to meet the teachers where they are and support teachers so that they can meet the needs of their students to help them grow and progress. It is vital that coaches break through barriers that cause negative perceptions and the unwillingness to change, and build relationships to support teachers with their instructional needs. Overcoming these barriers will be beneficial to the teachers in this district over time. The district has rolled out a number of changes in 2015-2016, including one-to-one digital devices for all students in second through eighth grades, a new Common Core mathematics curriculum, a new grading system and report card, and a new Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Program (PBIS). By 2016-2017, the district will also be adopting new Common Core English language arts curriculum, a writing program, and teachers will still be held accountable for strengthening their knowledge of Direct Interactive Instruction and technology integration. Knight (2007) affirmed that traditional professional development fails

because teachers have little to no choice in what they learn. Instructional Coaching is a way that the district can offer on-going, job embedded differentiated support to teachers to help keep them abreast of all of these new rollouts. The district's approach of supporting teachers in all of these endeavors is to expand the coaching staff for the 2015-2016 school year.

**Professional Development.** Even though the ICs instructional focus during the 2014-2015 school year was Direct Interactive Instruction, the ICs always asked teachers how they would most benefit from coaching support. Teachers are a diverse group with various needs; those teaching primary grades may have different needs than teachers who teach intermediate grades. Teachers are adult learners, so for learning to occur it needs to be self-directed and problem-centered, they have to deem the learning a necessity, and they have to be able to apply their new learning immediately (Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1997). When the needs and interests of adult learners are not taken into consideration, there is resentment and resistance to new learning opportunities (Knowles, 1973; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The need for choice and opinion in the professional development of a teacher is critical for teachers to grow professionally (Knight, 2007).

All of the steps in the DII PD process took teachers out of their classrooms for a half-day or a full day each time. Some teachers felt that time away from the classroom was learning time lost by their students. These teachers did not perceive the support offered by the ICs in this manner as effective, even if it meant that they were given job-embedded support to professionally develop. On the other hand there

were teachers who saw support from an IC as a useful tool and they did not mind being pulled out of class for PD. This group of teachers did not mind having to create additional lesson plans for their sessions with an Instructional Coach. It is clear that the teachers in this district are a diverse group and have a diverse set of learning styles. It would be wise for the district to continue to allow varied types of PD offered by the coaches so that teachers who are interested in accessing support from the Instructional Coaches can continue to do so in their own way.

### **Views of Coaching Dependent Based Upon Years of Experience**

All of the data that compared teachers' years of experience and their perceptions of the qualities held by the coaches were positive in nature but were not statistically significant. This finding could mean that teachers generally held a high regard for the ICs. Teachers reported that they received the highest amount or extent of IC support about instructional strategies at professional development trainings, and the least amount of support in reviewing student assessment data. It is evident that these reports are accurate. Most teachers received at least three trainings in a large PD setting. ICs likely did not review student assessment data (as reported by teachers in the survey) because there were not a lot of common assessment data to discuss over the last year. The district did not have curriculum that was Common Core aligned, teachers were building assessments for all grade level subjects during the school year, and not all teachers were using the assessments. The district was using a new company that provided benchmark assessments, but all teachers were not utilizing these assessments because they were not always good-quality assessments. Like all of

the other districts in California, most of the previous California State Standards assessments were no longer being administered in the district examined in the study in the 2014-2015 school year. In other words, data were scarce. Student assessment data from state testing will be made available to the district in the 2015-2016 school year. It is likely that the coaches will add data analysis to the list of supports they provide to teachers when the district begins to use common formative assessments again, and as administrators and teachers begin to receive data from the state about the 2014-2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System.

Ninety percent of teachers reported that working with an IC has helped improve their practice. While positive, only about 69% of teachers believed that working with a coach directly benefitted their students. If the ICs were able to work with teachers and their students more regularly, it is possible that teachers would be more likely to directly attribute changes in practice resulting from coaching to higher student achievement. During the 2014-2015 school year coaches worked with teachers 2-6 times depending upon their openness to working with the coach. The teachers who reported that their work with a coach directly benefitted their students were the teachers who frequently collaborated with their coach. One respondent felt that the support from an Instructional Coach was the best PD ever offered in the district. Other teachers described how they appreciated the support but they did not like having another person come in to observe them teach. Some said that using the

support provided by ICs was added work, and they would not utilize the ICs if it were not a mandatory practice in the district.

**Assessment Changes.** The CAASPP System includes Smarter Balanced Assessments which are summative assessments in grades 3 through 8 for English language arts and mathematics, interim assessments that can be used to monitor student progress toward mastery in English language arts and mathematics, alternate assessments that will be given in place of the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) to students who are eligible in English language arts, mathematics, and science, assessments for students in grades 5, 8, and 10, and standards-based tests in Spanish (STS) for students in grades 2 through 11 (California Department of Education, 2015). The timeline as to when these assessments will phase in has not yet been finalized. As CAASPP phases in, California State Tests are phasing out. When data from these assessments emerge, it is likely that ICs will analyze student data with teachers. See Table 13.

Table 13  
*California Assessment Changes*

	<u>Assessments Delivered by Academic School Year</u>					NA
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	
California State Test (CST) English Language Arts and Mathematics	x	x				
California State Test (CST) Science	x	x	x	x	x	
California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA)	x	x	x	x	x	
California English Language Development Test (CELDT)	x	x	x	x	x	
CAASPP English Language Arts and Mathematics			x	x	x	
CAASPP Alternative Assessment						x
CAASPP Science Assessment						x
CAASPP Standards-Based test in Spanish						x

**Mandatory then Voluntary.** I believe that many teachers would not willingly utilize Instructional Coaching if the use of an IC were not mandatory. Knight (2007) affirmed that teachers are habitual in nature, and changing behavior habits is not an easy task. As a result, they are generally more likely to protect the status quo. It is for this reason that I think Instructional Coaching in the district being studied should continue to be mandatory. I think that there should be some parameters about how an IC should be utilized. According to Kose and Lim (2010) professional learning is

effective for teachers when it is continuous, comprehensive, and content-specific. It would be important that coaches are not put in positions of instructional aides, substitute teachers, or an extension of the district's technology department. ICs are not to support teachers by grading homework, or by running groups for the teacher as an instructional aide does. The IC should not be asked or directed by site administrators to take over a class because a substitute did not show up. Moreover, ICs are not an extension of the district's technology department, and should not be fixing teacher computers or delivering professional development for teachers about curriculum or grading software.

I believe that teachers should have a choice in the type of support that they receive from a coach. Teachers have different needs and wants, and they come with a diverse and immense repertoire of knowledge to be taken into consideration. Utilizing an IC should be seen as an opportunity, but in many instances that is not the case. I believe that if working with an IC is mandatory at first, it gives the coaches an opportunity to build a relationship with teachers. Additionally, it would give the teacher and the coach the opportunity to have collaborative conversations and reflect on instruction. If teachers are given the choice to opt out of utilizing the IC they are likely maintaining the status quo. Researchers found that teachers were more likely to participate in professional development when PD activities were collaborative and when activities were updating their prior knowledge (de Vries et al., 2014). If Instructional Coaching is initially mandatory, teachers will have the opportunity to experience collaborating with a coach while updating their knowledge about DII and

other instructional practices. The interaction would help them get over their fear or anxiety, and then the teacher would more than likely want to access the coach on his or her own terms. Knight (2007) referred to coaches as full-time, onsite professional developers that work with teachers on research-based instructional practices.

Instructional Coaching is a newer phenomenon when it comes to education, so educators who have been around for a while may not be open to such a practice. I agree with Knight (2007) that teachers are not usually open to being coached because they already have a way of accomplishing something. Making coaching mandatory opens the door for positive changes to occur. Initially, some teachers may not agree with Instructional Coaching support being mandated, but with time and effort Instructional Coaching as a professional development model will become part of the district's culture. Continued PD offers regular opportunities for growth in teaching practices (de Vries et al., 2014). Knowing that teacher quality is one of the most important variables (if not the most important variable) affecting student achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wenglinsky, 2000), it is essential that teachers are given adequate opportunities with quality professional development (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2010) such as Instructional Coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Wenglinsky (2000) asserted that professionally developing teachers and the essence to which they teach has a direct impact on student achievement (p. 11). Since Instructional Coaching is the only continuous PD that is being offered to the teachers in this study, it is imperative it is not only offered to teachers but that its use is mandatory, if the district wants to impact student achievement.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited to one transitional kindergarten through eighth grade school district located in the Central Valley of California. Because the participants from this study were from a single school district and the district was relatively small compared to neighboring districts, the ability to generalize the results was affected. It is highly likely that individuals in other school districts may not have similar experiences as the teachers in the district being studied; instructional coaching models tend to vary from district to district and site to site.

The electronic survey was sent out to 134 teachers and results were received from 114 teachers. In many cases teachers who chose to take part in the survey did not answer all of the questions. The overall response rate was 85% but for some questions the response rate was as low as 40%. It is unknown why teachers chose not to answer all of the questions in the survey. Future studies should direct teachers to answer all questions to the best of their knowledge; this could result in a higher response rate overall. It is possible that some teachers may not have worked with the coaches enough to answer the questions, or that teachers did not want to give a negative response.

The researcher of this study worked as a coach in the same district as the participants, which may also be a limitation. Participants may not have wanted their responses to reflect negatively on the coaches even though all responses were anonymous.

Another possible limitation is that survey and interview questions relied on respondents to report their perceptions truthfully and accurately. It is possible that teachers gave more favorable responses than were warranted because they may have thought that the survey was not completely anonymous.

Most teachers chosen to participate in interviews were in grade levels kindergarten through second grade, and were teachers that the researcher did not work with directly in an attempt to minimize the possible biases and limitations introduced by interviewing those I directly coached. Ideally, it would have been beneficial to interview more teachers that taught in grades three through five. The sample of the participants purposefully chosen for the interviews was limited, which could have impacted the results of the study.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study could be replicated on a larger scale with a bigger sample size for both the survey and interviews including more than one school district. This study could also be replicated to include schools and teachers who teach within a kindergarten through twelfth grade district that utilizes instructional coaching. Another suggestion would be to add school site administrators to the sample to acquire an understanding of their perceptions of instructional coaching. Adding administrators to the research study would also be an opportunity to include a fourth research question and make some comparisons about the perceptions of teachers and administrators with regard to IC.

Future research could also focus on determining whether the IC program at any particular school site could better its program. Action research could be conducted within school sites, to better understand the needs of teachers so that IC could be more effective. Teachers could be surveyed to understand their perceptions about IC, and also to understand how they think a coach would be best used within their instructional program. This type of research would be collaborative in nature, and could give the teachers more of an incentive to participate.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## SURVEY PROTOCOL-INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at CSU Stanislaus. We hope to learn about teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching. Additionally, we are interested in investigating factors that contribute to these perceptions, and understand if there is a difference in perception based upon years of teaching experience. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to take part in a survey that should take about 15 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks to you for your participation in this study. It is possible that you will not benefit directly by participating in this study, although results will help educational professionals who are charged with providing professional development. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Your responses will be confidential. No one, not even the researcher, will be able to attach an identity to the survey responses.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate

in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. **After completing the survey, there will be an opportunity for you to take part in a drawing.**

Clicking on the link below indicates you agree to participate. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Monique Preciado, at (209) 521-2800 or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Dawn Poole at (209) 667-3495. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Campus Compliance Officer by phone (209) 667-3794 or email [IRBAdmin@csustan.edu](mailto:IRBAdmin@csustan.edu).

## APPENDIX B

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do you support the instructional coaching program in EUSD?
  - Do Not Support
  - Slightly Support
  - Support
  - Fully Support
2. To what extent do you support the instructional model: **Direct Interactive Instruction**?
  - Do Not Support
  - Slightly Support
  - Support
  - Fully Support
3. In your teaching career, have you worked with an instructional coach?
  - Yes
  - No

**Support for Professional Development**

4. My Instructional Coach(es) exhibits the following...

(Select one option on each line)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Respectfulness				
b. Credibility				
c. Maintains composure and a positive attitude				
d. Values continuous improvement				
e. Empowers teachers				
f. Builds collaboration and collegiality				
g. Provides feedback in a nonthreatening way				
h. Helps me adapt my teaching practices according to analysis				

of student achievement (ie. test results, checks for understanding)				
---------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--

i. Is someone I trust to help me and provide support				
j. Has strong knowledge of best practices in Direct Interactive Instruction (DII)				
k. Has strong knowledge of best practices of instructional strategies				
l. Has strong understanding of my needs as a teacher				
m. Has strong knowledge of how to incorporate technology into instruction				

5. Since the onset of the Instructional Coaching Program in EUSD, how often has an instructional coach provided you with each of the following?  
 (Select one option on each line)

	Never	1-2 times	3-5 times	6-8 times	9+ times
a. Information about instructional strategies at a professional development session					
b. Classroom visit to model a lesson					
c. Classroom visit to coteach a lesson					
d. Assistance in planning a lesson or unit					

e. Classroom visit to observe my instruction					
f. Feedback on my teaching practice					
g. Review of student assessment data with me (individually or in a group)					
h. Help with locating or creating classroom resource or curricular materials					
i. Support with classroom management strategy ideas					

6. How much do you agree with each statement **as a result of your work with my district's Instructional Coach(es)**...

(Select one option on each line)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I have a better understanding of Direct Interactive Instruction and each of its phases				
b. I feel more confident in my ability to teach using DII				
c. I am better able to plan and organize DII lessons				
d. I have made improvements in my practice				
e. I stop and reflect on specific instructional practices				
f. I am more willing to share and collaborate with other teachers				
g. I am better able to transfer new learning into my practice				
h. I feel that my students are directly benefitting from Instructional Coaching				
i. I believe that my students are showing academic growth				

7. Prior to this school year, to what extent did the Instructional Coach(es) support you in making changes in your instruction? (Select one)

- 1-2 times
- 3-5 times
- 6-8 times
- 9+ times
- I did not receive support from an instructional coach prior to this school year.

8. To what extent is each of the following a **hindrance** to overall efforts in your school or EUSD to improve academic performance of students?

	Definitely Not A Hindrance	A Slight Hindrance	A Moderate Hindrance	A Great Hindrance
a. Large class size				
b. Lack of curricular resources				
c. Lack of technology to support student learning				
d. Lack of teacher training to use currently available technology				
e. High transient student population				
f. Students' inadequate basic skills or prior preparation				
g. Lack of student motivation				
h. Lack of support from parents				
i. Lack of time to devote to instruction in specific content areas				
j. Lack of coherence or consistency across grade levels				
k. Lack of sufficient knowledge/expertise among teachers with regard to content (ie. reading or math instruction), standards, site or district initiatives				
l. Frequent changes or additions in school or district priorities or leadership				

other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Please state any additional comments that you would like to add about your overall thoughts regarding instructional coaching or professional development in EUSD.

### **Demographics**

10. Gender

- Male
- Female
- prefer not to say

11. Which **best** describes you? (Please choose the option that **best** represents your primary area of responsibility.)

- Transitional Kindergarten -2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher
- 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

12. Which best describes your teaching experience in number of years?

- 5 or fewer years
- 6-15 years
- 16-25 years
- 26 or more years

13. What is your age?

- 20-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or above

14. If you would like your name to be entered in a drawing for a gift card, please click on the link below. The link will take you to a separate document where it will ask for

your name and email address. Doing this allows your survey to remain separate from your name/email, maintaining anonymity.

## APPENDIX C

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL-INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership at CSU Stanislaus. We hope to learn about teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching. Additionally, we are interested in investigating factors that contribute to these perceptions, and understand if there is a difference in perception based upon years of teaching experience. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to take part in an interview that should take no more than 1 hour.

There are no known risks to you for your participation in this study. It is possible that you will not benefit directly by participating in this study, although results will help educational professionals who are charged with providing professional development. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Monique Preciado, at (209) 521-2800 or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Dawn Poole at (209) 667-3495. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Campus Compliance Officer by phone (209) 667-3794 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu.

Sincerely,

Monique Preciado  
Instructional Coach, EUSD

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your teaching background.
  - How many years have you been teaching?
  - How many years have you been teaching in your current district?
  - What grade levels have you taught?
  - What grade level are you currently teaching?
  - What motivated you to become a teacher?
2. Describe your experience with professional development in your district and the types of PD activities in which you have participated.
3. If you were given the option to choose any type of professional development, what would be ideal to meet the needs of your learning style.
4. Describe your experience working with an instructional coach, has working with a coach impacted your practice? (If yes, in what ways?)
5. How do you think your colleagues feel about the change in delivery of Instructional Coaching from previous voluntary options to a mandatory practice.
6. How often should an instructional coach be at a site to provide an adequate level of support? Can you describe the type of support you think other teachers would find beneficial?
7. Why do you think that some teachers may feel hesitant or anxious when it comes to working with a coach?

8. Is there anything that you would like to add with regard to the coaching program in your district?