The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the factors that contributed to the engagement of middle and high school teachers in professional learning with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy. The study addressed the following question: What factors appear to influence secondary content-area teachers’ engagement with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy? This study is set in a large suburban district and explores this question from the perspective of ten instructional coaches and ten teachers with whom they work.

Four primary data sources of were used: audio-taped focus group sessions with coaches, including researcher field notes; audio-taped interviews with both coaches and teachers; and surveys of coaches. Data analysis involved a multi-cycle coding process utilizing several coding strategies.
The analyses indicated that a number of interrelated and overlapping factors affected teacher engagement in professional learning. These factors were the following: school culture, coaching practices, coaches’ interpersonal acuity, meaningful relationship between literacy and content, and teachers’ inclination to reflect on practice. I found that the school culture encompassed and influenced the other factors. Three specific factors appeared to be effective in influencing teacher engagement included coaches’ use of embedded literacy pedagogy with teachers who were resistant to professional learning related to literacy; modeling and observation that incorporated active, situated learning strategies; and identifying a meaningful connection between content and literacy.

The study provides an explicit rendering of coaching practices that appear to be effective and useful in supporting content-area teachers’ engagement in the coach-teacher relationship. In addressing an underdeveloped area of the professional development research, the study can offer important heuristics for middle and high school literacy coaches who engage teachers in professional development related to understanding the intersection of literacies and the content areas.
Instructional Coaching and Disciplinary Literacy: An Examination of the Engagement of Secondary Content-Area Teachers in Professional Development

by
Barbara JoAnne Dehm Bamford

A DISSERTATION

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Presented March 30, 2011
Commencement June 2011

APPROVED:

________________________________________________________
Barbara JoAnne Dehm Bamford, Author

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

________________________________________________________
Barbara JoAnne Dehm Bamford, Author
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The pages of this dissertation hold far more than the culmination of years of study; they reflect relationships with many who have shaped this study. I am grateful for the generosity of all who have played a role in my development as a scholar and teacher:

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DEDICATION

To Rodney and Ryan,

For always believing in me. Your love sustains me.

Who so loves believes the impossible. ~Elizabeth Barrett Browning
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING AND DISCIPLINARY LITERACY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT OF SECONDARY CONTENT-AREA TEACHERS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the conditions that influence teachers’ engagement in professional development related to disciplinary literacy— the practice of teaching students how to use reading, writing, and other literacies, in order to learn and form complex content knowledge. In particular, this research seeks to add to the understanding of how instructional coaches engage secondary teachers in professional learning about literacy, from a social constructivist perspective.

This research takes place within the context of a single, large school district that has implemented instructional coaching as a district-wide professional development model. This study seeks to better understand the development of the learning of the secondary teachers in this district, in regards to literacy, using a framework that regards knowledge development as socially constructed and culturally mediated (Fosnot, 2005).

Research over the past 30 years has supported the idea of transforming professional development through structures that are job-embedded, site-based, and authentic (Bush, 1984; Joyce & Showers, 2003; Knight, 2000). Instructional coaching, according to Knight (2009), is the practice of providing professional development by employing on-site professional developers to work
collaboratively with teachers, helping them to incorporate research-based instructional methods into their teaching. However, there appears to be a need to better understand how coaching may support teachers in developing effective instructional practices—practices that ultimately result in improved student achievement (Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006; Stein & D'Amico, 2002).

There are several difficulties that arise in researching this field. One major challenge in discussing coaching lies in the multiplicity of ways the term “coaching” has been used (Cornett & Knight, 2009), and the numerous roles and responsibilities that are considered to be the work of coaches (Duessen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007). A second challenge to this type of research is the limited number of rigorous research studies on this topic (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Currently, there are no published journals dedicated to research on the professional learning of teachers. Although teacher learning may be considered under the umbrella of a particular discipline, at the current time there is not a journal publication dedicated to the research on the professional learning of teachers (Cornett & Knight, 2009). As a result, very little of what has been learned about coaching has been widely published or disseminated beyond the local context in which the research occurred. A final challenge, likely related to the lack of an outlet for publications in this field, is the lack of research that meets the standards for rigorous research. A majority of the research being done around coaching is exploratory in nature, through which educators have developed practices and theories based on ‘sensible propositions’ (Elmore,
2002), and refined those practices through experimentation and practice-based insights (Casey, 2006; Toll, 2006; L. West & Staub, 2003). As a result, there is little research that defines the parameters of the coach’s role or describes the specific strategies of an instructional coach and how those impact teachers (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Weiss & Pasley, 2008).

**Problem Statement**

The problem addressed in this study is twofold. It begins with acknowledging the resistance that secondary content area teachers demonstrate towards the use of content literacy strategies, and then it seeks to understand the ways a coaching model can assist teachers in grappling with these ideas.

Recent approaches to content area literacy—whereby content teachers overlay their content with generic cognitive processing strategies—have been neither well received nor implemented by most secondary content teachers (Phelps, 2005; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Content teachers often view this approach as infringing on their time to deliver content rather than a means to accessing and enhancing the student learning of the content (O’Brien & R. A. Stewart, 1992; O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Vacca & Vacca, 1993). Though student teachers are engaged in content area literacy coursework as part of their pre-service preparation, few are implementing these methods once they enter the classroom (L. A. Hall, 2005). However, the lagging achievement of our adolescent learners is cause for a re-examination of the teaching practices in
secondary schools, with a focus squarely on literacy instruction within every
discipline and the resulting academic achievement of adolescents.

Nationally, reading scores have continued to show a decline from the
elementary years to secondary grades (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007), and
internationally, U.S. students’ reading scores—though they are among the top in
the world compared to students in other industrialized nations in the elementary
grades—decline dramatically in the middle and high school years (Kirsch, de
Jong, Lafontaine, McQueen, Mendelovits, & Monseur, 2002), with American 15‐
year-olds performing below their age-related peers in fourteen other
industrialized countries.

Similarly, 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing
scores, representing adolescents in eighth- and twelfth-grade, show cause for
concern. Although scores improved modestly in 2007, only one-third of eighth-
graders and fewer than one-quarter of high school seniors demonstrated writing
that scored at or above the proficient level (National Center for Education
Statistics, 2008). In light of such results, there is increasing interest in addressing
the literacy instruction of students in grades four through twelve. Data such as
these from NAEP assessments has indicated that the massive investment in
literacy teaching and the professional development of elementary teachers in the
teaching of reading does not ward off later reading difficulties as students
progress to middle school and high school (Perle, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005;
Shanahan & Barr, 1995). Clearly, a need exists to expand literacy instruction,
particularly the literacy education of middle and high school students, throughout the course of students’ education.

As a result of the pressing need for increased literacy education in middle and high schools, for the past decade unprecedented attention has been given to addressing the literacy learning of adolescents (ACT, 2005; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2005; National Governors Association, 2005; National School Boards Association, 2006; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Snow & Moje, 2010). One focus has been on the literacy instruction within the content-area classes or integrating the teaching of reading comprehension skills and discipline-specific writing skills as part of subject area instruction. In order to develop teachers’ skills and understandings in this area, many school districts in the United States have turned to the use of instructional coaches (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010).

Coaches are charged with helping to improve student achievement by working with teachers to improve their instructional practices. However, when working with teachers in the realm of literacy—a concept which secondary teachers often find irrelevant or relatively unimportant—this work can prove to be a difficult undertaking (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; O'Brien & R. A. Stewart, 1990, 1992; O'Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995). Many secondary teachers are either unaware of or resistant to the need to teach students the literacies needed to access and demonstrate understanding of their content (M. W. Conley, 2008; L. A. Hall, 2005; O'Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Readence, Bean, & Baldwin,
and/or are ill-prepared to teach the literacies related to their discipline (Barry, 1994; Bintz, 1997; L. A. Hall, 2005).

For this reason, I chose to closely study a small group of instructional coaches’ thinking and actions (i.e., their moves, their thoughts, their reflections) over the course of a year while they were coaching teachers in matters of disciplinary literacy—a topic of historical and traditional resistance among secondary teachers—in order to develop a deeper understanding of this pedagogical practice. Additionally, I sought to understand how my work as a district literacy specialist intersected with the work of these coaches, namely in understanding the types of professional development and support the coaches required in order to be effective in their role.

**Background: Instructional Coaching**

With educational coaching being a relatively new approach in staff development, the research available on the topic is scarce (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2010). Although there is a body of professional literature that suggests that coaching increases implementation, or skill transfer (Bush, 1984; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Knight, 2007; Showers, 1982, 1985; Showers, Joyce & Bennett, 1987) and ultimately teacher quality (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wenglinsky, 2000), little is known about the effect on student achievement or the specific coaching practices that promote high-quality professional learning—learning of both content and pedagogy (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Guskey, 2003; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). In a recent review of the literature on
coaching, Cornett and Knight conclude that “a primary goal of research should be to identify the most effective and efficient ways to promote high-quality learning among professionals” (2009, p. 211). This study seeks to develop a deeper understanding about how that goal might be achieved.

**Background: Disciplinary Literacy**

For the past century, literacy instruction for adolescent students has been widely acknowledged for the crucial role it plays in students’ ability to “learn for understanding” (Graves, 2000; Gray, 1916). There is a pervasive belief that enhancing literacy skills will improve learning in the content areas (National Reading Panel, 2000). Despite this thinking, there has been a lack of implementation of literacy strategies and an emphatic declaration by the International Reading Association of an “ever-deepening crisis in adolescent literacy” (1999). Many teachers point to a lack of time, their limited knowledge of literacy teaching practices, as well as a belief that literacy skills are unrelated to their content (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Moore, 1996; O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). How can content-based literacy instruction be enacted in content-area classrooms in ways that will make a positive difference for students?

Content area literacy in the United States has typically been characterized as focusing on generic literacy skills (e.g. summarizing or writing five-paragraph essays) that are laid over content and address any discipline at a superficial level. Recent efforts to revitalize content literacy instruction have focused on an
approach that seeks to assist students in deep understanding of the content area concepts in ways that give primacy to content knowledge. This approach is known as disciplinary literacy (DL).

DL acknowledges each subject area as a discourse community with its own specialized language, texts, and literate practices that students must navigate (O’Brien, Moje, & A. Stewart, 2001). With this acknowledgement, literacy becomes a critical aspect of the discipline, rather than an “add-on” set of generic strategies used to improve the reading and writing of subject area texts. This reconceptualization of literacy instruction—disciplinary literacy—is grounded in sociocultural approaches to literacy (Cazden, 1988; Gee, 1992). DL situates literacy instruction as an integral aspect of the content—instruction that services subject area learning and emphasizes learning the ways of knowing, doing, and communicating within a discipline (Moje, 2008).

Research Question

In order to explore the factors that engage content area teachers in professional development focused around disciplinary literacy, the following question guided my study: What factors appear to influence secondary content-area teachers’ engagement with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy? This question was explored from both the perspective of teachers and instructional coaches.

In exploring this question, I use examples from the data to illustrate how instructional coaches engaged teachers in thinking about these ideas of literacy.
approach the idea of engagement as “authentic interaction among participants such that possibilities are created” (Davies, 1984 as cited in Lesko, 1986). Additionally, I chose a qualitative approach to this question because of my desire to understand and describe how the learning and practice of content area teachers is impacted by their context—their interaction with instructional coaches and their participation in professional development communities, relative to disciplinary literacy. In this study, I bring together the concepts of social constructivist theory, disciplinary literacy, and the field of professional development to provide a framework for considering the data. Each of these concepts is briefly defined at the conclusion of this chapter and explored in greater detail in Chapter Two.

**Audience & Significance of Study**

This research seeks to inform the thinking of multiple audiences: instructional coaches—both those with whom I work as well as coaches in the educational field at large; staff developers like myself who are engaging in the work of providing professional development for instructional coaches; school district administrators who play a vital role in overseeing and directing the work of instructional coaches; and the educational research community at large, with specific relevance for those engaging in research related to the professional development of teachers.

As with many studies, this inquiry is designed to inform the work of those within the local context in which the study is situated. This research is enacted as
a systematic exercise in self-reflection—a formalized but personal professional development endeavor for myself and the coaches with whom I work. A primary purpose of this research is for the coaches and researcher to apply new learning to our practice. This research is bound by the context in which it occurs, and for this reason, the findings are most relevant to the work of those who were directly part of the study.

Beyond the local context of this study, this inquiry seeks to respond to those in education—namely school district staff developers and district administrators—who are working to help secondary content teachers with integrating literacy in their instruction. There has long been a consensus in the reading community that all teachers are responsible for teaching reading and writing, yet the resistance to this belief by content teachers has been just as longstanding. By making this inquiry public, it can inform the work of those who are seeking to address similar problems of practice in other settings.

This study is situated in a body of research related to two fields: disciplinary literacy (Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) and instructional coaching (Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2007) in order to address the professional learning of content area teachers with regards to literacy. These studies provide important grounding and a framework for my research.

In many of the studies conducted around disciplinary literacy, the researchers, Moje and colleagues in particular (1996, 2004) focus their inquiry around the impact disciplinary literacy instruction has on students. For these
studies, the research was conducted in classrooms where teachers were already using disciplinary literacy practices. In contrast, this study seeks to understand the impact a disciplinary literacy approach has on teacher engagement with literacy practices. The focus of this research is on how such an approach might engage teachers who may have been resistant to early content-area literacy movements that emphasized literacy over content.

Research over the past two decades on professional development has provided compelling evidence that job-embedded, on-going professional learning leads to improved implementation of learning (Joyce & Showers, 2003). In the studies that have focused on the relatively new practice of instructional coaching as a means for achieving this, the data has illustrated that when support for professional learning—such as coaching—is utilized as a central strategy, the likelihood of achieving reform goals improves (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Stein & D'Amico, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). However, few studies have sought to understand the specific ways instructional coaching can serve as part of a system of support for the professional learning of teachers (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2008; Gallucci et al., 2010), though the literature advocating each of these approaches is extensive and ever-growing. To add to the complexity of this research, the roles of instructional coaches are often ambiguous and contextually dependent (Poglinco et al., 2003). In a review of the literature, there is little research that defines the parameters of these roles (Gallucci et al., 2010), making it difficult to gain insight into the effectiveness of
coaching. Lastly, this research seeks to add to the literature that considers coaching from the perspective of the teachers with whom the coaches work. This population’s voice is largely absent from the coaching literature (Toll, 2009).

In reviewing the literature, no studies were located that examined these areas of DL and instructional coaching in light of each other. Recent research suggests that intensive, on-going, contextually situated professional development is effective in assisting teachers in examining and refining their instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). By this, I mean that teachers are simultaneously engaged in learning about literacy as connected and integrated to their daily instructional practices—perhaps through their work with an instructional coach. Through this, teachers may develop deepened thinking about their literacy instruction and are better able to implement such ideas. However, as Neufeld and Roper (2003) caution, “No one, as yet, has proven that coaching contributes significantly to increased student achievement. Indeed there are scant studies of this form of professional development and how it influences teachers’ practices and students’ learning” (p. 1). In addition, with instructional coaching being a new means for professional development in many school districts, few have had the foresight (or funding) to research or develop what effective professional development for instructional coaches would entail. This study seeks to add further insight into the knowledge and understanding in these areas.
As with any research, this study is set in the context of prior studies. The following chapter examines research literature in the following areas: social constructivism; historical and current perspectives on professional development with a focus on instructional coaching; and content-area literacy, drawing attention to the specific development of disciplinary literacy. Each of these areas directly pertain to engaging teachers in professional learning related to disciplinary literacy through instructional coaching.

Glossary of Terms

Coaching Practices

This term is used in the practical and colloquial sense to refer to the content and pedagogy of what coaches do as they interact in instructional settings with teachers.

Disciplinary Literacy (DL)

Disciplinary literacy involves the use of reading, reasoning, investigating, speaking, and writing required to learn and form complex content knowledge appropriate to a particular discipline (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010). This differs from the traditional definitions of content-area literacy, which has not addressed content knowledge and had been more narrowly defined as the ability to read and write within a content area.

Engagement

Lesko’s (1986) idea of engagement as “interactions among participants such that possibilities are created” (p. 4) is the definition used for this study. These
possibilities include interactions between coaches and teachers that cause “thoughtfulness, seeing of greater complexity, or a light bulb to go on” (p. 5).

**Instructional Coach**

Instructional coaches are onsite professional developers who work collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to incorporate research-based instructional methods into their classrooms (Knight, 2007).

**National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Principles**

The NSDC (2001) Principles for staff development include the following components:

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. ([Learning Communities](#))
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. ([Leadership](#))
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. ([Resources](#))
- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. ([Data-Driven](#))
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. ([Evaluation](#))
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making. ([Research-Based](#))
• Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (Design)
• Applies knowledge about human learning and change. (Learning)
• Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (Collaboration)
• Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement. (Equity)
• Deepens educators’ content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately. (Quality Teaching)
• Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (Family Involvement)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Although there is not a commonly agreed upon definition of a PLC (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006; Williams, Brien, Sprague, & Sullivan, 2008), the purpose of a PLC is clear: to enhance student learning. Stoll and colleagues (2006) describe a PLC as:

an inclusive group of people, motivated by a shared learning vision, who support and work with each other, finding ways, inside and outside their immediate community to enquire on their practice and together learn new and better approaches that will enhance all pupils’ learning. (p. 5)
**Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning that describes what knowing is and how one comes to know. It situates knowledge as temporary, developmental, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated (Fosnot, 2005; von Glasersfeld, 1995).

**Staff Development**

Staff development is conceived broadly to include any activity or process intended to improve skills, attitudes, understandings, or performance in present or future roles (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). This term is used interchangeably with “professional development,” “teacher development,” and “in-service education” throughout the course of this work.

**State Content Standards**

The State Standards are the set of student learning goals for each area of the curriculum that each individual state has developed. These standards are the basis for assessments done by the state’s Department of Education.

**State Literacy Standards**

The State Standards for literacy are the set of student learning goals for reading, writing, speaking, and listening for the state in which this research takes place. These standards are designed to apply to instruction in all content areas and are the basis for assessments done by the state’s Department of Education. Common Core State Standards, which detail specific literacy standards for English
Language Arts instruction, as well as literacy standards for other subject areas, will replace the state literacy standards in 2014-2015.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

While few would argue the significance of the teacher’s role in a student’s success, there appears to be growing consensus that quality of teaching is perhaps the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement (Suh & Fore, 2002; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Professional development is an important means by which the quality of instruction can be improved. As a result, many of the current reform initiatives aimed at improving student achievement make professional development a primary focus.

The reform efforts in many school districts in the United States have included professional development that is carried out through the work of instructional coaches. Though much of the research promotes instructional coaching as a means of engaging teachers in professional learning, the high variability within the practices and methods of coaches make understanding this form of professional development a challenging task.

This review of the literature lays the foundation for this research study, which is an examination of professional development focused on disciplinary literacy through the coaching of teachers. Specifically, this research investigated the following question: What factors appear to influence secondary content-area teachers’ engagement with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy? In the present study, perspectives of both the teachers and coaches are reported. This question led me to focus the review of the literature to three major areas:
social constructivism, the framework through which this study is viewed; the professional development of teachers, with an examination of the practice of instructional coaching; and disciplinary literacy, including its relationship to content literacy. These topics provide the foundation for this study. To better understand the current phenomenon of instructional coaching as a means of professional development, it is important to frame these research questions in the history, theories, and research from which they have evolved. Research suggests that instructional coaching can be a highly effective means of professional development (Joyce & Showers, 1995). This study examines how this model can assist content teachers in developing their instruction of literacy practices relative to their content area instruction. Teachers have long resisted this practice; therefore, this review of the literature also addresses the historical roots of content area literacy and traces how the practice has evolved to this most recent shift in thinking, which embodies the idea of disciplinary literacy. Social constructivism, the conceptual framework for this inquiry, provides the basis for beginning this literature review.

*Social Constructivism*

Social constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning that describes what knowing is and how one comes to know. It situates knowledge as temporary, developmental, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated (Fosnot, 2005; von Glasersfeld, 1995). It places learners' thoughts and interactions at the forefront of the education process (Bidwell & Clason, 1970).
and frames knowledge in a way that emphasizes and values construction of knowledge for teachers through processes such as reflection, and professional dialogue (Hord, 1997a). It is from this framework of learning that my research questions for the current study are grounded.

The term constructivism grew out of the cognitive school of psychology, originating from the theories of Piaget, Dewey, Vygotsky, and Bruner (Lambert, 2002).

Learning from this perspective [constructivist] is viewed as a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of the world and discrepant new insights, constructing new representations and models of reality as a human meaning—making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate. (Fosnot, 1996, p. ix)

Fosnot goes on to explain that these social activities provide the means by which learners search for patterns, raise questions, and construct new models.

Vygotsky’s theory of learning is a foundational underpinning of social constructivism. He contends that social interaction plays a critical role in the process of learning, and his research places primacy on the environment as a major influence in learning (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development is considered a social learning process. His theory describes how interaction and collaboration with more knowledgeable others enables learners to construct new knowledge. In Vygotsky's (1978) words, the zone of proximal development "awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are
able to operate only when the [learner] is interacting with people in his (sic) environment” (p. 90). This development allows learners to continuously increase what they can think about and accomplish, independently of others. Vygotsky (1986) maintains that the careful scaffolding from a “more knowledgeable other” can assist the learner to do or know more. Eventually, with these structures for guidance, the learner becomes autonomous in enacting these new skills or understandings. Of key importance to Vygotsky’s theory is the interaction with others in the construction of new learning. For example, teachers may begin with a preconceived or underdeveloped idea regarding literacy’s role in their instruction, and make instructional decisions accordingly. This represents what teachers know without assistance–their independent level of performance. Through interaction with another individual who has more knowledge or understanding of these concepts, teachers begin to think and perhaps make decisions regarding instruction at an assisted level of performance, as they incorporate new ideas, or portions of new ideas into their own schema. In this dynamic, cyclical process of scaffolding, teachers move between assisted and independent levels of performance while building upon their understanding of various concepts.

Leont’ev’s (1978) work builds on Vygotsky’s ideas, asserting that within the environment, practical activity is the generator of human thought. This idea of deyatelnost, or praxis, refers to an interaction between theory and practical action. This type of practical, social activity results in a development of
consciousness as each informs the other (Daniels & Cole, 2002; Reid, Jensen, & Simovska, 2007). This activity serves as a developmental process for learners and is characterized by constant transformation and change (Davydov, 1990, 1995). As a result of engaging in an on-going activity—such as co-teaching with a coach—learners continuously measure and reshape current theories in light of the activities in which they are engaged.

Engeström (1999) developed Leont’ev’s model, expanding the emphasis on the intellectual activity from individuals to a collective group of learners, such as engagement in a professional learning community (PLC) with colleagues. Engström suggested that the collective intellectual activity was connected to the practical activity the group members would undertake, which may include ordinary daily activity as well as activities generally considered intellectual. This concept is particularly germane to considerations of developing literacy constructs among practicing teachers because they enter the profession with their own literacy histories and frameworks. Starting from their previous understandings and viewpoints, new knowledge is developed (Bidwell & Clason, 1970; Brooks & Brooks, 1999). By engaging in activities such as discussing ideas interactively, challenging preexisting assumptions, teaching, reading new information, and reflecting on theories and learning within the practical context, teachers presumably build new constructs and understandings. Thus, their understanding continues to be constructed through these kinds of activities. This
activity occurs with the support of colleagues who may be exemplary teachers or instructional coaches who take on the role of more knowledgeable others.

Social constructivism proposes that it is through this social activity of developing one’s thinking that learning occurs. This is a major shift from traditional educational models because it places learners’ thoughts and interactions at the forefront of the education process (Bidwell & Clason, 1970). The idea of social construction of knowledge leads to pedagogical practices that value interaction and reflection (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

Constructivism has important implications for professional development. First, learning is no longer viewed as the transmission of knowledge from the enlightened to the unenlightened; rather, those in the role of providing professional development act as "guides on the side" who provide learners with opportunities to challenge and explore their current understandings.

Second, if building new understandings requires that learners apply their current understandings in new situations, then in professional development, teachers must engage in an examination of issues that incorporate problems that have personal relevance and importance to them, not those that are of primacy to administration or district leadership. Staff developers can also encourage group interaction, where the dialogue between participants helps individuals become explicit about their own understanding by comparing it to that of their colleagues.
Third, if new knowledge is *actively* built, then time is needed to build it. Because knowledge is understood as tentative and refined through multiple social interactions, the development of such knowledge takes time. Providing ample time facilitates the opportunity for teachers to reflect on new experiences, as well as consider how those experiences fit with their current understandings. This process of constructing knowledge over time and through experiences allows teachers to develop and deepen their understandings.

The premise, or assumption, of instructional coaching resides within the constructs of a social constructivist framework, a framework whose ideas are inherent in and sensible to this present study. The professional development and growth of teachers is dependent upon the social engagement that occurs within the school setting. The collaborative environment provides a foundation that promotes the continuous cycle of learning for teachers. Learning within this context of professional interactions allows for teachers to constantly reconsider and expand their knowledge.

The structural framework that a coaching model provides addresses the need for ongoing professional growth. In coming to understand and apply learning theories such as social constructivism, the means by which professional development is designed and delivered can be improved. This leads to an examination of additional literature—a review of the research on professional development.
A Historical Perspective of Professional Development

A review of the history of professional development in education reveals that this is a relatively young field of study when conceptualized as learning for in-service teachers provided by entities outside the university. It wasn’t until the 1970s that educational leadership began to acknowledge that teachers within the profession were virtually unsupported in terms of continuing education. According to Schaefer (as cited by Joyce, 1990), teachers had been treated as functionaries who had been “wound up like an old Victrola and were expected to play sweet music forever” (p. xvi). By 1980, there existed a few common forms of staff development for in-service teachers: the superintendent’s annual back-to-school speech—or a full program of speeches from administration and selected consultants—provided as a motivational impetus for the teachers’ work that year; professional development provided by colleges and universities in semester-long courses linked to degree or state certification requirements; and the onset of the staff development workshops—led by the work of Madeline Hunter in development of the ITIP instructional model—that brought in outside experts to make an appearance, presumably to fill participants with new knowledge, and then leave them to implement it (Joyce, 1990; Yarger, 1990).

Nearly a decade later, the void remained, as staff development was labeled “education’s neglected stepchild” (McLauugin & D. D. Marsh, 1978, p. 69). It was evident that “teaching was the only complex vocation whose personnel were not provided with time for collegial activity or rigorous and continuing study of their
work” (Joyce, 1990, p. xvi). The consequences of this deficit became glaringly apparent as districts struggled to implement new technologies or curricular changes, and administrators and district leaders acknowledged they were not actively supporting—nor prepared to support—staff in an instructional leadership role. As fewer and fewer teachers required continuing education for certification purposes, the universities became less connected to schools and the professional development of teachers. The role of the university as the sole provider of staff development had greatly diminished (Joyce, 1990, p. xvi).

With the realization that districts and states needed to take on the role of supporting their teachers’ professional learning, the gradual emergence of staff development systems began. With the spread of school improvement processes, many states generated large-scale staff development initiatives in order to assist schools (Killion & Harrison, 1997). By the 1990s, agencies provided professional development services through three means: addressing the needs of individual teachers, schools, and district initiatives, respectively (Joyce, 1990). Staff development on the whole had moved from a position of complete disregard to a taken-for-granted component and requirement of nearly all reform initiatives (McLaughlin, 1991).

At this same time, the heretofore approaches to professional development came into question, and inadequacies within conventional approaches were identified. Previous models had focused on “district-mandated, generic instructional skills of teachers ‘trained’ as individuals by an outside ‘expert’ away
from the job site” (p. 134), and this type of training began to be viewed—by both teachers and many researchers—as fragmented and piecemeal, with little connection or relevance to student learning or classroom practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko & Putnam, 1995; Hatch, Ahmed, Lieberman, Faigenbaum, White, & Pointer-Mace, 2005; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Lieberman & Miller 2001).

This led to a significant shift in the 90’s with a new paradigm for professional development based on constructivist learning theories seeking to promote teacher inquiry. This approach to staff development focused on a shared, public process that promoted sustained interactions and emphasized substantive school-related issues; the expertise in this learning environment came from within—both within the school community as well as from within the group of learners—as participants were viewed as active learners. This paradigm reflected the premise that teacher development occurs over time and is tied to helping participants think about not only how to teach, but also thinking about the why in connection with a theoretical base.

Current Perspectives on Professional Development

The shift in thinking that marked the 1990s led researchers and policy makers to recognize the need for extensive change to existing models of professional development for teachers (Borko & Putnam, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Fullan, 1995; Knapp, 2003; Lieberman & Miller, 2001). Current understandings of high-quality or effective professional development consider practices that result in improvements in teachers’ knowledge and instructional
practice, as well as improved student learning (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Effective professional development has been described as professional growth opportunities that truly have an impact on teacher learning and ultimately enhance student achievement (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Guskey, 2003; Sparks, 2004). Since the early 1990s, there have been multiple studies that have examined the characteristics of effective professional development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Guskey, 2000; S. M. Wilson & Berne, 1999).

For professional development to have a significant impact on teaching practice and on student learning, research suggests that it needs to be intensive and sustained over time, embedded in teachers’ day-to-day work in schools and directly connected to teachers’ work with students (Sparks, 2004); able to engage teachers in active learning of the content to be taught and how to teach that content (Garet et al., 2001) and structured to engage teachers in solving problems of practice collaboratively (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Guskey, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Wei et al., 2009).

Sustained and intensive

Most professional development today, as in the past, still comes in the form of sporadic, one-shot workshops that typically last less than a day and the connections to one’s practice are left to the teacher to make. This model does not provide the “serious, cumulative study of the given subject matter or for trying out ideas in the classroom and reflecting on the results” (Wei et al., 2009, p. 9).
After examining studies related to student learning and changes in teacher practice, Wei and colleagues (2009) contended:

Intensive professional development, especially when it includes applications of knowledge to teachers’ planning and instruction, has a greater chance of influencing teaching practices and, in turn, leading to gains in student learning. (p. 9)

The duration of the professional development appears to impact teacher and student learning—in part, perhaps, because long-term efforts tend to include applications involving teacher practice. A meta-analysis of experimental studies found that professional development opportunities, ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total, and spread over six to 12 months showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). From the nine studies examined within this report, the researchers found that teachers involved in intensive professional development efforts for an average of 49 hours in a year saw their students’ achievement increase by approximately 21 percentile points. Studies that examined professional development opportunities involving a limited amount of professional development—five to 14 hours in total—showed no statistically significant effect on student learning (Yoon et al., 2007).

*Job-embedded and connected to practice*

In the past two decades, the necessity for professional development has come to the forefront; nevertheless, the majority of the formalized learning opportunities continue to take place away from the school site and are presented
as de-contextualized, general information that can be applied to a broad spectrum of classroom settings. Recent research suggests that professional development that is more closely tied to the specific classroom context in which the instruction takes place is more likely to affect teacher practices (Garet et al., 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007; Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005).

By situating the professional development in closer proximity to the classroom in terms of time, space, and content, teachers tend to be more likely to implement new learnings (Cohen & Hill, 2001). The researchers’ finding suggested that professional development focused on the specific content of their courses resulted in more reform-oriented or discipline-specific (e.g., the teaching of writing) practices than general professional development (Cohen & Hill, 2001). Job-embedded professional development also allows for active learning in formats that are a break from traditional approaches, bringing coherence between professional development and teachers’ other activities (Garet et al., 2001). When teachers engage in professional learning with job-embedded models such as coaching or peer observations, professional development often occurs within the context of the school or even the classroom. This contextualizes the learning, allowing for strong connections to teachers’ classroom instruction through structures such as collaborative planning, observation, and follow-up, which are vitally important to new practices being implemented and sustained (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Providing in-service education that allows for teachers’
learning to be so contextually situated has resulted in improved implementation as well as student learning (Garet et al., 2001; Wei et al., 2009).

*Engages teachers in active learning*

In developing an understanding of effective professional development, current literature indicates that teachers value the opportunity to engage in hands-on work that builds their knowledge of academic content along with the pedagogical practices related to teaching it, within the local context (Garet et al., 2001). Actively engaging in professional learning suggests that teachers engage in a meaningful examination of teaching and learning, for example, by reviewing student work or sharing feedback on observations of each others’ teaching. Through such active engagement centered around their own practices, teachers are better able to define the concepts and skills they want students to learn, how they will assist students in developing their understandings, as well as considering what steps they will take when students struggle to understand. The literature suggests that engaging in this sort of work is helpful to teachers’ understanding as well as their practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000; Little, 2003).

Modeling effective instructional practices is another means of actively engaging teachers in learning. The use of modeling allows for the acquisition of new views by allowing teachers to see new instructional practices or new skills in practice (Loucks-Horsley, Hewson & Love, 1998). Such experiences can help teachers to build schema about new approaches to instruction as they seek to
understand ways of teaching that may be different than the way they were taught. Additionally, modeling within the context of the local setting provides a further benefit in that teachers have been more likely to implement instructional practices that have been modeled on-site, using their own classrooms or a demonstration classroom (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Luft & Pizzini, 1998; Penuel et al., 2007; Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005; Supovitz, Mayer & Kahle, 2000). Modeling of instruction within teachers’ own classrooms fits with the perspective of situated cognition (J.S. Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) in which contextual learning is central. By developing teachers’ understanding in their classrooms or with their students—factors unique to the context of their setting—their understanding is further enhanced.

*Utilizes collaborative approaches*

The built-in privacy and isolation inherent to the current organizational structure for instruction within U.S. schools has long shaped teachers who exhibit a strongly individualistic work ethic (Lortie, 1975). With most teachers spending their days in isolation from other adults, the American teaching profession has not yet developed a strong tradition of professional collaboration. Historically, schools have been structured so that teachers work alone, with minimal time provided for working with colleagues to plan lessons, share instructional practices, design curriculum, or assess student work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Lortie, 1975).
One of the more promising and recent shifts in this cultural norm has been the development of professional learning communities, or PLCs. PLCs evolved from the work of Astuto and colleagues (1993) who proposed a structure in which the teachers and administrators within a school continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn. This requires more than just a collaborative working arrangement or a group that meets regularly; rather, the PLC structure is

one of continuous adult learning, strong collaboration, democratic participation, and consensus about the school environment and culture and how to attain the desired environment and culture. In such a collegial culture educators talk with one another about their practice, share knowledge, observe one another, and root for one another’s success. (Barth, 2006 as cited in Hord, 2007, p.4)

The literature on PLCs points to the presence of certain defining characteristics (Stoll et al., 2006). A synthesis of research on this subject indicates the following as the most common characteristics of effective PLCs:

- a shared vision (Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, & Wallace, 2005; DuFour, 2004; Feger & Arruda, 2008; Hord, 1997a; Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994)
- supportive and shared leadership (Feger & Arruda, 2008; Hord, 1997a; Kruse et al., 1994; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Mitchell & Sackney, 2006)
- a learning community through sharing of practices (Hord, 1997a; Kruse et al., 1994; Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004)
• a focus on improving student learning (DuFour, 2004; Feger & Arruda, 2008; Kruse et al., 1994; Louis, 2006)

• continuous inquiry and reflective dialogue (DuFour, 2004; Haar, 2003; Kruse et al., 1994; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2006)

• a collaborative culture (Bolam et al., 2005; Feger & Arruda, 2008; Kruse et al., 1994)

The collaborative process that results from these characteristics provides professional development in which teachers can strategically share and jointly construct instructional practices and understandings, analyzing and improving their classroom practice. The sharing and collaboration of a PLC extends beyond the staff room and planning time; in PLCs teachers share their practices by observing each others’ teaching (Dunne, Nave & Lewis, 2000; Kruse et al., 1994). In this team environment, teachers engage in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep collegial learning, which results in greater consistency in instruction, an increased willingness to share practices and try new instructional methods, and improved success in solving problems of practice (Hord, 1997a; Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Those studying the work of PLCs have sought to point to this process as one that results in improved student learning and achievement; however, researchers acknowledge the difficulty of determining the presence of a PLC as well correlating its work to improved student outcomes. With that understanding, there are studies that indicate that the PLC practices
and process may lead to higher levels of student achievement (DuFour, 2004; Hughes & Kritsonis, 2007; Strahan, 2003; Supovitz & Christman, 2003).

Instructional Coaching as Professional Development

To enact professional learning that embodies the best-practice qualities identified in the previous section, there appears to be a trend in US teacher professional development that is embracing what is known as “instructional coaching” as a promising strategy. In this study, the specific practices of coaches are examined in order to understand which are most effective in assisting teachers to engage in professional growth relative to teaching the literacy within their content area. In addition, the professional learning that is necessary to support coaches in their work is examined. In the sections that follow, these aspects of coaching are described through a review of the literature.

Instructional Coaching Defined

District-wide instructional reform efforts have led to envisioning leadership as part of a broader system in order to bring about systemic improvement. This has led to an inclusion of teachers as instructional leaders within schools (Smylie, S. Conley, & Mars, 2002; Taylor, 2008). This distributed model of leadership focuses on improvement through targeted attention to teaching & learning (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Elmore, 1995; Sillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). From this perspective, coaches serve as teacher leaders who assume the role of onsite professional developers, working collaboratively with teachers, helping them to incorporate research-based
instructional methods into their practice (Knight, 2007; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). This coaching model varies widely in how the support is delivered; however, foundational to this model is a coach who understands many instructional practices and focuses on a broad range of instructional issues related to student learning. In general terms, the instructional coach’s (IC’s) work with teachers is grounded in partnership principles centered around ideas of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2010), yet the specific actions that coaches take to enact these principles can be numerous.

*The Roles of an Instructional Coach*

Since its education-based inception, the term coaching has been used in a number of ways. This reflects a trend in the literature that suggests the role of a coach is both multifaceted and ambiguous (Blachowicz, Fogelberg, & Obrochta, 2005; Coggins, Stoddard, & Cutler, 2003; Learning Point Associates, 2004; Showers, 1985; Smith, 2006; Tung, Ouimette, & Feldman, 2004). This ambiguity adds to the complexity of researching and understanding the specific coaching practices that assist teachers in improving their practice. In order to begin to understand the scope of instructional coaching, this section explores the many roles of coaches identified in the literature. This ambiguity is acknowledged as a primary factor contributing to the scarcity of evidence supporting coaching. In this study, coaches specifically take on numerous and varied roles; however, the
focus of this study is specifically on the coaches’ role of assisting teachers with understanding and teaching the literacy inherent in their content area.

Because their role is born out of reform-based initiatives and their effectiveness based on traditional measures of student achievement, coaches take on a number of roles to assist teachers in meeting the goals of reform-based initiatives. The literature on coaching indicates that instructional coaches typically engage in a wide variety of activities and assume a number of roles (Duessen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; B. Hall, 2004; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; O’Connor & Ertmer, 2003; Rivera, Burley, & Sass, 2004; L. West, Hanlon, Tam, & Novelo, 2007). In much of the literature, the role of a coach is non-evaluative (Barkley, 2005; Toll, 2006). The coach does not take on supervisory duties, but in order to influence teachers, coaches utilize their relationships and expertise (Taylor, 2008).

Knight (2009) has identified seven practices that encompass the work of instructional coaches. These include enrolling teachers, collaborative planning, modeling instruction, conferring, observing, collaborative exploration of data, and continued support. It is through these practices that coaches support teachers’ learning and development of new or improved instructional techniques. In the course of their work, coaches engage in these practices with individual teachers, teams of teachers, as well as entire staffs (Knight, 2004). In order to effectively carry out these roles, coaches must be skilled in communication, relationship building, and change management (Knight, 2006).
Similarly, Neufeld and Roper (2003) have identified six practices that define the work of a coach at the classroom level, including working with teachers to plan and implement lessons, working with teachers to hone specific instructional strategies, developing and locating materials and other curriculum resources for teachers, encouraging teachers to talk about their practice, observing classes and providing feedback, and modeling instruction. In addition, they go on to identify a number of school level roles that coaches may take on, only some of which are directly related to improving the quality of classroom instruction. It is the multiplicity of these roles that make clearly defining the roles and practices of a coach increasingly complex.

This adds up to a significant task for professionals who have been placed into roles that are often ambiguous and contextually dependent (Poglinco et al., 2003). In a review of the literature, there is little research that defines the parameters of these roles (Gallucci et al., 2010), making it difficult to gain insight into the effectiveness of coaching.

**Professional Learning for Instructional Coaches**

Support systems for instructional coaches have varied greatly, often pieced together with little forethought, as districts in the current economic climate often receive sudden influxes of funding for these positions with minimal time to thoughtfully prepare and plan for how best to both utilize and support this newfound resource. Cornett and Knight also advise that “researchers can provide a great service by identifying the systemic supports that are most important [in
supporting coaches]” (2009, p. 210). Much of the professional literature around instructional coaching is of a practical nature, describing recommended practices for coaches (e.g. Barkley, 2005; Costa & Garmston, 2002; Kise, 2006; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). These guides provide a learning model for coaching similar to what is prescribed for any adult learner: study or research of instruction, observation of models, and opportunities for practice with feedback from those with expertise of more knowledgeable others (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Yet, as for adult learners in other roles, learning from independent reading of these resources alone does not constitute the rich experiential learning on which coaching itself is based.

Though many coaches come to the role with sufficient skills, most districts have found the need to sustain and grow the professional knowledge and skills of their coaches (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Researchers agree that if coaches are to be regarded as instructional experts, they must demonstrate a deep understanding of both instructional practice and content knowledge (Feger, Woleck, and Hickman, 2004; Neufeld and Roper, 2003; Poglinco et al., 2003). Studies have suggested that coaches may need support in developing the following skills associated with successful coaching. These include:

- Interpersonal skills: namely, researchers point to the support needed to enhance coaches’ ability to facilitate, collaborate, and communicate with individual and groups of teachers using skills such as supportiveness, respectfulness, approachability, accessibility, flexibility, tactfulness, and the
ability to build relationships. (D. Brown, Reumann-Moore, Hugh, du Plessis, & Christman, 2006; Coggins et al., 2003; Ertmer et al., 2005; Killion & Harrison, 2005; Knight, 2009; Lowenhaupt & McKinney, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2002; Poglinco et al., 2003; L. West & Staub, 2003);

• Skills for teaching adults: the skills required to successfully teach adults are not the same as those required for teaching children, and thus coaches may need additional development in these skills (J. A. Marsh et al., 2008; Norton, 1999);

• Instructional skills: developing a repertoire of effective coaching practices, including enrolling teachers in coaching, identifying appropriate interventions for teachers to learn, and modeling (Knight, 2009).

Beyond developing their coaching practices, the literature suggests that coaches need both a breadth and depth of knowledge in their work. Namely, researchers have pointed to the importance of an in-depth understanding of content knowledge (L. West & Staub, 2003) as well as content pedagogy (Dole, 2004) about the teaching practices they are sharing with teachers (Knight, 2009). Additionally, Neufeld & Roper (2003) suggest coherent and focused orientation programs for new coaches that provide sense-making for coaches about their role and its relationship to the “big picture,” with on-going assistance in the form of coaching from mentor coaches and additional specific professional development that addresses the needs of coaches at different school levels and of different knowledge and skill levels. Other studies also speak to the importance
of ongoing professional development for coaches as a means of improving their skills (Everston and Smithey, 2000).

Only recently have studies considered structures that will provide instructional coaches with these professional learning opportunities. Some studies point to the importance of phased-in learning and ongoing learning opportunities as key components for coach learning. (C. J. Brown, Stroh, Fouts, & Baker, 2005; Gallucci & Swanson, 2008; Knight, 2006; J. A. Marsh et al., 2008; Shanklin, 2007; Smith, 2009). Another challenge in developing effective professional development for coaches is that there are few people with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead such work (Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

On the whole, the research in this area is limited and the learning of coaches tends to appear at the peripheral of coaching studies. The literature tends to assume that coaches enter the position with the skills and knowledge necessary for the work, and that in an ever-changing, always-growing field of learning, the knowledge they bring into the role with them will suffice. There is little research that explains how individuals learn to be coaches and are best supported in refining their practices over time (Gallucci et al., 2010). It is this gap that is also considered within this study. Throughout this research, I wondered about the content and the androgogy that might most effectively support the work of coaches. What types of understandings might they need to develop and what were the most effective means of achieving those? What types of supports and understandings would instructional coaches need to be effective in engaging
content-area teachers in an area that has historically seen high resistance—the integration of literacy strategies and secondary level content teaching?

*Content-Area Literacy*

Content-area literacy, a field which content-area teachers have persistently resisted or ignored, provides a rich and challenging context for this study as a basis to understand effective professional development for secondary content-area teachers. For the past hundred years, educational researchers and teachers have wrestled with understanding the roles of reading and writing instruction at the secondary level. It was in the early 1900s when significant advances were made leading to the development of standardized tests and resulting in the comparison of populations across the country (Gray, 1916). Studies done in the 1920s and 30s based on these tests resulted in the conclusion that many U.S. secondary students were reading disabled (Olson & Dishner, 2004), leading to the consideration of reading methodology and instruction at the secondary level (Center & Persons, 1937; Strang, 1940; Bond & Bond, 1941). William S. Gray spearheaded research centered on understanding reading across content fields (Vacca, 2002) as he voiced his recognition of the unique demands of reading in each subject area (Whipple, 1925). As early as 1930, William McCallister, a colleague of Gray’s at the University of Chicago, suggested a way of thinking that is now commonplace when he wrote, “Guidance in reading should be recognized as a function of every instructor” (p. 200). Hence, the birth of “every teacher a teacher of reading.”
As a result, educators have been working ever since to design strategies to assist secondary students with learning to read and write in the content areas (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Moore & Readence, 2001) in response to the needs of teachers who have voiced difficulty with re-envisioning literacy as part of content-area curricula (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Moore, 1996; O’Brien & R. A. Stewart, 1990; O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Ratekin, Simpson, Alvermann, & Dishner, 1985). Explanations for the difficulty include constraints on instructional time, secondary teachers’ limited knowledge of literacy processes and literacy teaching practices, and teachers’ resistance to envisioning literacy as part of learning in their content area (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Moore, 1996; O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Despite such a longstanding focus and a consensus regarding literacy’s importance to teaching and learning of content, researchers have consistently found that secondary schools and teacher education programs have been less than successful in developing integrated secondary literacy models, and the teachers frequently and easily dismiss efforts to incorporate practices that focus explicitly on literacy (Moje, 2006; O’Brien & R. A. Stewart, 1990; O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995). The research literature on this subject has pointed to constraints on instructional time, secondary teachers’ limited knowledge of literacy processes and literacy teaching practices, as well as teachers’ resistance to envisioning literacy as part of learning in their content area as a means for
explaining these difficulties (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Moore, 1996; O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995, Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). As Snow and Moje (2010) point out, "[e]mphasizing “literacy” does not mean... deflect[ing] attention from subject-area learning... deep learning in the subject areas requires complex literacy skills" (p. 66)

Recent researchers have called attention to the failure of content-area literacy approaches to address the specialized and sophisticated literacy processes students need to make sense of complex content-area texts. Many teachers’ understanding of content-area literacy fails to go beyond assigning the reading and writing of content-specific texts (McConachie & Petrosky, 2010). For those content-area teachers who incorporate instruction of literacy within their teaching, the focus has been on general comprehension strategies, such as previewing, predicting, monitoring, questioning, and summarizing (Snow & Moje, 2010). Though these strategies are widely endorsed as effective practices (National Reading Panel, 2000), teaching generic strategies alone falls short of what adolescent learners need to successfully navigate content-area texts. As Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) explain:

We have spent a century of education beholden to this generalist notion of literacy learning—the idea that if we just provide adequate basic skills, from that point forward kids with adequate background knowledge will be able to read anything successfully. (p. 41)
Knowing the purpose of such comprehension strategies, including when and how to employ them, is an often-neglected aspect of developing these strategies into tools that will assist students in content-area learning (Snow & Moje, 2010). As well, these comprehension strategies alone may not address the challenges presented by advanced content-area texts (Moje & Speyer, 2008).

Recent thinking from content-area literacy researchers has attempted to begin to address these disciplinary considerations and demands, suggesting that as students advance in school, their literacy instruction should become increasingly discipline-based, supporting students in their interactions with and understandings of texts that are utilized in the various disciplines or subject areas (Bulgren, Deshler, & Lenz, 2007; M. W. Conley, 2007; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Yore, Bisanz, & Hand, 2003; Yore & Treagust, 2006). However, the shift has been slow and there has been little movement beyond developing generic comprehension strategies (Moje, 2008).

**Disciplinary Literacy**

Disciplinary literacy is a recent development in the field of content-area literacy that moves beyond the long-held notion of “every teacher a reading teacher.” It approaches content-area literacy through an emphasis on the need for building more powerful connections between literacy approaches and disciplinary content instruction in order to improve the learning opportunities

Shanahan & Shanahan (2008) have suggested a model (see figure 2.1) that points to disciplinary literacy as a natural progression from the basic and intermediate literacy skills that are developed in the elementary years. As students become more sophisticated readers and writers, interacting with more complicated and specialized texts in middle and high school, it appears that generalized literacy skills may not serve their needs as they work to make sense of specialized texts in various disciplines (Grigg, Donahue, & Dion, 2007; Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007). The model the Shanahans propose is based on this premise. They suggest that as students advance to making sense of more complex and sophisticated texts, there is a need for specialized content-area literacy instruction that allows students to develop their understanding and fluency within the advanced content of the disciplines studied in middle and high school.

...during middle and high school, many students begin to master even more specialized reading routines and language uses, and these particular outcomes, although powerful and valuable, are also more constrained in their applicability to most reading tasks. A high school student who can do a reasonably good job of reading a story in an English class might not be able to make much sense of biology or algebra books, and vice versa. Although most students manage to master basic and even intermediate literacy skills, many never gain proficiency with the more advanced skills that would enable them to read challenging texts in science,
history, literature, mathematics, or technology. (p. 45)

Figure 2.1 The Increasing Specialization of Literacy Development

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) go on to explain that disciplinary literacy can be viewed as the most specialized of literacy skills in a progression of literacy development:

...as students move through school, reading and writing instruction should become increasingly disciplinary, reinforcing and supporting student performance with the kinds of texts and interpretive standards that are needed in the various disciplines or subjects. (p. 57)

This is a shift from the focus on generic comprehension strategies to the specific structures, language, and texts of the disciplines. Only recently have content-area literacy researchers begun to attend to the specialized nature of literacy within various content-area subject matter (Bulgren et al., 2007; M. W. Conley, 2007; Guthrie et al., 2004; Schoenbach et al., 1999; Yore et al., 2003; Yore & Treagust, 2006).
There is an additional body of research that takes disciplinary literacy pedagogy a step further, reversing the relationship between the understanding (literacy) and the subject matter, moving to a perspective that seeks to work from within the discipline to assess the literacy processes necessary for understanding the content (Bain, 2006; Goldman, 1997; Leinhardt & Young, 1996; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998; S. M. Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg, 1991; Yore, Hand, & Prain, 2002). In this literature, the researchers suggest that the epistemological foundation of a given discipline shapes the literacy practices within the content, and thus the learning of subject matter within that discipline. This stems from a focus on examining how members of a discipline think and how that thinking shapes the texts they produce—or how they access the texts of others—in order to understand the concepts of the discipline.

In many aspects, Wineburg’s study (1991) initiated this thinking by studying the means by which historians approached a historical document in contrast with the approach used by high school students enrolled in a history class. His results pointed to distinct differences between the thinking of the historians and the students, despite the students enacting multiple comprehension strategies that might be deemed appropriate from a general comprehension perspective. Bain & Ellenbogen (2001) expanded on this work through endeavors to teach students the practices of historians as they engaged with texts. The excerpt that follows is a reflection from a student in the class. It
evidences the kind of learning and change in thinking that can come from this type of instruction:

This class taught me not to just believe something is right just because the teacher says it or if it’s in the textbook. I now think and even perhaps act like a historian. If I disagree with something the teacher or the books says I can listen carefully or read through to check for internal consistency. Internal consistency is important especially when I’m listening to a teacher because if he/she contradicts themselves, it would be hard for me to know what is correct. Also, if a teacher says something which I think is wrong, I can corroborate with other sources to check which was correct. By far the most important thing I learned was not just to accept what is being said but check to see if it corresponds with what I had previously learned. Honestly, through this course, I have become a better thinker. (pp 2106-2107)

Because of the discipline-specific nature of these skills, they vary from content-area to content-area and serve to develop student understanding of a specific content area or disciplinary field.

A disciplinary literacy approach acknowledges each subject area as a discourse community with its own specialized language, texts, and literate practices that students must navigate (O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995). With this acknowledgement, literacy becomes a critical aspect of the discipline, rather than a superimposed set of generic strategies used to improve the reading and writing of subject area texts. This re-conceptualization, known as disciplinary literacy (DL), situates literacy instruction as an integral aspect of the content,
which services subject area learning and emphasizes learning the ways of knowing, doing, and communicating within a discipline (Moje, 2008).

Related to the research question in the present study, I wondered if an approach that grounded literacy from within the discipline would be received differently by content-area teachers than traditional content-area literacy approaches. Could a disciplinary literacy approach change how teachers viewed literacy in relation to their content? Would teachers be willing to integrate disciplinary literacy practices as part of their instruction? I wanted to understand if working with instructional coaches could assist content-area teachers with re-visioning literacy in their content, as well as help them to develop the instructional skills necessary to implement these practices. What factors would influence teachers to engage in this work?

Summary

The literature on both instructional coaching and disciplinary literacy suggests the need for additional research in these emerging fields—though both are grounded in the histories of professional development and content-area literacy, respectively. Instructional coaching is a recent approach that enacts much of what the current literature points to as best practices. Though much of the initial research indicates that this approach can be an effective means of professional development, the details on what makes this approach effective are not clear. Understanding the specific coaching practices that engage teachers—
specifically in regards to areas in which they are resistant—can be helpful in identifying ways to move teachers toward socially just (and sensible) practices.

The review of the literature on disciplinary literacy indicates that this, too, is an emerging field—one that has grown out of the significant work done around content area literacy—but a field that takes a sharp turn away from many of the previous approaches. Much of the literature recognizes how the teaching of disciplinary literacy affects the thinking and learning of students; however, more study is needed to understand how disciplinary literacy, when used as a lens for professional development, can support teachers’ use of literacy in the teaching of content.

It is at the intersection of these two emerging fields that this study lies. This research seeks to understand each of these constructs in relation to the other, as each provides a rich context and lens through which to examine the other. In the chapter that follows, I present the finding of this research in regards to these questions and wonderings.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the engagement of secondary teachers in professional learning related to literacy. As indicated in the literature review chapter, there is research supporting the idea that coaching practices improve engagement with and implementation of such teaching practices; however, research that delves into understanding the specific factors that lead to this engagement is limited.

With the intention of gaining an in-depth understanding of how secondary teachers are engaged in professional learning relative to literacy, a focus traditionally resisted by content area teachers, it was important to utilize a research design that included observation and interviews of coaches and teachers who were currently engaged in this type of learning. To meet the proposed criteria and sufficiently address the research question, a qualitative study involving the use of focus groups, individual interviews, surveys, and participant observations was designed. The use of multiple sources of data collection enabled the researcher to triangulate the interpretations of the data.

This qualitative study took place over eight months. During this time, I studied the work of ten instructional coaches who worked full-time supporting the teaching staffs of a single middle school or high school. This chapter describes my research paradigm and perspectives, the participants and how they were selected, the setting, data collection and analysis, a discussion regarding issues of
trustworthiness and credibility, and the recruitment and ethical considerations for the study, including the process of informed consent.

Research Paradigm and Perspectives

Research Paradigm: Qualitative Research

My choice of qualitative research is a reflection of my worldview and philosophical base. Qualitative research is embedded in a complex historical field that has fluctuated over time making it difficult to define. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) offer a generic definition:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world....qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.3)

A qualitative methodology provided the opportunity for me to describe and understand how the events, interactions, and meanings derived from this study were shaped by their context (Maxwell, 2004).

Because of its inherent openness and flexibility, qualitative research provides an opportunity to recognize unanticipated influences and generate new theories. With this flexibility, qualitative research “allows you to modify your design and focus during the research to understand new discoveries and relationships” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22). Additionally, qualitative research supports the practical goal of my study: to generate theories that are “understandable and
experientially credible” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 24) for educators whose work involves these areas.

More specifically, this qualitative study is based on naturalistic inquiry in that the research takes place in a real world setting. As the researcher, I seek to capture the individual point of view, examine the constraints of everyday life, and understand the concepts related to this study without manipulation of the phenomenon of interest. “The phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher such as would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting” (Patton, 2002, p. 39). In a qualitative inquiry, the contextual setting contributes so greatly to the meaning, such inquiry requires that the researcher assume the role as the key instrument for data collection. This allows for an adaptive approach and a consistently emergent design, as “The human instrument builds upon his or her tacit knowledge as much as if not more than upon propositional knowledge, and uses methods that are appropriate to humanly implemented inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187).

Additionally, this study reflects an interpretive inquiry that is focused on understanding multiple sources of data through an inductive data analysis process in order to develop understanding of participants’ meanings. Though these understandings cannot be separated from my own background, history, and prior understanding, I acknowledge that the findings of this research are bound by these constructions and it is up to the readers to develop their own
interpretation of these ideas as well. By examining aspects of the coaching relationship as it happened and where it happened, this study allowed me to fully explore my research questions in a manner that reflected my worldview and philosophical base. Specifically, a naturalistic research design fits with my social constructivist lens because such a design:

- suggests that realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts (the whole is more than the sum of the parts);
- because of the belief that the very act of observation influences what is seen, and so the research interaction should take place with the entity-in-context for fullest understanding; because of the belief that context is crucial in deciding whether or not a finding may have meaning in some other context as well; because of the belief in complex mutual shaping rather than linear causation, which suggests that the phenomenon must be studied in its full-scale influence (force) field; and because contextual value structures are at least partly determinative of what will be found. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39)

A naturalistic inductive inquiry allows for the development of subjective understanding based on the varied and multiple perspectives that participants co-construct through interactions. These ideas cannot be fully understood apart from the specific social and cultural context in which they develop and are enacted.

**Researcher Perspectives**

The framework for a study is created in how the “researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework that specifies a set of questions that he or
she then examines in specific ways” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 30). This study was grounded in the theoretical perspective of social constructivism. This perspective influenced the type of research I chose to do, the types of data I collected, the questions I asked, and my methods of data analysis.

According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), the social constructivist research perspective adopts “a relativist ontology, a transactional epistemology, and a hermeneutic, dialectical methodology” (p. 184). This theoretical perspective guided my design of this study. It matched my purpose, which was to understand how instructional coaches engaged secondary content area teachers in professional learning related to literacy.

A social constructivist approach considers learning to be a social interaction. Moll (1990) suggests that social activity and cultural practices provide sources for thinking and learning. This premise underlies the idea that professional learning occurs in the interactions between a coach and a teacher, and that they construct meaning from their active engagement in their work with one another. Teachers and coaches acquiring knowledge within a specific social setting in turn construct their own understanding and perceptions. This study required the researcher to design a study that would examine those constructs that coaches create and use to engage teachers in professional learning as well as teachers’ perceptions of such practices. It is my intention for the readers of this study to consider the meaning as constructed through multiple and interwoven
viewpoints. This set of representations are interpreted and documented as the “findings” of this research.

Research Participants and Setting

Participant Selection

This research took place in the district in which I work—a large school district in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Before submitting the study to IRB at Oregon State University for approval, I shared the research design with the assistant superintendent of the district and gained written approval and support for the study.

I met with the coaches at the onset of this research. At that time I explained that the purpose of my study was to understand the ways in which instructional coaches influence the use of disciplinary literacy instructional methods, methods that involve the use of multiple literacies in order to learn and form complex content knowledge appropriate to a particular discipline. I explained the time and expectations for participation and extended an invitation to all coaches using what Henry (1998) defined as “convenience sampling.”

Each of these coaches was assigned to work full-time at one of the district’s middle or high schools. Of the 16 secondary instructional coaches with whom I work, 14 attended the preliminary meeting; of those attending, ten elected to participate. Two of the four coaches who attended but did not elect to participate indicated that they were too new in this role (this was their first year as an instructional coach) to provide what they felt would be helpful data, and the
other two coaches declined because they would be taking maternity leaves for a majority of the study.

To determine the teachers who would be interviewed for this study, I again used convenience sampling and had each of the participating instructional coaches identify teachers with whom they had worked during the course of the study. Of the 25 teachers identified, 15 agreed to participate in interviews.

Demographics of Coaches

During the course of this research, all of the participating instructional coaches worked full-time as instructional coaches at secondary schools (middle or high school). Of the ten participating coaches, three were male; seven were female. Table 3.1, provides background demographic information on the coaches. All names indicated in the table and throughout the study are pseudonyms. The coaches bring to this role varied prior experiences, particularly in regards to their content area endorsements, number of years coaching, and literacy backgrounds.
### Table 3.1 – Instructional Coaches Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach Name</th>
<th>Years in the Field Teaching</th>
<th>Years in the Field Coaching</th>
<th>Content Area Certification</th>
<th>School Level &amp; SES</th>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>• Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>Title I Middle School</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>Title I Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• PE</td>
<td>Non- Title I Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>Non- Title I Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>Title I Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>• Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>Title I Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>• Multiple Subjects</td>
<td>Non- Title I Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>• Social Studies</td>
<td>Non- Title I Middle School</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Advanced Math</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Social Studies</td>
<td>Title I High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Setting**

Skyview School District (pseudonym) is located in an urban area in the Pacific Northwest. It is one of the larger districts in the region, composed of over 60 schools; 16 are comprehensive secondary schools employing instructional coaches. According to the state’s 2008-2009 report card, the enrollment in the district during the course of this study was over 40,000 students. Each of the middle schools from which an instructional coach participated had between 700 and 1,100 students, and approximately 50 teachers. The two high schools whose instructional coaches participated each had between 1,500-2,000 students and
approximately 100 teachers. The student demographics of the district are as follows: White 54%, Hispanic 36%, and Other 8%. More than half of the district’s student population is considered living in poverty based on the numbers who qualify for Federal Free and Reduced Meal Program. Eighteen percent of students are enrolled in English Language Learner programs, 14% in Special Education programs, and 9% in Talented and Gifted programs. The schools represented by the participating coaches represented a wide range of demographics within the district. Of the participating coaches, five were from schools identified as Title I and five were not, which is a balanced reflection of the makeup of the district’s secondary schools. Seven of the comprehensive secondary schools are identified as Title I, while nine are not.

_Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations_

As a researcher studying my work with instructional coaches, I found it important to safeguard and maintain the collegial relationships that were already in place, while generating open dialogues about my research question through new means and forums. In my role as a researcher, I was an active participant in “forging generative, communicative relationships, in building ongoing dialogues and expanding the domain of civic deliberation” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 598). Throughout the research process, my relationship with the coaches deepened as we discussed, pondered, and attempted to make meaning of their work with teachers as well as my work with them. The structure of the research was meant to provide benefit both to the coaches and me as we investigated and questioned
the realm of issues associated with coaching secondary content teachers in matters of literacy.

Christians (2005) outlines four general guidelines for ethical behavior when engaged in qualitative research. The first is the subject’s right to informed consent. Second, is the need to design research that is free of active deception. The third guideline insists on safeguards to protect subject’s identities giving them assurance of privacy and confidentiality. Lastly, the researcher must do everything in her power to assure the accuracy of the data. Following Christians’ Codes of Ethics and the guidelines of the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I obtained informed consent for this research study.

At the introductory meeting, I explained to the instructional coaches the purpose of the research and what it would involve. Additionally, all coaches had the opportunity to read the informed consent document and have it read to them (See Appendix A). This document put forth the purpose of the study in writing and outlined the time commitment and responsibilities of the participants. It reiterated to the participants that their participation was entirely voluntary, but that they would receive compensation for their participation (participants were paid by the district at an hourly curriculum rate for their time spent in focus group sessions and interviews outside of contract hours), and that they were free to leave the study at any time without negative consequences. Contact information was included in the document in case the participants had any questions or concerns before, during, or after the study.
All participating coaches signed the informed consent document, which allowed me to audiotape their focus group sessions and interviews, as well as collect observational notes and survey data regarding their work. Ethical guidelines designed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) regarding expectations for research were used when recruiting participants. The research proposal was approved by the IRB at Oregon State University, and I agreed to follow the code of ethics by providing coaches with informed consent documents, reading them, and answering questions before they signed to join the study. I agreed to keep data confidential by creating pseudonyms for the participants and disguising the locations, as well as keeping the data in secure locations (Christians, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005).

**Design of Study**

The central research question that guided this study was the following: What factors appear to influence secondary content-area teachers’ engagement with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy? This question was explored from both the perspective of teachers and instructional coaches.

**Data Sources**

I used multiple sources of data for my study:

1) feedback and demographic surveys of coaches,

2) observations of coaching interactions with teachers,

3) interviews of coaches,
4) interviews of teachers who had worked with a coach to develop disciplinary literacy practices,

5) focus group sessions with coaches,

6) a research journal containing descriptions of my thinking and reflections on my learning.

In December and March I administered a survey of coaches regarding the professional development I was conducting with them (See Appendix B). These surveys were sent through an online provider, which allowed the instructional coaches to share their thinking and needs freely, anonymously, and at their own convenience. The feedback from these surveys assisted me in designing future professional development sessions, as well as led to questions and ideas that could be further studied in subsequent focus group sessions. At the conclusion of the study, I administered a final survey of coaches to confirm the themes and categories I had identified within their data.

**Focus Groups**

The focus group allows for a “collectivistic rather than an individualistic research method that focuses on the multivocality of participants’ attitudes, experiences, and beliefs” (Madriz, 2000, p. 836). In speaking to the advantages of focus groups over interviews, Madriz suggests that focus groups make it possible for researchers to observe the interactive processes occurring among participants. Often these processes include spontaneous responses from the members of the group that ease
their involvement and participation in the discussion.
(p. 836)

The interactive process that the focus group allowed for was a purposeful part of both the data collection and the professional development I provided for the coaches. It was during these two sessions that instructional coaches could listen to the ideas, questions, problems, and successes of other coaches and enrich the ideas shared by adding to them, questioning them, or responding to them situationally, based on the context and setting that they were working within.

Focus group sessions were held twice, once in December and then again in April, as a confirmatory method for testing hypotheses generated during the study (D. Stewart, Shamdasani, 1990). The exact dates and times were jointly decided by the group, and held in a district conference room. Each focus group session was audio taped. Each session followed a protocol that began with a social time to interact, followed by the discussion. Each focus group discussion was guided by a set of open-ended questions (See Appendix C).

The first focus group meeting in December was attended by nine of the ten coaches. I reviewed the information from the informed consent form, highlighting the information pertaining to confidentiality. Before beginning the session, I asked each coach to complete a biographical information form (See Table 3.1). I provided participants with a handout that explained the protocol for the discussion and listed the three guiding questions.
The second focus group occurred in April, when instructional coaches could reflect on their body of work for the year and begin to set goals and develop plans for the following year. Eight of the ten coaches attended this session (two were not able to attend due to scheduling conflicts). I began the session by having participants engage in checking the transcript from the first focus group session. Minor changes that clarified meaning were noted by two coaches. We then moved into the discussion which was guided by six questions (See Appendix C) that I had identified for follow-up, based on data collected in the previous focus group session, the surveys, and the coaching observations.

*Coaching Observations*

Seven of the ten coaches arranged for me to observe them during a coaching session related to disciplinary literacy. The coaching sessions varied in nature and included the following:

**Table 3.2 Types of Coaching Observations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Coaching Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina</td>
<td>Delivering professional development to a PLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominic</td>
<td>Delivering professional development to a PLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Post-conference with an individual teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Post-conference and video analysis with an individual teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke</td>
<td>Co-teaching and post-conference with an individual teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosanna</td>
<td>Delivering professional development to small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan</td>
<td>Modeling instruction for a teacher and post-conferencing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During each of the observations, I took a variety of field notes that included verbatim conversations, body language, and questions asked by the coach and teachers. When requested by the coach, I also provided feedback and suggestions on the session, based on my observations. Copies of my notes were given to or discussed with coaches.

Coach Interviews

In considering the role of interviews, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that

An interview is said to be a conversation with a purpose, but... [in] a very real sense...investigator and respondent together create [original emphasis] what is the data of the research. Each influences the other; each shapes the other and is shaped by the other. (as cited in Brunner, 1997, p. 5)

The interviews with the coaches took place in June, toward the end of the study, and allowed for me to work with each participant to co-construct data that reflected our thinking about their coaching work and practices. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. The interviews were determined by the participants’ schedules and held at a location of convenience to the coach. Six of the ten coaches arranged to meet with me for the interview. The remaining four coaches were not interviewed for various personal reasons. I used five predetermined questions to guide the semi-structured interview, which were followed up by additional probes that engaged the participants in conversation
around the “hunches” I had formulated throughout the course of the study, in an attempt to co-construct meaning which related to my research question and allowed for continuous member checking. The guiding questions for each coaching interview were as follows:

1. What coaching practices did you find to be most effective or least effective when coaching teachers in the areas of disciplinary literacy?
2. Tell me about any critical events or turning points that altered your thinking about coaching content area teachers in integrating disciplinary literacy into their instruction.
3. Describe an experience when you felt particularly successful as an instructional coach in assisting a teacher to integrate literacy into their teaching this year.
4. Thinking about your professional development this year, what helped you with coaching teachers in matters of disciplinary literacy? What else do you need to help you develop in this area?
5. What else would you like to share with me about coaching content area teachers in matters of disciplinary literacy that we haven’t touched on?

I had each interview transcribed verbatim by a paid individual who was employed as a medical transcriptionist. I reviewed the transcripts for ambiguities and errors, and changed all names to pseudonyms.
Teacher Interviews

When considering interviewing as “the active joint construction of plausible stories or accounts of social life” (p. 136), it became important to include in this account the voices and perspectives of the teachers with whom the coaches had worked (Schwandt, 2003). At the end of the study, I emailed an invitation to each of the twenty-five teachers whose names had been provided to me by their coaches. Of the teachers invited to participate, 15 responded that they would like to participate, and schedules permitted for ten of those teachers to be interviewed. At the time of the interview, I explained to teachers the purpose of the research and what it would involve. Additionally, all teachers had the opportunity to read the informed consent document and have it read to them (See Appendix D). Interviews took place at the teachers’ schools and were audio taped. In the cases where there was more than one teacher being interviewed at a school, teachers elected to complete the interview as a group. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Interview groups ranged in size from one teacher to five teachers. Teachers from four of the ten schools were interviewed. I again used a semi-structured interview format, preceded by gathering demographic information about the teacher, and then conducting the interview using six guiding questions about their work with their instructional coach, their views on disciplinary literacy, and their views on instructional coaching. The questions were as follows:
1. Tell me about the relationship between literacy and your content as you see it.

2. What sorts of difficulties exist for teachers who are working to integrate literacy instruction into their content area teaching?

3. Describe some of the work you have done with your coach in this area this year.

4. Tell me specifically about some of the literacy instruction you’ve tried to incorporate in your teaching this year.

5. If you were to design the practices that an instructional coach used in working with teachers, what would you have the coach do?

6. What else would you like to share with me about instructional coaches or literacy in content classes that we haven’t touched on?

These questions were followed up by probes that allowed me to explore my “hunches” with the teachers and co-construct meaning related to my research questions from a teacher’s perspective. For these interviews, I also had each one transcribed verbatim by a paid individual who was employed as a medical transcriptionist and reviewed theses transcripts for ambiguities and errors, changing all names to pseudonyms as well.

*Researcher Journal*

The research journal includes observational notes, methodological notes, and theoretical notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). “Observational notes are statements bearing upon events experienced principally through watching and
listening (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 100). My research journal included observational notes from focus group sessions, coaching observations, and other interactions with the participants.

Methodological notes are statements that reflect an “operational act completed or planned: an instruction to oneself, a reminder, a critique of one’s own tactics” (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 101). My research journal contained methodological notes that demonstrated my reflexivity as a researcher as I reflected on the data I had collected. As I began the data analysis process with the initial reading of the transcripts, I simultaneously began to write memos—a form of methodological notes—about the meaningful ideas I was seeing in the data.

Theoretical notes represent “attempts to derive meaning from any one or several observational notes” (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 101). These theoretical notes also took the form of memos as I began the data analysis process with the transcribed interviews, focus groups, and the observational notes, connecting theoretical understandings to the patterns I was identifying in the data. These notes reflected hunches that were revisited during each cycle of data analysis, aiding in the clarification of themes and identification of patterns.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of all data, an analytic inductive approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used as the framework for developing an understanding of the experiences of the participants. Adler (1990) describes analytic induction as a way to
call upon our experiences, utilize our feelings, and be a part of the research instrument while evolving and formulating theory that is grounded in the experiences of ourselves and the people we study. By remaining open and flexible, with a close eye and ear to behavior in natural settings, induction (or retroduction), is the only epistemology that addresses the subjective nature of human life, while generating theories that respect the everyday realities of its members. (p. 55)

The use of this approach requires that the researcher perform multiple readings of the documenting resources to construct data through identification of concepts and relationships that exist within the context of transcripts, fieldnotes, and written responses. Additional readings allow the researcher to test the validity of the assertions that are generated, as well as identify disconfirming evidence as well as confirming evidence (Erickson, 1986).

The section that follows details how the transcripts from the focus group session and interviews with both coaches and teachers were analyzed. After this description, the analysis of other data sources will be discussed.

**Focus Group and Interview Analysis**

To begin the process of identifying data within the focus group and interview transcripts, I used a multi-cycle coding process, utilizing several coding strategies. Before and during the coding cycles, the audio recordings of the interviews or focus group discussions were reviewed multiple times to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts.
First Cycle Coding. Descriptive line-by-line coding was used for the first cycle of coding. According to Saldaña (2009), “Descriptive coding summarizes in a word or short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data...it is important that these [codes] are identifications of the topic, not abbreviations of the content” (p. 70). This cycle provides for the development of a “basic vocabulary” of data to form “bread and butter” categories for further analytic work (Turner, 1994, as cited in Saldaña, 2009, p. 199). At times, I also used an amalgam of In Vivo, Initial and Descriptive Coding in an attempt to capture the complexities I saw within the data.

Beginning with the focus group transcripts, I read to develop a big picture view of the coaches’ thinking. I then carefully re-read the transcripts and assigned codes to each segment of data I identified. In some cases, this required line-by-line coding, and in other instances it meant coding larger passages of the transcripts that represented a single topic.

As I did the initial coding of focus group sessions, I generated analytic memos to begin the interpretation of the data, including making connections with related research. This first round of memo-writing recorded my initial “noticings” in the data, which I used to refine and focus subsequent coding and memo-writing. I then transferred my codes to post-it notes, so that I could lay them out, rearranging them and regrouping them as I noticed patterns and relationships among ideas. I repeated this process with the coaches’ interviews before moving on to the teachers’ interviews.
Second Cycle Coding. The second cycle of coding is the putting back together and fitting together of the categories identified in the first round of coding. During this phase,

some codes will be merged together because they are conceptually similar; infrequent codes will be assessed for their utility in the overall coding scheme; and some codes that seemed like good ideas during First Cycle coding may be dropped all together because they are later deemed “marginal” or “redundant” after the data corpus has been fully reviewed. (Lewins & Silver, 2007, p. 100 as cited in Saldaña, p. 149)

The purpose of this messy, and at times, ambiguous process, is to develop a sense of categorical organization from the First Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2009).

During the Second Cycle coding, I primarily used Pattern Coding in order to converge data into “the most salient categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46) and make decisions about which of my initial codes made “the most analytic sense” (p. 57). As I sought to achieve saturation of the data—examining the data until “no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136), I heeded Dey’s cautions (1999), realizing that many of these categories did not “always have sharp boundaries, and that there are different degrees of belonging” (pp. 69-70). I searched for overlapping codes and began to determine where they best fit into the bigger incidents and categories I had identified.

I continued the memo-writing process to discover where the data connected and how it related to my research questions. These memos were full of new
questions to be asked and answered about the nature of instructional coaching. At the end of the Second Cycle coding, I created situational maps using these big ideas, using color-codes to begin to search for similarities and differences. I rearranged these color-coded post-its into new categories and studied them from both the teachers' and the coaches' perspectives. This led to the identification of major themes that would guide the third round of coding.

Third Cycle Coding. During the third round of coding, I used Focused Coding as I sifted through the transcripts looking specifically for instances of data that served as confirming, as well as disconfirming evidence for each major theme. I noted the location of each instance, along with relevant descriptive details to assist in another iteration of refining the categories I had identified. Using the data that was coded in the final cycle, I reexamined my categories and looked for areas of overlap and redundancy, as I sought to clearly delineate the boundaries of each theme.

After separating the codes into themes, I also believed it was important to attend to the frequency counts of each code, while at the same time maintaining a consciousness of the code's qualities as well as its quantity (Saldaña, 2009). I reexamined the placement of codes within the categories multiple times to ensure that, as much as possible, I was not “forc[ing] or select[ing] [data] to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent categories or discard[ing] [data] in favor of keeping an extant theory intact” (Glaser, 1978, p. 4). I also sought to make sense of the relationships between the themes of the data by creating diagrams of the
phenomena in order to bring the codes to life and envision the story the data was
telling.

*Other Data Sources*

Data from the coaches’ demographic surveys were used to provide
background information regarding demographics for the study. Field notes from
observations, feedback surveys, and my research journal were used as additional
data sources to supplement and support the findings of the observational data
discussed in Chapter 4.

*Trustworthiness and Credibility*

There is much debate over the use of the terms and constructs of
reliability and validity in qualitative research. New language has emerged for
judging qualitative research from multiple viewpoints. Denzin and Lincoln
(2000) suggest that within a constructivist paradigm of inquiry, the terms
internal and external validity are replaced with the criteria of trustworthiness
and credibility.

Trustworthiness is the measure most cited as the standard for validity in
qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Trustworthiness is
established when findings as closely as possible reflect the meanings as described
by the participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness can be
demonstrated through the collection of enough data in an uncompromised
manner and presented with enough detail to convince the reader that the
conclusions make sense, from their perspective (Merriam, 1998).
The trustworthiness of the qualitative data within this study is demonstrated through the following strategies:

1. Triangulation: using multiple sources, methods, investigators
2. Member checking: having the participants read and respond to the reasonableness of the emerging findings
3. Long-term engagement in the field
4. Peer examination: asking colleagues to review aspects of the data and evaluate the reasonableness of the findings
5. Participatory forms of research: involving participants in all phases of research
6. Researchers’ biases: clarify the researcher’s worldview, theoretical orientation, and assumptions at the outset of and throughout the study (Cresswell, 2003, p. 204)

Although each of the strategies above was implemented, triangulation, member checking, and participatory forms of research were the three main strategies used to enhance validity in this study.

Triangulation is considered by some to be the most traditional method of establishing validity (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995), since—as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest—objectivity can never be captured. They agree with Flick (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5) that “The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth,
complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry.” In this study, I strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings by triangulating the data using a number of the methods listed previously. One means of triangulation was achieved by collecting data from a variety of sources that contributed to the rigor, complexity, and depth of the study. In order to generate and assess my evolving understandings of the research data and analysis, I brought together data from surveys, focus group sessions, observations, and interviews with both coaches and teachers, as well as my own research notes. Triangulation also took place by the comparing the verbatim transcriptions of both the focus group sessions and interviews with the secondary data, which included observations, surveys, and artifacts as well. Finally, I triangulated the data by bringing together multiple perspectives and voices in this study—the viewpoints of both the coaches as well as the viewpoints of the teachers. Through these means, the dependability, credibility, and confirmability of this study were strengthened.

Member checking occurred throughout the study in a number of ways. During each interview and at points within the focus group session, I would paraphrase back to participants the key ideas I had heard and ask for confirmation that what I’d heard accurately reflected their thinking. In addition, during the study, as well as at the conclusion of the data collection period, I would share back typed transcripts of the notes with participants for them to review and confirm accuracy. I concluded the study with a survey of coaches
regarding the themes identified in the data, as a means of confirming my understanding of their perceptions.

Participatory means were used throughout the research process to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. Even before the study began, I consulted with several of the instructional coaches on the design of the study, seeking their insight as to the means that might prove to be significant sources of learning. As I began collecting and analyzing data, I would frequently meet with instructional coaches to discuss my hunches, collecting and considering their reactions and insights throughout the process. Through these interactions with coaches, multiple perspectives were considered as data were analyzed.

Generalizability, or external validity, is a sensible goal of all research in the social sciences, especially educational research. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that this notion be re-conceptualized as transferability when considering qualitative research. With transferability the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. The best advice to give to anyone seeking to make a transfer is to accumulate empirical evidence about contextual similarity; the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible. (p. 298)
With this in mind, there is a burden upon the qualitative researcher to provide adequate description of the context and the assumptions central to the research so that the reader can understand the extent to which the findings are transferable.

*Researcher Challenges, Perspectives, and Biases*

*Researcher Perspectives and Biases*

This research study evolved from my experiences as a literacy specialist and a researcher in a graduate teacher education program. It was through my work with teachers and instructional coaches that I wrestled with what would become my research questions.

During this time, my ever-evolving worldview as a researcher was primarily informed by the perspective of social constructivism. This theoretical perspective not only informed the design of this study, but also influenced how I constructed knowledge and made meaning throughout the study. Additionally, social constructivism provided a lens that matched the purpose of the study: to learn about and construct understanding of a complex process through a variety of social means.

I came to this study with beliefs about coaching teachers and implementing literacy in content area classes grounded in my own personal experiences: from my own teaching of literature, composition, and social studies at the middle school level; from my experiences of teaching and supervising pre-service teachers at the university level; and from my most current experiences of
working with in-service teachers and instructional coaches to develop and strengthen the literacy practices within their instruction. My understanding of professional learning placed primacy on the relationship between the teacher and learner—even when the learners were adults.

Additionally, I came to this study with a value for the importance of context. As a researcher, I concur with Guba: “It is virtually impossible to imagine any human behavior that is not mediated by the context in which it occurs” (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Because I view my own subjectivity as limited, I applied that belief as I considered the teaching and learning of others. As teachers learn from and work with instructional coaches, I saw the value and importance of contextualizing and providing relevance for the literacy that the instructional coaches were working to help teachers develop.

It was also important for my research to be based on what Noddings (2007) calls an ethic of care. It is with this perspective that I took on the role of an active participant-observer within this research, as I desired to learn more about the coaches and the teachers with whom they worked. I believe this role, and the exchanges it provided for, allowed the voices of the coaches and teachers to be heard. In our schools and classrooms voices can be denied, and marginalized groups can be easily silenced (Lent & Pipkin, 2003). This ethic of care allowed me to participate in a learning environment that promoted an atmosphere where we could openly discuss the school culture, especially as it related to the teachers as
learners; choose to question authorities, traditions, and basic assumptions; and engage in reflective dialogue.

Our world has fashioned us to be uncomfortable admitting when we are unsure of something or at a loss for a solution (Wheatley, 1999). Every issue has its own set of complex contextual constraints and web of relationships. As a researcher, I understand and believe that not knowing the answers to my research questions and being open to learning with and from the coaches and teachers in my study created a powerful learning opportunity for all of us. Wheatley (1999) suggests

As we work together to restore hope to the future, we need to include a new and strange ally—our willingness to be disturbed. Our willingness to have our beliefs and ideas challenged by what others think. No one person or perspective can give us the answers we need to the problems of today ... we can only find those answers by admitting we don't know. We have to be willing to let go of our certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time. (p. 34)

As a researcher, I have to be cognizant of my limitations and biases. I cannot be completely objective, because of who I am and what I bring to the table. In the words of Antonia Darder (2003), “To achieve a liberatory practice, we have to challenge those conditions that limit our social agency and our capacity to intervene and transform our world” (p. 502). Moreover, as a researcher, I needed to let go of my ideas of “truth” in relation to my knowledge and beliefs. I needed to try and see from different perspectives and try to stay curious and reflective
rather than being certain about myself and my ideas. Everything I bring to these relationships and this work is seen through my eyes, which are colored by who I am at that time. I have sought in this research to be open to new ideas and understand the perspectives of others.

*Researcher Challenges*

The act of a practitioner researching her own practice significantly alters the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the theory and the practice, the process and the product, the knower and the known. Some may view such relationships as problematic. However, believing that all research is influenced by the perspectives and experiences of researchers, I recognize the inherent bias of all research. In qualitative research, this relationship is acknowledged “up front” and critical reflexivity is built into the research process, to prevent distorted effects or outcomes (Herr & Anderson, 2005). To support this process of critical reflection, I met regularly with participants, as well as “critical friends” who were not a part of the research, to discuss my evolving perspectives and seek their responses to my work and to my thinking. I reviewed the notes in my researcher journal to be aware of the ways in which I was influencing the research. Throughout the course of this research, I acknowledged my subjectivity and sought to recognize how this limits what I see and understand throughout the process. Though partial and incomplete with the inability to fully recognize how my beliefs and experiences influence this
research, the reflexivity developed through this reflective process assisted me in validating my research claims.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative research was to understand the work and needs of secondary instructional coaches as they engaged in coaching teachers regarding disciplinary literacy. I did this by examining the following question: What factors appear to influence secondary content-area teachers’ engagement with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy? This question was explored from both the perspective of teachers and instructional coaches.

In this chapter, I discussed the perspectives that I brought to this study—specifically that of social constructivism—as well as the biases that I bring to the study—specifically as they pertain to my beliefs about teaching and learning for adults and literacy for students. I described the setting for this study, as well as the participants, ten secondary coaches and ten teachers with whom they worked, and how they were selected. Finally, I presented the data sources—focus group session, interviews, surveys, and observations—that were used in this study, as well as provided a detailed overview of the systematic data analysis that was used to generate and frame the findings, discussion, and conclusions that are reflected in the chapters that follow.
Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influenced the engagement of secondary content area teachers in professional development work with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy. This study focused on ten middle and high school instructional coaches and ten of the teachers with whom they worked. The coaches are teachers who are on special assignment by the school district to work full-time with teachers on their instructional practices. However, one of the primary roles of the instructional coach, according to the instructional coaching handbook for the district, is to “Support teachers in identifying and using learning activities that integrate ...literacy into all aspects of the curriculum.” This expectation extends to all teachers, at all grades, in all disciplines. Because literacy is often seen as learning to read and not necessarily related to content area instruction, engagement in professional development about literacy is not usually viewed favorably by secondary content area teachers. This study was designed to examine the perceptions of both coaches and teachers regarding the conditions that influenced effective coach-teacher relationships in the use of content-related literacy instruction.

In this chapter, I refer to the transcripts of the focus group sessions and interviews. Each quoted excerpt from a transcript has a reference indicating the source from which it was taken (FG1 or FG2 for each focus group meeting,
accordingly; CI for coach interviews; and TI for teacher interviews), and a number indicating the page number of the transcript. For the interviews, a letter is also included to indicate the first initial of the participant interviewed. For example, a quote from page 4 of the interview with Dominic (a coach) would be cited as CI, D, 4. When including a quote that contains my words, I refer to myself as BB. Although information from the observations and surveys are referenced in this chapter, the quotations are from the interviews and focus group meetings if not otherwise noted. When necessary for grammatical and syntactical consistency, some remarks were edited, but context and meanings of statements were carefully preserved.

The findings examine teachers' and coaches' perceptions of the factors that contribute to the engagement of secondary content area teachers in professional learning related to literacy instruction. Data from both the coaches and the teachers with whom they worked were read and analyzed, and a set of factors appeared to influence the quality of the engagement between teachers and coaches. After presenting the data regarding teacher perceptions of the factors that engaged them in working with a coach, I will display data on coaches' perception of teacher engagement.

Findings Based on Teachers’ Perceptions

From interview data with teacher regarding their perceptions of the professional development relationship with coaches, four major themes were
identified: coaching practices, the coaches’ interpersonal acuity, the school culture, and a meaningful connection to content. These themes, listed in order of the frequency with which they were identified within the data, were identified through my understanding of teacher engagement as a condition for learning through my social constructivist researcher lens. The teachers interviewed articulated the role that the coach, the school culture, and the content of the learning all played in their engagement.

The first and most often mentioned theme of effective coaching practices highlighted four methods employed by coaches to engage teachers in professional development:

1. Modeling instructional practices
2. Providing instructional strategies and resources
3. Generating a sense of urgency or need
4. Building from teacher-identified needs

The second theme was interpersonal acuity. Three categories of interpersonal acuity were identified: establishing credibility, building relationships, and sustained interactions. Interpersonal acuity occurred when teachers pointed to the skills their coaches displayed in building relationships and engaging teachers on a personal level in order to involve teachers in developing the literacy practices within their content area.

The third theme was school culture. Three categories of school culture were identified: collaborative learning communities, school leadership and
vision, and understanding the coach’s role. These factors differed from those within the first and second themes as they represent the ideas teachers shared that were related to the organization and operation of the schools, such as leadership’s role, the coach’s role, and the role of collaborative communities within the school.

The fourth and final theme identified by teachers was that of **meaningful connections to content**. In other words, secondary teachers indicated they were more likely to engage in professional development regarding literacy when the literacy came *through* and *from* the content. By focusing on the teaching and learning of content knowledge—with literacy presented in a supporting role—teachers viewed the professional development as more relevant to their work.

The data collected with instructional coaches revealed similar themes to those identified in the teacher data. However, I identified a depth and breadth to the categories within these themes that was not identified in the teacher data. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the themes and categories from the data interpretation and portrays the relationship between the data from the coaches’ data and the teachers’ data.
Figure 4.1 Factors Influencing Teacher Engagement

Factors Identified by Teachers

1. Coaching Practices
   - Modeling instructional practices
   - Providing resources
   - Generating a sense of urgency or need
   - Building from teacher-identified need

2. Interpersonal Acuity
   - Building relationships
   - Validating teachers and their practices

3. School Culture
   - School leadership and vision
   - Collaborative learning communities
   - Understanding coaches’ role

4. Meaningful Connection to Content
   - Seeing literacy as part of content

Factors Identified by Coaches

1. Coaching Practices
   - Modeling “Plus” (includes guidance and follow-up)
   - Providing resources
   - Generating a sense of urgency or need
   - Building from teacher-identified need

2. Interpersonal Acuity
   - Building relationships
   - Establishing credibility

3. School Culture
   - School leadership and vision
   - Collaborative learning communities
   - Understanding coaches’ role

4. Meaningful Connection to Content
   - Seeing literacy as part of content

5. Teacher’s Inclination for Reflection on Practice
   - Reflective practitioner
Each of the themes—coaching practices, relational acuity, school culture, and meaningful connection to content—is explored first by describing the theme, then followed by description with excerpts from the interviews of teachers who worked with coaches. These vignettes, or illustrative data, are used to represent, inform, and develop the definition of each category as it relates to the overarching theme. Illustrative data were placed within the category with which they displayed the strongest connection; however, many pieces of data appeared to be tangentially related to multiple categories. The interrelatedness of these ideas and the categories used is discussed further in Chapter 5.

After presenting data representing the teachers’ perspective, the following section will compare, contrast, and expand on these ideas in relation to the perspective of the instructional coaches. The chapter ends with a close look at the factors that coaches and teachers identified as *hindering*, or impeding, teachers’ engagement with coaches in the learning and work of developing one’s disciplinary literacy practices.

*Coaching Practices*

Teachers identified four coaching practices that were effective in engaging them in thinking about and teaching the literacy within their content.

1. Modeling instructional practices
2. Providing instructional strategies and resources
3. Generating a sense of urgency or need
4. Building from teacher needs
In the sections that follow, I use illustrative data to illuminate these categories. At times, the coaching practices teachers identified do resemble other areas of influence, such as school culture or role of content. This points to the interconnectedness of these ideas and how these factors are interrelated parts of a whole that comprise the culture and work of developing teaching practices.

*Coaching Practices: Modeling instructional practices*

Several teachers referenced the modeling that their coaches provided as an effective demonstration of ways by which they could re-vision and integrate literacy instruction within their teaching practices. Through observation of desired practices, teachers were able to develop closer approximations of these practices and felt less vulnerable when attempting to use them within their classrooms. It appeared, from the teachers’ perspective, that modeling allowed for them to not only “see” the instructional practice, but also experience the practices as they were enacted with one’s own students. The following excerpt from an interview with a middle school social studies teacher illustrates this idea:

She [the instructional coach] will do activities in the class. When we go to training and someone says they do this [instructional strategy] with their class and it works great, it is not always easy to go, “Okay, I will do that in my class.” She will say, “There is this activity, and I will do it for two periods, and then you can do it.” And so seeing somebody with your kids do whatever it is, it’s like, “Oh, I get it now.” That is very helpful. (TI, N, 6)

This data indicated that the value in the modeling came from more than just ‘seeing’: it was in seeing a *contextually situated* model—modeling that
demonstrated a practice with the teacher’s own students, resources, and classroom setting that aided in implementing the practices themselves. By modeling with a teacher’s own students, a coach makes a practice not only observable, but also provides a context for learning that will aid in the teacher’s understanding. From a social constructivist perspective, learning is greatly dependent on the interaction between the learner and the context. By situating the learning in the context in which it will be applied, teachers are more fully able to interact with what they are learning, thereby deepening their understanding. Additionally, by seeing instructional practices implemented within the local context of their students and their classrooms, many of the roadblocks that resistant teachers may employ when modeling is utilized as a strategy in other settings (e.g. a video or observing in another school) are removed.

In another interview, a teacher spoke to the role that modeling played in validating ideas the coach had shared with teachers. “She [the coach] is willing to model things for teachers, and by doing this, she provides support for her suggestions” (TI, M, 1). Again, the role of a contextually situated model provided a strong validation of the coach’s instructional ideas, which many of the teachers in this school indicated were helpful to their learning before deeply considering or implementing them.

In both these instances, the teachers spoke to the ways in which modeling affected their thinking about a new instructional practice. Although this practice stands on its own as a means of engaging teachers, in later sections, I will
consider how modeling is an enactment of other factors—namely, the
demonstration of a meaningful connection to content, as well as developing a
coaching presence in classrooms.

*Coaching Practices: Providing resources*

In exploring with teachers the ways that coaches engaged them in professional development, the idea of the coach as a resource provider was mentioned repeatedly. Teachers acknowledged that they recognized the instructional expertise of coaches and could rely on them to develop or locate resources for them. Although the coaches present a more complex perspective on this practice—a perspective that will be explored later in the chapter—teachers consistently pointed to this practice as one that was not only helpful but perhaps imperative to their implementation of new practices.

In the following instance, Travis, a drama teacher, describes in detail the steps the coach took to assist both the teacher and the PLC with relevant and timely resources:

...the electives team is tricky, because we are each a department of one in a lot of ways, so we are constantly trying to find in the PLC a common point...you know, a common practice. So he [the coach] has done a lot to...[bring] in specific things that might work in music, might work in art, might work in foods, and in drama, and that has helped.

He goes on to depict how the coach’s practice of providing resources impacted his instruction:
The lesson he did with me, that had the most impact, was in critiquing performances...[he had asked]
“what is something you are not happy with, the way it is [currently] going?” and we can work on that.
[With] [t]he critiques...the kids will show each other their work and then say, “That is really good; now watch ours.” So, I tried different forms and checklists, and it just wasn’t [helping students be] very specific. So he came in...we met a few times, and developed a real guided, structured critique, and we put up posters, we modeled somebody performing [and how] we would critique them, and he [provided] a whole list of sentence starters...it really has had an impact because they critique scenes, they critique monologues, pantomime, and they are much more specific. My expectations have changed because I have seen that they can do it; they can be more specific, and it is not too much to expect. (TI, T, 5-6)

This selection illustrated a pattern that I continued to see throughout the teacher data: the influence of specific resources and tools that are directly relevant to the teachers’ content area and instruction. It seems that when the coach provides resources that fit precisely with the teachers’ immediate context (e.g. they serve to meet an immediate and practical need of a teacher), they are highly likely to be implemented as part of a teacher’s instructional practices. Such actions, as described by Travis, can have a significant influence on teachers’ thinking—and ultimately teachers’ daily practices. The challenge for coaches, then, is to capitalize on opportunities these requests afford by embedding literacy practices in ways the teacher may not expect or intend when making their request. This approach to engaging teachers in considering literacy practices will be presented
more fully later in the chapter when the data from the coaches on this topic is examined.

Providing resources appeared to also be a means by which coaches could meet another need of teachers—the need for more time. The passage that follows reflects one teacher’s experience; however, similar sentiments were expressed in each of the teacher interviews:

He [the coach] has been a tremendous resource, a person who gathers resources for me. We were looking at some lesson plans, and he suggested that instead of doing it my way, although he said it was fine, you might want to try using some graphic organizers, and let the kids feel that they were more creative, and they might respond to that a little more positively. I said, “Well, I don’t have any; do you have any ideas?” He said, “I’ll get back to you.” And when he got back to me, he brought a notebook of graphic organizers, and I’ve used almost every one of them. It has been a real help to go get things that I normally would not have time to go get, a resource. (TI, B, 5)

When a coach provides instruction-ready resources in a timely manner, coaches make the task of implementing a new idea significantly less demanding for teachers. With limited time to prepare for instruction, the idea of preparing to teach one’s content differently can be daunting. By scaffolding the use of a new instructional approach or tool, through means such as providing the resources needed for implementation, this data indicates that teachers were more likely to implement new literacy practices.

As I considered the transaction above, I thought about the teacher’s response, “Well I don’t have any; do you have any ideas?” I wondered if the
teacher’s response indicated his hesitancy to try out the idea. When considering this data through that lens, it reveals, perhaps, the compelling influence that the practice of providing resources had on a resistant teacher.

*Coaching Practices: Generating a sense of urgency or need*

This category of coaching practices—generating a sense of urgency or a need—encompasses a number of different coaching practices. However, the common thread running throughout these practices was that the coach’s action resulted in teachers seeing a need or developing a sense of urgency for changing their instruction. The data suggest that coaches achieved this in a number of ways; two primary methods—using data and providing feedback—were mentioned most often. An example of each is discussed below.

The first example is illustrated by a teacher whose coach had used data to engage her in examining and developing her instructional practices:

*Another thing Jasmine [the coach] helped us with is reading our data. We can really drill down and figure out how to differentiate for students by looking at the data. It’s really made my instruction more targeted. So, this made me realize that I needed to be doing some small group instruction... (TI, M, 2-3)*

In analyzing formative and district interim assessment data with her coach, this teacher recognized a need to change and develop her instructional practices. This type of comment was representative of several other teachers who highlighted the impact that examining their own students’ data had on their perception of their instructional practices. In examining the trends around this specific practice, it was of interest to me that all of the teachers who acknowledged the
use of data to develop awareness were from Title I schools—schools that have struggled to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). I wondered if the pressure of sanctions for not meeting AYP in these schools has heightened the teachers’ use and value of such data sources. I also wondered if such data was less meaningful to teachers in schools where the fear of sanctions for not meeting AYP were not a daily reality. These considerations were discussed with instructional coaches and will be reexamined later in the chapter.

The second method by which coaches heightened teachers’ awareness of students’ needs was through the feedback that coaches provided. One math teacher explained how his coach would provide feedback during the lessons through questions she would ask, as if she were a student:

She came in [to my classroom] with the eyes of making me a better teacher, and what she could do to make me a better teacher. When she comes in, [she helps me think] at the level of the kid that might be struggling at literacy. She would be the one to raise her hand and say, “What could we do if I didn’t understand this?” So that kept me on my toes about, you know, “why am I not writing this stuff on the board? Why am I not modeling what I [would] need to do?” So that was the most valuable piece to me, because that gave me the buy-in that I needed to have. “Hey, this stuff works” [I thought]. Seeing [that modeling my thinking and supporting their language] works, it is amazing stuff. (TI, D, 7)

In this excerpt, the teacher explicitly described how his thinking and his instructional practices changed as he received feedback throughout the lesson. As a teacher with a deep understanding of his content, he illustrated how the coach's
comments provided an acute and immediate awareness of the needs of his students—students who may not have the deep or sophisticated skills to access content knowledge, skills that secondary teachers often may take for granted.

Teachers more frequently indicated that the use of data influenced their understanding of a need for changing practices than other means, such as feedback from their coach. However, those teachers who did reflect on the practice of providing feedback indicated that the feedback that heightened their awareness came through natural, authentic collegial interactions with their coaches. Rarely did teachers refer to the formal observation and post-conference feedback as a factor in the changing of an instructional practice. In later sections of this chapter, I will examine the coaches’ more nuanced and complex perspectives on this practice, as they sought to explain their use of feedback.

*Coaching Practices: Building from teacher-identified needs*

The final category of coaching practices reflects those places in the data where teachers described how coaches engaged them in professional development and implemented new practices by focusing on the teachers’ needs, rather than the coaches’ own preconceived agenda. This builds on Deci & Ryan’s (1985) theory of self-determination that asserts it is through developing teachers’ sense of autonomy and competence that high-quality engagement is fostered. The example that follows illustrates the way in which a coach engaged a teacher by creating an autonomy-supported environment, in which the teacher determined the ways in which the coach would assist him:
One of the things we did was to have the kids write a philosophy of life [essay]..., and it is a very difficult assignment for them to grasp; ...and usually what happens is the first time we do this we get something that is very superficial, so I told Dominic [my coach] that I get frustrated with this and feel the kids aren't getting it. So he thought about it and came back with some sentence starters, you know, idea starters. That helped the kids immediately, [and it was] something I hadn't thought of. (TI, B, 6)

The following transaction also demonstrates the value two teachers found in their coach basing his work from their needs:

Travis: We’ve been asked [by our coach] what we need.

Ben: Oh, that's true!

Travis: He came to me and said, “What do you wish you could improve, or what do you [want to work on]...?” That’s how the critique [lesson] came up...[he would ask teachers], “if you could get a time to work on one particular thing, have access to one particular thing, what would it be?” (CI, T, 9)

By engaging teachers in thinking about their instructional needs relative to literacy, the coaches addressed the motivational aspect of engagement. When coaches begin by asking what the teachers need and then focus their work on those issues, the coaches’ practices reflect the respect they have for the teachers and their work. By asking questions, this coach allowed teachers to demonstrate competency and autonomy in the coaching relationship. It appears that the sense of ownership that came from such interactions tended to inspire teachers to continue their work with the coach.
Summary: Coaching Practices

Together, these coaching practices make up the “moves” that coaches utilized in order to engage middle and high school content-area teachers in professional development related to literacy. These varied and multi-faceted practices were ones that teachers consistently pointed to as what their coaches “did”—the work of coaching. The data suggested that these types of actions—actions that validate, demonstrate, scaffold, heighten awareness and meet teachers’ needs—engaged teachers in thought, and sometimes action, with regard to literacy and their instructional practices.

Relational Acuity

In the previous sections, the data focused on what the coaches did that engaged teachers; this next set of data indicates that who the coaches are, and their relationships with teachers, is also of importance to teachers. There is a body of research that shows learning is more likely to occur when there is a relationship between the teacher and the learner (e.g. Barkley, 2005), so it is not surprising that teachers pointed to the relational skills of their coach as a necessary factor for engaging in the teaching and learning process with their coaches.

Relational Acuity: Building Relationships

As teachers talked about the work their coaches did, many mentioned the coaches’ perception and awareness of the needs of teachers. In order to engage
teachers in professional development—especially when the focus may not be of the teacher’s choosing (such as a district-wide focus on literacy at all grade levels and in all content areas)—teachers noted the value of a coach’s interpersonal skills as they worked to engage teachers in this work. This thinking was reflected in the comments of Ben, a social studies teacher who suggested that coaching requires skills to understand and navigate the complexities of human relationships:

I think as far as the instructional coach goes, it needs to be a very special person. Dominic, you know, like he [Travis, the other teacher] said, is sensitive to frustrations, and he doesn’t mind taking a black eye and having to go back and re-research something or prepare something if he is wrong or there is a good argument against it. (TI, B, 14)

Ben’s comments acknowledged his understanding of the work his coach was doing to engage teachers in professional learning. He indicated that in order to engage teachers in professional learning, coaches need to be attuned to the needs of teachers—and that such awareness comes by developing relationships with teachers. It appears that by building relationships, coaches can attend to teachers’ need for learning to be personalized and highly relevant.

Another teacher broaches this same idea from another perspective:

He [the coach] is pretty good at not being threatening and being aware of that—knowing that [the coach] is not always going to be welcomed with open arms because it’s going to be [that he’s the messenger about] another new thing coming our way. I think that it is kind of important for instructional coaches to ask more than [they] tell. (TI, T, 14)
In Skyview School District (pseudonym), instructional coaches bear the primary responsibility for sharing and helping teachers to implement district initiatives, including a focus on literacy. Often, these new practices may be viewed as an imposition being forced on teachers by an outside entity with no knowledge of their current circumstances. By “asking rather than telling,” the teacher reiterated the importance for coaches to know teachers—their needs, their students, their content—in order to present ‘another new thing’ in a manner that provides the relevancy necessary for teachers to engage. By asking questions, coaches can develop an understanding of teachers and their needs, customizing the learning accordingly.

In addition to knowing one’s teachers and their needs, teachers often spoke about the value they found in the collegial support coaches could provide for their work. One teacher explained:

> She [the coach] is really, really supportive and really, really positive and constantly giving us pats on the back and recognizing, “look at how you have improved in this area!” She’ll make little certificates for us. She has been part of our [teacher leadership meetings] a lot this year, coming to that and just saying ‘great job’ and ‘so-and-so did this…’. She is just, oh so super supportive and is really wanting to help…I think she has really made people feel like she is there for us. (TI, A, 6)

Engaging in the work of learning and developing one’s professional practice is not easy work, and in this excerpt, the teacher acknowledges the value of encouragement. Though this teacher serves as leadership within her department
and is known as an exemplary educator district-wide, she still expressed the need for—and value of—a coach who supports and validates her work. Through recognition, coaches may be able to provide teachers with positive information about their self-competence, a need that appears to be common to all learners. This in turn can support teachers’ intrinsic motivation, leading to their sustained engagement in professional learning.

Relational Acuity: Validating Teachers’ Practices

Teachers acknowledged that one way coaches developed relationships was by affirming teachers’ current practices. Teachers indicated that they were more likely to engage with the coach in further developing their practice when relationships were developed in this manner. In a sense, validation developed their trust and piqued their interest in learning more. Susan, a social studies teacher who works with Sabrina, explained:

I think that one thing that Sabrina did on our team was not necessarily for me, but she validated the experiences that people on our team had. Like, Jon was always saying, “No, I don’t teach that, I don’t do that, I don’t teach reading...” but he would be doing these vocabulary activities with the group that really helped them...I kinda keyed Sabrina into what kind of things he was saying, but also what he was doing in his classroom. So she went to him and [said], “No, you are doing what I am asking people to do.” And she got him to join the vocabulary cohort, which I didn’t think he would ever consider.” (TI, S, 6)

In this instance, a teacher, who is known by his peers to be resistant, engaged in a voluntary after-school PLC (Professional Learning Community) focusing on
vocabulary instruction. This highlights the importance of coaches building relationships by acknowledging and affirming current literacy practices, as it appears to have an influence on teachers’ engagement in professional development.

Another teacher, Kia, echoed how her coach’s use of validation impacted teachers’ readiness for growth:

> I think part of it is to validate the person in what they are doing already...I think that is a big step with making people open to change and willing to try new things, and Sabrina has been, in my opinion, very good at validating people with what they are able to do and then working with it. Because you can always have room to improve. You can always push further. (TI, K, 8)

Kia’s comment was representative of several others who emphasized the importance of endorsing teachers’ current instructional practices. Her comment indicates that for those teachers who tend to be resisters or late adopters, validation is a means by which instructional coaches can establish a point of commonality and effectively persuade these types of teachers to consider new practices.

Travis, who teaches drama, described a recent professional development encounter with his coach. The coach was revisiting a process to help an electives PLC look at the literacy within their content standards, after the team had expressed frustration with the process the first time through.

> He [the coach] came once, I really admired this, and apologized because we [the electives teachers] were
frustrated because so much new stuff is being introduced at once, it is all coming at us, and he had worried that the implication was that we were doing it ‘wrong’... He didn’t back-pedal, but he said ‘here’s a different approach’... He talked a lot about taking what we are already doing and tweaking it instead of just putting it aside. (TI, T, 8)

In this piece, Travis acknowledged that, in the face of what feels like an onslaught of new initiatives, validation can be a factor that substantiates teachers and their practices, thereby lessening the perception of change. Through validation, it appears that instructional coaches can alter teachers’ negative perception of a change. Validation suggests to teachers that perhaps they’re not being asked to make the more dramatic, second-order change and alter their beliefs, but rather a first-order change, whereby they can retain current beliefs while making incremental changes in small steps without a radical departure from their current practices. It is also of interest to note that Travis’ comment reveals that validation is effective at engaging even the most veteran of teachers. Although Travis has taught for 29 years and received multiple accolades for his teaching, the coach’s endorsement of his teaching practices resulted in Travis reconsidering the value of the task—identifying the literacy within the content standards.

Interestingly, although this practice of validation was the most frequently identified practice for engaging teachers, as identified by the teachers themselves, it was one practice that was not identified by coaches. Although coaches discussed the ways in which they encouraged teachers to take “small steps” in developing their practices, there was no mention of their intentional use of
validation as an approach to developing relationships or engaging teachers. The implications of this finding will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

*School Culture*

In general, the culture of an organization refers to a set of common values, attitudes, beliefs and norms. Effective schools establish a number of common elements that make up their “culture.” Senge (1990a) and Fullan & Hargreaves (1996) acknowledge the importance of a shared vision. Such a vision, championed by a strong leader with a sense of moral purpose, serves as a foundational component of the school culture. In other words, the principal is of particular importance in determining the vision and resulting culture of a school.

Deal & Patterson’s definition (2002) of culture also provides language that helps in conceptualizing this theme. They conceptualize it as an underlying set of norms, values, beliefs, rituals, and traditions that make up the unwritten rules of how to think, feel and act in an organization. These underlying factors influence considerably “the way we do things around here,” as Barth (2002, p. 6) suggests. In addition to the way things are done, culture as viewed in this study, impacts the way things are thought about as well.

There were several ideas mentioned by teachers that, taken together, acknowledge the importance of this theme of “school culture.” Throughout the interviews, teachers affirmed aspects of the school environment that contributed to their engagement in professional development. A central feature that many teachers identified was the need for coaching to be a well-defined and integral
part of how things are done. For teachers to engage in professional development, questions such as “why do we have a coach?” and “why are they working with me?” needed to be addressed by leadership. In addition to a culture of coaching, teachers also asserted the importance of a pervasive focus on student and teacher learning within the school culture and how that impacted their engagement in professional development and their work with coaches. A third aspect of the school’s culture that appeared to enhance teachers’ engagement with professional learning was that of a collaborative learning culture, often in the form of professional learning communities, or PLCs. Though each of these components is uniquely set apart from the others, together they contribute to creating the type of environment that appears to enhance teacher engagement in professional learning in regards to literacy.

_School Culture: Culture of Coaching_

Each of the teachers I interviewed indicated the value they found in having their coach present in their classrooms, working with them regularly to improve their instructional practices. In the excerpt below, one teacher describes the importance of coaches working with teachers within the context of the classroom:

…I know that other people are jumping on board and she [the coach] is in their classrooms now, helping them. I know that...But I got so used to having her in [my classroom] helping me become a better teacher, that when that time isn’t being utilized, and I see [coaches] sitting in their office, working on stuff, I’m going, “no, that’s not the best way to utilize that
Clearly, this teacher, as many others indicated, values a culture of coaching and the opportunity for regular coaching as part of his teaching practice. It is important to note that all of the teachers interviewed were teachers who worked regularly with their coaches. These teachers spoke clearly of the value they found in this new cultural norm of coaching. Having a colleague working alongside them, coaching them, interacting with them throughout the class was seen as part of a natural, professional relationship, one that allowed for feedback through authentic dialogue grounded in a desire to help students learn. Having these types of professional interactions throughout the course of the instructional day seemed to be an accepted cultural norm on the part of teachers who were engaged in working with a coach. It was also of interest to note the negative perception voiced by this teacher in regards to coaches closing their office doors and operating in “private practice.” It would seem that the cultural norm of open doors and collaborative learning are valued highly by this teacher.

In order to have teachers welcome coaches into their classrooms and accept coaching as part of the school culture, teachers expressed the importance of the coach’s role being well defined. One teacher explained:

A lot of us who are new really validate what she [the coach] says, and that it’s important to work with her. The first year was all about establishing what her role was. After that, the staff started to buy in. (TI, C, 2)
When coaches were implemented as part of the professional development structure at Skyview School District, significant work was done to help coaches understand their role. However, what may have been equally important to the success of coaches was how well their staffs understood their role. Even in schools where their role may have been clearly articulated to the staff, coaches still needed to help staff understand this new cultural practice by demonstrating what coaching entailed. It was imperative that coaches modeled coaching practices that reflected the ways in which a collaborative community operated, with a focus on supporting teachers in a non-evaluative role. Once coaches were able to “show” teachers what coaching entailed, teachers more readily embraced coaching as part of their school culture.

Teachers also spoke to a key component of developing a coaching culture schoolwide—word of mouth. When teachers learned of the work coaches were doing with their colleagues and the influence it was having on student learning, teachers indicated their colleagues were more likely to give this new type of professional development a try. As one teacher shared, “Other teachers saw the impact working with Jasmine had, and then they’d decide that, ‘hey, I want some of that.’” (T1, M, 2) The work of coaching became part of the cultural norms within pockets of the school as teachers were able to witness and develop an understanding what coaching entailed.
School Culture: Leadership & Vision

Many teachers attributed their school’s vision and focus to the work of the school’s leadership. Teachers from several schools pointed to the overarching vision and focus of their schools as the impetus for working with their coach and teaching the literacies within their discipline.

One teacher explained how his shift in thinking about literacy came about:

The whole process we have gone through at our school, [focusing on] how to teach better [has caused me to shift how I think about literacy as part of my instruction]. We actually have conversations in our building about how to teach better, which is atypical, I find. Talk about why our kids aren’t learning and what we want them to learn and what is really important for our kids to learn. The content piece is very important, yes, these content pieces are important, but our kids can’t read to get to the content... (TI, N, 1)

Very clearly this teacher has portrayed the culture of this school. He asserts that the focus is squarely on student learning, with an emphasis on the integral role of teachers and the work they do to teach the literacy within their discipline. Such a focus is associated with the very intentional, focused efforts of school leadership; rarely does it come about on its own. This teacher later equates these changes in culture with the arrival of their current principal three years earlier, substantiating the connection between school leadership and school vision.

A teacher from another school—a school whose leadership worked to provide a strong and clear vision—echoes the sentiment that the focus is on what
can teachers do differently in terms of literacy instruction to affect student learning:

I think that just a general sense of, you know, we are all teachers of reading, we are all teachers of writing...these kids are all of ours, we all work together—that message is being relayed a lot. (TI, A, 4)

It is of interest to note that the first illustration in this section was shared by a teacher in a Title I school that was facing restructuring—a school where oftentimes such conversations are mandated. The second illustration, just above, is from a non-Title I school, where many students readily demonstrate proficient achievement on standardized testing measures. Seeing the comparable impact of visionary leadership in schools with such different populations and needs indicates a consensus among the teacher-participants regarding the role of leadership.

School Culture: Collaborative Learning Communities

Another factor several teachers pointed to was the collaborative learning culture developed by establishing and engaging in professional learning communities (PLCs). The focus of a PLC is to collaboratively examine student learning and teaching practices in order to develop teacher learning and, as a result improve student learning (Hord, 1997b). When a school has teams operating as PLCs, it appears that collaborative professional learning becomes part of the cultural norm. One teacher explains:
I think it goes back to almost the very beginning when Sharon [the principal] came here [and created] a culture of data...If you create a culture...where you are able to take a look at your data and...go, “Wow, this trend is not very good.” Or, “this trend is great.” Or even break it down to specific teachers, “wow, you did a great job on this. What did you do?” That is the collaborative piece that we are having now as teachers, where we did not have that three years ago [before our principal came]. It is happening now...[TI, D, 3]

This excerpt illustrates the type of thinking that became a cultural norm when teachers at this school began working in PLCs.

Summary: School Culture

Many teachers spoke to the structures, environment, and vision within their schools that made up the culture and supported the professional learning they were engaged in with their coaches. The teacher-participants of this study acknowledged that when the school had a concerted focus on the learning of both teachers and students, and teachers worked collaboratively towards it, they were more likely to engage in professional learning related to literacy. They also acknowledged the importance for teachers to understand the role of the coach in this learning environment.

Meaningful Connection to Content

The final theme reflects the teachers’ idea that a valid and relevant connection between content teaching and literacy teaching resulted in more effective engagement in professional learning with coaches related to literacy. If teachers understood the linkage between students’ literacy skills and the learning
of content, they then appeared to be more willing to engage in developing their practices for teaching the literacies related to their discipline. One teacher explained the connection as it related to student understanding to content:

I think some of it is getting people to buy into the fact that your...[students] will do so much better in your class if they can read. And so once they can buy into that—that, “I need to help them get there too,” then they start to [see the importance of teaching the literacy within their content] [TI, K, 4]

Dan, a math teacher supported this assertion as he explained how he came to understand the relationship between reading and his content:

It is difficult for kids to do math when they have to read it...An example of that is the...testing for us. When people actually sat down with our IEP kids and read the questions to them, they found out that they could do the math. They could not do the math [in previous tests] because they didn’t understand the questions. But when the question was read to them, the light bulb came on—pencil to paper—and they could do the [math]. So there it is, right there in a nutshell. If the kids could read and have literacy skills, content will come. It will. And we all have to think of ourselves as reading teachers, because if we do, your content will follow. (TI, D, 5)

When Dan saw firsthand how students’ reading skills impeded their ability to demonstrate their mathematical understanding, the necessity of literacy for his students took on a new urgency. This connection to content seemed to be especially important to middle and high school content area teachers outside of language arts.
While many of the teacher-participants reiterated this idea, just as many alluded to the idea that many teachers they know do not engage in teaching the literacy within their discipline when they fail to see any connection between literacy and their students’ ability to understand the content. This, and other reasons that hinder teacher engagement in professional engagement with disciplinary literacy, will be explored at the end of the chapter.

**Summary of Teacher-Identified Factors Influencing Engagement**

Teachers identified a series of factors that contributed to their engagement with coaches relative to disciplinary literacy. These factors centered on the relationship of their content to literacy, the culture of the school, and the actions and skills of the coaches themselves. These themes will be echoed in the sections that follow as I present data that represents the coaches’ viewpoints. However, since the coaches’ perspectives were revealed through multiple focus group discussions, observations, surveys, as well as through individual interviews, these more in-depth strategies for identifying the thinking of coaches provides a perspective on these themes that brings a new depth and complexity to, as well as expansion of, the ideas shared by the teachers.

**Coaches’ Perceptions of Factors that Engage Teachers in Professional Learning**

In this next section, I present the perspective of coaches on the question of factors that engage teachers in professional learning related to literacy with an instructional coach. These data represent coaches’ thinking as communicated
during focus group conversations, individual interviews, surveys, and discussions we had as part of my observations of their work. The themes and categories identified by coaches are largely the same as those identified by the teachers in the previous section. However, there was an additional theme of “teachers’ inclination for reflection on practice” that became apparent in the coaches’ data. Within some of the other themes, the coaches presented a more complex perspective of these ideas, necessitating the use of additional themes and categories. Each of the themes will be discussed in the same sequence used in the previous section. At the end of the section, I will present the factors that coaches and teachers identified as hindering secondary content area teachers from engaging in professional learning related to disciplinary literacy.

Table 4.1 represents the findings from a final survey administered at the end of the study. The purpose of the survey was to share with coaches the themes and categories I had identified within the data during initial rounds of analysis and provide an opportunity for each coach to individually respond, indicating whether they agreed that these ideas were indeed, from their experiences and perspectives, factors that engaged teachers in professional learning related to literacy. In this survey, coaches were asked to indicate if each factor engaged teachers in one of three ways: The factor usually engaged most teachers, sometimes engaged most teachers, or did not usually engage most teachers. If coaches indicated that a factor engaged teachers “sometimes” or “not usually,” they were asked to provide a brief explanation of their thinking.
This survey process allowed me another opportunity to conduct member checking, confirming or challenging the themes I had identified at that point in the data analysis process. The survey results for the categories that appear in this study are displayed in Table 4.1. Each of these themes and categories will be presented and discussed in the section that follows.

### Table 4.1 Coach Survey Results: Factors that Engage Teachers in Literacy PD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Usually engages teachers</th>
<th>Sometimes engages teachers</th>
<th>Does not engage teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modeling “Plus” (includes guidance &amp; follow-up)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing resources</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Starting from teachers’ need</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generating a need or sense of urgency (using data)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Acuity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing credibility</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building relationships</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Validating teachers’ current practices</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School leadership</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School vision</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborative learning communities</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaningful Connection to Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate a connection between content &amp; literacy</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers’ Inclination for Reflection on Practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflective practitioner</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coaching Practices

Coaching Practices: Modeling “Plus”

The most frequently discussed factor for engaging teachers was modeling and other related collaborative practices that allowed teachers to “see” and “hear” through processes such as thinkalouds what disciplinary literacy practices and ways of thinking entailed. Teachers also mentioned the assistance modeling provided for them as learners. However, the coaches were clear that the benefits of modeling were conditional. “Modeling” as simply a demonstration by the coach while a teacher observed was frequently described as a practice that would not engage teachers in a substantial way, according to the coaches. Adam explained how modeling actually detracted from teacher learning in one instance:

[With] modeling lessons, I did not frontload it well enough when I first started doing it, so that they could really assume the coach’s role. And so they started looking at everything that was going on and not focusing on…what we were really trying to improve on. So it hampered our conversation and in the end it just really fell apart. (FG2, 23)

Brooke and Ella also discussed the drawbacks of modeling as simply demonstration and observation:

Ella: I find that modeling does not necessarily work with the unconsciously unskilled teacher, because you can come in and teach for three weeks, and they still won’t get why it works for you and not for them.

Brooke: But they will have enjoyed the time off.
Ella: Right. I found that giving the teacher a checklist and having [a coach] sit with the teacher and say, “do you see what she is doing there? That is this.” Just to help them.

Brooke: So they are doing a [guided] observation while you are modeling. (FG2, 16)

This idea of scaffolding the observation through the use of a tool that guides the observation or a more knowledgeable co-observer was frequently indicated as an important part of effective modeling.

Marney’s example of a scaffolded observation reiterates the value coaches recognized in providing guidance for the observation:

I took a first year teacher and together we observed one of our master teachers. I sat with her and we wrote notes back and forth and she wrote an email to the principal that it was probably the most condensed learning environment that she had ever had, because she was able to see it happening and have conversations about why it was happening...I want to do that more, because I think there is multiple layers of learning going on all at the same time. (FG2, 19)

Ella also indicated the value of building reflection into the observation and modeling process. Her explanation of the structures that needed to accompany modeling extended beyond the idea of reflection to asking teachers about their plans for acting on that reflection:

...[teachers] are not going to jump us because you say “this is best practices” and they see someone do it once or maybe twice. That doesn’t get full implementation in the classroom right away. So you have to have that reflective piece every time. Get the feedback, post-conference again. “So what is your
new goal? When are you going to [take it] to the next level?” (CI, E, 4)

This theme of modeling “plus”—plus structures that allowed for guidance, reflection, and goal-setting during the modeling and observation process—was echoed by all of the coaches. On the final survey, each of the coaches indicated that they believed that this type of practice would engage most teachers.

Another aspect of modeling that coaches discussed was the credibility and transferability of the modeling. Coaches’ discussions reflected that teachers valued contextually-situated modeling provided by teachers they viewed as credible in order to engage in thinking about the modeled practices and not discount them immediately. Jasmine explained her teachers’ reaction to modeling she had provided in using a professionally-produced video that demonstrated instruction in another district:

I think [my] staff doesn’t value the [professionally produced videos] as much because it is outside of us, it is “those” kids, it is professionally done. But when you can see a teacher that they know with the kids that we have, I think it carries a little bit more weight with my staff. (FG, 21)

Coaches reiterated the reliability teachers found in models that were contextually situated, demonstrating practices with ‘their’ students. However, the earlier excerpt from Ella and Brooke demonstrated that contextually situated models alone are not sufficient in engaging teachers; it appeared that coaches found the use of contextually situated models as a kind of prerequisite for engaging teachers in the observation.
Another approach that coaches identified for providing credible and transferable modeling was the use of demonstrations by highly respected colleagues. As Brooke shared:

I think the most effective [way I helped science teachers develop their literacy practices] component was when I had someone who was well respected by the entire team, who was doing an amazing job...with setting the purpose to embed more purposeful reading with [her] students...So I asked her to be a model for her peers. Every single one of them watched her teach. It was really powerful. And then I had her do it in front of the whole staff because I could see how her team was, it was contagious once they saw, Oh, Whitney's doing it; I can do it. I want to be like her." So she did it for the entire team and once she did it for the entire team and the entire staff, I could start to see more buy-in because it meant a lot, coming from her. (CI, B,13)

In addition to these more traditional forms of modeling (e.g. demonstration lessons, watching videos), coaches referred multiple times to other collaborative structures that they employed that engaged the teacher as more than an observer, but allowed for modeling and observation as a by-product. Co-teaching and co-planning were two such practices that coaches identified. Brooke explains:

I really love modeling, and I can see it going really well, but as far as sustainable behaviors, do I see that, in a teacher, the practice is really changed for a long time because of my modeling? I don't think so. I don't think that [modeling alone] is effective [at developing sustained new behaviors] most of the time, but what is effective is when we co-plan. Maybe I am modeling, and that modeling leads me to co-teaching; that is very effective....I love to have someone sitting there
beside them. I love it when it can be me sitting next to them, or watching someone else is ideal. But if that can’t happen, [there just needs to be] someone for them to have those immediate conversations [with]...but if I can’t have another adult physically there for them to corroborate with, I like co-teaching, and I think that is really effective when we co-teach together. (CI, B, 2)

Brooke explained that these collaborative practices build in the components coaches identified in the earlier excerpts—guidance, reflection, follow-up—but practices such as co-planning and co-teaching also engage the teacher in the *doing*, moving them from simply observing modeled instruction to more participatory practice that reflect what Vygotsky termed “shared” instruction (1978).

Coaches also discussed modeling as a way in which they could “covertly” engage teachers who may not voluntarily participate in observation of modeling or other collaborative structures. Sabrina shared:

To [help teachers] develop the literacy, I ask teachers if I can come in, and I pitch it as though I need to practice this [strategy] because I’m the coach, and so I need to hone in on it. And I [ask], “can I use your classroom [to try this out], and would you observe me?”...And I use what their content is, and I apply literacy strategies. I have teachers who say afterwards that they had no idea...I had modeled one time, and then a social studies teacher took it and ran with it. He ran over people using it. And now he totally gets it. He wasn’t a resistant teacher; he was a team player, but he wasn’t sure about the literacy in social studies, and now he is all about it. [It’s] all about the kids finding the literacy, and he’s telling kids, “you have to have literacy to read the social studies book”; “you have to have literacy to know US
History," and I’m starting to see that spread throughout his team. I have another teacher who’s doing the same thing, and it’s starting to spread throughout her team...But I model, model, model. And I model with people who have lots of connections. And it starts to spread. (FG1, 13-14)

This example provided a contextually situated model of instruction for teachers who had not previously engaged with her to develop their instructional practices. By proposing the interaction as a way to assist her, she found a way to get teachers who might otherwise abstain from such professional learning “in the room,” a necessary first step in engaging teachers.

The last example of modeling from the data demonstrated that on its own, modeling is not a failsafe means of engaging teachers in professional learning.

Jasmine: Some people are really starting to understand that there is a difference [between modeling how to do an activity and modeling my thinking about something], so that is pretty exciting.

BB: What do you think has caused that?

Jasmine: I have modeled; I have shown them videos. You know. I think it is just continually coming back to talk about what it looks like and what it sounds like, and what the difference between “[Students], here’s what I want you to do” and “[Students], here’s how I think about it.” Some teachers still don’t get it [even though] I have shown them. (FG2, 3)

In the first comment, Jasmine expressed her excitement at the engagement and learning she was seeing from some of the teachers. However, by the end of the exchange, her frustration with teachers she has provided multiple models for was evident.
Modeling, when conceived of as simple observation, was initially discounted by coaches as a strategy for engaging teachers in a way that would lead to any sustainable change. However, throughout the study, as they discussed the complimenting structures that scaffolded the practice of modeling and observation, they indicated overwhelmingly the value that this practice can provide in developing teachers’ learning.

*Coaching Practices: Providing Resource*

Another coaching practice that was greatly debated and the nuances of which were teased out through multiple discussions was that of providing resources. Initial comments pointed to this practice as “low leverage,” a means by which a coach could get a foot in the door, establish credibility, and accommodate teachers. But several coaches expressed concern that it was not a practice that would lead to deep and sustained change in thinking or instruction. However, again, over the course of the study, distinctions regarding these initial generalities were made and a more complex understanding of this practice developed.

The idea that providing resources made new practices easier for teachers to implement was explained by Sabrina:

> And those…stem questions…all I did was print them off [the state department of education’s] website, but you would have thought I had a pot of gold. You give them the question stems, and they say, “I can do this in my classroom.” (FG1, 14)
As a coach who was new to her school this year, Rosanna made clear the way in which providing resources she created opened doors for her to engage with teachers:

I had no pre-existing relationships with anyone in [this school]. I was new to everyone. I really wanted to make sure that I wasn’t too pushy and that I wasn’t threatening. I think providing lessons...was seen as a favor, like, “Good, I didn’t know what I was going to do in these lab classes. Now I have something to do. Thank you!” (CI, R, 1)

However, as she continued, Rosanna indicated that providing resources could be problematic at times:

In trying to open doors and trying to form relationships, I did a lot for people. And I had an experience with a teacher where she said, “Well, I want something like this, but I just don’t want to do the work.” Basically, there was no learning or developing on her part that was going to happen, it was just like, “Here is something I want, and I don’t want to do the work, so why don’t you do it for me?” I thought, “I think I have created this situation. I think this is happening right now because I’ve been trying so hard to connect and get my foot in the door that I have done too much for people instead of with people.” I think there has got to be some kind of balance there where you are giving people [the resources] they want and have them coming to you, but they have to got to be engaged in the thinking and committed to developing and improving...somehow I was doing the work, and they weren’t...So I had to think about, and I am still thinking about, how to make it be their goals and their drive to improve. (CI, R, 3-4)
In this passage, she illustrates that providing resources can result in mixed responses. While she had commented that some teachers took the strategies within the lessons and applied them to other aspects of their teaching, and effectively learning from the ideas within the resources, some teachers, as this one, looked at the coach as support staff who could assist her in continuing her current practices. Professional learning, reflection, and goal-setting were not any part of what this teacher appeared to want to engage in with her coach.

Although Brooke realized the ways in which providing resources assisted teachers with implementing new practices, she also questioned how this practice impacted her other roles as a coach:

If that [helping teachers to implement new practices] means me doing some of the work for them or providing them with more resources, then I probably should, and that’s fine, but it’s like when is it too much? When are we really going to get to the heart of coaching? Because once you’re in that role of a resource provider, it’s hard to get out of it. (FG1, 2)

It appeared that while coaches realized the benefit providing resources and strategies could have on teachers’ instruction, they also acknowledged that this practice, in and of itself, was insufficient to implementing significant, sustainable engagement in professional learning.

Nevertheless, coaches did acknowledge one important way in which they could use this coaching practice to develop teachers’ practices. Rosanna explains:

They’re happy to have those ready-made lessons, because they need it and they don’t have a lot of time. And I just built in my values into all of those lessons.
All the lessons incorporate an aspect of [our] literacy model...I’ll build the lessons so that [teachers] can’t hand the kid a worksheet; you cannot do the lesson I gave you without the [literacy] strategies. And I do that on purpose. So all the things I want them to do...all the things I care about, are built in. So I’ve done them this huge favor of handing them a lesson, and they all use it, but I know I’m inflicting my values on them at the same time. (FG1, 12)

This was one of several instances where coaches alluded to using a coaching practice as a more “covert” approach to acquaint teachers with disciplinary literacy methods.

Coaches acknowledged the value of resources as a means for engaging teachers in trying new practices; however, they wrestled with ways to more actively engage teachers in the thinking they viewed as necessary for meaningful engagement.

Coaching Practices: Generating a sense of urgency or a need

Coaches agreed that when teachers identified a need or a reason for a change in their instructional practices, they tended to be more willing to engage in professional learning. Frequently, coaches pointed to two means by which they helped teachers themselves identify a need for change: using data to develop teachers’ awareness of a need; and shifting the focus to the students’ needs, rather than the teachers and the instruction. As Brooke expressed, “[One] thing that really helps [teachers engage in professional learning] is when you get them to focus on the kids” (FG2, 14).
Jasmine concurred. In the following excerpt, she shared how exposing teachers to the concepts and skills required of students on the state test opened their eyes to students' needs of which they were previously unaware:

One thing that I think was helpful was showing our team leaders the reading assessment. Because that really opened our health teacher’s eyes...she [said], “they have to read food labels? And compare them?” Because in health, they were just doing a literal analysis of them; they were not comparing across [labels] or trying to generalize or analyze in any kind of way. And so that, in a lot of ways, opened people’s minds to [the need to teach differently in their content area classes]. (FG1, 14)

Later in the year, she again spoke to the influence that considering the needs of students had on a teacher’s practice:

I had a conversation with a teacher who basically told me that he wasn’t going to do it and he was going to give the administrator lip service and say they would, but they didn’t have any desire to. And then we had a conversation after that, basically, I [said], “These kids aren’t getting it, and their odds in their life—you know we are talking poverty, prison, and so if we don’t help them, who is going to?” He was quiet. And then I noticed after that he started doing a lot of things that we were talking about and he started enjoying teaching actually again, I think. (FG2, 4)

Another frequently mentioned method of helping teachers to see a need was the use of data. Coaches often discussed the ways in which they used data to illuminate the needs of students. Ella described how this practice heightened the teachers’ sense of urgency:
So that [the realization that many of their students—
who had passed the state test the previous year—
were not passing] was a big moment for them, that
they were really the ones responsible. [So the
conversation became] “How are *you* going to
change?...What are *you* going to change here?” (FG2,
15)

Hannah and Ella discussed at length the impact looking at assessment data could
have in helping staff engage in professional learning and new practices:

Ella: ...thinking about where my staff is—and I would
describe them as blissfully ignorant of the need for
their students and their need to change instruction—
and I feel sometimes that when I start shining a light
on something...last year it was more true than this
year...when they would say they didn’t need to do
[anything new]. They would quote false statistics.
They thought that they had 80% of their kids pass
[the state tests] every year. I went back and looked at
3 years of their data, and they didn’t. The overall
school score had never been at 80%. I couldn’t find it.
But they believed it. I’d show them the data, and
they’d be baffled. They’d claim that the change in
scores had just happened, but it hadn’t...I’m getting a
little more pushback because they’re feeling
threatened because they’ve been pretty ignorant of
the reality of their situation.

Hannah: I think you’re identifying part of the process.
They’re starting to see they have a need...The year
that we didn’t meet [Adequate Yearly Progress], we
went backwards in two subpopulations we were
targeting. We asked ourselves, “How can we go
backwards? How can that subgroup have negative
gains?” We were frustrated. We had to get over it.
Look at the data. Look at the learners. (FG1, 8)

In surveying coaches about this practice at the end of the study, several indicated
that the display of data, although it has the potential to engage teachers, does not
always do so. They noted that the use of data appeared to be more effective with teachers involved in “high stakes” disciplines (those disciplines in which tests determine whether a school meets AYP) and that, at some schools especially, data is dismissed completely or that it intimidated teachers. It was of interest to note that most of the teachers who indicated this practice were “sometimes” a factor were from non-Title I schools. All but one of the coaches who indicated that identifying a need through the use of data or a focus on student need was generally effective with teachers were from Title I schools.

Coaching Practices: Building from teachers’ needs

Several coaches indicated that using data didn’t always stimulate teachers as learners. However, they did indicate that starting from a teacher’s need was important in the engagement of teachers. Multiple coaches shared ways in which they engaged teachers by capitalizing on a need the teacher had identified. Ethan explained:

I don’t have the data conversation with my teachers as much. I have the conversation that’s closer to the everyday business of being in the classroom...It’s not so much of “let’s look at the reading scores” it’s “let’s look at what’s going on in your classroom, and why aren’t they doing the work.” Then, once they get their mind around that, it’s easier to introduce...whatever [literacy] strategies you want to talk about...I tend to get the glassy-eyed look from teachers when we talk about [state test scores] or when we focus on something that is exterior. My experience is that teachers are going to be much more receptive if we’re talking about something that they have direct control over right now. A lot of times they don’t see that. There’s this conversation I have a lot of times
with teachers “We need to teach them responsibility. They need to have that responsibility for bringing their materials to class.” But the reality is, yes, we do. But a lot of times kids don’t bring their books to class because they don’t read very well, and reading is painful for them. (FG1, 16)

Brooke echoed the need to start from what the teacher has identified as an area of focus, even when it’s not literacy related:

My content teachers don’t come to me and ask, “How do I model this, Brooke?” How do I share it, how do I guide…” They honestly, they want to be literacy teachers, but when they come to me, it is about classroom discipline or a new instructional strategy, or it could be grouping their students differently. It could be a question about data and how am I going to use this data. So they don’t come in consciously asking for [literacy practices]...I find the little window of opportunity [to plant a seed about literacy] that they didn’t consciously come to ask for this literacy piece, but I am going to put that on the table, and just be kind of clever about how I do it. But they are not consciously, purposefully coming to me [for literacy strategies], I am just being creative on how we get there. (FG2, 6-7)

Several coaches described the ways in which they would take advantage of a teacher-articulated need as a way to “covertly” weave in suggestions that would develop students’ literacy practices. Ella echoed this idea as she shared about her work with health and PE teachers:

[The health and PE teachers] still say, “I can’t focus on literacy,” but they see that there is a need to increase student talk and dialogue about a text—which is literacy. So instead of focusing on the [idea] of embedding literacy, [I tell them that I’ll help them] increase student engagement and discussion...so that [students] can better engage with the content...So
with those teachers, instead of going in from the literacy angle in their face, I am going in the backdoor with their content. How do you get kids more engaged in your content and increase their understanding? Well, let’s talk about that. And then [say], "oh, by the way, this is literacy." (CI, E, 8)

Summary: Coaching Practices

The coaches pointed to multiple practices that they used regularly to engage teachers in professional learning related to literacy practices that would enhance student learning of content. Although the general ideas are similar to what teachers had indicated, the data from the coaches’ reflected that modeling needed to be contextually situated and accompanied by scaffolds such as guidance, reflection, and goal-setting. The other teacher-identified themes of providing resources, identifying a need, and building from teachers’ needs were also indicated as strategies coaches used; however, the coaches spoke to the deliberate and often “covert” ways that they would embed literacy pedagogy into these practices.

Relational Acuity

Relational Acuity: Building relationships

Like teachers, coaches addressed the idea that who the coach is—and how they interact with teachers—affects teachers’ engagement in learning with and from them. The coaches identified several behaviors or relational skills that appeared to be key in developing relationships with teachers. In the following section, each of these ideas is illustrated.
One of the most common ideas mentioned in regards to a coach’s interpersonal skills was that coaches needed to know their teachers so well that they could differentiate their approach based on their knowledge of the teacher. One such example of differentiating their approach was knowing when to use “collegial coaching” and when to use “technical coaching” (Barkley, 2005). While collegial coaching allows for the teacher being coached to name the specific focus of the coaching, technical coaching focuses on assisting teachers with applying specific instructional methods learned in staff development. Technical coaching does not allow for the teacher to identify the focus of the coaching. In a discussion on these different coaching approaches, Sabrina explains how the coach’s approach differs, based on the relationship with the teacher:

If you are a new coach, I think collegial [coaching] is very important. And if you tell people, “part of my focus is literacy, but I can do anything,” that helps [provides the relationship needed to move] into the technical coaching. But I also think that it really depends on your staff and it depends on how good you are at building relationships and maintaining those relationships. Some people, you can walk right into their classroom and start technical coaching, because that is who they are. But you as a coach have to know that. And some people you have to be a collegial and resource person, and move into that. (FG2, 9)

Dominic echoed this idea as he described the different approaches he takes with each teacher, depending on the relationship and validating practices:

[After helping teachers see a relationship between their content and literacy] for me, it is a relational model of knowing their strengths and weaknesses,
knowing where our relationship is, where I can push and where I need to pull back because some people I could push very hard in dialogue, engage very deeply and passionately with, and we were still okay. Some teachers, there was no way I could do that; it was more of...walking on eggshells so to speak. (CI, D, 1)

Dominic’s approach reflects the nuanced approach needed when engaging in technical coaching with teachers. When the coach has developed a respectful, collegial relationship with the teacher, the coach is more able to challenge the teacher’s thinking without pushing the teacher away. However, as Dominic acknowledges, when he’s asked to engage in technical coaching without such a relationship in place, there is a need to tread more carefully, building the relationship simultaneously with helping the teacher to develop professional practices that they may or may not value.

Coaches expressed that they employed many of the practices explained in the previous section (on coaching practices) to develop relationships with teachers. Dominic, a coach who has often discussed the importance of interpersonal acuity sums up how these practices were used to develop relationships:

I think the key though is hanging in relationally with them. Just constantly talking to them, checking in, bring in new information. Continually bringing it in through their PLCs, through other professional development. But I think the key has been to build their confidence up by being there, observing them, catching them doing things well, complimenting them on risking, encouraging them. (FG2, 2)
The idea of the coaches’ presence in the classroom environment is mentioned here as a means by which coaches developed relationships. It is also addressed in a later section as a way that coaches help to develop a pervasive culture of coaching throughout the classrooms of their schools. Again, the coaches’ presence is a topic that is tangentially related to both their ability to develop relationships as well as the culture that is developed within a school by this practice.

By being present in the classrooms, coaches also developed relationships with students. Sabrina spoke to the importance of developing relationships not only with teachers but also with students:

\[
\text{Just like you have to build a relationship with your students, I have to build and maintain a relationship with my teachers. And I have to do it with the students. I have found that you cannot do in-depth coaching if you do not know these students. If I don’t know the kids, they don’t view me as another teacher who is in the room all the time, and the coaching is not quality. (CI, 7)}
\]

Although building relationships was certainly acknowledged by coaches as an integral part of engaging teachers in professional learning, Rosanna acknowledged that positive relationships alone will not necessarily result in engagement. As she explained:

\[
\text{I think [one content area] is a tougher crowd, but I feel like they have warmed up considerably. I felt like they were hostile, and now I feel like they are not. Now I feel like they are warm and friendly. They are not coming and looking for anything, but in social interactions, they have warmed up considerably. (CI, R, 6)}
\]
It is worthwhile to note that Rosanna was the only first-year coach who participated in this study. All of the other coaches were in their second or third year of coaching at their school. These coaches often spoke of how the practices a coach uses in the first year differ widely from what is employed in subsequent years, due to the relationships that are in place. Several coaches acknowledged the need for using more “low leverage,” teacher-friendly strategies in the first year (e.g. providing resources) in order to develop relationships with teachers. Once relationships were established with teachers, coaches indicated that they were able to become part of the cultural norm for teacher learning—dropping in classrooms for impromptu coaching, participating in the thinking during team PLC meetings, and challenging teachers’ thinking during technical coaching experiences.

*Relational Acuity: Developing Credibility*

Coaches indicated that one of the most salient aspects of developing relationships with teachers was through the establishing of credibility. Credibility was identified as the means by which coaches demonstrated to teachers that they could have confidence in the suggestions and practices advocated by the coach. Coaches spoke to a number of ways by which they established such trust, as well as the necessity of demonstrating this to teachers.

As coaches acknowledged the varied roles and practices they engaged in, they also indicated that often times they take on addition duties—duties that fall
outside their official role—in order to build relationships with teachers. Rosanna, a first year coach, admitted:

I think my environment is...very high pressure, and so I feel like I’ve had to be creative and do things that aren’t exactly in the job description [of a coach] to form those relationships. (FG1, 12)

Brooke reiterated:

We do [tasks not considered “coaching”] because we want to keep the relationships we have worked so hard to develop. So you stay up to 11 pm getting something together for some emergency for some teacher, you answer the text message on a weekend, you go to the lab because they need someone to lean on. You don’t want to burn the bridge you spent all year building. (FG2, 29)

Once a coach has established credibility with a teacher, they emphasized their dependency on word of mouth in extending their reputation to others with whom they hadn’t worked:

I think it is the relationships that I have built and the word spread that even if you don’t work with me consistently, you can still trust Sabrina, that she is not here to judge you. Then that trust has built into – if someone says this is a good book, and this is a good idea, then I am willing to try it. (FG2, 2)

Rosanna also explained how her work with one teacher affected the perception of other teachers in the school:

I team-taught one class with [a teacher] every first period...and that was effective because I could go deep with that one teacher, and I think it gave me some credibility. Sometimes people think that coaches are people who are too burned out to teach, or too disconnected from kids to teach effectively
themselves. I think [the fact that I taught everyday] made people feel like, “Okay, that is not the case with her. She can still teach, she just has chosen to coach.” So I think that gave me credibility, and [that teacher] would say, “Oh, you should get Rosanna to come do this with you.” That helped [me build relationships with other teachers]. (CI, R, 2)

Rosanna also shared that the teacher with whom she team-taught was well connected among the staff. Several coaches noted the importance of developing relationships with staff members who were highly respected as a means of developing credibility with other teachers.

**Summary: Relational Acuity**

In the coaching survey at the end of the study, all coaches indicated that building relationships and establishing credibility were important aspects of their work in engaging teachers.

**School Culture**

As coaches discussed teacher engagement in professional learning, they were clear that factors related to the school culture affected teachers’ engagement in professional learning. Like teachers, they acknowledged factors such as school vision, school leadership, the way the collective school staff interacted, as well as teachers’ understanding of the coach’s work. Coaches also talked at length about the importance of school leadership in creating a culture of accountability for engaging in professional learning.
School Culture: Leadership & Vision

Coaches spoke frequently and at length about the importance they saw in the role their school administrators played in establishing a culture that fostered collaborative professional learning. Sabrina explained her principal’s approach to developing the school climate:

Something I think is out of our control, but is very prevalent, and you have to work very hard at, is the environment that your administrator presents. There is a culture within every single building. And if your principal has set some type of culture, I think it’s difficult to overcome that...My principal will say over and over, “you need to get on the train” for the past two years, and now we’re starting to see growth...and if my principal hadn’t been delivering that message, I know my staff wouldn’t be where they are at. (FG1, 15)

It appeared from Sabrina’s comments here and throughout the study that her principal took a very active approach as an instructional leader in developing the vision of teachers.

In addition to creating a vision for a staff, coaches frequently discussed the importance of administrators building in accountability for professional learning and growth. The coaches’ thinking reflected an article they had recently read as part of their professional development (Nelsen & Cudeiro, 2009) that referenced the need for administrative monitoring of implementation. In this article, the authors suggested that in order to engage teachers in ongoing professional learning, schools use “cycles of learning” (p. 33) that include the following
components: quality learning opportunities; opportunities for safe practice; observing colleagues; receiving feedback; professional reading; peer discussion and data review; monitoring, measuring, and modifying. Ella explained:

But I think if you are going to have real accountability and good coaching, you have to have that full cycle. You have to have the administrator [monitoring the implementation] built in. (CI, E, 3)

Coaches repeatedly acknowledged the role administrators played in teachers’ professional learning. Dominic noted that as teachers engaged in the work of professional learning, administrators’ presence and sustained vision were necessary. He described it as:

We had more accountability...our administrative team was able to participate and actually dig in with those groups so that provided the...accountability...It isn’t going away. It is the vital part of our work. We all have a part and role to play in it for our students to be successful. (CI, D, 3)

One coach shared how a lack of vision stifled the engagement at her school:

I will say, “why aren’t our math and health teachers getting copies of the reading [data]?” And the answer will be, “oh, they don’t have time to look at the reading data, they should look at their own data.” And my argument is always, “That is their data.” I’ve said that, and I say it to my administrators, and they buy in on some days and on other days they don’t. So there’s not a culture at Lakewood School that data is everybody’s data. (FG1, 14)

Without a consistent, sustained focus on a common vision by administrators, it seemed that “opting-out” was a viable option for teachers.
Brooke spoke to how a common vision engaged teachers at her school in collaborative work and learning. She explained:

They know it’s a common vision for the school...We see ourselves as a school PLC too. So when [the whole school is] centered around [a common goal], I think they honestly want to try it. They want to be a team player. (FG2, 8)

Related to the role of administrators in creating a vision, some coaches shared how the teacher leadership within the school, specifically content area team leaders, helped to create a culture of learning. Hannah described the culture her team leaders created at her school:

We had leaders leading from within, who believed in all of us, and we just stepped up and said, this is what we’re going to do. And we did it. And no one can take that away from us. We owned it. It’s who we are. Things don’t happen to us...We create our success. It didn’t happen by accident. We know exactly what we did and how we did it. (FG1, 7)

The culture that Hannah describes at her Claremont Middle School portrayed a strong sense of self-determining behavior. However, when this way of thinking is not part of a school community, Rosanna indicated that perhaps it could be developed when teachers experience success:

I was thinking, if the culture of our school becomes, “We are all improving all the time, because that is just what we do,” that would be great. That is not what it has been. Also, you know what is interesting? Our [state test] scores improved a lot in math. We went up about ten percent over the last year, which is statistically significant. We targeted and we did some things very intentionally. We were very purposeful and then we saw some success. So now I
have seen people [saying], “Maybe we should do this.” I was not hearing conversations like this in the fall. I think now that we have had some success...I think people are getting into it and people want to be involved in the decision making...I feel like they are into it because they had some success. (CI, R, 5)

_School Culture: Collaborative Learning Communities_

In addition to the leadership and vision developed by administrators, coaches mentioned several aspects of the school culture that reflected the value of teachers learning collaboratively with and from one another. The PLC structure was referenced frequently; however it is the ideas that define a PLC rather than the PLCs themselves that appeared to foster teacher engagement in professional learning.

One factor frequently mentioned by coaches was the idea of teachers learning from each other. When asked what engaged a group of content area teachers in their work as part of an after-school, interdisciplinary PLC focused on developing student vocabulary, she acknowledged:

> It was the teaming. I [asked] them to team up with another person [in the PLC] and watch each other. And I think after about two weeks of...watch[ing] each other and knowing someone was going to watch you, that focused them. (CI, S, 4)

Jasmine echoed the value teachers found in learning by observing each others’ practice:

> I have a lot of staff who want to be videoed...and [want to] do some analysis together, and maybe even...share with their PLC teams because I think the
more open they can be in sharing our practice, the better. (FG2, 20)

Another feature of collaborative learning communities such as PLCs that coaches commented on was the way in which this structure allowed for differentiation. Through PLCs, coaches acknowledged that learning could be adapted for each content area, so that the focus better matched the needs of their content area. Dominic shared that, “In my work, I will be getting into those PLCs and really differentiating their needs, identifying what they need more quickly” (CI, D, 3).

A PLC structure allowed not only for a differentiated approach to meeting teacher’s needs, but also allowed for teachers to learn from one another. Hannah described how they used the PLC structure to systematically enact professional learning, drawing on the credibility of team leaders and the collaborative relationships that existed within each PLC. She explained:

I've found that "selling it" [the professional learning they wanted teachers to engage in] to the team leaders is the way to go. Train them. They're experts, they're trusted, everyone looks up to them, so if they're the ones up in front of staff presenting the information, then everyone’s buying in, because this is the best of the best. If they've bought into it, then we’ll buy in too...and now I’m not the only one they can go to for help...It spreads like wildfire when they’ve bought in. Because when you have your math team leader sit down with his group to mine the literacy in the math standards, and he’s like “This is good stuff,” everyone’s ready. Because math teachers know if the team leader’s saying it’s good, they believe him. Because he’s not going to say it’s good if
it’s not. He’ll say it’s garbage. He’ll say they’re making me do this, if that was the case. (FG1, 4)

Each of these reasons—differentiated professional learning, collaborative learning, and learning from each others’ practices—appeared to be a reason that coaches found value in engaging teachers in professional learning through collaborative learning communities. Ella stated it clearly:

Coaching worked better if you worked with a PLC rather than one-on-one to have ongoing change. There’s peer pressure and support. If you can get a group to commit, then it opens a lot of doors. It leads to more meaningful [encounters in the one-on-one coaching]. (CI, E, 1)

When collaborative learning communities existed within a school, there appeared to be a perception that the school was a learning environment for teachers. Coaches commented that professional learning became a regular part of what teachers did. Brooke explained:

It’s about the duration. The teachers where it is most effective are the teachers who are working with [me] consistently. Because the accountability is there. It’s not about working with them five hours a day. It’s about working with them for one hour for five weeks. (CI, B, 4)

In the survey completed at the end of the study, coaches affirmed the idea that when collaborative learning structures and processes were part of the school culture, teachers were highly likely to engage in professional learning. One coach even stated that PLCs served as, “the most effective setting for professional learning related to literacy for content area teachers” (CS3, R, 2). However,
several coaches also commented in the survey that when a group of teachers were working as a PLC “in name only”, and not functioning as a true professional learning community, they are unlikely to engage in professional learning, and perhaps may seek to sabotage the professional learning of others. As one coach wrote, “those with a negative culture are difficult to work with as they validate and feed off each other” (CS3, R, 3).

**School Culture: Understanding the Coach’s Role**

Though not directly a part of school culture, coaches, like teachers, noted that understanding the coach’s role within the school was a foundational aspect of how the school operated. Sabrina affirmed that by having a coaching model in place for over three years, teachers were beginning to understand the coach’s role as learning-focused, rather than evaluative:

> I think our teachers now get—they get coaching. They get coaching across the district, most of them do. They realize that we really truly are not there to evaluate them, that we do know what we are talking about when it comes to literacy. I think that now they feel safe to trust those things. (FG2, 8)

Marney echoed the importance of this understanding for teachers:

> Teachers want to know that their coaches are really teachers and that is one thing I think my staff understands, that bottom line, across the board, I am not an administrator, I am a teacher, and I just want to go in there and teach. (CI, M, 4)

As coaches became part of the school culture, teachers and coaches both emphasized the importance of teachers understanding the role of this new
position. Traditionally, schools have been made up of administrators, teachers, and support personnel. To introduce the instructional coach into this environment, who appears to function at times in all of these roles, it can be confusing to staff. When staffs understand the coach’s role and why the coach may be working with “me,” teachers appear to be more likely to engage in professional learning with the assistance of their coach.

**Summary: School Culture**

School culture, as described by coaches, encompassed a vision for student and teacher learning by leadership, an active and regular role in maintaining the focus on this vision by the school administrators, and teachers working together to develop their learning, targeted on this vision, from and with one another, and with their coaches. Many coaches indicated that all of the other factors in this study—coaching practices, interpersonal acuity, connection to content, were mute points without a collaborative learning culture in place.

**Meaningful Connection to Content**

In their work to engage teachers in professional learning around disciplinary literacy, coaches realized the importance of helping teachers see the relevance of literacy to their content. Coaches clearly expressed that helping teachers understand what literacy was—and was not—as well as how it was an integral part of their content were key pieces that led toward teacher engagement.
Sabrina explained how she used the state’s standards, and the process of comparing the state standards for reading, which apply to all content areas to the state standards for literature, which are the content for English language arts teachers. Through this process she attempted to distinguish for content area teachers what literacy entailed as it applied to their content area:

[Literacy standards] need to be integrated and pulled out for content teachers, going “Here is the literacy. Literacy is not just literature. Literacy is showing a kid how to read a graph. Showing a kid how to write a summary when it comes to writing a summary on a sports article...The literacy in music is reading the notes. That is authentic reading.” So showing them that reading core standards are not literature standards. It is not about you [teachers] reading a novel [in class]. It is about giving [students] authentic text in the area that you are studying and utilizing those skills. And I think we are finally we are starting, we are getting that. (CI, S, 1-2)

Jasmine also helped teachers see the relationship between literacy and their content by looking at specific standards and the skills they required of students. She explained:

Something else I noticed...with the district interim assessment for reading, we looked at the data, and the strand data. And that opened the door, with standards like locating information in titles and graphs, the science teacher was like, “I could do that.” Seeing that 50% of our kids are below the standard in that standard, they realize that every little bit helps. Spinning it to, “you don’t have to teach language arts” but rather “mine the literacy that’s in your content,” we’re working on that, but baby steps. (FG1, 14)
In order to develop secondary content area teachers’ understandings of literacy, several coaches reiterated the approach of defining it from within the teachers’ content. Rosanna, a high school coach, considered the potential differences in how middle and high school teachers might perceive literacy. In the end, she affirmed the need for the literacy to be understood through, and as unique to, teachers’ content, especially for high school teachers:

My feeling is that the higher in grade level you go, the more that content is king. So I think maybe it is a little bit easier to get the majority of middle school teachers on board with reading and literacy strategies, especially when I was a middle school teacher, a lot of people were elementary certified. At some point in their lives, they had planned to teach everything, and they buy into the idea that we are all teachers of reading and things like that. In the high school level, I don’t think that is true at all for a lot of our teachers. I think that they think of themselves as scientists or as psychologists, or whatever their content is. So I think in terms of common literacy strategies or instructional strategies, they don’t see things as being common. They see [things] as unique to their content. (Cl, R, 1)

She then goes on to illustrate how one math teacher, with whom she co-taught regularly, saw the relationship between literacy and his content, realized how literacy could assist students in/with accessing the content knowledge, and engaged enthusiastically in developing the literacy instruction within his math classes:

Rosanna: Once we did [some lessons that addressed the literacy within the content], he was really interested and open to fitting more [of those types of lessons] into his [teaching]. And he saw it as literacy,
you didn’t have to disguise it as, “Oh, this is student engagement.”

BB: He saw this was integrating literacy to help students understand his content and he was okay with that and open to that?

Rosanna: Right. I would say he saw that kids have trouble matching up words with math, and that is a skill they need [to access the math]. (CI, R, 2)

Using a disciplinary approach to their work with teachers, coaches engaged teachers by identifying the literacy they needed to teach their content. This was done by looking at their content standards as well as their students’ needs, and appeared to engage teachers in new practices. Coaches were in agreement that approaching literacy through the content was a method that would engage most teachers. One coach acknowledged this approach may not engage teachers who vocalized that they didn’t have time to “add more” to what they were teaching, and that literacy, for these teachers, may need to be embedded in practices that more directly meet a teacher-identified need.

*Teachers’ Inclination for Reflection on Practice*

The final theme of factors that engage teachers, as identified in the coaches’ data, was that of teacher attitudes. It is worthwhile to note that there was not any data identified within the teachers’ interviews that reflected their consideration of this factor. However, coaches explicitly and spontaneously brought up the impact a teacher’s reflective nature had on their likelihood to engage in professional learning related to literacy.
Teacher Attitude: Reflective Practitioner

In order to establish a common understanding of "reflective practitioner," I draw on Schön's work (1983) which describes it as the capacity to think on what one “knows” and “use this capacity to cope with unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice” (p. ix). Reflection may occur in conjunction with the experience, before, or after it and is an attempt to create meaning. In the following exchange, Sabrina and Hannah discussed that, while many teachers engaged somewhat naturally in this type of action, some teachers demonstrated considerable resistance to it as well:

Sabrina: We are requiring our teachers to think, and they have to reflect and think. And if for the last 15 years, you have been doing “the book,” why would I think? It’s gotta be that I do the book because it’s comfortable. I don’t have to think, and if the student gets an F, it’s not my fault. It’s the kid’s F...

Hannah: When Sabrina said we’re getting resistance because we’re asking teachers to think, you know, the transformation that’s going on, from my perspective, we’re “reprofessionalizing” teachers to be reflective practitioners. To not follow the manual. To look at their learners and make [the instruction] fit for their learners. With “reprofessionalizing,” when you put it that way, teachers go, “Yah, we’re getting control again.” They’re honoring our expertise. We’re not just someone who is supposed to follow these lesson plans, like we ask subs to do. We are the thinkers; we are the ones who know our learners. We have to give them back that honor that you are a professional. We trust your judgment. We trust you. And we trust you with the kids in our city. (FG1, JD, 6-7)
When pressed for an explanation of how that attitude was developed in teachers, Hannah again pointed inward, to teacher attitudes that reflected a mindset of self-determination. She explained, “...we decided as a staff what we were going to do, and we empowered ourselves. And that was just a movement that happened because we believed in ourselves.” (FG1, JD, 7)

Jasmine echoed the self-determining attitude of teachers who demonstrate reflective tendencies:

Teachers who are maybe successful, and [yet] still realize, “I have 5-10% of my class who is not meeting, so I am not doing everything I can do.” I think those teachers are willing [to engage in professional learning]. (FG2, J, 12)

The coaches’ comments suggested that teachers with reflective attitudes looked inward first, when encountering situations that were unique, uncertain, or disturbing to them. From this inward reflection, teachers tended to engage with coaches as a means to resolve their conflict. Dominic explained:

I think any way we can get people to reflect on their practices is going to help our conversations and help them continue to move forward. It is the folks who struggle to reflect, they don’t see [the issues]. (FG2, 20)

He ended by acknowledging that if teachers aren’t reflective, they may see little reason for engaging with a coach.

In discussing how coaches fostered this attitude among teachers, Sabrina shared the work she had done with a PLC. She suggested that she was able to recognize teachers’ reflective attitudes when:
[the teachers] would talk together with their [peer observation] partners and they would...team up with another team and [a teacher] would say things like, “And I was thinking about how I should do that with my kids,” and “I was thinking about how I could tweak that in my classroom,” [as she was observing the other teacher’s instruction]...I know she was being reflective and she had notes. I mean in her vocabulary journal, she had notes written down of everything that she was going to do and her thoughts and everything. (CI, S, 5)

Coaches’ survey comments also reflected that a reflective attitude did not appear to be natural to some teachers, and many who resisted engaging in practices that fostered this type of thinking did not consider such thinking to be a valuable use of their time.

*Factors that Hinder Teachers from Engaging*

This is a study on those factors that enhanced teacher engagement in their work with coaches in disciplinary literacy practices. Conversely, this was not a study in those factors that inhibited, or impeded, teacher engagement. However, I noticed that there were several instances when coaches and teachers discussed why teachers did *not* engage in professional learning. Although several of these reasons have been referenced throughout this chapter, and many of them are simply the inverse of factors that cause teachers *to* engage, it may be germane to display this data, even nominally, as a brief counterpoint to the emphasis of this study. As this study seeks to understand the ways in which teachers are engaged in professional learning, such understanding can be enhanced by considering collectively the factors inhibiting engagement.
In reviewing the focus group transcripts, the interview transcripts of both the teachers and coaches, as well as the open-ended coach surveys administered at the end of the study, I identified six primary reasons that coaches and teachers identified as factors that prohibited teachers’ engagement in professional learning. In Table 4.2, I present these reasons, in order of the number of times each theme was identified in the data. For each theme, I also included explanatory phrases from the transcripts and surveys in order to better illustrate each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th># of times appeared in the data</th>
<th>Illustrative Phrases from Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of urgency, relevance or need</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>• Literacy is an “add-on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time or energy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>• Too much content to “cover”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative or dismissive school Culture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• This will go away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Leadership doesn’t value or dismisses professional learning related to literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of skill or resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Too hard, too much work to change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “hopeless”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative teacher attitude</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• teacher in “independent contractor” mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• blames others</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• being judged by others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• being “done to”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misunderstanding the role of a coach</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• not sure of coach’s role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The findings discussed in this chapter have illustrated the specific ways in which coaches engaged secondary content area teachers in professional learning related to disciplinary literacy. Coaches and teachers discussed a combination of factors including coaching practices, the coaches’ interpersonal acuity, the school culture, and the teachers’ understanding of the relationship between their content and literacy. Coaches also pointed to an additional factor of teacher attitudes.

Coaches and teachers both acknowledged that coaches engaged teachers using practices that provided modeling, resources, built on teachers’ needs, as well as practices that helped teachers see a need for teaching literacy as part of their content. For the most part, coaches and teachers spoke about similar practices as being effective at engaging teachers in learning. Coaches and teachers also both acknowledged the importance for a coach to build relationships and demonstrate credibility with teacher in order to engage them in professional learning. Throughout the data, it was evident that both groups recognized several aspects of the school culture that led to engagement. Namely, they pointed to the leadership and vision of the school, a collaborative learning community within the school, and an understanding by staff of the coach’s roles within the school. Lastly, both teachers and coaches spoke to the importance of literacy being envisioned as a means for supporting and enhancing content area...
learning, rather than an “add-on” to their curriculum. In recognizing teacher attitudes as a factor, coaches suggested that teachers with a reflective, self-directed demeanor may be more likely to engage in professional learning.

In summary, the data reflects that these coaches thoughtfully utilized a myriad of practices to engage teachers in professional learning related to teaching the literacy within a content area. In doing so, they were cognizant of the role that the environment and the attitudes of the teacher played, as they sought meaningful ways to engage content teachers in professional learning regarding disciplinary literacy.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the key findings related to my research question. I also discuss the implication of the research findings for various audiences, share limitations of the study, and recommend suggestions for further research.
Chapter Five: Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which instructional coaches engaged secondary teachers in professional learning. More specifically, I sought to understand the ways in which coaches engaged teachers in learning related to literacy, a topic often met with resistance by secondary content-area teachers. I examined this question from the perspective of both coaches and teachers. In this final chapter, I review the study from beginning to end, first summarizing the questions and the methods. A discussion of the key findings is followed with a consideration of the implications of this research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for further research. Finally, my personal reflections close the chapter.

Summary of Methods and Research Questions

The following question guided the study: What factors appear to influence secondary content-area teachers’ engagement with instructional coaches, relative to disciplinary literacy? This question was explored from both the perspective of teachers and instructional coaches.

These research questions were considered through a qualitative approach using a social constructivist lens to carefully examine the practices that ten secondary instructional coaches used to engage teachers in professional learning relative to the literacy within their disciplines.
My study drew primarily on the data derived from focus group discussions, individual interviews with both coaches and teachers with whom they worked, as well as surveys of the coaches. Field notes from observations of the coaches, a researcher journal, and researcher memos also provided secondary sources of data. Over the course of a school year, I was able to become familiar with the coaches’ current practices, engage in discussions regarding beliefs that influenced their work, and observe them in various settings as they engaged teachers in professional learning.

The study began with the first focus group session, in which coaches shared their initial ideas in relation to my research questions at the time. Throughout the year, I observed coaches in their work with teachers and discussed these observations with them; I also surveyed them regarding the influence their personal professional development had on their work as coaches. During the year, I kept a researcher’s journal detailing my developing understandings as I engaged in my work with coaches. I also visited school and observed coaches as they engaged in their work with teachers. Towards the end of the year, we met again as a focus group to revisit the ideas from the first session and weigh them against what we had experienced and witnessed over the course of that year. We engaged in conversations around my “hunches” and the themes that I had begun to identify. I concluded the study with individual interviews of each coach, teachers with whom they worked, as well as conducting a final survey of coaches. The interviews and final survey were means by which I
attempted to access the individual perspectives of each coach. The teacher interviews also provided a source of data that allowed for an alternate perspective—one that allowed for constructing a more complete understanding of the data related to my research question.

This study presents a dual perspective (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The etic (researcher's) perspective contributed to the development of a conceptual and theoretical sense of the study with an aim of contributing to the current research literature in this field. The emic (coaches’ and teachers’) perspectives added to the etic perspective through our conversations as well as my observation within the natural setting of the schools (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2005).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study highlight not only that there are multiple factors related to teacher engagement, but that they are both complex in their makeup as well as interrelated. These factors appeared to be equally important to engaging teachers, with the exception of the factors related to school culture, which were considered paramount to creating the context for the other factors. The process of engaging secondary content-area teachers in professional learning related to disciplinary literacy does not follow a lockstep formula or recipe, yet there appear to be some factors that were often influential: e.g., a coach who uses varied and contextually situated coaching practices with appropriate amounts of scaffolding and accountability; a coach who had developed relationships and established credibility with teachers; demonstration of a meaningful connection
between literacy and a teachers' content-area; teachers who demonstrate reflective practices; and a positive, collaborative school culture that is focused on a shared vision.

Figure 5.1 attempts to conceptualize the factors related to engaging teachers in learning. This framework portrays factors related to engaging teachers in professional learning as overlapping and intersecting, situated within the broader and encompassing concept of school culture.

**Figure 5.1 Conceptualizing the Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Teacher Engagement**
Although coaches indicated that multiple factors influenced the engagement of secondary teachers in learning related to the literacy of their discipline, they also indicated that the absence of a collaborative school culture would tend to “trump” other factors. Figure 5.1 attempts to portray this relationship, with other factors related to engaging teachers embedded within the context of the school culture. The most significant underlying factor, a positive, collaborative school culture built around a shared vision, appears to be the canvas for the coaches’ work of engaging teachers in professional learning. Without this culture in place, subsequent factors may have negligible influence (Little, 1982; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Dufour, 2007; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

As I consider the problem of engaging teachers in professional learning, I draw on Magdeline Lampert’s (2001) model of teaching practice, which situates the teacher (or in the case of this study, the coach), the student (or teacher), and the content as three elements that make up the work of teaching. In my study, the “elements” of this teaching model are the coach, the teacher and disciplinary literacy, the content that coaches are working to engage teachers in as learners. Lampert explains how these three very complex elements are both constantly in flux as well as interconnected. She considers the complicated work of teaching problems—such as engaging teachers in professional learning—as analogous to piloting a plane:
In order to make a move in three [sic] dimensions, one needs to look up and down as well as left and right, and forward and back, to locate the relevant objects in the environment, many of which are themselves moving across all of these dimensions as well. (p. 447)

As coaches seek which “move” to make to engage teachers in professional learning, they too need to consider these elements: the coaching practices and relational skills that might best fit the situation; the teachers, and their inclination for reflecting on practices; and the content—in this case, disciplinary literacy—as well as the teachers’ perception of the content. Each of these elements—the coach, the teacher, the content—is associated with factors that must be considered when addressing the problem of teacher engagement. The elements of the teacher, content, and coach are in constant flux with each coaching encounter, making the factors related to each coaching interaction complex and unique. Sizer (1985) also describes the “moves” that teachers (or, in the case of this study, coaches) must make to engage learners based on the unique qualities and needs of the teacher, the learner, and the content:

The character of this triangle is subject to change, varying from pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher, subject to subject, day to day, even minute to minute. Change any one of the triangle’s members and the others have to shift to accommodate, or even to break apart...That these triangles vary for different people, subjects, and times makes the task of providing constructive schooling an extraordinarily complex and subtle business. (Sizer, 1984, pp. 151-52)
As I consider these models and the findings of my own study, I have attempted to conceptualize these elements as the sites of the factors leading to teacher engagement.

Within the culture of a school that has a positive and collaborative environment focused on a shared vision, there appear to be multiple factors that enhance, or promote, the engagement of teachers in professional learning. These factors can be considered by their relationship to three elements—the coach, the content, and the teacher—similar to those elements identified by Lampert and Sizer.

In order to engage teachers in thinking about their instruction of the literacy within their discipline, coaches often appeared to consider multiple factors in light of the other elements. For example, coaches described how the coaching practices they used were connected to the teachers’ content: what coaching practice would help to create a meaningful connection to the teacher's content area? One case in point is described by Rosanna, a high school coach, who used the coaching practice of examining data with math teachers, to help determine what content to teach. In one instance, she and a teacher had noticed that students were having difficulties with language-rich math problems. To assist the teacher, she suggested and modeled using word sorts and other activities to help students break down and make meaning of the mathematical language within the problems. By matching the literacy strategy to the gap in students’ content knowledge, the teacher was receptive to the instructional
practices. She explained, “[the teacher] saw that kids had trouble matching up words with math[ematical ideas], which is a skill they need” (CI, R, 2). The coaching practices of generating a need by examining data, providing instructional routines, and modeling the use of the routines created a meaningful connection between the literacy practices and the mathematical content.

The coaches also expressed that they decided how to engage the teacher by considering the element of the teacher: what coaching practice would most likely engage a particular teacher, based on the teacher’s inclination for reflection on practice? Dominic explained how he would utilize the coaching practice of modeling with teachers who didn’t demonstrate an inclination for reflection:

I will...model reflection because that sometimes is not a natural thing for [some] people...and say, “As I reflected on your lesson, I was wondering what it would have looked like if you did this. What do you think?...I am hoping that if I can plant seeds, I can change that culture a couple people at a time. (FG2, 19)

An additional consideration coaches made was the element of themselves, the coach: What coaching practice would be most likely to engage a teacher, given the coach’s relationship with the teacher? As Brooke described the ways in which she engaged the teachers she had been working with for several years, she explained, “because the relationships are there now, and they trust me more, I can get away from [just] modeling, so it is all about more co-planning, more co-teaching this year, because the relationship is there” (FG2, 7). Given her
relationships with these teachers, she engaged teachers in coaching practices that required them to be more active participants.

This complex approach to deciding how best to engage teachers necessitates a “theory” for teacher engagement that inextricably ties these concepts, or elements, to each other. In this theory, the elements of the coach, the teacher, the content, and the school culture are each considered as interactive parts of a whole, leading to teacher engagement in a coach-teacher model of professional learning. The factors related to these elements are represented in Figure 5.1 through overlapping circles set within an area representing the school culture. When these elements are considered both individually and collectively, it appears coaches are more likely to engage teachers in professional learning.

Within this model or theory of engagement, there appear to be four key findings, or “imperatives,” for maximizing the engagement of secondary content area teachers:

1. The role of the school culture is paramount because it creates the context for the other factors for the teacher engagement;

2. There may be a need for coaches to utilize embedded, or hidden, strategies within their coaching practices to engage more resistant teachers in professional learning;

3. The coaching practice of modeling may need to be enacted in a way that actively situates learning; and,
4. There is a need to draw a meaningful connection between a teacher’s content area and literacy.

These findings reflect the ideas that most frequently appeared in the data, or the ideas that appeared to be most pertinent to engaging teachers in this type of professional development. Each of these findings will be discussed further in the following sections.

The role of school culture

When schools operate as collaborative learning communities, working collegially to improve practices is routinized part of everyday practice. It appears that as a school develops a shared vision with a focus on both student and teacher learning, such cultural systems acknowledge the importance of two key ideas: the value of developing one’s practice in the context of collaborative relationships, such as a coach or a colleague; and the importance of developing one’s teaching practices to support the student as a learner, including attending to the literacies that are integral to accessing and making sense of one’s content. Thus, a school culture built around the idea of the school as a learning community—not only for students, but also for teachers—is central to engaging teachers in developing their professional practices, specifically in regards to instructing the literacies of their content (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Hord, 1997b; Senge, 1990b).
In examining the attributes of a professional learning community (PLC), educational organizations such as Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (1997) (SEDL) suggest the need for:

- school leadership that invites **shared decision making**
- a **shared vision** toward a commitment to students’ learning
- learning that is **focused on the needs and learning of students**
- a **learning community** that shares practices (e.g. visiting peers’ classrooms)
- **collegial relationships**

When a school culture is enacted in this way, it satisfies the conditions for self-determination, a condition Deci and Ryan (1985) argue is necessary for adult learning, and by extension, professional development. Self-determination and adult learning theories make it clear that the human propensity for growth and learning only happen when change is freely chosen, in the moment, through the interplay of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Markland, Ryan, Tobin, & Rollnick, 2005).

Behaviors that develop a personally meaningful rationale for engaging in a behavior, along with opportunities for participation and choice, are two of the conditions necessary to support feelings of **autonomy** (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When teachers are involved in a community in which they participate in activities such as **co-constructing a vision** that has personal meaning to them, a sense of autonomy is fostered through participation and choice. This can often lead to
teacher engagement in learning. This was demonstrated when Brooke shared how she engaged her team leaders in coaching (FG1, 4-5). Initially, they questioned why they were being released from their teaching duties for a full day to work with the coach; however, Brooke explained that “letting them set half of the agenda was huge. They identified their strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and [developed a focus based on] what did they need coaching in, as a leader?” (FG2, 5). By asking teachers to participate in constructing a vision that has meaning to them, Brooke was able to engage teacher leaders in coaching encounters to which they were initially resistant.

Another means by which autonomy is developed as part of a school culture is through a focus on the needs and learning of students. By participating in a professional learning community that is focused on becoming responsive to students, teachers are provided with opportunities to process new information as part of attaining a meaningful goal. Jasmine shared an example (FG2, 4) of a teacher who defended his plans to give administrators “lip service” with regards to new instructional practices. However, she explained this teacher’s change of heart after discussing the “realities” of their students’ lives:

we had a conversation after that [when] I [said], “These kids aren’t getting it, and their odds in their life—you know we are talking poverty, prison, and so if we don’t help them, who is going to?” He was quiet. And then I noticed after that he started doing a lot of things that we were talking about and he started enjoying teaching actually again, I think. (FG2, 4)
A focus on students’ needs can be a significant means by which teachers are provided with an opportunity to participate in a meaningful practice.

Another means of developing an effective school culture is through activities that develop teachers’ sense of competence, another component for developing feelings of self-determination. A feeling of competence is fostered when teachers experience effective enactment of their practices (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). When principals involve teachers in practices such as sharing the power and authority of decision making, this enhances teachers’ sense of competence, as seen in Hannah’s example:

We had leaders leading from within, who believed in all of us, and we just stepped up and said, this is what we’re going to do. And we did it. And no one can take that away from us. We owned it. It’s who we are. Things don’t happen to us...We create our success. It didn’t happen by accident. We know exactly what we did and how we did it. (FG1, 7)

The teachers of this school are capable of engaging in professional learning perhaps, in part, because of the sense of competence they have developed from effectively enacting ideas they hold as their own. Such feelings of competence, when combined with feelings of autonomy and relatedness, allow for the type of culture in which teachers want to engage in professional learning.

Finally, when the school culture is structured so that professional learning activities satisfy teachers’ need for relatedness, teachers’ sense of self-determination is fostered. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) describe the condition of relatedness as a deep association, or connectedness to those from whom one is
learning, or the opportunity to experience learning in a context in which a sense of belonging is fostered. For example, when PLCs engage in sharing their practices as a learning community, they tend to internalize and accept as their own the values and practices of the group. This fits with Ella’s observation that, as a coach, widespread engagement and change is much easier to facilitate through a PLC setting than with individual teachers because teachers may be more willing to accept new ideas when they observe colleagues accepting these practices.

The need for relatedness is also satisfied through the PLC structure of collegial relationships, which can help to cultivate a sense of belonging. However, when “collegial” communities are enacted without a collective commitment to student learning, the group will often end up merely entrenching existing practices and reinforcing the assumptions on which their beliefs are based (Timperley, A. Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007. The effectiveness of collegial interactions is understood through a focus on the relationships between teaching practices and student outcomes. As Rosanna, a coach-participant, shared, groups like the English PLC at her school had become entrenched in maintaining current teaching practices. However, they do not appear to be driven by a focus of student needs (CI, R, 8). As seen in the findings, coaches used multiple practices, such as using data and providing feedback to help teachers develop a student-centered focus for their collective learning.
In sum, cooperatively examining one’s practice within a team, such as a PLC is a relatively new cultural practice in US secondary schools (Astuto et al., 1993; Hord, 1997b). It seems evident that the attributes of effective PLCs can meet teachers’ needs for self-determination, a necessary condition for learning. When such cultural norms are part of how a school operates and thinks, working collaboratively with a coach to develop disciplinary literacy practices can become an acceptable norm.

_Embedding hidden pedagogy in coaching practices_

The second key finding is made in relation to the ways in which coaches engage teachers who may appear “resistant” to engaging in learning about or teaching the literacies within their content area. Professional learning approaches that focus directly and overtly on building new knowledge and skills appear to be appropriate when teachers’ existing understandings are aligned with the new learning (Guskey, 1986). When this is the case, teachers can readily incorporate new learning with pre-existing understandings about instructional practices. However, when teachers’ theories about valued curricula and effective teaching practices differ from those being promoted in the professional learning, a less overt or direct approach appears to be needed.

Teachers are likely to discount or outright reject new ideas that conflict with their current understandings unless a point of convergence with existing understandings is identified (Guskey, 1986). Without such engagement, teachers are likely to dismiss new ideas as unrealistic, inappropriate, or irrelevant for
their students or curricula. One way in which coaches in this study engaged teachers in considering new ideas that conflicted with current practices was to include these ideas as “embedded pedagogy,” or practices that are shared under the guise of addressing an alternate need or understanding. For example, the teacher with whom Ethan worked expressed that he was not interested in literacy practices, but he did indicate his need for practices that would engage students in classroom learning. Using this need as a point of common understanding, the coach gained entry into this teacher’s confidence; the teacher observed the coach modeling an instructional practice that met the teacher’s need of engaging study, but also supported students’ literacy development (FG1, 5). This approach of embedding the literacy pedagogy within a strategy that is employed for alternate reasons (e.g. student engagement), allows for the experiencing of a discrepant event that creates “cognitive conflict” on the part of the teacher—a condition necessary for learning that involves a change in belief or attitude (Cobb, Wood, & Yackel, 1990).

With teachers who are reluctant to engage in professional learning related to literacy, it appears that embedding literacy pedagogy within coaching practices, in which the teacher can experience the outcomes of such practices, is one way of changing teachers’ thinking about such instruction. This experience can provide a discrepant event leading disequilibrium and the need to resolve prior understandings with current “realities” which may be a first step in lessening their resistance towards such practices.
Coaches discussed multiple ways in which they gained entry with teachers to lead them to such discrepant events through which they could embed pedagogy. For example, Sabrina discussed asking a teacher to “borrow” her class so that she could practice an instructional strategy while the teacher observed and provided feedback. Rosanna shared how she built her literacy practices into the lesson plans she provided for teachers. Ethan explained how he built from the teacher’s need of engaging students to encourage a teacher to make use of a practice that might help achieve that, as well as engage students in active literacy processes to assist in their understanding of content. When working to engage resistant teachers in professional learning, coaching strategies that embedded more indirect, or “hidden,” approaches to literacy appeared to be an effective means of gaining entry with a teacher. This draws on Deborah Ball’s (1993) line of thinking as she considered the ways in which she could engage students in deep mathematical thinking. She acknowledged that “thoughtful consideration of students’ current ideas and interests must be threaded throughout this process of [mathematical thinking]” (p. 384). The same appears important for coaches. They too must give “thoughtful consideration” of the teachers’ current ideas and interests as they seek to find entry points in to developing teachers’ thinking of teaching the literacies within their content.

Complexities of modeling

Analysis of the data from both coach and teacher participants revealed that coaching practices involving modeling were important to engaging teachers.
Coaches asserted that “modeling” tended to engage teachers in meaningful ways when it was conceived of as active. The idea of active learning (which includes practices such as discussion, reflection, planning, and feedback) is central to the current literature on effective professional development (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Little, 2003). Coaches pointed to these active learning practices as integral components of active engagement during modeling-related activities. Coaches also pointed to collaborative practices such as co-teaching and co-planning that afforded opportunities for teachers to take a more active role in the instructional processes, while still engaging in observation of modeling. G. W. West (1996) contends there is value in discussion during making-meaning activities such as modeling and observation. “The goal of dialogue is to help...bring assumptions to the surface and clarify theories-in-use, which must happen before a shared set of meanings and a common thinking process can be developed” (p. 56). Coaches were quick to point out that without the reflection and planning opportunities that dialogue provided, modeling was rarely effective. Rather, it was through discussing and clarifying that teachers began to engage in professional learning in meaningful ways. Marney (FG2, 19) facilitated an observation for one of her new teachers, illustrating the type engagement and learning that can comes from activity such as dialogue. She indicated the following:

I took a first year teacher and together we observed one of our master teachers. I sat with her and we wrote notes back and forth and she wrote an email to
the principal that it was probably the most condensed learning environment that she had ever had, because she was able to see it happening and have conversations about why it was happening...I want to do that more, because I think there is multiple layers of learning going on all at the same time. (FG2, 19)

This fits with Leont'ev's theory (1978) that such activities allow learners to continuously measure and reshape current theories through the lens of the activities in which they are engaged.

Another aspect of modeling that coaches appeared to consider significant was contextually situating learning experiences involving modeling. The coaches' ability to engage teachers in professional learning was enhanced when modeling was provided within the context or culture in which the teacher would be using the practice. This is an example of what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as “situated learning,” or learning that takes place in the same context in which it is applied. Through conversations with and observations of coaches, it became apparent that providing opportunities for situated learning, particularly opportunities that involved modeling and observation, were important to engaging teachers with new ideas. Jasmine articulated this when she described how her teachers discounted instructional practices she showed them on professionally produced videos. Brooke explained how she was able to situate modeled learning experiences for teachers by having her science team observe a highly-respected colleagues from the same content area masterfully draw upon an instructional strategy they had previously discounted (CI, B, 13). These
instances demonstrate the nuances of learning a new instructional practice, practices that are defined by their context. As J. S. Brown and colleagues explain (1989):

Learning how to use a tool [or instructional practice, in this case] involves far more than can be accounted for in any set of explicit rules. The occasions and conditions for use arise directly out of the context of activities of each community that uses the tool, framed by the way members of that community see the world. The community and its viewpoint, quite as much as the tool itself, determine how a tool is used. Thus carpenters and cabinet makers use chisels differently. Because tools and the way they are used reflect the particular accumulated insights of communities, it is not possible to use a tool appropriately without understanding the community or culture in which it is being used. (p. 35)

Just as Jasmine’s teachers expressed, perhaps unconsciously, a tool such as a new instructional strategy, cannot be adequately understood until it has been viewed within the context of which the learner (in this case, the teachers) will use it. Watching a decontextualized video of teachers enacting practices in an unknown setting does not provide the contextualized nuances of using a new practice which assist teachers in using new ideas. When drawing upon tools such as videos to demonstrate new instructional practices, it appears important for teachers to have an understanding of the context in which the practice is taking place, as well as engage in activities that cause them to consider how these concepts fit within their own community of practice.
In a related vein, J. S. Brown and colleagues postulate that activity, concept, and culture are interdependent and critical aspects of learning. As coaches described the ways in which they used modeling to engage content area teachers in professional learning about “tools” of literacy, it appeared that they worked to incorporate both authentic activity as well as the cultural setting in which teachers may enact these tools. By attending to these aspects of learning, the coaches of this study enhanced teachers’ ability to engage with new instructional practices. Fullan (2001) reiterates the importance of learning in context:

Learning in the setting where you work, or learning in context, is the learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific (customized to the situation) and because it is social (involves a group)...such learning changes the individual and the context simultaneously. (p. 14)

Although the finding regarding the value of situated, active learning is not new to the field of education, its examination in this study may help to illuminate and make explicit the ways in which coaches can more consciously and systematically incorporate modeling to engage teachers.

Drawing a meaningful connection between a teacher’s content area and literacy

The organizational structure of U.S. secondary schools reinforces the idea that the work of middle and high school teachers is to teach subject matter (Fisher & Ivey, 2005; Sizer, 1985; Sunderman, Amoa, & Meyers, 2001). As a result, secondary teachers question not only the relevance of literacy to their content, but also their ability to teach literacy, as well as what teaching literacy
will “take away” from their content-area instruction (O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Ratekin et al., 1985; R. A. Stewart & O’Brien, 1989). With this thinking firmly in place, it is not surprising that literacy instruction appears irrelevant or unimportant to these teachers until it is connected as a meaningful and necessary way of assisting students with understanding the content of the discipline.

In order to help secondary content teachers move to a place of teaching students the strategies they need to access and understand content, it seemed logical to me at the onset of this study to shift the focus of the professional learning for teachers to content from literacy. As Fisher and Ivey (2005) suggest, this moves the discussion of content-area literacy away from teaching reading and writing as goals to reading and writing as tools for learning by “capitalizing on reading and writing versus teaching reading and writing as the goal” (p. 6). By shifting the emphasis to literacy as a means of engaging students in content learning, content area teachers may find a point of coherence for ideas relative to literacy.

Disciplinary literacy is one approach to such a paradigm shift. A disciplinary literacy approach acknowledges each subject area as a discourse community with its own specialized language, texts, and literate practices that students must navigate (O’Brien, R. A. Stewart, & Moje, 1995). With this acknowledgement, literacy becomes a critical aspect of understanding and making meaning of the discipline, rather than a set of additional activities. This situates literacy
instruction as an integral aspect of the content, in the service of the subject area learning and emphasizes learning the ways of knowing, doing, and communicating that are specific to and within a discipline (Moje, 2008). By approaching the literacy through and in the service of content, content area teachers are provided with the coherence (Draper, 2008) that they need to see the value of literacy instruction within their content area teaching.

The coaches and teachers in this study affirmed that a disciplinary-focused approach to professional learning about literacy was a key factor in engaging teachers. Rosanna, a high school coach, described how a connection to content in which the content was primary and the literacy was viewed as relevant to the content by the teacher, engagement with new ideas and practices were much more likely to be employed. She explained how one math teacher responded:

Rosanna: Once we did [some lessons that addressed the literacy within the content], he was really interested and open to fitting more [of those types of lessons] into his [teaching]. And he saw it as literacy, you didn't have to disguise it as, “Oh, this is student engagement.”

BB: He saw this was integrating literacy to help students understand his content and he was okay with that and open to that?

Rosanna: Right. I would say he saw that kids have trouble matching up words with math, and that is a skill they need [to access the math]. (CI, R, 2)

Moreover, teachers spoke to the “added value” they found in instructional practices that approached literacy as a means of supporting learning in regards
to the content of their discipline. Travis, a drama teacher, described how he worked with his coach to collaboratively identify a need relevant to his content, as well as ways in which literacy practices could be enacted to enhance students’ learning:

The lesson he did with me, that had the most impact, was in critiquing performances...[he had asked] “what is something you are not happy with, the way it is [currently] going?” and we can work on that. [With] [t]he critiques...the kids will show each other their work and then say, “That is really good; now watch ours.” So, I tried different forms and checklists, and it just wasn’t [helping students be] very specific. So he came in...we met a few times, and developed a real guided, structured critique, and we put up posters, we modeled somebody performing [and how] we would critique them, and he [provided] a whole list of sentence starters...it really has had an impact because they critique scenes, they critique monologues, pantomime, and they are much more specific. My expectations have changed because I have seen that they can do it; they can be more specific, and it is not too much to expect. (TI, T, 5-6)

These illustrations also demonstrate the importance of coaches and content area teachers working collaboratively to develop appropriate literacy practices for their disciplines, as teachers appeared to have a stronger sense of the intended outcomes of their content area, as well as the practices that might help students achieve those goals, without distracting from or distorting the content. When coaches and content area teachers work together to develop instructional practices, this reinforced not only the primacy of content area instruction, but
also the teachers’ sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy, necessary conditions for engaging teachers in professional learning.

Implications

The findings in this study have implications for those who facilitate or support the professional development of teachers—particularly coaches, principals, district administrators, and district-based curriculum specialists. In the following sections, I explore the potential implications of this study for improving the design and implementation of instructional coaching programs and policies.

Implications for District Administrators

Given the financial investment that school districts are making in coaching initiatives and the lack of research that defines the specific ways in which coaches effectively carry out their roles, this study is informative for both practical and theoretical reasons. In what follows, I propose two practical implications for consideration by district leadership as they seek ways to effectively implement coaching models that engage teachers in developing their instructional practices.

First, it would seem sensible to assess schools for their readiness to engage in this type of professional learning. Given the primacy that school culture played in the work of engaging the teachers in this study, it would seem important that district leadership assess the climate or culture of a school before dedicating the resources tied to a coaching model to a particular school. In assessing readiness for a coaching program, this study underscores the importance of multiple
aspects of a school culture being intact for such professional learning to take place, including school leadership, a shared vision focused on learning, an understanding of the role and work of a coach, as well as the establishment of collaborative learning communities.

Readiness of a school for engaging in such work can be measured in part by the principal’s leadership in supporting this work as well as a willingness to use their administrative powers to support teachers to take up new practices (Huberman, 1983; Huberman & Miles, 1984). Additionally, the school should demonstrate a collective and dedicated commitment to achieving a common vision aimed squarely at student achievement. This type of commitment and focus provides natural entryways for coaches to collaborate with teachers regarding instructional practices.

A second aspect relevant to a school’s readiness is measured by the staff’s understanding of the role and the work of a coach. For a coach to engage teachers in professional learning, it seems necessary that teachers understand this new role, in order to maintain their own sense of competence. If teachers perceive that a coach is being brought in to fix or evaluate “deficient” teachers, then their resistance to engaging in this type of work would seem natural. However, if the role of the coach is portrayed as advisory—a means of professional guidance for all teachers—and that the most highly-skilled professionals rely on coaching to improve their practice, then coaching can be engaged in without risking one’s professional reputation.
Finally, a school’s readiness for engaging in professional learning through a coaching model can be understood by considering the role of professional learning communities within the school. Such structures not only are conducive to a culture of collegial learning, but also provide the structures necessary for coaches to work with collective groups of learners, ensuring that coaching is not “one more thing” added to their busy schedules.

*Implications for School Administrators*

The results of this study suggest that principal support is central to the successful enactment of coaching programs. In both overt and subtle ways, principals signal their endorsement of teachers’ engagement with coaches, and these signals in turn appear to influence the teacher-coach experiences (see also Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, & Garnier, 2009). Based on these ideas, I recommend that coaching programs include principals and district leaders as partners in coaches’ work, as they have in Skyview School District, so that they can establish a shared vision of effective coaching of disciplinary literacy, learning together effective ways to support coaches’ work with teachers. This partnership provides knowledge about coaching and the dilemmas coaches face, so that school administrators can support the coaching work within a school, creating a culture that embraces such practices.

Through partnering with coaches in professional learning about literacy and developing their own understanding of the urgency for changes in teaching practices, school administrators can provide support by establishing a means of
accountability for teachers in regards to their professional learning and instructional practices. It seems important, however, that a sense of urgency and accountability must be balanced with first providing teachers opportunities for safe practice of new instructional methods within collaborative structures such as professional learning communities (PLCs).

**Implications for Coaches**

This study touches on many significant points of the work of instructional coaches. However, a few key implications for their work appear significant.

It is apparent that many of the coaches in this study varied their coaching practices based on the need of the teacher, the willingness of the teacher to develop their instructional practices in regards to literacy, and reflective attitudes the teacher displayed. As coaches seek sophisticated and complex means of engaging teachers through practices such as embedding pedagogy, it is important that they are cognizant of how such “covert” practices may affect their relationships with teachers. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, teachers' engagement with new instructional practices is situated within a collaborative school culture—one in which the coach's role is clear. Since coaching, by definition, is a collegial practice (Barkley, 2005; Russo, 2004), embedding literacy pedagogy through hidden or covert approaches in order to engage teachers must be done thoughtfully and with much care. Coaches must delicately balance meeting the needs of teachers with meeting the needs of students through sound instructional
practices. When teachers are resistant to implementing such practices, it becomes necessary for coaches to find ways to move teachers forward in their thinking while maintaining a collegial relationship. Embedding hidden pedagogy can be one means of doing this, as long as it does not appear subversive to the teacher.

Interpersonal relationships and the relational skills coaches bring to this work are not inconsequential in the effectiveness of coaches’ work. Within this theme, teachers pointed clearly and frequently to the ways in which coaches would validate their current practices. As a result of such validation, teachers acknowledged that they were more willing to engage in professional learning. However, coaches did not indicate an intentional use of validating teachers’ current practices as a means of engaging teachers. This incongruency leads me to believe that coaches may unknowingly provide teachers with unintended feedback in order to gain entry with teachers. In other words, coaches may be unaware of the message they are communicating as they seek to engage teachers. Although these teachers pointed to this interaction as a means by which they were engaged in professional learning, coaches need to be aware that such exchanges could be misconstrued by other teachers as acceptance of the status quo, leaving teachers believing there is no need for them to engage in professional learning. The complexity of this for coaches is in identifying ways to continue to validate teachers and their practices in a way that acknowledges a need for continued learning and growth.
A final implication for coaches is found in the understanding that content area strategies may not be best applied generically to all content areas. If coaches are to assist content area teachers in finding coherence between their content and the literacies that service the learning of their content, they must consider working collaboratively with teachers to develop instructional practices that first meet the goals of the discipline.

*Implications for District Curriculum Specialists*

As I examine my work of supporting the professional learning of coaches, I find myself drawn to applying the framework of sociocultural factors that influence teachers’ engagement with coaches (Figure 5.1) to my work of engaging coaches in their professional learning. Applying this model to my work, it seems imperative to foster a collaborative culture that operates from a shared vision and provides collaborative learning opportunities for quality learning. Within this culture, I must seek to develop and navigate the use of my own set of instructional “coaching” practices for engaging coaches in professional learning. I must also ensure that I develop credibility leading to trusting relationships with each of the coaches, as well as help them to develop meaningful connections between the learning I engage them in and their “content” of coaching. Although my role is further removed from the coaches’ daily work than a coach who ‘lives’ in the same building as the teachers with whom they work, this does not limit the implications that such a model may have for my work.
As I engaged in this research process, I learned that coaches, just like teachers or anyone seeking to develop their professional practices, benefit from coaching. One method of data collection for this study was observation of coaches. In the process of collecting observational data, I found that coaches wanted coaching and feedback on their own practices. Job-embedded professional development that draws on coaching practices such as modeling, observation, and feedback appeared to be important for all learners.

Limitations of the Study

All research is bounded, as is this study. This inquiry is conducted in a single district located in an urban community in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The district is relatively large, employing nearly 4,000 teachers. The participants in this study are ten of the secondary instructional coaches and a subset of the teachers with whom they worked. The teachers who participated were identified by the coaches with whom they worked. The research comes from observations, interviews, surveys and focus group discussions. Many of these data sources rely on honest and accurate self-reporting, which are known to pose threats to validity (Ericcson & Simon, 1980). This study does not consider the perspective and ideas of teachers who did not engage in professional learning with coaches. Such an alternate perspective may lend additional insights into the factors that both promote and inhibit teacher engagement in professional learning. This study represents a close look at the work of one person with a small group of instructional coaches and teachers they selected to speak to their
work. In the end, the findings reflect what is relevant to this study and these participants.

However, as Noddings (2007) points out, sharing stories as educators allows us to affirm and also rethink the validity and meaning of our experience. It is my story and the stories of these participants that have shaped this inquiry. Because of my experiences as a classroom teacher, teacher educator, and college professor in the field of literacy, I am a part of this study. “The way in which I know is most assuredly tied up with both what [I] know and [my] relationships with [my] research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 281). In this research, objectivity is considered, as Lincoln and Guba (2003) suggest, “a chimera: a mythological creature that never existed, save in the imaginations of those who believe that knowing can be separated from the knower” (p. 279).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The future research questions related to this study are both countless and promising. I am inspired as I think of the multiple ways in which I might continue to understand my original question, as well as other questions that arose as part of this research.

This research sought to add to the understanding of teacher engagement in professional learning, specifically as enacted through the emerging practice of instructional coaching. This study also considered engagement through the lens of secondary content area teachers’ as they participated in professional learning
relative to the content-area literacy, a field of study traditionally viewed as irrelevant or unimportant to content area teachers.

The field of instructional coaching needs evidence of effective ways to engage teachers in developing their practices in order to further develop an understanding of what constitutes effective coaching practices—practices that will change teachers’ practices and ultimately lead to improved student understanding (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2001; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Further research is needed to identify the ways in which the practice of instructional coaching impacts not only teachers’ engagement in professional learning and teachers’ instructional practices, but also the learning and achievement of the students in their classes. This type of future research may allow for consideration of the ways in which teachers continue the practices they have been introduced to through their engagement with coaching.

Through this research, I sought to add to the understanding of what coaches do to engage teachers and help them to develop their teaching practices. This study provides an entry point in the literature for considering the use of “covert,” or embedded means of engaging teachers in learning experiences in which they unexpectedly encounter discrepant events, through the coaching practice of embedding pedagogy. Studying and understanding the effects of this practice, specifically as it affects the coach-teacher relationship, could provide valuable insight into the ways in which coaches engage resistant teachers.
During the course of the interviews, several teacher-participants mentioned their desire for additional time to work with a coach. Coach-participants also spoke to their limited capacity, especially at the high school level, where coaches often work with staffs numbering nearly a hundred teachers. Future studies on applying these practices to alternate or additional coaching models, such as peer coaching, could provide additional insights for educational leaders as schools seek to develop a coaching framework that allows for the engagement of all teachers, regardless of the size of the staff.

This study was situated in the work of middle and high school teachers working in a wide range of schools with teachers of all content areas. Further research is needed to understand the subtleties that exist in developing the professional learning of teachers in varying contexts. For example, coach-participants alluded to differences in engaging teachers that may be due to the grade level the teacher taught. This cause me to wonder would the coaching practices for engaging teachers differ between middle and high school? How do they compare to engaging elementary teachers? Coaches also made reference to ideas that made me consider the role of the socio-economic status of the school population in engaging teachers in professional learning relative to literacy. Were teachers in Title I schools more likely to see a need for developing the literacies of their students than teachers in schools of higher socioeconomic status? Were teachers from schools that did not meet AYP more likely to see a need to develop their practices? Finally, coaches also noted differences in teacher
engagement related to the content area teachers’ taught. Would teachers of electives be less likely to engage in professional learning, given that they may be the only teacher of that content at their school? Would they see literacy as less relevant to their content than “core” content area teachers? How does a coach’s knowledge of the teachers’ content area affect their engagement? Further research is needed to understand how these factors impact teachers’ engagement in professional learning.

*Concluding Thoughts*

As I entered this study I could not predict how my understanding of the intricacies of teaching and learning would be developed. This study has deepened my thinking about the critical first step of engaging teachers in their professional learning. When I began this work, I expected to learn the ways in which coaches made literacy palatable for secondary content-area teachers. What I came to consider was that what occurred before and during that process—engaging the teachers’ hearts and minds—may be much more important. Through this study, I have developed my understanding that qualitative research writing is not simply a recording of “facts.” Instead, the writing of the texts, from the field notes, to the interview and observation transcriptions, the memos and the dissertation itself—is a process of discovery. It is through writing that I have discovered a subject, as well as a broadened understanding of some of the complexities with which it is fraught. It is through the writing that I have discovered how much I have learned from these coaches and teachers.
To a large extent, what I have learned from these coaches and teachers supports much of the educational research on teaching that has been conducted over the years. Teaching is difficult and complex. Engaging teachers in professional learning in areas that are not of their choosing is delicate work that requires sophisticated relational skills and a toolbox of varied practices. Learning by doing is not a simple cliché. It must be lived out in the classroom.

In spite of many obstacles and challenges, these coaches demonstrated means of engaging even the most resistant of teachers in learning related to literacy, and teachers acknowledged their practices were being transformed. The teachers and coaches of this study have shown that the work of a coach can influence the transformation of teachers’ practices, and perhaps of the teachers themselves.

Spending a year with these coaches talking about their work and watching them in action inspires in me a new hope for the future of teacher learning. A hope that

- all teachers can find a passion for learning;
- instructional coaching, collaborative learning communities, and a culture of deprivatized practice will become the norm of American schools;
- instructional leaders will come to understand the work of coaches as situated and complex. There is not a formula by which their work can be understood; and that
literacy can be understood as an inextricable part of each content area. It serves to engage and assist students with content, in ways that are meaningful to their lives.

As others read this account, I acknowledge that they bring their own perspectives and understandings to it. Qualitative research invites this type of interpretation. My intentions were to responsibly convey my purpose, interpretations, and conclusions as clearly and coherently as possible, thereby offering readers of this research the opportunity to construct personal meanings that might influence their practice and competence as teacher leaders. In the end, my hope is that the readers of this study will also feel fortunate, as I did, in having this opportunity to learn from these coaches and the teachers with whom they worked.

As I close this chapter on my research, I reflect on my interview with Nathan, one of the teachers who participated in this study. He could be considered a typical middle school social studies teacher in his district. Teaching for over ten years, Nathan admitted that he thought he had it all figured out. He was adamant that students needed to memorize content. How could students be productive members of society without knowing critical names, dates, and events of our country’s history? But as he continued, he acknowledged a shift in his thinking. “The content is very important…but our kids can’t read to get to the content” (CI, N, 1). It was an awareness, a way of thinking focused on the needs of students, that shifted both his thinking and his practice. After this shift, his
coach exemplified him as “running teachers over” to share new ideas for
developing literacy within instruction. He credited conversations centered on
improving teaching practices as integral to his development as a teacher. He calls
himself a “teacher of reading.”

It is through the words and thoughts of Nathan, the other teachers, and
each of the coaches that I find hope for creating the complex systems of activity,
interaction, and meaning for teachers—systems that will engage us in new ways
of thinking and teaching, for the sake of both our teachers and our students.
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*Educational Researcher, 39*, 183-197.


Appendix A: Informed Consent Document for Coach Participants
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Instructional coaching and disciplinary literacy strategies: A study in the professional learning of content-area teachers

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ken Winograd, Associate Professor, Teacher and Counselor Education

Student Researcher: Barbara Dehm Bamford, Doctoral Student, PhD in Education, Teacher and Counselor Education

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
I understand that I am invited to take part in this research study. The purpose of this project is to gain a better understanding of 1) what is helpful in supporting the content (literacy) knowledge of instructional coaches and 2) the coaching practices that are most effective in moving teachers towards a greater use of literacy strategies within their content-area instruction. The results of this research project will be used for Barb’s Ph.D. studies and help her to complete her degree.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?
I understand that this form is provided to give me the information I need to decide if I wish to participate in this research. I may ask any questions I have about the research, what will happen during it, what Barb’s part will be, what my part will be, or anything else that is not clear. When all my questions are answered, and I feel that I fully understand, I can decide if I want to participate in this research study or not. If I decide to participate in this research, I will be given a copy of this form for my records.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
I understand that I am invited to be in this study because I am an instructional coach at the secondary level in the district where this research project is taking place.
**WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**
I understand that during this study, I will participate in the following activities that may take place outside of the contractual workday:

1) one interview, one-on-one with Barb lasting no more than one hour
2) a maximum of three focus group sessions lasting no more than 1.5 hours each
3) a maximum of six online surveys requiring no more than 15 minutes each

I will spend no more than 7 hours outside of my contractual work hours during the course of the 2009-2010 school year in these activities. Additionally, during my contractual work hours, I will participate in scheduled professional development sessions facilitated by Barb, as well as participating in one or two scheduled observations with Barb, as I engage the work of coaching a teacher.

I understand that all focus groups may possibly be audio taped, as well as my interview. If I choose not to participate in the audio taping of the focus groups or interviews, the researcher will use notes to collect the information I share.

I will permit my voice to be recorded during focus group sessions and during an interview. __________ (participant's initials)

**RISKS**
I understand that there are no risks in this study. I understand that I can refuse to take part in this research project. I also understand that whether I choose to be part of this research project or not, my position in the district will not be affected, nor will my working relationship with Barb be affected.

**BENEFITS**
I understand that the benefits of being part of this study are the opportunity to contribute to understandings of successful coaching strategies as well as improved understandings of the support systems that are needed for instructional coaches. I understand that I also may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on my own practices, and I may also feel a sense of satisfaction from sharing success strategies with my peers, as well as helping future instructional coaches.

**COMPENSATION**
I understand that I will be compensated at the district’s curriculum rate for up to 7 hours of work if I fully participate in all aspects of the study. This compensation will be awarded at the end of the study (May 2010).

**CONFIDENTIALITY**
I understand that my identity will remain unknown and my name will not be used in any written reports, publications, or presentations the researchers may give. Any reference to me will be by a pseudonym, and I understand that any
information I give during this study will be confidential. All interview notes, write ups, audio tapes will be kept by Dr. Ken Winograd on the campus of Oregon State University for at least three years after the study ends.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**
I understand that I take part in this research because I wish to, and my participation is voluntary. I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions, that I may stop being part of this research project at any time, and that my participation or lack of participation does not affect my standing in Salem-Keizer Public Schools, with my school or with Barb in any way.

**QUESTIONS**
I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions. If I have any questions, I understand that I can contact Dr. Ken Winograd at 541-737-5988 (winograk@oregonstate.edu) or Barb Bamford at 503-399-3075 (bamfordb@onid.orst.edu). If I have additional questions about my rights as a participant, I can contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at 541-737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

I understand that my signature indicates that this research study has been explained to me, that my questions have been answered, and that I agree to take part in this study that includes 6 online surveys, 3 focus group meetings, 1-2 observations and 1 interview.

Participant’s Name (printed): ________________________________

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant Date

**Researcher Statement**
I have discussed the above points with the participant, or where appropriate, with the participant’s legally authorized representative, using a translator when necessary. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Researcher Date
Appendix B: Survey Instruments: Coach Feedback Surveys
This survey will be posted at an online site (i.e. Survey Monkey) and made available to instructional coaches within one day of each teaching session. Coaches will be able to complete the survey anonymously. This survey is designed to provide feedback on the teaching session, and allow coaches to communicate their needs for future teaching sessions in terms of content (literacy) knowledge and coaching strategies. Survey data will be available to the researcher electronically immediately after any teacher completes the survey. Wording of the survey may be made more concise to match the content of each teaching session, if needed.

1. Did you attend this month’s Instructional Leadership Literacy PD?
   a. Yes
   b. No. If you answered no, skip Question #2.

2. In 1-2 sentences, summarize what you perceived to be the content of this month’s professional development session.

3. Rate how helpful the content of this month’s professional development session was to your work as a coach in helping teachers implement literacy strategies in their teaching.
   a. Very useful: I have multiple ideas about integrating literacy in content-area classes that will be useful to share with teachers.
   b. Useful: I have 1 or 2 ideas about integrating literacy into content-area classes that will be useful to share with teachers.
   c. Minimally Useful: The ideas that were shared about integrating literacy into content-area classes are ones I have already shared with teachers.
   d. Not Useful: I did not find any ideas in this month’s content that would be useful to share with teachers regarding implementing literacy strategies in content-area teaching.
   e. NA: I did not attend.

4. In 1-2 sentences, explain the coaching strategies that were shared in this month’s professional development session.

5. Rate how helpful you anticipate the strategies shared in this month’s professional development will be to you as you coach content-area teachers in implementing literacy strategies in their teaching.
   a. Very helpful: I gleaned multiple strategies for helping teachers integrate literacy in content-area classes.
   b. Useful: I gleaned 1 or 2 strategies for helping teachers to integrate literacy into content-area classes.
c. Minimally Helpful: The strategies for helping teachers to integrate literacy into content-area classes that were shared are ones I have already been using regularly with teachers.
d. Not Helpful: None of the strategies that were shared this month help me in my work with teachers to implement literacy strategies in content-area teaching.
e. NA: I did not attend.

6. Briefly identify your needs for future PD, in terms of literacy content.

7. Briefly identify your needs for future PD, in terms of coaching strategies.

8. What strategies did you use last month to assist teachers with implementing literacy in their content instruction? Mark all that apply.
   a. Pre-observation conferences
   b. Observations
   c. Post-observation conferences
   d. Video analysis
   e. Co-teaching
   f. Modeled lessons
   g. On-the-spot coaching
   h. Co-planning curriculum/instruction
   i. Observing together with a teacher another class/instruction
   j. Other:

9. In what other ways can I support your work of helping teachers to implement literacy model strategies?

10. List below any additional feedback you have on this month’s PD.
This survey was administered in person at the end of the study to confirm findings identified within the data. Many coaches chose to identify themselves on this survey to allow for follow-up clarifications as needed.

**Coaching Survey**

Below are the factors coaches indicated were effective at engaging teachers in professional development (around literacy). Please indicate whether you agree with each factor by using the following coding system:

F= Yes, it is a factor that engages most teachers  
NF= No, it is not a factor that engages most teachers  
SB = If your response is conditional (i.e. sometimes...), mark ‘SB’ (see below) and comment at the end or next to the factor.

*If you have difficulty determining if a certain item is a factor, apply the “if/then” conditional statement to help you: “If ___(factor from below)__, then a teacher is more likely to engage in pd around literacy.”*

**Engagement** is defined as participating, cooperating, partaking, and considering. It is different from implementing.

1. Coaching Practices

   ___ a) “Modeling Plus”:
     - Modeling through direct in-class modeling, team teaching, video analysis, peer-observation, AND
     - **guided** with observation tools or co-observing (coach & teacher observing modeling together), AND
     - accompanied by **follow-up** (accountability, follow-up, debrief, next steps)

   ___ b) Providing resources (materials, strategies, or information to build background knowledge to help teach the literacy in the content)

   ___ c) Starting **from the teachers’ expressed needs**

   ___ d) Validating teachers & current effective practices, and trying to engage them in incremental changes that stem from these practices

   ___ e) Using data to affect teachers’ perceptions & demonstrate growth

   ___ f) Fostering teacher reflection
2. Relational Acuity (Interpersonal Skills)

___ g) Establishing credibility (through a variety of means to establish that you “know your stuff”)

___ h) Building relationships

___ i) Sustained interactions (regular time with coach, over time; multiple encounters)

3. School Culture

___ j) School leadership (administration holds teachers accountable; sets a level of expectation)

___ k) School vision (culture of vision for improvement & growth vs. culture of negativity and stagnation, often established by leadership—a type of peer pressure)

___ l) Collaborative Learning Communities (another form of peer pressure, but on a PLC level, especially developed through a focus on students)

___ m) Deprivatizing Teaching: School has developed a culture of coaching through peer observations, instructional rounds, and ‘opening’ our classrooms to each other

4. Relationship to Content/Teacher Beliefs & Attitudes

___ n) See a Need: Teachers believe there is a need for the pd/literacy

___ o) See a Connection to Content: Teachers believe the pd/literacy is relevant to their content.

___ p) Survival: Teachers display attitudes that demonstrate an external force/crisis is causing them to engage.

___ q) See Results: Teachers’ attitudes are changed and more receptive because of success or results with previous coaching experience/pd.

___ r) Reflective Practitioner: Teacher demonstrates attitudes of reflecting on their practice in order to improve.

Comments on factors marked “SB” or other comments:
Appendix C: Focus Group Protocols and Questions
December Focus Group Meeting #1

Dear Coaches,

Thank you for participating in this study of your work. The focus of this study is understanding the nature of coaching secondary content area teachers in regards to disciplinary literacy. It is important that you respond fully and thoughtfully to questions. Please speak freely. Data is only as honest and accurate as you share it. Even though the session is being audio-taped, everything you say will be held in the strictest confidence. You and your ideas will be identified through the use of a pseudonym in the final report.

Our purpose is two-fold:
- Learn from each other, and
- Identify themes, patterns and insights relevant to our work

Through...
- A forum for open-ended questions, answers, and discussion
- A focused, honest conversation that produces ideas and insights through dialogue

Guiding Questions:

1. What ways are you seeing teachers trying to implement literacy in their content area teaching?

2. What strategies are you using to help teachers develop the literacy within their content area instruction?

3. What supports do you need to help you be effective in your work as a coach? What are your problems and challenges?
Focus Group Meeting #2

April 2010

This study focuses on the nature of coaching teachers in regards to disciplinary literacy at the secondary level. Please respond fully and thoughtfully to questions. Please speak freely. Please give others an opportunity to respond. This data is only as honest and accurate as what you share. Even though the session is being taped, everything you say will be held in the strictest confidence. You and your ideas will be represented through the use of a pseudonym in any report.

Focus Questions:

1. Thinking about the teachers with whom you work, share some examples of teachers who are consciously and purposefully using literacy strategies within their content area instruction as a result of coaching (e.g. it's not something they've always done). Consider and discuss what “coaching moves” might have helped these teachers engage in the use of such practices.

2. Consider and discuss the following coaching strategies:
   a. Modeling lessons
   b. Co-planning lessons
   c. Observing & conferring
   d. Co-teaching lessons
   e. Video analysis
   f. On-the-spot/Bug-in-ear coaching
   g. Observing together
   h. Traditional Presentations

   Which are most powerful, and in what ways, when it comes to helping teachers implement new practices? What are the drawbacks to some of these strategies?

3. What things do you do on a daily basis that you consider ‘effective coaching’? What things do you do on a daily basis that you don’t consider to be coaching? How much time is devoted to each? How does that impact your effectiveness as a coach?

4. PLCs & networking were mentioned as important supports for coaches at the last focus group. What specific supports do these structures provide that you believe are most helpful to your work as a coach?
Appendix D: Informed Consent Document for Teacher Participants
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Instructional coaching and disciplinary literacy strategies: A study in the professional learning of content-area teachers
Principal Investigator: Dr. Ken Winograd, Associate Professor, Teacher and Counselor Education
Student Researcher: Barbara Dehm Bamford, Doctoral Student, PhD in Education, Teacher and Counselor Education

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
I understand that I am invited to take part in this research study. The purpose of this project is to gain a better understanding of 1) what is helpful in supporting the content (literacy) knowledge of instructional coaches and 2) the coaching practices that are most effective in moving teachers towards a greater use of literacy strategies within their content-area instruction. The results of this research project will be used for Barb Bamford’s Ph.D. studies and help her to complete her degree.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?
I understand that this form is provided to give me the information I need to decide if I wish to participate in this research. I may ask any questions I have about the research, what will happen during it, what Barb’s part will be, what my part will be, or anything else that is not clear. When all my questions are answered, and I feel that I fully understand, I can decide if I want to participate in this research study or not. If I decide to participate in this research, I will be given a copy of this form for my records.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
I understand that I am invited to be in this study because I am a teacher who has worked with an instructional coach at the secondary level during the 2009-2010 school year in the district where this research project is taking place.
WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?
I understand that during this study, I will participate in the following activities that may take place outside of the contractual workday:
1) one online survey requiring no more than 30 minutes
2) if selected for further study, one interview, one-on-one with Barb lasting no more than one hour

If I am not selected for additional participation, the only activity I will be asked to participate in is the online survey.

If I am selected for additional participation, I will spend no more than 1.5 hours outside of my contractual work hours during the course of the 2009-2010 school year in the activities listed above. Additionally, during my contractual work hours, I will participate in 2-3 scheduled observations by Barb, as she observes me 1) working with my instructional coach and 2) as I teach, integrating literacy strategies in my content-area instruction.

I understand that my interview may possibly be audio taped. If I choose not to participate in the audio taping of the interview, the researcher will use notes to collect the information I share.

I will permit my voice to be recorded during an interview. __________
(participant’s initials)

RISKS
I understand that there are no risks in this study. I understand that I can refuse to take part in this research project. I also understand that whether I choose to be part of this research project or not, my position in the district will not be affected, nor will my working relationship with my instructional coach or Barb be affected.

BENEFITS
I understand that the benefits of being part of this study are the opportunity to contribute to understandings of successful coaching strategies as well as improved understandings of the support systems to assist teachers in moving toward a greater use of literacy within their content area teaching. I understand that I also may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on my own practices. I may also gain a sense of satisfaction from contributing to the professional thinking in this area.
COMPENSATION
I understand that if I am selected for additional participation, I will be compensated at the district’s curriculum rate for up to 1.5 hours of work if I fully participate in all aspects of the study. This compensation will be awarded at the end of the study (May 2010). I understand that if I am not selected for additional participation, and only participate in the online survey, I will not be compensated for my participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY
I understand that my identity will remain unknown and my name will not be used in any written reports, publications, or presentations the researchers may give. Any reference to me will be by a pseudonym, and I understand that any information I give during this study will be confidential. All interview notes, write ups, audio tapes will be kept by Dr. Ken Winograd on the campus of Oregon State University for at least three years after the study ends.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
I understand that I take part in this research because I wish to, and my participation is voluntary. I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions, that I may stop being part of this research project at any time, and that my participation or lack of participation does not affect my standing in Salem-Keizer Public Schools, with my school, my instructional coach, or with Barb in any way.

QUESTIONS
I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions. If I have any questions, I understand that I can contact Dr. Ken Winograd at 541-737-5988 (winograd@oregonstate.edu) or Barb Bamford at 503-399-3075 (bamfordb@onid.orst.edu). If I have additional questions about my rights as a participant, I can contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at 541-737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

I understand that my signature indicates that this research study has been explained to me, that my questions have been answered, and that I agree to take part in this study that includes 1 online survey, and possibly 1 interview as well as 2-3 scheduled observations.

Participant’s Name (printed): ________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant Date
Researcher Statement
I have discussed the above points with the participant, or where appropriate, with the participant’s legally authorized representative, using a translator when necessary. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

Signature of Researcher

Date