SUPPORTIVE SYSTEMS FOR BUILDING CAPACITY OF THE

ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2017

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Fiori, Christy L. *Supportive Systems for Building Capacity of the Elementary Instructional Coach*. Doctor of Education (Educational Leadership), December 2017, 153 pp., 11 tables, 5 figures, references, 78 titles.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in a fast-growth district. Through syntheses of research from educational scholars, the conceptual framework was developed with a focus on building capacity of instructional coaches in an ever-changing environment of fast-growth through the lens of professional learning communities, human and social capital, and support from district and campus administration. This study assessed the perceptions of six instructional coaches, six principals, and six district leaders from Rose ISD regarding the school district's support for building the capacity of instructional coaches within the elementary instructional coaching program. The three-part data collection process included document analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews to support triangulation of data. Through the a priori coding process, the following four themes emerged that highlight key components needed to support district leaders in establishing systems to build the capacity of instructional coaches in an ever-changing environment caused by fast growth: structured time for professional learning, program clarity, collaborative support systems, and implementation of a professional learning community framework. This study revealed a specific need to further understand systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional coaching program in an ever-changing environment of a fast-growth district.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

According to the Texas Education Agency (2016), student enrollment in public schools throughout the state of Texas increased by over 350,000 students in the past six years. There are over 80 districts that now meet the criteria of a fast-growth district in the state of Texas (Fast Growth School Coalition, 2017). This includes school districts that have at least 2,500 students enrolled and experienced at least 10% enrollment growth over the past five years. In addition, students enter classrooms on all different instructional levels with a wide range of experiences and needs. Regardless of students' background, experiences, or instructional level, the school's responsibility is to support all students towards success (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000). Principals and teachers are held accountable to this high standard now more than ever, with the increased emphasis on college readiness.

As a result of increased enrollment, fast-growth districts must recruit and retain an increased number of highly qualified teachers each year. A major component of retention is that of continual teacher development (Knight, 2011). Sustainment of professional learning can be difficult with large numbers of teachers to induct into a district year after year. Such ongoing learning contributes to assuring that teachers remain of quality. With teacher quality being one of the most critical factors impacting student achievement, this remains a high priority for districts (Wenglinsky, 2000). Therefore, having support in place to build the capacity of new teachers and continue the growth of established teachers regarding effective instructional practices becomes an even more difficult responsibility for principals to manage in a fast-growth district. Instructional coaches are more commonly filling this void of support needed to build teacher capacity. With the additional instructional support of coaches at the campus level, what

actions are fast-growth districts taking to build the capacity of instructional coaches for expertly guiding their teachers? This study sought to explore that question.

Instructional coaches (ICs) are faced with the challenge of supporting teachers' professional growth in such a way that maximizes learning for all students to ensure the curriculum is understood with depth and complexity (Knight, 2011). However, many times the instructional coaching role is not clearly articulated throughout the campus, which may impact the success of the instructional coaching model. In addition, ICs may not receive the training needed for meeting the high demands of the position. According to Fullan (2005), capacity building requires purposefully designed ongoing actions to move the entire system forward to achieve learning at high levels for all students. In 2011, Fullan noted that when new skills are acquired, motivation for improvement increases as well. However, the method in which new learning takes place is critical to the overall success of implementation, no matter who the learner is. When new learning is front-loaded or presented all at once, a sense of anxiety is created and the chance for translation into improvement in daily culture within the system is decreased (Fullan, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

The research on leading change through capacity-building highlights the importance of systems being in place to build capacity of instructional coaches. It is critical that district and campus leaders work together to implement systems that will support building the capacity of ICs (Knight, 2011). Many times principals are left with the sole responsibility of determining how the IC program will function on campus. This autonomy throughout a school district can create a wide range of experiences for instructional coaches and teachers, which may result in a

wide range of results for student learning. Even though the research highlights the importance of

systems for building capacity of instructional coaches, there is still limited research regarding the

appropriate systems needed to develop the skills of instructional coaches in fast-growth districts.

To contribute to the literature, this study was conducted to examine the systems in place for

building the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in a fast-growth district.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the conceptual framework is focalized around building capacity of ICs

through the lens of professional learning communities (PLCs), human and social capital, and

support from district and campus administration. District and campus leaders are a critical

aspect of the conceptual framework as they act as partners in building the capacity of ICs within

the instructional coaching program. The conceptual framework includes the change process as

an important factor, as a way to understand how the district supports ICs in working together

with the principal in leading the campus through each phase of change. Figure 1 illustrates the

relationship between the change process and PLCs in regard to building capacity through social

and human capital and support of district and campus administration.
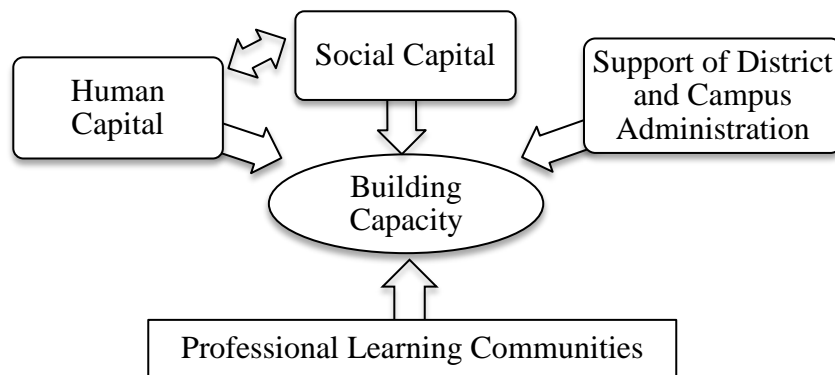
Figure 1. This conceptual framework is a combination of the change process described by Fullan (2007), building capacity components explained by Fullan and Hargreaves (2013), district and campus administration support described by Knight (2011), and the professional learning community model promoted by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, and Mattos (2016).

The conceptual framework of this study demonstrates how the components interact with one another in the capacity-building process of instructional coaches. The change process surrounds all other components of the conceptual framework because change is involved in all other components and can impact the progress of building capacity, depending on how the change is planned for and managed (Fullan, 2007). Understanding how to facilitate change effectively in the ever-changing environment of a fast-growth district is critical and supports the need for building capacity of instructional coaches.

Building capacity is placed in the center of the conceptual framework as it is the intended outcome for instructional coaches through the development of human and social capital and support of district and campus administration. Building capacity involves collaborative action to enhance the collective knowledge and skills of the organizational members to increase student learning (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005). Fullan and Knight (2011) explained that in order to have high levels of success, alignment of change agents is needed in schools, which supports the inclusion of district and campus administration within this study. District leaders, principals, and instructional coaches need to work collectively to achieve significant instructional change throughout the district. Fullan et al. (2005) explained that the true meaning of an effective change process is creating the culture to persist and work through barriers to allow reform to occur.

Human capital can be built through professional learning experiences, formal education, or over time through multiple years of teaching. Leana (2011) explained, through an empirical study, that human capital can have an impact on student achievement, but if this approach is utilized independently, the positive impact is limited. Social capital is the result of educators building relationships through collaboration. When educators work interdependently, there is a

positive impact on social and human capital, which can positively impact student achievement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Leana, 2011). Balancing social capital with human capital is fundamental in building capacity within a learning organization.

The PLC component is located at the bottom of the conceptual framework, symbolizing that it is the foundation of the capacity-building process. A PLC framework provides a structure to support educators in finding the balance between human and social capital by focusing on student learning through professional collaboration and monitoring of effectiveness that is based on results for students (DuFour, 2004). Since the fast-growth district selected for this study chose the DuFour et al. framework for implementation of PLCs, it was appropriate that the DuFour framework undergird this study. The PLC work of others, such as Hipp and Huffman (2010), Hord (1997), and Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017), served to inform and guide this study as well, since their research and writing are parallel in many ways with the DuFour PLC framework.

The PLC framework utilized in this study is based on the four pillars suggested by DuFour and colleagues (2016), which include mission, vision, values, and goals. The framework is also based on three big ideas, including student learning, teacher collaboration, and a clear focus on student results. These components are explained further in the next chapter. The concept of PLCs in schools can improve understanding of best practices, align communication efforts, increase problem-solving, and support an effective change process (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003). Professional learning communities provide a feasible process for engagement of teachers in collaboratively planning for organizational improvement that positively impacts student achievement.

Hipp and Huffman (2010) indicated that the most significant professional learning and

technique for change within a learning organization is that of building a community of life-long learners. When educators throughout a school become interdependent with one another through frequent reflection and assessment of effectiveness, they become a true PLC. Huffman and Jacobson (2003) asserted that collaborative leadership also supports campuses in becoming a professional learning community.

Purpose of the Study

Through reviewing the literature regarding instructional coaching, it is evident that little educational research explores the systems in place to build the capacity of instructional coaches. Although there are general resources for best practices that provide support and direction to campuses that employ instructional coaches, I found no empirical studies that have examined systems for building the capacity of instructional coaches in fast-growth districts. In a fast-growth district, staff and students may shift campuses from year to year, based on where the growth occurs. Without supportive systems and clarity of the overall district purpose of the instructional coaching program, the support may not be effective for this ever-changing environment. The purpose of this study was to examine the established structures and systems for elementary instructional coaches to support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. A qualitative analysis allowed for a more comprehensive representation of the success of the systems established for the instructional coaching program.

Research Questions

This qualitative research study explored the following overarching question. What are the systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth

district that is the target of this study? To determine the answer to this question, the following

three sub-questions were addressed:

1. What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional
    coaches?

2. How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their
    capacity as effective coaches?

3. What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are
    implementing the instructional coaching program?

The research questions were answered through the utilization of in-depth interviews and

focus group discussions from multiple perspectives and levels of leadership throughout the

district. Document analysis also was conducted to support triangulation of data. A full

description of the methodology for this study is further explained in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

When districts are experiencing fast growth, they face the challenges of meeting facility

needs, adding new staff, increasing expectations of closing student achievement gaps, and

sustaining professional learning initiatives. With limited funding in schools, the inclusion of an

instructional coaching program can become a burden if success is not evident. If districts make

the decision to implement an instructional coaching program, then it is of great benefit to

understand what support systems are needed to ensure the program is meaningful for improving

student learning, developing teachers professionally, and supporting administrators in continuous

improvement of the campus (Knight, 2011). Therefore, this study was conducted to understand

the systems in place for building the capacity of instructional coaches and supporting the success

of the overall instructional coaching program in the fast-growth district.

The findings from this study may provide fast-growth districts with ideas for establishing

systems and supportive structures to begin the implementation of an instructional coaching program. The study findings may also provide districts with an established instructional coaching program additional ideas for systems and supportive structures to build the capacity of instructional coaches for continuous improvement efforts in their current model.

<p style="text-align: center;">Delimitations</p>

Parameters were established within this study in an effort to provide appropriate delimitations. The use of a small sample size is one of this study's delimitations. This study centers on one Texas school district and selected elementary school sites within that district. This study involved data collection from in-depth interviews conducted with participants in district-level leadership, including three content coordinators, one curriculum director, and two area directors. The leaders were chosen based on the number of years they have supported the instructional coaching program, to provide a historical perspective. This study also involved data collection from a principal focus group and an instructional coach focus group in which participants represented six elementary campuses within the district selected. The principals and instructional coaches were chosen for the focus group based on time involved with the instructional coaching program in their current role. Additional in-depth interviews were conducted with instructional coaches and principals from two of the six elementary campuses selected for this study. Collection of data from different levels of leadership was chosen to understand the systems in place to build the capacity of instructional coaches from multiple perspectives.

The second delimitation in this study is that the selection of the school district was not random; rather, a fast-growth district was specifically targeted as there is limited research in this

area. Additional parameters were set by focusing entirely on the elementary level. The elementary level was chosen to deeply study one particular instructional coaching model and the systems that exist to support overall IC program sustainment.

Assumptions

This qualitative study relied on the perceptions, knowledge, and experiences of the elementary principals, instructional coaches, and content coordinators, as well as a curriculum director and area directors within one fast-growth district chosen for the study. An assumption of this study is that the information shared from the participants during the in-depth and focus group interviews was accurate and portrayed an accurate picture of the elementary instructional coaching program. The documents collected and analyzed through the document analysis process were assumed to be accurate as well.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they specifically relate to this study to support readers' understanding of the importance of these terms.

- Area director – The area director is the supervisor of principals and supports continuous improvement throughout the campus.

- Building capacity – Building capacity is defined as actions taken collaboratively to enhance the collective knowledge and skills of the organization to increase student learning (Fullan et al., 2005).

- Coachee – A coachee is a person being coached (Kee, Anderson, Dearing, Harris, & Shuster, 2010).

- Collaboration – Collaboration is "a systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practices in order to improve individual and collective results" (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 217).

- Coordinator – For the purpose of this study, in the coordinator role, a district leader oversees the development and implementation of the district curriculum and supports development of instructional coaches.

- Fast-growth school district – A school district that has at least 2,500 students enrolled and experienced at least 10% enrollment growth over the past five years is considered fast-growth (Fast Growth School Coalition, 2017).

- Instructional coach – An instructional coach is someone whose primary responsibility is to support teachers in implementing research-based best practices in their classroom through a partnership approach (Barkley & Bianco, 2011; Cornett, Ellison, Hayes, Killion, Kise, Knight, Reinke, Reiss, Sprick, Toll, & West, 2009; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Knight, 2006).

- Instructional coaching program – For the purposes of this study, the instructional coaching program of the district studied is a structured plan with expectations designed to align the work of instructional coaches throughout a district.

- Professional learning community – This concept is a structure that focuses on student learning through professional collaboration and monitoring of effectiveness, based on results for students (DuFour, 2004).

- Sustainment – For sustainment, an initiative must be maintained, as it becomes part of the daily routine throughout a campus and/or district (Fullan, 2007).

- System – This is a defined structure where specific strategies are established and consistently utilized to create common understanding and maintain alignment throughout a

school district (Fullan, 2010).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the study with background district information, the statement of the problem, conceptual framework, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 contains the relevant literature connected to the conceptual framework of the study, which includes building capacity through human and social capital, support of campus and district leaders, and the professional learning community framework to positively impact the change process. The literature review also summarizes the elements of an instructional coaching program. Chapter 3 provides clarity regarding the research methods and data analysis procedures utilized to answer the research questions. The results and findings are presented in Chapter 4. Discussion and summary of the findings, as well as implications for practice and future research, are included in Chapter 5. The literature review served as a basis for the analysis of Chapter 5.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the systems that are in place for building the capacity of instructional coaches and supporting the success of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. This chapter provided a general overview of the purpose and structure of the study. The conceptual framework depicts the relationship among the concepts inherit within the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fast-growth districts are faced with the challenge of adding large numbers of new instructional staff each year to support increased student enrollment. Sustainment of professional learning initiatives becomes more difficult as building capacity takes time (Sharratt & Fullan, 2009). The demands on campus principals have increased, making job-embedded professional learning and implementation of effective instructional practices a challenge (Fullan, 2014). The utilization of instructional coaches (ICs) is becoming a common strategy for districts to fulfill this important need. However, research is limited regarding the appropriate support systems needed to develop the skills of the instructional coach in fast-growth districts.

Knight (2006) indicated that instructional coaching has become more widely used because leaders recognize that the traditional professional development model does not result in effective implementation of best practices, which reduces the impact on student learning. Traditional professional development is typically a one-time event in which teachers attend a training session with the expectation of implementing new learning with students. However, teachers are less likely to implement new learning with the traditional professional development model due to the lack of time and understanding of the one-time event.

Understanding how to effectively develop teachers through on-going professional learning is critical for district and campus leaders in order to support student success. Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, and Arguelles (2001) conducted a study that involved nearly 100 elementary teachers regarding implementation of best practices as a result of professional development opportunities. The results of their study showed that visible student learning was the top reason for teachers to continue implementation of an instructional strategy. The study also revealed that

teachers were more successful with maintaining fidelity of instructional strategies when consistent support was received. To keep teachers on track with implementation of best practices, support must be received along the way to get to the point in which student learning is visible. Hargreaves and Braun (2012) discovered that beliefs and practices of teachers form a more interactive relationship. Coaching, as a professional development technique, supports teachers in incremental shifts in beliefs and practices over time. This on-going support allows instructional coaches to gradually decrease the level of support to create independence and sustainment of best practices.

Knight (1998) reported significant statistical differences when comparing the traditional professional development model and the partnership approach. When support and feedback are provided, regarding personalized professional development through a partnership approach, results are more evident in instructional improvement. One of the key factors in the purpose of instructional coaching is to support teachers with clarity of curriculum and instructional practices. Hattie (2009) discovered, through his meta-analysis, that teacher clarity has a significant impact on student achievement. In his rank order of influences on student achievement, teacher clarity is ranked ninth with an effect size of 0.75.

Hargreaves and Braun (2012) conducted a mixed methods study that included surveys, site visits, and interviews from a variety of stakeholders throughout the Ontario school system. This study revealed that beliefs of teachers and practices of teachers have an interactive relationship. Through the data collected, they found that educators were more likely to change their instructional practices to align to change initiatives if they shifted their belief about the change initiative. Hargreaves and Braun also discovered that participants were more willing to change their instructional practices when there was specific modeling in their classroom.

Hargreaves and Braun claimed that coaching, as a professional development technique, supports teachers in incremental shifts in beliefs and practices over time. This on-going support allows instructional coaches to gradually decrease the level of support to create independence and sustainment of best practices. Fullan and Knight (2011) asserted that without coaching, efforts for instructional reform do not reach true improvement. Successful instructional coaching programs focus on building capacity, instructional delivery, teamwork, and systematic change as the lead components of reform (Fullan & Knight, 2011).

This chapter provides an overview of instructional coaching and a review of the conceptual framework components that are the focus of this study. This includes the change process, professional learning communities (PLCs), and building capacity through human capital, social capital, and support of district and campus administration. The review of related literature also provides an overview of learning organizations as a foundational concept for PLCs. The relationship between the instructional coaching program and the conceptual framework components is also established in this chapter.

<div align="center">Schools as Learning Organizations</div>

Senge (1990) described a learning organization as a place "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together" (p. 3). Schools become a learning organization when systems exist to build "shared vision, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery" (p. 12). Shared vision creates the focus of the organization and energy to learn. Senge concluded that many times the vision does not spread in an organization, but in a learning organization there is a

consistent effort to increase "clarity, enthusiasm, communication and commitment" regarding the vision (p. 227). Mental models are represented by the views and beliefs of people, which impact how people behave and respond within the system. According to Senge, system-thinking will fail if mental models within an organization are not highly considered. Teaching people how to reflect on how they think and to become more aware of their own mental models and behaviors is important within a learning organization. Team learning occurs when teams think creatively through complex situations with coordinated action. This requires a deep mastery of how to dialogue with one another effectively. Personal mastery relates to individuals learning effectively, which does not guarantee organizational learning. However, without individual learning, organizational learning does not exist.

Schools that are effective learning organizations develop structures to learn together and respond effectively through an ever-changing environment (Brandt, 2003; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Kruse, 2003; Louis, 2006). Senge (1990) explained that structures should be developed systemically to influence behaviors over time. In a learning organization, structures are not only developed, but there is power to adjust structures to meet the current and ever-changing needs of the system.

Learning organizations are in a constant process of identifying the gap between the vision and the current state of the organization. Understanding this gap can generate creative energy through the action that is taken to continuously improve the organization through the change process. Through this continuous improvement process, learning organizations cultivate a culture of innovation, inquiry, action, risk-taking and collective collaboration to achieve desired results to move the organization forward in the change process (Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

The Change Process

In the current study, the concept of building the capacity of instructional coaches to build

the capacity of teachers through a professional learning community framework was examined as

a structure that supports organizational change. Fullan (2007) asserted that change is considered

a process rather than a specific event. To support instructional reform in schools, it is critical

that leaders understand the change process. Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher (2005) explained that

the true meaning of an effective change process is "about establishing the condition for

continuous improvement in order to persist and overcome inevitable barriers to reform. It is

about innovativeness, not just innovation" (p. 55).

Phases of Change

The intended outcome of engaging in the change process is institutionalization.

Institutionalization occurs when an initiative is maintained, as it becomes part of the daily

routine throughout a campus and/or district (Fullan, 2007). Until this occurs, the change has not

been fully implemented. Leaders facilitating change engage in backwards planning by thinking

about the vision for institutionalization. When embarking on the journey of change, it is

important for school district leaders to utilize effective strategies to understand the need for

organizational change (Hanover Research, 2016). Once the need for change is clear, the

selection of appropriate strategies and a guiding coalition to support the process to reach the

intended outcome for the change is important. Kotter International (2015) reported that engaging

as many stakeholders as possible in the change process increases their support for the change.

However, successful engagement with the change process takes time (Fullan, 2007). Fullan

reported that the change process can take as little as two-four years or as many as five-10 years,

depending on the scale of the change. An important concept in facilitating any change process is for leaders to understand that all phases are planned for at the same time.

Initiation Phase

The first change process phase is called initiation (Fullan, 2007). Leaders facilitating change tend to focus heavily on this phase since reaching the outcome is highly dependent upon intentionality from the beginning. Fullan emphasized that, during this phase, leaders should engage their staff by communicating how the initiative will impact all stakeholders. Havelock and Zlotolow (1995) asserted that, during this phase, building relationships with stakeholders and making certain the change is communicated in terms that stakeholders understand is important to the success of the change efforts.

When working through the initiation stage of the change process, reflection on the following components can support leaders in gaining clarity with planning and communicating efforts (Fullan, 2007):

- Understanding of how the innovation supports improvements for stakeholders and students
- Mapping out the change process and benchmarks for determining success
- Communicating the innovation goals and process for goal attainment
- Supporting stakeholders to understand the purpose and timing for the innovation
- Making resources available that will support the implementation and sustainment of the innovation

The initiation phase is critical in clarifying the intended results for student success and shifting the current processes in place to support the desired change.

Implementation Phase

The second phase in the change process is called implementation (Fullan, 2007). During

this phase, leaders should focus on resources and needed support to implement the specific initiative or innovation (Fullan, 2007; Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995). Providing feedback and on-going professional development for teachers to make the right adjustments in instructional practices is a key element of the implementation phase, to improve results for student learning. Continuous application, with the support of feedback, increases the opportunity for a specific skill to reach the proficient level (Colvin, 2008). This also ensures common language and understanding of the initiative (Fullan, 2007). Clarity regarding expectations decreases the chance for inconsistent implementation.

As with the above phase of change, it is important to reflect on the following components with all stakeholders involved in the change to support clarity-seeking during this phase (Fullan, 2007):

- Developing a shared understanding of what the innovation will look like at the beginning stage, middle stage, and full implementation for all stakeholders
- Defining the conditions necessary to support successful implementation
- Understanding support needed for all stakeholders involved in the implementation process
- Assessing and refining established structures to support implementation of the innovation
- Developing a process for providing feedback and consistent professional development for all involved in the change process
- Monitoring the results of implementation of the innovation
- Focusing on continuous improvement of the implementation of the innovation

An initiative is implemented to full capacity only when the level of sustainment can be reached. Leaders should monitor the implementation process closely to assess and provide appropriate support to continuously improve implementation of the initiative. Fullan (2007) found that many educational initiatives fail due to an overemphasis on the initiation phase and a lack of focus on the last two phases.

Institutionalization Phase

The third phase of the change process is institutionalization. This phase occurs when the initiative becomes part of the daily routine for the staff (Fullan, 2007). Havelock and Zlotolow (1995) explained that during this phase is when stabilization of the change effort should occur and providing further professional learning for continuous improvement should be highly considered to foster sustainment. When working through this particular stage of the change process, it is important to reflect on the following components to support clarity-seeking with all stakeholders (Fullan, 2007):

- Understanding the span of implementation throughout the organization
- Understanding and planning to respond to areas that need more support
- Establishing plans for sustainment of the innovation

It is also important to note the relationship between reaching institutionalization of the change process and the establishment of a shared vision. Fullan et al. (2005) asserted that shared vision is not a pre-condition for the change process, but it is an outcome of a successful change process. Shared vision will be reviewed later in more detail as to its relationship with professional learning communities.

Professional Learning Communities

A professional learning community supports the development of a collaborative culture that can shift the beliefs of educators from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, when implemented effectively (Barkley & Bianco, 2011; DuFour et al., 2016; Hargreaves & Bach, 2012). Effective PLC implementation is intended to develop lasting improvement over time rather than initiate quick change for a temporary solution (Senge et al., 2000). Hargreaves and Braun (2012) found that when teachers spend time as part of a culture that is driven by PLCs,

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there is a shared collective responsibility among the staff. Collective responsibility includes

investing professionally and emotionally as an organization regarding success for every student

in every grade level.   To create this level of collective responsibility, specific structures need to

be in place to support the development of a learning organization.

Through a prevalent literature review and field research, Hipp and Huffman (2010)

asserted that the following five dimensions, adapted from the work of Hord (1997), allow a clear

visualization of a professional learning community culture:

- Dimension 1: supportive and shared leadership

- Dimension 2: shared values and vision

- Dimension 3: collective learning and application

- Dimension 4: shared personal practice

- Dimension 5: supportive conditions (p. 13)

Hipp and Huffman also explained that commitment is needed on behalf of the leaders and staff to

sustain the PLC culture and to consistently increase student learning. This includes a campus-

wide effort, based on the above-mentioned dimensions, to have a system-wide impact on the

school's culture. Although community members and district office personnel are not direct

members of a PLC within a school, establishing support from these stakeholders is recognized as

an important component for system-wide impact as well (DuFour et al., 2016; Hipp & Huffman

2010; Hord & Hirsch, 2008).

DuFour et al. (2016) described professional learning communities as a "continuous,

never-ending process of conducting schooling that has a profound impact on the structure and

culture of the school and the assumptions and practices of the professionals within it." (p. 10).

DuFour and colleagues developed a PLC framework that includes an organizational focus that

supports this vision. This framework is undergirded by three big ideas, including student

learning, teacher collaboration, and focus on student results, which are supported by the

following four pillars: mission, vision, values, and goals, as highlighted in Figure 2.
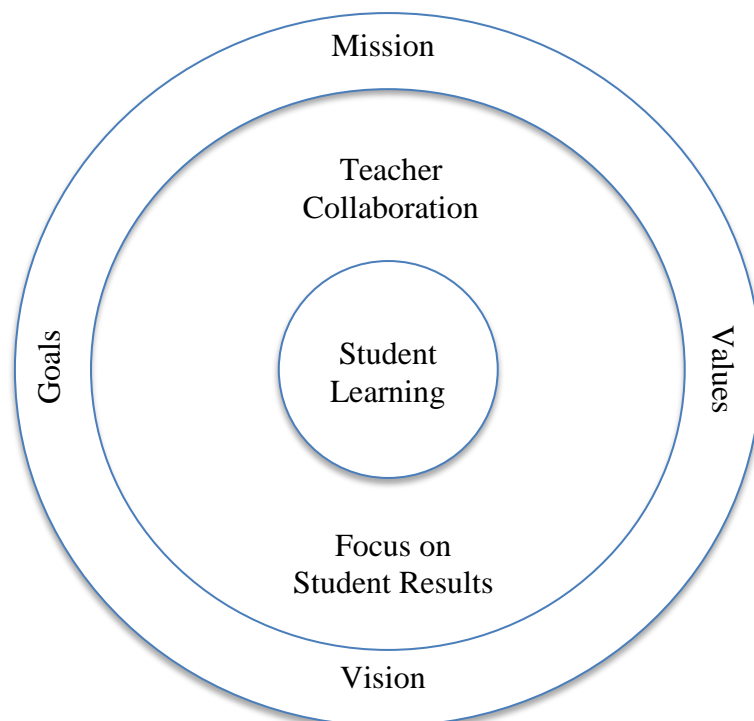
Figure 2. Professional learning community framework components. Adapted from *Learning by Doing*, by R. DuFour et al. (2016).

The DuFour et al. framework is designed for the above-mentioned big ideas and pillars to

consistently be the focus for all campus leaders and staff members at all phases of PLC

implementation.

This current study focused on the professional learning community framework that is

based on the work from DuFour et al. (2016). However, it is important to highlight the

similarities and differences between the work of DuFour et al. (2016) and Hipp and Huffman

(2010) as it is presented within the literature on PLCs. Table 1 represents a comparison of these

two frameworks to provide clarity, with the commonalities and differences among the PLC

research reviewed.

Table 1

Comparison of PLC Research

PLC Model of DuFour et al. (2016)	Aligned PLC Dimensions (Hipp & Huffman, 2010) to the DuFour et al. (2016) Model	Similarities	Differences
Four Pillars: Mission, vision, values, goals	Dimension One: Shared values and vision Dimension Two: Shared leadership	Both models focus on a vision that supports high levels of learning for students. Expectations regarding leadership behaviors are included in both models to support the vision. DuFour's model includes a shared leadership approach in developing the PLC pillars, which aligns with Hipp and Huffman's dimension two of shared leadership.	DuFour's four pillar model includes the use of SMART goals, but this is not specifically included within Hipp and Huffman's five dimensions.
Big Idea One: Student & Teacher Learning	Dimension Three: Continuous learning and application	Both models include student learning as the primary focus of PLCs. Both models prioritize teachers continuously learning to improve student learning.	DuFour's model focuses specifically on four critical questions to support staff in facilitating learning for all students.
Big Idea Two: Teacher Collaboration	Dimension Four: Shared Personal Practice Dimension Five: Supportive Conditions	Both models prioritize the use of structures and resources for teachers to collaborate regarding student learning.	Hipp and Huffman include observation among peers, but DuFour's model does not specifically include this component.
Big Idea Three: Focus on Student Results	Dimension One: Shared values and vision	Both models focalize on improvement of student learning.	Not applicable

Three Big Ideas of the PLC Framework

A professional leaning community focuses its work around the three big ideas of student learning, teacher collaboration, and focus on student results (DuFour et al., 2016). To support campuses in maintaining a high level of concentration on these three big ideas, the following four critical questions serve as a foundation for teachers and leaders.

1. What is it we want our students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
4. How will we extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency? (p. 59)

First Big Idea: Student Learning

Student learning is the first and most critical big idea within a professional learning community (DuFour et al., 2016). The first critical question of a PLC is centered on a guaranteed and viable curriculum. The state of Texas provides school districts with the state standards, the Texas Essentials of Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Grade-level TEKS are required to be taught to students by the end of the course or school year. However, districts must determine how the TEKS are prioritized, sequenced, paced, and informally assessed. DuFour et al. described this process as the development of essential standards. Appropriate data are utilized in making these curricular decisions.

The second critical question of a PLC refers to teachers understanding each student's level of mastery regarding the essential standards (DuFour et al., 2016). The state of Texas provides summative assessments of the TEKS, which are referred to as the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (TEA, 2016 FAQ). These assessments are conducted each year in specific grade levels and courses to measure the level to which students

have learned the TEKS. Schools that are functioning as a PLC do not depend solely on state assessment data (DuFour et al., 2016). The DuFour et al. model includes teachers working collaboratively in teams to create and analyze common formative assessments (CFAs) to understand the level of mastery for each student regarding the essential standards. This process allows teacher to guide instruction to further support student learning on a regular basis throughout the school year.

The last two critical questions focus on the monitoring of student learning and how the school will respond when learning does or does not happen. Students that have not learned the appropriate essential learning standards should receive targeted interventions to reach proficiency (DuFour et al., 2016). This includes the multi-tiered results to intervention (RTI) process. Turse and Albrecht (2015) emphasized RTI characteristics as "the use of research based instruction and interventions, early screening, continual monitoring of progress by collecting data on every child, tiered levels of increasingly more intensive instruction, and a collaborative team approach" (p. 83). Within a PLC, efforts are also critical for students that already demonstrate mastery of the essential standards and need extension to further their learning. DuFour and colleagues recommend schools work collaboratively to establish a school-wide systematic intervention and extension time to maximize support for all students. During this time, students have been identified in a timely manner and guaranteed the appropriate interventions or extension based on their academic needs. The team and administration monitor student progress closely to support the on-going work through this systematic approach.

For students to learn at optimal levels, the staff must learn as well. DuFour and Marzano (2011) emphasized "the PLC process is specifically intended to create the conditions that help educators become more skillful in teaching, because great teaching and high levels of learning go

hand in hand" (p. 23). The major premise of a professional learning community is that learning occurs for all, adults and students, which aligns with Hipp and Huffman's (2010) PLC common practice of collective learning and application.

Second Big Idea: Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration is the second big idea in the DuFour et al. (2016) PLC framework. In creating a professional learning community culture, collaboration is at the heart of the work of the educators (Bauml, 2016; DuFour et al., 2016; Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Hord, 1997; Kanold, 2011). DuFour et al. (2016) described teamwork as a foundational structure for members to "work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable" (p. 12). Professionals may work together and have productive discussions, but if they do not have a common goal that must be accomplished through shared work, then they are classified as a group versus a team. Through collaboration, teams construct shared knowledge about the most effective ways to achieve the goals for student learning. This construction of shared knowledge connects with Hipp and Huffman's (2010) PLC common practices of continuous learning, collaborative structures, and teachers sharing practices together. Hipp and Huffman specifically explained, "When teachers learn together, by engaging in open dialogue, opportunities arise to collaborate and apply new knowledge, skills, and strategies" (p. 17).

It is important that supportive structures are in place to create the conditions for successful collaboration. Hipp and Huffman (2010) found, through their work, that the common practice of supportive conditions is what allows success with all components within a professional learning community. DuFour et al. (2016) included providing time, clarifying focus of work, and developing collective commitments as supportive structures that are critical for

successful collaboration. Providing time for collaboration can happen in a variety of ways, but it is important that it takes place during the teacher contractual workday (DuFour et al., 2016; Hipp & Huffman, 2010). This communicates to teachers that district leaders expect and value collaboration.

There are many creative ways schools can adjust to provide time for teachers to collaborate within the instructional day. One example of a structure that supports collaboration during the school day is through creating common planning times for teachers who teach the same subject (DuFour et al., 2016; Hipp & Huffman, 2010). Another idea to provide collaborative time for teachers is through parallel scheduling (DuFour et al., 2016). Parallel scheduling involves the use of specialists to teach lessons to students in one grade level simultaneously, such as "back-to-back specials" lessons (p. 65). This allows teams of teachers to have two consecutive planning periods to go deeper into the collaborative planning process. Hipp and Huffman (2010) explained that some schools are working closely with their community to implement early release or late arrival days for students to support extended collaboration for teachers. However, it is important to note that collaboration, on its own, will not bring increased positive outcomes on student achievement (DuFour et al., 2016). What teachers are collaborating about is what is critical to the work of a PLC. The previous four critical questions are the driving force behind the collaboration and are utilized with the PLC framework to maintain the focus on student learning.

Third Big Idea: Focus on Student Results

The third big idea of a PLC, as defined by DuFour et al. (2016), is a focus on student results. This is aligned to PLC critical questions three and four, discussed previously in this

chapter. Being results oriented as a professional learning community requires a focus on the evidence of student learning to improve teaching practices to respond to the enrichment or intervention needs of students (DuFour et al., 2016). To foster a focus on results, a cyclical process that includes the following components can support teachers in working together to analyze and respond to student learning:

- Gathering evidence of current levels of student learning
- Developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in learning
- Implementing those strategies and ideas
- Analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not
- Applying new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement (p. 12)

Hargreaves and Braun (2012) found, in their research, that teachers valued analyzing the achievement data of students when it resulted in deep, productive discussion about specific students and their needs. Senge et al. (2000) concluded that the purpose for any attempt to construct a learning organization is centered on the assumption that the effort will yield improved results.

DuFour's Four Pillars

Mission

The mission of a learning organization supports a school's understanding of the fundamental purpose of its existence. Seeking clarity collectively around the purpose can support the establishment of priorities and decision-making (DuFour et al., 2016). After a school collaboratively determines its purpose through the creation and acceptance of a mission statement, this work becomes the foundation for the visioning of the campus.

Vision

The vision supports what the organization is to become in the future (Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Kanold, 2011). The vision establishes focus that avoids an organization stagnating by creating an image of what the organization will look like in the ideal state. A core component of the vision within a PLC is a persistent focus on the learning of all students (DuFour et al., 2016; Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Kanold, 2011; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Pascal & Blankstein, 2008). Huffman (2003) found, through a five-year study of professional learning communities, that the underlying reason schools create a vision is focalized on how to support students.

To establish a shared vision, it is necessary to have a clear process that solicits the input from stakeholders (Kanold, 2011). Smith and Lucas (2000) explained that the creation of a shared vision requires a process that allows consistent opportunities for people to work collectively to develop the school's future direction. This type of process supports campuses in understanding the current state and identifying actions that support the shared vision from multiple perspectives (DuFour et al., 2016). Once the shared vision is created, it is important to revisit it regularly.

Huffman (2003) asserted that leaders must work together with staff to create a shared vision to achieve a high level of commitment by all. This concept of co-creating the vision of the school aligns to the PLC common practices of shared leadership and shared values and vision (Hipp & Leana, 2010). Shared leadership involves administrators sharing the decision-making power with teachers to promote and support leadership development (Hord, 1997). However, it is important to note that only creating a vision does not provide the necessary actions to accomplish the established purpose (DuFour et al., 2016).

Values

The third pillar of the PLC framework is values. Through a shared leadership approach, the mental models discussed earlier in this chapter are important to consider. Mental models of the staff can influence what is valued by the organization. Clarifying values collectively allows the organization to identify specific behaviors that are needed to support the mission and vision of the campus (DuFour et al., 2016). DuFour et al. suggested that this is accomplished through the establishment of collective commitments. The creation of collective commitments gives clarity to individuals, teams, and campus leaders regarding how all can support improvement for all students. This process aligns to Senge's (1990) research about the importance of creating awareness of the mental models that already exist among individuals, to ensure alignment of behaviors as an organization.

Goals

The fourth pillar of the professional learning community framework is goals. The creation of common goals is critical to the process for collaboration among teams (DuFour et al., 2016; Hord & Hirsh, 2008). Within the PLC framework, teachers collaboratively design goals within teams that effectively measure the impact of instructional practices on student learning (DuFour et al., 2016). Goals guide the work of the team and support a focus on student learning.

Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017) conducted a study to examine the relationship among PLC implementation and the collective efficacy of teachers. This study included survey data from 16 different schools in one school district that implemented a PLC framework. The data indicated a significant impact on the perception of teachers regarding their ability to support the needs of all students more effectively when establishing goals collectively. In addition, Rosenholtz (1985)

conducted an analysis of effective schools studies and asserted that "the more teachers succeed

with students, the greater their certainty that it is possible to succeed and greater their

experimentation procuring success" (p. 355). It is important that schools not only profess goals,

but they must align their actions and behaviors to achieve the established goals.

The DuFour et al. (2016) PLC framework includes the utilization of a specific tool to

support alignment of actions to attain campus goals. Through this model, schools develop

campus goals that are used by teams to create SMART goals. The use of SMART goals allows

campuses to measure actions based on the results of student learning.

The SMART acronym represents specific components for teams to utilize when

establishing goals. These components are identified below in Figure 3.

S	Strategic and specific
M	Measurable
A	Attainable
R	Results Oriented
T	Timebound
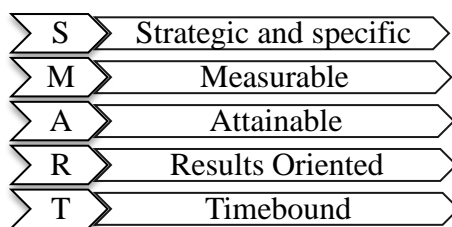
Figure 3. SMART goal framework (adapted from DuFour et al., 2016, p. 90).

The strategic, specific, measurable, and results oriented SMART goal components require the

goal to be targeted primarily on improving student learning. For example, a team of teachers

may focus on increasing the number of students that meet the progress measure on the upcoming

mathematics state assessment by 10%. These SMART goal components also include the team's

understanding of the current reality of how students performed the year prior. The team also

commits to actions that support the achievement of the goal. The attainable SMART goal

component suggests that the results the team is trying to achieve are reasonable in the timeframe

provided. The time-bound SMART goal component establishes a timeframe for the team to

work within to evaluate success. DuFour et al. (2016) explained the importance of campuses

responding to successful attainment of SMART goals through celebration, especially in the early stages of professional learning community implementation.

Instructional Coaching

An instructional coach supports teachers in implementing research-based best practices in their classroom through a partnership approach (Barkley & Bianco, 2011; Cornett, Ellison, Hayes, Killion, Kise, Knight, Reinke, Reiss, Sprick, Toll, & West, 2009; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Knight, 2006). It is important to note that the instructional coach does not serve as the formal evaluator of teachers (Knight, 2006). The instructional coach's role is specifically aligned to supporting teachers in building collective capacity through a partnership with campus administrators. In supporting teachers and teams, instructional coaches are able to support and develop a professional learning community culture that is focused on instructional collaboration that results in a positive impact on student learning. The instructional coach's role to support teachers and teams in professional growth occurs through a variety of structures.

Role of Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches and campus administrators must meet regularly to establish structures and maintain clarity of the instructional coaching program in order to achieve optimum results (Von Frank, 2010; Knight, 2011; Barkley & Bianco, 2011). Maintaining close lines of communication through collaboration is critical for successful implementation of an instructional coaching program (Von Frank, 2010). The roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of the IC's work are critical components of the collaboration among the principal and IC (Von Frank, 2010; Barkley & Bianco, 2011). This clarity-seeking process between the principal and

IC should also include discussion about resources available, timelines, and expected results of the IC's work (Von Frank, 2010). Once the principal and IC have clarity around the instructional coaching program, it is critical that this information is openly communicated with the staff to support campus-wide clarity (Knight, 2011).

ICs must build trusting relationships with teachers for authentic engagement in the coaching process to support campus-wide continuous improvement. Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted case study research on relational trust in three urban schools in Chicago. They found the level of relational trust significantly impacted the improvement efforts of the schools. The study included surveys that measured teacher perceptions of their trust in parents, the principal, and fellow teachers in the school community over a six-year period. "Schools with weak trust reports in both 1994 and 1997 had virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading or mathematics" (p. 111). This conclusion was based on the analysis of the relational trust measures through the survey data collected and the collection of the school's academic productivity profile data.

Knight (2007) concluded that principles should be established to guide and support work of ICs to build trusting relationships with teachers through a partnership approach. Through his research, Knight created "partnership principles" that were designed to support building the emotional connection among ICs and teachers (p. 36). The partnership principles, explained in Table 2 below, also serve as a reflective tool for instructional coaches to support their personal growth in how they build the capacity of teachers.

Table 2

Core Principles for Building Emotional Connections

Core Principle	Description
Equality	All involved educators' ideas and beliefs are valued.
Choice	Teachers have choice in the learning process.
Voice	Variance of opinions is encouraged through conversation in regard to learning.
Dialogue	ICs are listeners and facilitators of thinking and learning.
Reflection	ICs support teachers to think deeply about ideas prior to committing to them.
Praxis	All educators involved are committed to maintaining focus on utilizing ideas for instructional practices and use the learning as it works best for their own classroom.
Reciprocity	ICs are focused on learning best practices as much through coaching as the teachers. ICs believe that the teacher's skillset is as critical as their own skillset.

Note. Adapted from Knight, 2007, p. 24-26.

Instructional coaches must also work to understand the needs of teachers. A successful instructional coaching program should be based upon a framework that supports instructional coaches in assessing the needs of teachers. Knight's (2011) model, the big four, is focused on the following vital instructional concepts, which were developed through the Kansas Coaching Project (p. 60-63).

- Content planning

- Formative assessment

- Instruction

- Community building

These four concepts can be utilized as filters for understanding the needs of teachers in regard to creating targets for continuous improvement through the coaching process.

Content Planning

Content planning drives the pathway of the instructional journey on which teachers and students embark. This includes "unpacking the standards and using them as a foundation for creating guiding questions that guide students to the knowledge, skills, and understandings they need to acquire" (Knight, 2011, p. 60). Content planning supports teachers in understanding specifically what students are expected to learn, which aligns with the DuFour et al. (2016) professional learning community critical question one: What do we want our students to learn? The content planning process also provides an opportunity for teachers to make decisions that are based on student learning data in regard to pacing, sequencing, and prioritization of learning standards.

Formative Assessment

Knight (2011) described the use of formative assessments as the "learner's GPS" (p. 61). From the content planning process, proficiency statements are created as a guide for creation of formative assessments. These are simple assessments used during teaching to examine the level of student learning of the specific learning target being taught. Through formative assessment, teachers learn about what and how students are thinking, and then teachers use that information to guide their instruction. Teachers that implement formative assessment practices understand that it is important to dig deep to understand student misconceptions (Coffey, Hammer, Levin, & Grant, 2011). Formative assessment also aligns with DuFour's et al. (2016) professional learning community critical question two: How will we know if each student has learned it?

Wenglinsky's (2000) study of over 7,100 eighth-grade students in mathematics and science specifically linked student learning with formative assessment practices. This study

analyzed 14 different strategies, and formative assessment was one of the top two strategies

supporting student learning. In fact, students that had teachers who utilized formative

assessments had increased success on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

assessment over their peers, in the area of science.

Hattie (2009) synthesized over 800 meta-analyses through 15 years of research that

related to student achievement. These factors dealt with contributions from student, home,

school, teacher, curricula, and teaching approaches. Through Hattie's synthesis, 138 influences

emerged. These influences were ranked by the greatest impact on learning outcomes for

students, as represented through effect sizes. He found that formative evaluation was in the top

three of positive influences on student achievement. Specifically, formative evaluation resulted

in a 0.9 effect size regarding student achievement.

Instruction

There are many different ways for instructional delivery to occur in a classroom.

However, instructional coaches support teachers in understanding the importance of effective

instruction to improve student learning (Knight, 2011). Instructional coaches must have a deep

understanding of the best instructional practices that support teachers in understanding and

responding to the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom. Knight (2011) identified "six

high-leverage" teaching strategies through his research: effective questions, thinking prompts,

stories, cooperative learning, experiential learning, and quality assignments (p. 62). These

strategies are described in Table 3.

Table 3

High Leverage Strategies

High-Leverage Strategy	Description
Effective Questions	• Elicits higher levels of thinking and supports teachers in assessing how students apply their learning
Thinking Prompts	• Objects used as a springboard for conversation
Stories	• Narratives utilized to create interest, support new learning, build schema, or create a sense of community
Cooperative Learning	• Students leading learning together in small groups with clear roles and common goals
Experiential Learning	• Learning structured for students to "live out" the content being learned
Quality Assignments	• Activities that are student-centered to create student engagement in high levels of learning

Note. Adapted from Knight, 2011, p. 62.

Community Building

Strategies that build community within the classroom are critical for teachers to consider

when working with students, because it supports a "smooth ride" throughout the instructional

journey (Knight, 2011, p. 63). Key components of community building include setting clear

expectations, providing feedback regarding expectations, establishing an interactive classroom,

and creating an environment of respect. Instructional coaches need a strong understanding of

these important concepts as well to assess teachers' understanding and provide the necessary

support to ensure professional growth (Cornett et al., 2009).

Coaching Cycle

Once instructional coaches understand the needs of the teachers that they serve, utilizing

a coaching cycle becomes a useful tool to support teacher growth. The coaching cycle

represented below in Figure 4 includes three major steps for ICs to follow when working with

teachers on instructional improvement (J. Knight, Elford, Hock, Dunekack, Bradley, Deshler, D. Knight, 2015).

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │      Goal       │
                    │ Identification  │
                    └─────────────────┘
          ↗                                    ↘
 ┌─────────────────┐                  ┌─────────────────┐
 │   Improvement   │        ←         │  Learning the   │
 │   of practice   │                  │    Strategy     │
 └─────────────────┘                  └─────────────────┘
```
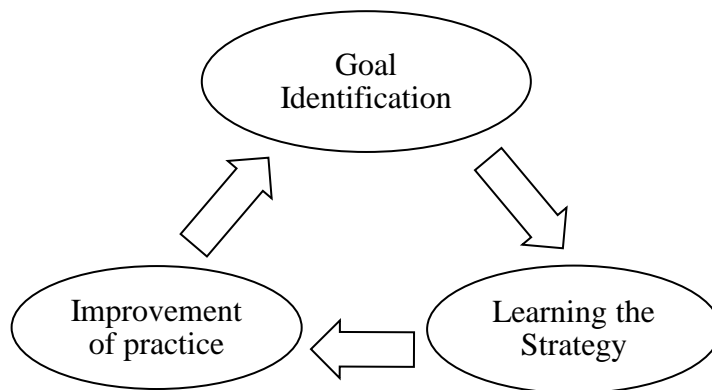
Figure 4. Instructional coaching cycle for the process instructional coaches follow when supporting teacher development. Adapted from "Three Steps to Great Coaching," by Knight et al., 2015.

The first step, identify, involves ICs working with teachers to identify a goal based on data (Knight et al., 2015). A successful goal for the instructional coaching process should be short-term, focused, and motivational for the teacher. Once the goal is established, the teacher and coach work collaboratively to identify a high-leverage strategy that will support the attainment of the established goal.

After the goal and high-leverage teaching strategy are identified, the instructional coach supports the teacher in learning how to carry out the strategy in the classroom (Knight et al., 2015). This involves the IC explaining the strategy to the teacher, with clarity; high-leverage strategies can be complex, so it is key that ICs highlight the most critical components to make it as simple as possible (Knight, 2011). At this point, ICs informally ask if the teacher would like to have the strategy modeled. Engaging with the teacher in this manner, rather than requiring modeling, is aligned with the partnership approach that was described earlier in this chapter. If the teacher is interested in seeing the strategy modeled, then the IC will work collaboratively with the teacher to determine how this will look (Knight et al., 2015). As indicated below, this

step can be done through several different methods, depending on the needs and learning style of the teacher.

- IC modeling in the teacher's classroom with students
- IC modeling for the teacher in the classroom with no students
- IC and teacher co-teaching
- IC and teacher visiting other classrooms together
- IC and teacher watching video together

At the conclusion of the modeling phase, it is important that the IC and teacher meet to discuss and reflect on the lesson.

The next step in this process is for the teacher and instructional coach to determine if the established instructional goal has been attained (Knight et al., 2015). This can be done through lesson observation or analysis of student learning data. When the instructional coach provides feedback to the teacher, it is critical to highlight what was done well with the implementation of the strategy (Knight, 2011). During this process, it is also important that any misconceptions of implementing the strategy are reflected upon between the coach and teacher, to support professional growth. Zwart, Wubbels, Bergen, and Bolhuis (2009) conducted a mixed methods analysis utilizing both teacher self-reflections and student perceptions in defining the relationship between coaching and teacher learning. The quantitative and qualitative analysis found similarities in which teachers displayed an increase in changed behavior when attempting new strategies as a result of being observed, as indicated by students. In this study, teachers reported increased learning as well.

This cycle of coaching (identify, learn, improve) is designed as an on-going support for teachers as they continue to refine implementation of high-leverage strategies (Knight et al., 2015). The utilization of a coaching cycle is vital to build structure around collaborating with teachers regarding instructional improvement. In fact, Sharratt and Fullan (2009) found that

schools with significant student success implemented an instructional coaching program with the following elements: 1) structured time for the instructional coach to facilitate meetings, 2) modeling lessons for teachers, 3) planning with teachers, 4) observing teachers during instruction, 5) analyzing student data, and 6) guiding teachers in collaboratively reviewing student work.

Development of Coaching Skills

For instructional coaches to be successful with supporting growth of teachers, they must be specifically skilled in how to coach effectively. It is pivotal for instructional coaches to understand that during a coaching session with a teacher, providing advice is not a best practice (Kee et al., 2010). It may be tempting for instructional coaches to give advice as they are typically highly skilled teachers and are viewed by others as experts in the education field. However, Kee et al. (2010) provided key skills that drive the work of effective coaching for instructional coaches, as follow:

- Committed listening
- Paraphrasing
- Presuming positive intent
- Powerful questioning
- Reflective feedback

Committed listening allows for comprehension of the "needs, perceptions, and emotions" of the person being coached (Kee et al., 2010, p. 95). Committed listening supports the coach in noticing trends of behaviors. The use of paraphrasing provides clarity for the coach and coachee, when used effectively (Cheliotes & Reilly 2010; Kee et al., 2010). Paraphrasing supports movement forward in thinking and is directly linked to committed listening. To deeply

understand the true meaning of what is being said through communication of words and emotion, the coach must commit to keenly listen in order to skillfully paraphrase.

Presuming positive intent during a coaching conversation is supportive in building trust between the coach and coachee (Kee et al., 2010). If done effectively, a safe place is created for thinking. When the coach presumes the positive, it sends the message that the coach values and believes in the coachee. Presuming the positive is a skill that must be learned and practiced by instructional coaches to create positive and trusting relationships.

Once instructional coaches understand the importance of presuming positive intent, this can support their development of powerful questions. Kee et al. (2010) described powerful questions as open-ended questions that are asked in order to provide optimum benefit to the one receiving the question. By asking powerful questions during a coaching conversation, the coach is sending the message of high expectations to the person being coached. This is another strategy that builds trust between the instructional coach and the teacher.

Reflective feedback allows instructional coaches to effectively provide feedback to a teacher in a way that promotes self-reflection to increase clarity (Cheliotes & Reilly, 2010; Kee et al., 2010). Kee et al. (2010) described the following three options for providing reflective feedback.

- Clarifying questions or statements for better understanding
- Feedback statements that identify value or value potential
- Feedback to mediate thinking through the use of reflective questions for possibilities (p. 134-135)

Kruse (2003) conducted a qualitative study of three schools that included interviews with teachers and administrators, classroom observations, meeting observations, and document analysis. Kruse revealed, through this particular study, that a shared learning experience may be more effectively achieved through the creation of structures to examine practices and reflection

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of personal learning. The structures included an effective instructional coaching program, as described above, which allow for this type of examination and reflection. However, it is important for instructional coaches to assess their own strengths and weaknesses for all essential coaching skills in order to continuously improve the structures in place for the betterment of the teachers they coach.

Instructional coaches act as a catalyst to support teams and leaders through effective PLC implementation through the use of coaching skills (Barkley & Bianco, 2011). As teams struggle with implementing strategies to meet the needs of learners, the instructional coach provides support through the coaching skills and coaching cycle previously described in this chapter. The instructional coach can also support the team in generating action through the use of effective questioning (Kee et al., 2010). Through this partnership approach, the teachers and teams of teachers benefit tremendously from the support of an instructional coach (Barkley & Bianco, 2011; Knight, 2007).

Building Capacity

Building capacity involves taking action collaboratively to enhance the collective knowledge and skills of the organization for the purpose of increasing student learning (Fullan et al., 2005). In an effective instructional coaching program, this is the primary focus and role of the instructional coach. For ICs to successfully support teachers at this level, structures need to be in place for the IC's capacity to be built as well. Instructional coaches must be effectively taught and must work to improve coaching skills, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills (Knight, 2006; Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004).

Feger et al. (2004) indicated that instructional coaches also need support in learning how to manage the new situations they face along the way, through development of problem solving skills. ICs also need to stay connected with new resources available to support them in their coaching role. Due to the complexity of this role, it is important that instructional coaches not only receive initial comprehensive training, but they should have on-going professional development themselves to continue the learning process (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

Without a strong understanding of the necessary skills for a successful instructional coaching program, there can be several negative effects, including wasted time, wasted money, and increased misconceptions for teachers (Cornett et al., 2009). Since building the capacity of instructional coaches is so vital to the success of the instructional coaching program, it is important to examine how this is best achieved.

Human and Social Capital

Coleman (1998) and Leana (2011) described human capital in education as building the capacity of individuals regarding pedagogy and subject knowledge. Human capital can be developed through explicit professional learning, formal education, or through experiences gained from multiple years in the teaching field. Human capital is also a resource that can be brought into the school for support in building the capacity of staff. This includes the use of educational consultants. Leana asserted that human capital has the potential to influence student achievement positively if this approach is combined with the utilization of social capital.

Social capital is the result of educators building relationships through collaboration (Coleman, 1988; Leana, 2011). When educators work interdependently, there is a positive impact on social and human capital, which can positively impact student achievement

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(Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Leana, 2011). Leana conducted a two-year study that involved over 1,000 fourth and fifth grade teachers in New York City. The findings of this study revealed that students demonstrated higher mathematical gains when teachers were engaged in frequent dialogue with colleagues, specifically about mathematics, and when trust was evident among teachers. There is significant power in utilizing both human and social capital together for capacity to be built most effectively. Therefore, when building the capacity of instructional coaches, it is important to include opportunities for collaboration regarding their role.

Finding ways for ICs to collaborate, since they engage in the same type of work, aligns with building capacity through human and social capital. Feger et al. (2004) stated that collaboration is fostered among ICs through options such as district meetings, study groups, or online platforms. This interaction builds community among the team and helps ICs feel connected to share experiences and/or emotions. Through these types of collaborative experiences for instructional coaches, they hear from others that may vary in years of experience and expertise. During this interaction, it is also important that instructional coaches have time to reflect upon and determine next steps regarding their specific coaching work. Through building social and human capital in this manner, it allows instructional coaches to take learning from other settings and apply it in their own setting.

Support of Campus Administration

Fullan and Knight (2011) explained that to have high levels of success within a learning organization, alignment of the beliefs and behaviors of all change agents is needed in schools. Therefore, teachers, coaches, and principals need to work together to accomplish profound instructional change. This includes the campus administrators and instructional coaches working

closely through collaboration to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coaching program. Fullan and Knight reported that recent survey findings indicated that 75% of instructional coaches spend less than 25% of their time engaged in coaching teachers. Of that 75%, 40% reported spending 10% or less of their time engaged in coaching teachers. Within the survey findings, ICs reported that the lack of role clarity resulted in their engagement of clerical work rather than instructional reform. It is the responsibility of the principal to protect the time of the instructional coach to ensure that instructional improvement with teachers is a priority (Knight, 2011).

To undergird a successful instructional coaching program, one important role of the principal is to proactively show support for the instructional coach (Knight, 2011). Principals symbolically can communicate support for the IC program by creating supportive structures that align with the best practices described in this chapter. Principals can also show symbolic support by participating in professional learning with the staff. This type of behavior highlights the importance of the instructional coaching program to the staff and that they, the principals, are learners as well. Principals may also demonstrate support for the IC program in a literal manner through supportive conversations with staff members. Instructional coaches reported the most vital support needed to be effective in their role is the support from the principal. When administrators and instructional coaches partner together, change is led more effectively.

Support of District Administration

Providing professional learning for principals on effective utilization of instructional coaches should be a priority of district leadership to create conditions for implementation of an instructional coaching program (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Clarity about the IC's role in schools

can support all stakeholders in understanding the link between professional development that occurs from coaching teachers and student outcomes (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007). It is important for district leaders to understand that placing ICs on campuses without clarity of purpose may limit the success of the instructional coaching program (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

Instructional coaches must be effectively taught and continuously work to improve coaching skills, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills (Knight, 2006; Feger et al., 2004). Feger et al. (2004) indicated that instructional coaches also need support in learning how to manage the new situations they face along the way, through development of problem solving skills. Therefore, continuous district-level professional learning should be provided to support instructional coaches in their work on campuses.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the systems in place for building the capacity of instructional coaches and supporting the success of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. The review of literature grounds the conceptual framework that is the focus of this study. This chapter reviewed related literature to understand the change process, schools as learning organizations, professional learning communities, instructional coaching, and capacity building through human and social capital. The review of literature highlights the importance of district and campus support in establishing an effective instructional coaching program. Chapter three will explain the research design utilized in examining the established structures for elementary instructional coaches in a fast-growth district.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study sought to understand the systems in place for building the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in a fast-growth district. A qualitative analysis allowed for a more comprehensive representation of the systems established for the instructional coaching program. This qualitative research used a descriptive case study design to examine how the structures established for elementary instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in the fast-growth district targeted for this study. This chapter explains the research design, which includes the qualitative methodology, sampling, instrumentation, data collection plan, and data analysis. Limitations, assumptions, and ethical considerations are included as well. A visual representation of the methodology is included in the data collection section of this chapter to reflect the key components of the research design.

Descriptive research seeks to richly describe an aspect of social life (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Case studies allow for descriptive data and in-depth analysis of one particular unit studied, through the generation of data in natural conditions (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 2010; Yin 2003). Flyvbjerg (2011) acknowledged that:

> Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lie at the center of the case study as a research and teaching method; or to put it more generally yet—as a method of learning. (p. 303)

Due to this being an original study and not a replication of a previous study, it was designed to describe current systems related to the targeted instructional coaching program. Specifically, the systems in place for building the capacity of instructional coaches were the focus. In addition, this study provides greater insight into the support provided by the different levels of leadership that have been involved in the instructional coaching program, by allowing

the participants to voice their understandings about the systems in place. This study was not

concerned with the frequency or quantity of occurrence, thus eliminating the requirement for a

quantitative view.

This research study explored the following overarching question. What are the systems

in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that

is the target of this study? To determine the answer to this question, the following three sub-

questions were addressed:

1. What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional
   coaches?

2. How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their
   capacity as effective coaches?

3. What structures are in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are
   implementing the instructional coaching program?

Prior to conducting any research, approval was obtained from the UNT Institutional Review

Board. The approval notification is included in Appendix A.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

This study centered on one rapidly growing Texas school district, hereafter referred to as

Rose Independent School District (ISD). The pseudonym, Rose ISD, is used to maintain

confidentiality of the district. Pseudonyms are also used for all campuses and participants.

Permission and support from the district was established prior to conducting the study. Campus

sites within the district were selected to represent a sample of districts similar in size and rapid

growth.

Purposive Sampling

The sampling technique for selecting this site was purposive selection. Merriam (2009) explained, "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 72). Therefore, purposive sampling was chosen as the preferred sampling approach as I was allowed to set criteria for particular characteristics that assist with answering the study's research questions (Charmaz, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

Merriam (2009) asserted that criteria for purposive selection should "directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases" (p. 78). This study included data collection from in-depth interviews from district-level leadership, including three content coordinators, one curriculum director, and two area directors. The district leader participants were selected based on the criteria explained in Table 4.

Table 4

Selection Criteria for District Leader Participants

Purposive Selection of District Leaders
Criteria: 1. Area directors that have supported the elementary IC program in a leadership role for a minimum of three years resulted in two area directors. 2. Curriculum directors that have supported the elementary IC program in a leadership role for a minimum of three years resulted in one curriculum director. 3. Content coordinators that have supported the elementary IC program in a leadership role for a minimum of three years resulted in three content coordinators.

Content coordinators serve as leaders in curriculum and instruction for the district, across content areas. They also serve in a supportive role to the instructional coaches on the campuses; however, they are not in a supervisory role. The curriculum director supervises the content

coordinators and oversees the instructional coaching program through the support of content

coordinators. Area directors support the campus leadership with continuous improvement of

student learning, teacher development, and campus operations. This includes supporting the

instructional coaching program. Area directors serve as supervisors to campus principals.

This study also involved the principals and instructional coaches at six elementary

campuses: Grace, Douglass, Gerard, Isabella, Gabriella, and Lee (all pseudonyms). These six

elementary campuses were selected through purposive selection and random selection.

Purposive selection was utilized to establish criteria in selecting participants that would best

support answering the research questions. This process resulted in 12 campuses meeting the

criteria, therefore allowing for random selection to be most appropriate to narrow the participants

for the study. Creswell (2014) referred to random sampling as "each individual in the population

has an equal probability of being selected" (p. 158). The selection process utilized for this study

is fully explained in Table 5.

Table 5

Campus Selection Process

Purposive Selection of Campuses	Random Selection of Campuses	Random Selection of Interviewees
Criteria: 1. Campuses not supervised by the researcher resulted in 26 campuses. 2. Campuses in existence since 2012 resulted in 22 campuses. 3. Campuses with principals that have supported the IC program for a minimum of three years resulted in 12 campuses.	Of the 12 campuses that met the criteria, six were randomly selected for principal and IC focus groups. Each campus was assigned a number, and an online random number generator was used to randomly select the six sites.	From the six campuses randomly selected for the focus groups, two campuses were randomly selected through the use of an online random number generator for individual in-depth interviews with the principal and IC.

The ranges of overall years as educators and years in current position of the instructional coaches and principals participating in the focus groups are listed in Table 6. Ranges have been used to mask the identity of the participants in an effort to support confidentiality.

Table 6

Years of Experience of Focus Group Participants

Participant	Campus	Range of Years in Education	Range of Years in IC position
IC 1	Grace Elementary	10-15 years	2-3 years
IC 2	Isabella Elementary	10-15 years	2-3 years
IC 3	Lee Elementary	16-20 years	2-3 years
IC 4	Douglass Elementary	25-30 years	4-5 years
IC 5	Gerard Elementary	5-9 years	0-1 year
IC 6	Gabriella Elementary	16-20 years	0-1 year
Principal 1	Grace Elementary	20-25 years	6-9 years
Principal 2	Isabella Elementary	20-25 years	2-3 years
Principal 3	Lee Elementary	20-25 years	10-15 years
Principal 4	Douglass Elementary	20-25 years	6-9 years
Principal 5	Gerard Elementary	10-15 years	4-5 years
Principal 6	Gabriella Elementary	16-20 years	0-1 year

Context of District and Schools

According to the documents reviewed for Rose ISD, the district is categorized as a fast-growth district due to the high increase in student enrollment over the last two decades. During this time period, the district ranged from a 7% to 30% increase in enrollment of new students each school year. The fast student growth in Rose ISD resulted in a high demand to hire more teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators as well. The number of teachers and leaders

in new positions is significant when considering the concept of building capacity of instructional coaches.

District documents reviewed indicated that Rose ISD introduced a professional learning community framework in 2007 at one specific campus within the district. The PLC framework utilized was based on the work of DuFour and colleagues. Their book, *Learning by Doing*, created structures for teacher collaboration that were focused on learning for all students (DuFour et al., 2016). The district implementation of a PLC framework resulted in positive movement towards a collaborative culture and several more campuses began to utilize this framework as well. In 2010, district leaders increased involvement in the utilization of the PLC framework through providing professional learning opportunities where campus leaders, teachers, and district administrators learned together and from each other. However, due to the lack of clarity with the implementation of the PLC framework, campuses struggled to move forward in the change process.

Rose ISD initiated the instructional coaching program in 2012 to support the implementation of the professional learning community framework, according to district documents reviewed. The district assigned each elementary campus one instructional coach and four instructional coaches were assigned for every secondary campus. To support funding of the program, the district shifted the role of the accelerated reading teacher to the new instructional coaching role, at the elementary campuses. At the secondary campuses, the instructional coach positions were filled through shifting the master schedule and teachers were hired as needed to accommodate this change.

The specific focus of the instructional coaching program, as explained through documents reviewed, was on shared practices, collective learning, and teachers' application of

learning to help close student achievement gaps and accelerate learning for all students. Additionally, the instructional coach position was expected to support the professional learning community framework implementation and serve as a communication link between the district and campus. Since the initiation of the instructional coaching program, the district implemented the professional learning community framework with all campuses.

The campuses in this study have implemented the instructional coaching program since it began in 2012. Based on the Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) released in 2016 by the Texas Education Agency, the student enrollment of these campuses ranges from approximately 700-800 and the percent of economically disadvantaged students range from 4 to 11%. The demographic information of the schools in the study is included in Table 7.

Table 7

School Demographic Information

School	Title 1	Sped.	Low SES	ELL	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian
Douglass Elementary	No	7%	9%	9%	10%	11%	36%	35%
Gabriella Elementary	No	5%	13%	11%	9%	15%	57%	15%
Gerard Elementary	No	10%	14%	6%	16%	13%	52%	13%
Grace Elementary	No	10%	12%	9%	13%	9%	35%	39%
Isabella Elementary	No	12%	14%	5%	12%	16%	56%	9%
Lee Elementary	No	8%	13%	4%	10%	14%	59%	14%

According to the most recent TAPR report, all campuses in this study received a Met Standard accountability rating for the 2015-2016 school year (TEA, 2016). The state of Texas rates campuses either Met Standard or Improvement Required. These ratings are based upon the performance on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in four

different indices: student achievement, student progress, closing the achievement gap, and

postsecondary readiness (TEA, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

In order to align with ethical research practices, specific actions were vital prior to

conducting research. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) stated that informed consent (Appendix B)

is needed to safeguard participants from any potential risks for participating within a study.

Informed consent was explained to the participants of both the in-depth interviews and the focus

groups. I also explained that participation is voluntary. Signatures were obtained to confirm

they were opting to participate. It was explained that if, at any time, the participant would like to

leave the study, consent may be revoked. The procedures for obtaining informed consent are

aligned with the requirements of University of North Texas Institutional Review Board. The

interviews and focus group processes were shared with all participants that detailed the study and

explained that participation is considered confidential. Pseudonyms were used for all

participants, the district, and campuses cited within this study. I also considered the impact of

my role as a district leader in Rose ISD; therefore, I selected participants that I do not directly

supervise, as previously noted in the participant section of this chapter.

Instrumentation

The qualitative data collection and analysis involved a focus group of principals and a

focus group of instructional coaches from six Rose ISD elementary school sites. The focus group

interview process was selected to provide additional insight into the systems in place to support

instructional coaches. Focus group interviews are a dynamic process based on interaction

between multiple people; therefore, the data drawn from this experience will be unique in nature (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). The focus group discussions were based on interview protocols (Appendix C & D) that allowed for a natural flow of conversation to elicit participants' understanding of the systems in place to support the instructional coaching program. The focus groups took place face-to-face and lasted approximately 60 minutes in length. During the focus group sessions, I moderated the conversation while seeking to listen and observe the social interactions of the participants.

This study also involved semi-structured, in-depth, individual interviews with the elementary principal and the instructional coach at each of two campuses randomly selected from the focus group participant pool. In-depth interview data were collected from district-level leaders, including three content coordinators, one curriculum director, and two area directors. The campus-level in-depth interviews (Appendices E & F) and district-level in-depth interviews (Appendix G) followed specific interview protocols that included probing questions. The in-depth interviews all took place face-to-face and ranged approximately from 30-60 minutes in length.

The focus group and interview protocols were specifically developed for this study. Each protocol included approximately 10 questions that facilitated discussion from the participants to understand their perspective on the systems in place to build the capacity of ICs. All protocols were field tested in a process where they were reviewed by five educators that are in similar positions to those participating in this study, which included representation of instructional coaches, principals, and district leaders. During the review process, the selected educators provided detailed recommendations and all were considered in the final development of the

protocols. The purpose of this review was to validate the instruments and improve the questions

to better answer the study's research questions.

Data Collection

Data for this study were obtained through three stages of data collection during the spring

semester of 2017, as indicated in Table 8. The focus group and individual interviews took place

in February and March. Document analysis was conducted in the beginning of April upon the

completion of the interviews. The analysis process began in May and continued through June

with the purpose of understanding emerging themes to establish findings of the study. At the

conclusion of the analysis process, the member-checking process took place.

Table 8

Qualitative Research Design

Descriptive Case Study		
Phase 1 February-March 2017	Phase 2: April 2017	Phase 3 May-June 2017
In-Depth Interviews • ICs (2) • Principals (2) • Coordinators (3) • Curriculum Director (1) • Area Directors (2) Focus Groups • ICs (6) • Principals (6)	Document Analysis • IC Handbook • Visioning Document • Samples of IC Meeting Documents • Samples of Weekly Newsletters to ICs	Research Findings • Themes emerged through analysis in relation to systems in place for IC capacity building. Member-Checking • All Interview Participants (18)

Note. Adapted from the work of Creswell and Miller (2000), Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003).

The member-checking process gives participants the opportunity to review a summary of the

findings and provide feedback. The inclusion of the member-checking process supports the

establishment of credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Stake, 1995). During this feedback

process, Stake (1995) explained that the participants are requested to review the findings for

"accuracy and palatability" (p. 115). The feedback provided by the participants during the

member-checking process was reviewed and included as appropriate to provide improvement to

the study.

Document Analysis

The following district documents were examined through the documentation analysis

process: instructional coaching handbook (Appendix H), curriculum and instruction visioning

document (Appendix I), handouts and agenda of an instructional coaching meeting (Appendix J),

and samples of instructional coach weekly newsletters (Appendix K). These documents were

analyzed for evidence of the structures in place for the instructional coaching program in the

district within this study. This additional method was intended to support a deeper

understanding of the study's targeted research questions.

Focus Group Interviews

Six elementary instructional coaches and six elementary principals participated in the

focus group interviews. The focus group discussion was structured with open-ended and probing

questions to give the participants the space to speak from their experiences in regard to the

systems in place for the instructional coaching program. Focus group participants were assigned

an identifying number to verbally state prior to responding to interview questions, in order to

support the transcription process and retain identity protection.

Individual In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with two area directors, one elementary curriculum director, three content coordinators, two elementary principals, and two elementary instructional coaches. Open-ended and probing questions that range from broad to more specific were asked during the interview process. The purpose in selecting semi-structured interviews was to allow for a more naturally flowing conversation and to give the respondents latitude to discuss what is important regarding the instructional coaching program (Chase, 2011).

Both the in-depth interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded in order to support the data analysis process. All audio recordings were submitted for professional transcription. I also utilized handwritten notes to capture observed expressions and physical responses that may not be evident through an audio recording. All records collected for this study will be kept on a remote storage device and locked in the office of the Supervising Investigator. As per federal regulations, the research participants' information will be maintained for three years, and then will be deleted.

Data Analysis

This study sought to examine the systems established for elementary instructional coaches in the targeted fast-growth district. During and after the data collection process, I followed specific steps to understand and make meaning of the data that were involved in this study. This included the establishment of preset categories, analyzing collected data through the use of these preset categories, and identifying themes from the data analysis process. The qualitative computer data analysis program, QSR NVivo, was used to assist with the data analysis process.

The data analysis process included the use of a priori codes as preset categories to sort, organize, and synthesize the data collected to identify emerging themes (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). The use of a priori coding provides guidance in understanding and making meaning of the data collected as a result of a thorough analysis of information. Tesch (1990) explained, "Categories start out as tools and become part of the outcome" (p. 139). The a priori codes selected were critical to the data analysis process as they were derived from the conceptual framework explained in Chapter 1 and from words and phrases of the research questions and interview questions. The preset categories are denoted in Table 9.

Table 9

A Priori Codes

Code	Category
RC	Role Clarity
BC	Building Capacity
DE	District Expectations
S	Support
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
C	Communication
NA	Needs Assessment

After each in-depth interview and at the conclusion of the focus group interviews, transcriptions took place and the data were analyzed and organized into the preset categories identified in the table above, within the QSR NVivo program. After the documents were collected for document analysis, they were analyzed and organized into the preset categories as well. After all the data collected was initially coded, it was further analyzed to determine if any larger categories existed. Patterns were reviewed within the categorical data to determine

similarities and differences (Taylor-Power & Renner, 2003). The larger categories that emerged from this analysis were summarized as themes and the data were reviewed again to ensure effective alignment to the themes that emerged. Counting how many times themes were repeated was also part of this process as well, as a form of verification.

Methods triangulation is a technique that utilizes two or more different methods to find meaning in regard to the research question (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). During this three-part data collection process (document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group interviews), I sought convergence in the findings in order to triangulate. These three methods provided data from different stakeholders that were involved in the instructional coaching program as a means of finding convergence.

Limitations of the Study

Validity is a process that involves the researcher earning the confidence of the reader by illustrating that the study is credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This includes the researcher not only drawing conclusions regarding the data but utilizing tactics to verify the conclusions drawn, such as triangulation of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Merriam (2002) asserted that researchers build credibility and trust through utilizing additional guidelines when conducting qualitative studies. These guidelines may include the researcher engaging in reflexivity to consider the possible biases or assumptions within the design and findings of the study. Despite the fact that this study has specific procedures in place to support validity and reliability, there are important threats to consider.

Through engaging in reflexivity during the research design process, a few aspects of bias are identified that could have been present. This study relied on the perceptions and knowledge

of the elementary principals, instructional coaches, and district leadership. The information gathered from the participants during the interviews and focus groups regarding the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD could have been portrayed in a more negative or positive manner than in reality, based on participants' perception and experiences. Researcher bias was also a threat to consider as I am currently working in the central office of the district being studied. To overcome this limitation, I did not have any professional relationships with the elementary campuses chosen in the study. With the district leadership participants, they had no professional performance connection to me as well. During recruitment of participants, I clearly explained that my role within this study was solely as a researcher and was separate from the school district. I also explained to the participants that other district leaders would not be present during the focus groups or interviews and that their participation would be confidential as indicated in the informed consent document. Another limitation to this study is the length of the data collection process. The success or lack of success of the instructional coaching program may fluctuate over time. Since this study was conducted over one semester of a school year, the data collected represented that time period only and may not depict the overall picture over a period of time.

The above-mentioned limitations are the reason for the criteria that were utilized in selecting participants, to support a historical picture of the instructional coaching program. To provide more conclusive results, triangulation of data was a tactic utilized to determine the findings within the study. This process included data collected from document analysis, focus group interviews, and in-depth interviews.

Summary

This qualitative case study design was for the purpose of examining how the structures established for elementary instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. Research was conducted during the spring semester of 2017 and included document analysis as well as individual in-depth and focus group interviews. Through a data analysis process, identified themes emerged in relation to the research questions guiding this study and are further discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the systems in place for building the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in a fast-growth district. The support of district leaders and principals in the establishment of systems to sustain the overall instructional coaching program in a district encountering high levels of change was also explored in this study. This chapter includes the findings revealed from a qualitative analysis of the data collected. I assessed the perceptions of six instructional coaches (IC1, IC2, IC3, IC4, IC5, IC6), six principals (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6), and six district leaders (DL1, DL2, DL3, DL4, DL5, DL6) from Rose ISD. The school district's support for the elementary instructional coaching program was analyzed through a triangulation of data including in-depth individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis.

The results support the purpose of the study, which was to examine the following overarching question and three sub-questions. What are the systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

1. What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

2. How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches?

3. What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program?

To answer the above-stated research questions, seven a priori codes were selected and utilized throughout the data analysis process, as indicated in chapter three. The reference frequency of each a priori code within all data collected was tracked throughout the data analysis

process by the QSR NVivo coding software. The frequency information listed in Table 10 is placed in order of the a priori codes most frequently referenced first.

Table 10

A Priori Code Frequency

A Priori Codes	Reference Frequency
Support	217 references
Building Capacity	191 references
Needs Assessment	146 references
Communication	137 references
Role Clarity	129 references
District Expectations	109 references
Professional Learning Communities	67 references

The analysis of the categorical data highlighted the existence of four themes: (a) structured time for professional learning, (b) program clarity, (c) collaborative support systems, and (d) implementation of professional learning communities. Each theme is further reviewed in the next section of this chapter, as well as the relationships with the conceptual framework components.

Data Analysis Findings

The four themes in this study represent the overall perceptions revealed from the analysis of data collected from in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The data analysis process also highlighted the interdependent relationship among all four themes in building the capacity of instructional coaches in Rose ISD. The relationships among the themes are illustrated in Figure 5. The themes' support of one another undergirds the importance of each individual theme and its impact on the overall systems in place to support the instructional coaching program in the fast-growth district in this study.
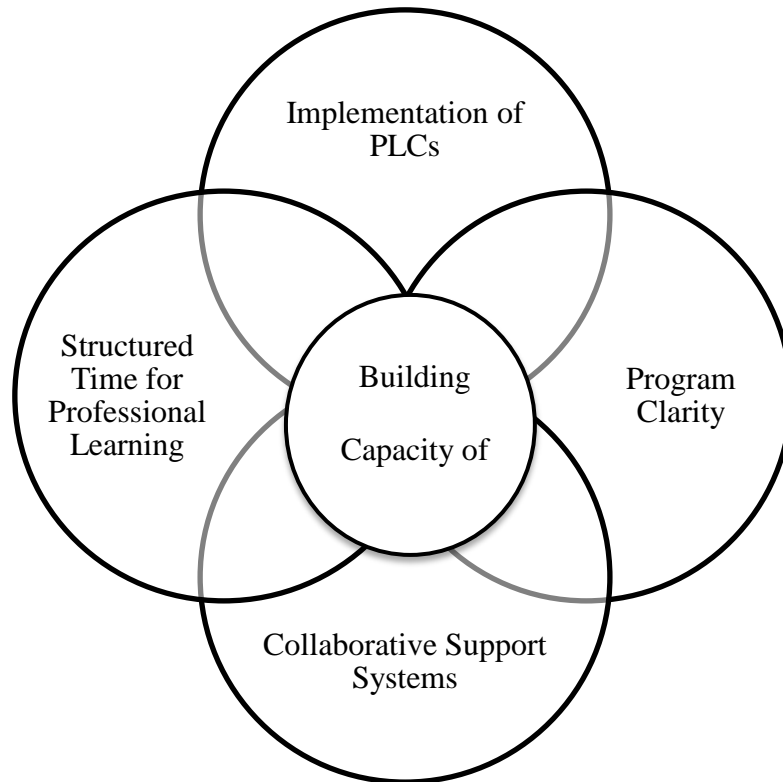
Figure 5. Relationships among four themes revealed from data analysis, regarding building capacity of ICs.

Each theme is further discussed in the next three sub-sections: 1) alignment of themes to in-depth interview and focus group data, 2) alignment of themes to the document analysis data, and 3) alignment of themes to the conceptual framework.

Alignment of Themes to Interview and Focus Group Data

Theme 1: Structured Time for Professional Learning

Findings from this study indicate that structured time for professional learning in Rose ISD is utilized to support capacity-building of ICs. This theme is supported by two sub-categories: district-level professional learning time and campus-level professional learning time. The prioritization of time is also a supportive structure that aligns with a professional learning community culture. DuFour et al. (2016) included providing time as one of the supportive

structures that are critical for successful collaboration. Because of the support continuously

needed to build the capacity of existing instructional coaches and instructional coaches that are

new to their role, due to the fast growth, providing specific time for this to occur was identified

as a significant priority in Rose ISD.

District-level structured time. At the district-level, the participants consistently discussed

a variety of structures that are utilized to prioritize time for professional learning of instructional

coaches. The theme, structured time for professional learning, included consistently-held

district-level IC meetings, annual coaching training, consistently-held individual coaching

sessions between content coordinators and ICs, and an annual instructional coaching academy.

District-level IC meetings have occurred since the induction of the IC program in Rose

ISD. However, the purpose and format has adjusted over time, based on needs of the ICs and

increased understanding of best practices from district leaders. The current model includes IC

meetings that occur once a month for approximately four hours. The focus of the monthly

meetings is on learning for the instructional coaches so they can bring back best practices to their

campuses. This approach is aligned to Knight's (2007) core partnership principle of praxis, as

ICs can use ideas they learn from the meeting in ways that work best for their campus. DL1

described, during an in-depth interview, about how the format has been altered to meet specific

needs of ICs across the district.

> DL1: The IC meetings have evolved so much. Originally it was only [the] math and
> English Language Arts and Reading [coordinators] that could present at the IC meetings,
> and the very first year it was more focused on it being an event rather than the learning
> that is occurring for ICs. Now, in the monthly IC meetings, we cover curriculum updates
> and then there's always a teach piece. We've really started including all special programs
> like dyslexia, special education, GT, and ESL as well. They [ICs] also get a time to
> practice coaching now. So, we [content coordinators] find it really beneficial for them to
> have this opportunity. We break them [ICs] into triads, and they work with other coaches
> to have thinking partners. They might practice a conversation they're going to have, or if
> they have a problem, somebody will help coach them through that problem.

IC5 explained, during an in-depth interview, about the benefit of having prioritized time together

as instructional coaches to develop coaching skills further during the monthly IC meetings.

> IC5: Allowing time for coaching with each other during the IC meetings is really beneficial because that's [what] I think [is] the part that you're least prepared for. I know curriculum and things like that, but when you're in this role and you get the opportunity to practice those conversations with people [ICs] that are in the same boat as you, it is really helpful.

P2 shared, during the focus group interview, how she observed the instructional coach on her

campus utilize the coaching skills she learned from the district professional learning experiences.

> P2: I think the coaching [training provided by the district] has been the most beneficial for our IC. But I also think it depends where the coach is. I think it takes a lot of practice. And I know that in some of their meetings, they [ICs] have had those opportunities to kind of role play and practice those conversations. So, I know that's probably been most beneficial to my IC because I have witnessed her be able to question very quickly, where I personally have said, 'Gosh, I wish I would have thought that myself.' So, I think that coaching has really benefited her the most.

During the focus group interview, IC5 highlighted the overall benefit of the structured

professional learning time as an instructional coach.

> IC5: Since I have become an IC, I've gotten so much PD from the district through our meetings that has really stretched me and grown me. In particular areas that were not my strengths … [such as] literacy. I primarily taught math and science, and so I've had opportunities to learn more about guided reading and the continuum of literacy and strategy groups. So, I feel like I'm constantly learning.

> The district also provides an annual coaching training in the beginning of the year for all

instructional coaches. This full-day training is provided by outside consultants and includes an

overview of coaching skills, including paraphrasing, positive presuppositions, committed

listening, powerful questioning and reflective feedback. IC2 described how the annual district

coaching training has continued to support them in their role.

> IC2: The coaching piece has really helped [me]. With the curriculum, I feel pretty strong in that area. I know where to go to find information, and I can research on my own. I feel like the coaching is not something I could get anywhere else, like actually what that's like. We practice at meetings, but having the training in the beginning of the year really

does kind of help set the stage for that piece of our role. I feel like that's the heart of our role.

Beyond the IC monthly meeting and annual coaching training, the content coordinators further the development of the IC's coaching skills through the individual coaching sessions between the IC and an assigned content coordinator. The district calls this structure *coaching the coach*. The content coordinator meets with the assigned IC a minimum of once per month. IC2 reported the benefit of this additional layer of support during an in-depth interview.

> IC2: This year I have a coach [content coordinator] that meets with me about once a month. We just have a very good relationship. I feel like she kind of asks me where we [campus] are and what we're doing. She's realized just from watching me in other settings that I'm not good at celebrating, and that's the first thing she asks me when she comes or follows-up about. 'Okay, so last time we talked you were working with a second-grade teacher, how is that going?' That just makes me stop and reflect. She actually even made me do a gratitude journal for an entire month. She didn't make me, but we just talked about that. That [support] really just helped me see things that I am doing or that are working that I don't always see.

During the principal focus group interview, P5 included the following description of the coaching support provided by the content coordinators.

> P5: Each IC is being coached by a coordinator in the district. I think that's been very beneficial for her to get feedback from our instructional coach about the conversation she's had with her coach. It's a different kind of relationship than what they've had in the past. It's on-the-spot supportive, because she gets to meet with her more often and it's more of a coaching relationship.

The coaching that is provided by the content coordinators to instructional coaches each month also includes focused time on the development and monitoring of goals. This allows the coordinator to target the support provided for that individual instructional coach. DL3 described how this process is utilized in Rose ISD.

> DL3: For us at the district level, when we're coaching with our cadre of coaches, they identify their goals. They identify the campus goal that they're working on, as well as a personal coaching goal, and then we monitor and track that throughout the year. I use a Google doc [document] for [keeping track of] their goals. I use [it] each time we're progress monitoring and looking at evidence that supports their growth towards the goal.

All the coordinators may not do it the same way, but we're still tracking the same things. We track their personal goal, their campus goal, [and] what evidence that they have.

The district also provides structured time in the summer in which they host an Instructional Coach Academy. This is a full-day training to review upcoming priorities across the district. The first time this training was conducted was the summer of 2016. DL1 reflected on the implementation of this new structure to build the capacity of ICs.

> DL1: Last year we started the IC Academy, and we feel like that's been pretty beneficial. We're going to evolve that again this year as far as we're really going to differentiate between new ICs and existing ICs [regarding] where they are on the continuum of their role.

Collaboration among educators is recognized through the work of DuFour et al. (2016) and Hipp and Huffman (2010) as an important component within a professional learning community framework. ICs learning from one another through collaboration during the structured professional learning time established was prevalent within the data collected. The ICs within this study perceived that the learning time spent together has been highly valuable to their professional growth. In addition to learning together with other ICs, the perspective of ICs and principals revealed the need for structured professional learning time together as well. IC4 and P4 described this need through the focus group sessions.

> IC4: I've been in this role since its [the program's] beginning. What I would really like is that, at some point, my principal and I would be in a district meeting together. I think that when she and I are hearing it [information], and [if] we would be given time to discuss it, then we could make things [new learning] clear quickly. Because sometimes what she hears and what I hear may be the same things, but sometimes we might not have received it the same. That creates another conversation or some checking into things. I think, on occasion, that it would be nice that principals and ICs meet together to hear some of the same information that might be important.

> P4: I would like to be able to attend trainings with the IC at the same time, so we can have conversations. For example, when we attend the PLC trainings, it's wonderful because we're right there talking. We can make a plan instead of the separate [conversations]. I would like to see more IC/principal training together.

Campus-level structured time. Fullan and Knight (2011) explained that to have high levels of success within a learning organization, alignment of the beliefs and behaviors of all change agents is needed in schools. Therefore, instructional coaches and principals need to work together to accomplish profound instructional change. This includes the campus administrators and instructional coaches working closely through collaboration to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coaching program. Campus-level structures utilized for professional learning time to build the capacity of instructional coaches, as explained by the study participants, includes weekly Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings and on-going individualized support for the IC by the campus principal. In Rose ISD, the ILT includes the instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal. Participants described these meetings as occurring weekly and providing time to discuss best instructional practices occurring across the campus. DL5 shared experiences regarding the prioritized time of the ILT.

> DL5: The instructional coach is part of the instructional leadership team on the campus. So, it's the campus principal, assistant principal, and the instructional coach. They are constantly having daily conversations, or they'll have formal meetings at least once a week where they're talking about what's going on in classrooms. They're constantly evaluating, conducting needs assessments to see what the teachers are needing.

P5 described how the ILT protects planning time on a regular basis and reflects on how she works to support the IC individually.

> P5: My instructional coach and I, well it seems like we talk all day, every day. We meet formally on Mondays as an ILT; we'll plan for the week. We need to look at our calendars together because our time is so budgeted that we need to make sure we are protecting our planning time and teams' planning times. I also spend time with my IC supporting her in her work with teachers on a regular basis. I think it is also important to watch her in action with individual teachers and teams. She has this sense of urgency that is often not matched by teachers in the classroom. What I convey to her is that from our positions, we have a birds-eye view of everything, and we can see a holistic picture of what's going on in the building. I talk with my IC regularly [about] until they [teachers] see it and you [have to] help them discover it. It's that self-discovery and aha moment that changes things, and this all takes patience and dedicated time.

The examples shared during the in-depth interviews and focus groups highlighted the sole focus of the structured time with instructional coaches being utilized to support their professional growth.

Theme 2: Program Clarity

Findings from this study indicate that program clarity has been a specific focus in the implementation of the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD. This theme is supported by three sub-categories, establishment of program expectations, consistent communication of program expectations, and consistent monitoring of program expectations. Participants consistently shared examples of how, in the first two years of the IC program, clarity was lacking in terms of the IC's role and purpose of the program. IC6 and IC4 described their experiences in the early years of IC program implementation.

> IC6: This is my first year as an IC. I have been in the school district for five years. So, my previous four years, I've spent as a teacher in a classroom with IC support. What I have seen from the teacher perspective is that four years ago, there was no definition of the IC role. We [teachers] used to joke, and our IC would joke, that she would carry around a sign saying, 'I don't know what my job is.' Nobody really knew [the job of the IC].

> IC4: That very first year, the main thing I remember from the meeting [IC meeting] is we didn't really know what we were supposed to do. I remember one structure that we had decided what kind of shoes we were supposed to wear. Our leaders wanted the IC program to happen. They knew it was a good thing. I think they thought that this was going to be really great for campuses, but I don't think they really knew what they wanted it to look like yet.

Establishment of district expectations. The participants consistently discussed the support from the district regarding the recent establishment of district expectations for all staff involved in the instructional coaching program in the last two or three years of program implementation. These expectations were written in the format of an instructional coaching

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handbook. Rose ISD established the handbook in the spring of 2015 with the purpose of clearly

describing the role of all stakeholders involved in the instructional coaching program throughout

the district, including directors, coordinators, campus administrators, instructional coaches, and

teachers. With a district-wide implementation of professional learning communities, Rose ISD

included the IC program as a support to reaching sustainment by aligning the IC's role to support

teams of teachers in the PLC process. The participants indicated the difference the handbook has

made in the instructional coaching program. DL1 and DL6 shared about the support the

handbook has provided for them in supporting the IC program.

> DL1: We've developed the IC handbook. I think that was very beneficial, because when
> we started out the role really wasn't defined. Everybody was seeing something different.
> It was really important that we put down what we expected, what it looked like, what it
> sounded like, and what it was not. That was real important, because some people saw that
> [the IC] as an extra set of hands that could sub or make copies. We just had to really
> define that this wasn't what we [district leaders] had envisioned this role being. I think
> that this really helped the clarification, but I also think it helped the ICs set goals. Their
> goals could be set on some of those domains that we had set up. I think it helped evolve
> the conversations from the content coordinators who became coaches to the ICs. I know
> it did [for] me.

> DL6: I think in the initial piece of the program, the challenge is that it was not really
> clear on what the purpose of the program was. I think we lacked a lot of clarity on what
> the role of the principal was with ensuring that the ICs were performing at the level that
> they needed to. I think in the beginning, some of these ICs were doing a lot of clerical
> [work] or they were just going into classrooms to support teachers that perhaps the
> principal wanted them to support. I think we were probably addressing as many people
> as we could've as far as building the capacity, but I think the district, a couple of years
> ago, put in place an IC handbook that did provide some clarity. Not some, but significant
> clarity for all stakeholders that included the principal, the IC, the teachers on the campus
> as well as the district's role in supporting the program. Since that time, I do think that
> we've seen a significant change with the IC program. We're maximizing the services of
> the IC on our campuses now.

The principals that participated in the focus group shared the difference the IC handbook

has made for their campus in implementing the instructional coaching program. P3 explained,

during the principal focus group, how this helped their new IC transition.

P3: I guess the first two years we had the program the guideline book had not come out. This came out about the third year. When my new IC came on, it was a lot easier for me to sit with her and provide that clarity, because we had that guideline book that we all worked on. It really helped her to know the role she was going into.

During the IC focus group, the instructional coaches also shared the benefits of clarity for the instructional coaching program as a result of the IC handbook development. IC5 specifically noted that, in the short time as an IC, the establishment of expectations supported teachers' understanding of the IC role as well, in this process.

IC5: In the two short years that I've been an instructional coach, I don't really think it's [IC program] changed that much. Who I think it's changed for is the teachers. I feel like there is more clarity to the classroom teachers about what our role is in the five years that it's taken to get there, but I think that's probably the biggest thing I've noticed specifically this year. I think experiences have been super positive now that people are gaining clarity through the IC handbook and what our job entails.
Rose ISD's establishment of the district expectations for the IC program in a handbook format has allowed district leaders, principals, and ICs to consistently refer to this guide in implementing the role as intended by the district. P5 explained during a focus group about how she can utilize the handbook consistently each year to communicate expectations.

P5: We are a part of the instructional coach program, so I think everybody's working together to make that program work. It's not just up to the instructional coach. I think that document helps us tremendously because there have been a few occasions when teachers have questioned the program. Especially a teacher who comes from another district that's used to seeing different models and explaining to them this is how our program here works. Every year during August PD, we review different pieces of it [handbook] that we think are really relevant for the time. You can hand that to a teacher and say, 'Read this cover to cover,' but that's not going to happen. I do think this helps us a lot.

DL1 and DL4 highlight the importance of the IC handbook and how it is utilized on a regular basis in supporting the IC program.

DL1: I can assure you that almost every IC, if you asked them where that handbook is, they carry it with them. It really is that important. I know that the content coordinators used it to guide and to look over the goals that the ICs set with their ILT to make sure it [the goals] tied to it [IC handbook]. So, it truly is a very important document. That's the

reason it needs to be updated as we see that it needs to be updated, because that's the value that we have in it.

DL4: We have an IC handbook and refer to it quite frequently in all our meetings and relate back to it for our expectations. The handbook identifies the IC's role and the principal's role. I mean, it identifies everyone's role in this IC program. And at times, we've had to talk to principals about that. Is the task you're asking them [IC] to do really a role of the IC? Sometimes they have such a good relationship [with the principal], that they [IC] almost turn into an AP. So, the IC handbook has really identified the purpose of the program specifically. We revisit that each year to revise and edit it.

Through the evidence provided by the participants, the perception of those in the study is that the handbook is clear in detailing the specific roles and responsibilities within the IC program. The IC handbook will be further reviewed in the document analysis section.

In addition to the establishment of the IC handbook, the implementation of professional learning communities throughout the district provided more clarity to the IC program. Per the participants, this allowed the district to be clearer about the purpose of implementing an instructional coaching program. Professional learning communities undergird the theme of program clarity because the participants consistently discussed how this framework provided clarity to district and campus administration about how the IC's role can be utilized with teams of teachers. This allowed district leaders to establish the expectations of the IC program by aligning the work of the IC with best practices of establishing a PLC.

P5 discussed, during an in-depth interview, how PLC implementation has aligned closely with the expectations of the IC program.

P5: I think another big overarching thing that the district has done to support building capacity of the ICs is the professional learning communities, because the instructional coaching program fits with that perfectly. All the things that PLC talks about doing, seeking the best results for the kids, your instructional coach can only help you get there. So, professional learning communities has been really key to helping the instructional coaching program be successful as it aligned our focus and purpose in how to effectively use our ICs. The district really lined out a lot of the details through that program handbook, and I think that helps give weight to the role of the coach.

P4 shared how the instructional coach is utilized to support the PLC framework

implementation with teachers during the focus group interview.

> P4: I feel the IC has become the heart and soul of the campus. I can't imagine running the campus without her being there. She does so much, as far as supporting teachers with the curriculum planning and PLC process. That's how we kind of look at the IC, as that curriculum specialist on campus to help the teachers, the administration team, special education team and anybody to dig a little bit deeper into the curriculum to make sure that we are teaching it to the level it should be at. It has been a nice change from the beginning of the unknown to now we feel like we are at a place where we have a vision of where we would like the IC to go on our campuses in supporting us as a Professional Learning Community as well.

IC4 and P2 both explained, during the focus group interviews, how PLC implementation

supported a shift in the IC role on campus to being more effective.

> IC4: I guess as far as that evolution of the IC job on my campus, it has been the introduction of the PLC. I've watched my campus go from kind of zero to amazing. We're still not there, and we've still got a long way to go, but me and my principal have embraced this. So, I've personally grown from this and the campus has come a long way in the last three years since we've been a part of the PLC.

> P2: I know personally we kind of really looked at those PLC questions and what do we want them [students] to learn? How do we know they've learned it? And my IC has been kind of instrumental in kind of bringing that back to the forefront repeatedly when sometimes we lose sight of it. I feel like that's kind of built all of our capacity in learning communities. When I look at year one as a principal to year three, I have seen teams shift so much in just their conversations with each other. It's like, 'Let's focus on kids and what's best for kids,' and, 'What do we need to do for kids?' So, that is kind of a celebration in just that collaboration piece.

> *Consistent communication of program expectations.* Rose ISD has worked toward

communicating information strategically by aligning what is shared during IC meetings with

principals and assistant principals during their meetings. During the IC focus group, IC2

described the benefit of this aligned communication.

> IC2: I've noticed recently the changes in our meetings; they look different. We had them a lot more frequently, like every week last year. Now we have them once per month, and they are very targeted. They [IC meetings] are aligned with what the principals and APs are receiving in their meetings. We used to be given this information to just take back, which I think we all did the best that we could. Now that it's aligned

with all campus leaders, I think we are moving a little quicker on campus with moving forward.

This district also provides a weekly newsletter to instructional coaches that includes curriculum and informational items to support ICs in their role as district liaison on campus. These are designed by the content coordinators. DL4 explained, during an in-depth interview, the purpose of this district communication.

> DL4: Well, we provide weekly communication to the ICs that is created by the content coordinators, and we provide that to principals and APs as well. We try to make it very continuous. It's not for the principal or the AP to act upon. It's just to have knowledge of what is being shared with ICs. So, we do send this out weekly through an electronic format. Now, the expectation for the IC is that communication we are providing, they are responsible to share on their campus and to be discussing this with your principal during weekly ILT meetings. So, there is an expectation with that communication for sure.

Consistent monitoring of expectations. The consistent monitoring of IC program expectations emerged as the primary role of the principal since the IC is placed on campus. However, the participants were not able to describe specific training that is designed for principals regarding this part of their role. Fullan and Knight (2011) asserted that professional learning for principals about effective utilization of instructional coaches should be a priority of district leadership to create conditions for implementation of an instructional coaching program. DL3 and P2 described, during an in-depth interview, the importance of the role of principal in building the capacity of instructional coaches.

> DL3: I think principals have to really think about the strengths that the coach has and also talk to the coach about his or her goals and how those goals align with the goals of the campus and the vision of the campus. I think again having that relationship and a principal investing in the coach and knowing that the coach's success or lack of success is directly related to the support that the principal gives them.

> P2: I know the district does give us the program handbook to kind of guide us, but I think the expectations of the IC and the role they play on our campus really is going to come from the campus administrator and how that intertwines with your vision and all your work together. We're supporting the district's initiatives, but I think a lot falls on how we, as administrators, communicate to our staff of that role of the IC.

District leaders reported that the handbook is in place as a guide and the area directors support the principal individually in this process. However, there is no structured plan for building the capacity of the principal in monitoring the IC program. DL6 explained, during an in-depth interview, how this is a potential need in Rose ISD.

> DL6: Right now it's not so much the district evaluating it [the IC program]. It's really more so the principal. The closest [evaluation] that the district would have would be through the area director's role and working with the principal in understanding what the goals of the campus are and the IC's role with implementing professional development. So, I think that's something that we could tease out a little bit more to really have a more measurable tool with how much progress that the individual campuses are making with the IC support.

The participants explained that the state-mandated teacher evaluation system, T-TESS (Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System), is in place to monitor the growth of the IC individually. The principals have received training on this evaluation tool, but this system is not specifically aligned to the roles and responsibilities of the IC, as established by the district. DL6 explained experiences with the evaluation of ICs during an in-depth interview.

> DL6: We have T-TESS in place now and that is the tool that we are using for evaluating the IC. I noticed that some principals have taken that a step further with goals that they're working with their ICs on establishing. So, it goes over and beyond not just the goal for the campus, but individual growth as the IC. They've used the IC program guide that the district provided as a starting point of assessing where the IC is and identifying areas of strength and areas of needed growth. I do know that those that have gone back to that IC handbook, they feel like they're better targeting the needs of the IC versus the T-TESS, because it doesn't exactly align to the ICs role. So, I'd like to see some type of tool that it is more of a joint evaluation with possibly the input from the coordinator or the elementary director in some way to where it's not solely on the campus principal. I think if anybody has a clear understanding of the program, it's going to be your district-level staff.

There also is not a formal program review that is conducted from the district level to monitor effectiveness and continuous improvement of the IC program. Fullan (2007) recommended monitoring the results of implementation of the innovation taking place which is, in this case, the IC program. This supports reaching the institutionalization phase in which leaders understand

the span of implementation throughout the organization and can respond to areas that need more

support. This was discussed by district leaders, DL4 and DL6, as a next step and a need to

further develop the IC program.

> DL4: I think some [principals] do a really nice job with this [monitoring], but this is probably something that we haven't done as much teaching for principals because some have been able to keep the same IC for five years. But the reality is we're rapid growth so more than likely they're going to have a new IC at some point. Right now the principals determine progress based on what they're observing on their campus. We don't really have a formalized structure. We've kind of run into a couple of times this year when ICs are struggling. It is finding a way to get that communication piece where principals come to me and come to their area director and we can work together. We are working with one principal right now, because she determined that there was a need for some structure for her IC. The content coordinators and myself, we identified the three areas with the principal that the IC was struggling with. We put in a support plan for her using us directly to support that. But as far as how do the principals determine success of ICs, it's really up to them. When they do say something's an issue, the great thing is that the area directors can observe and see what is the underlying issue. We can kind of work through that issue. But, I think this is the work that we may need to start thinking about. DL6: I think, unfortunately, right now our evaluation is really probably more on what we may be hearing from the principal or the area directors. The curriculum director really doesn't talk directly to principals about the IC. I think what she hears is more from the coordinators who might be working with ICs. So, I think the only way we're evaluating the progress right now is mainly if that IC is a good fit for the campus or not. When I say fit for the campus, I mean as well as the relationship with the principal. If they don't have common philosophies or beliefs, it's a little bit rockier. You can see those teams that are highly effective ILTs, are those that seem to have a common vision. They're better able to execute the work. So, I think if I said anything that we need to work on is how to better evaluate the program.

Participants indicated that a shared understanding of what the IC program will look like

at the beginning stage, middle stage, and full implementation for all stakeholders is not occurring

in Rose ISD. In addition, the support needed for all stakeholders involved in the implementation

process and the assessment of established structures to support implementation of the IC

program are all related to the sub-category of monitoring district expectations of the IC program.

Theme 3: Collaborative Support Systems

The theme, collaborative support systems, was consistently referenced by the participants as a means of building capacity within the IC program in Rose ISD. Based on the interdependent relationship the district leaders, principals, and ICs have within the established IC program in Rose ISD, collaboration is revealed as a high priority. The participants referenced that ICs formally and informally collaborate with other ICs, content coordinators, and campus principals. In addition to this occurrence of informal and formal collaboration throughout the district, this theme is also supported by one sub-category, development of trusting relationships. ICs build trusting relationships with teachers for authentic engagement in the coaching process to support campus-wide continuous improvement. Based on the level of collaboration that is required to build the capacity of ICs within the IC program, the participants repeatedly referenced the importance of trust throughout the district.

Based on the perception of the study participants, instructional coaches in Rose ISD collaborate with one another formally and informally. The formal collaboration that takes place among ICs was explained within theme one, structured time for professional learning. This occurs during monthly IC meetings based on the established collaborative structure during this time. However, the informal collaboration that occurs is specifically directed by instructional coaches, as shared by participants. A construction of shared knowledge about the most effective ways to achieve goals for student learning occurs through collaboration of educators. This construction of shared knowledge connects with Hipp and Huffman's (2010) PLC common practices of continuous learning, collaborative structures, and teachers sharing practices together. Finding ways to allow ICs to collaborate, since they engage in the same type of work, aligns with building capacity using human and social capital, as suggested by Feger et al. (2004).

The participants described this informal collaboration as their very own support system across the district. IC5 described the importance of this system of support in the in-depth interview conducted.

> IC5: I think they're [ICs] the biggest support. You kind of tell them the situation without telling them specifics. So, still following that privacy because the other campuses don't necessarily need to know what's going on with your campus. So, there's still that privacy boundary, but calling them and saying, 'Have you had a similar situation like this? What did you do?'

DL2 described, during an in-depth interview, this collaborative support system among ICs from what they experienced and the benefits for the instructional coaches.

> DL2: Some of our coaches just are seeing that we want more of a lateral capacity building through the district, so they're reaching out to those in coaching positions on other campuses and sharing best practices and tapping into other strengths. So, I think that this is something that we would hopefully, with the culture of professional learning communities in our district; we're going to see more of that.

The formal collaboration that takes place between ICs and content coordinators was explained within theme one, structured time for professional learning. This occurs during on-going individual coaching sessions and during the monthly IC meetings. The informal collaboration that occurs among ICs and content coordinators is typically based on individualized needs in which an IC may need additional support. IC5 and DL1 explained, during an in-depth interview, about the collaborative support system of the content coordinators.

> IC5: We have our coaches this year and that's been better. I've had the same one for two years, but I feel like this year we've done a lot more with them. And so, I'm definitely comfortable calling her. She knows my campus, and she knows the teachers here, and so she gives me a lot of guidance. Sometimes I'll say, 'Do you think this is something I need to bring to them [principal and assistant principal] or not?' And she can't always answer, but I think she does a good job of helping me think through it.

> DL1: I think even in listening to other coaches talk about what's going on at their campus, they're learning. I also know that a lot of ICs are reaching out to each other. I know I've taken ICs to see other ICs at work. I had an IC that really wanted to learn about interactive word walls, and so we lined up three or four campuses for us to go walk, take pictures, and talk to the ICs and teachers about interactive word walls. The IC

could go back and deliver professional development. I think that's real important, and it's real organic by doing it that way versus me just showing them pictures and an article. I do think this type of collaboration is real important for their professional growth.

The formal and informal collaboration that takes between ICs and campus principals occurs during weekly ILT meetings and through the on-going support for the IC provided by the principal as needed. Both the informal and formal collaboration are typically based on campus needs and individual support needed by the IC, as discussed previously in theme one of this chapter. Teachers, coaches, and principals work and collaborate to accomplish profound instructional change. This includes the campus administrators and instructional coaches working closely through collaboration to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coaching program. Based on the perceptions of the participants, this collaborative support system has been established within the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD.

Development of trusting relationships. Regarding the development of trusting relationships, the previously described collaborative support systems of the IC program are reliant upon having trust at all levels within the IC program to successfully build the capacity of ICs. DL3 articulated, during an in-depth interview, how trusting relationships can support success within the IC program.

> DL3: I think what promotes success with the IC program is the coordinators having their relationships with the six coaches that they coach. I think that there's time to build the trust within those relationships, so I feel like we sometimes get some very valuable, honest, real feedback, because that trust is there.

Since Rose ISD is a fast-growth district, the instructional coaching program is in constant change with adding newly hired instructional coaches and principals. In addition, these changes, at times, result in campus placement changes of instructional coaches, based on district need. Participants explained that when campuses are impacted by change, the development of trusting relationships over time can be more difficult. P6 and IC2 described their experiences during a

focus group and in-depth interview about the importance of developing trusting relationships to

support the success of the instructional coaching program.

> P6: I felt like with my past IC, we strived that first year on the importance of relationships, maybe a little bit too much, where we didn't get into the real work of the instructional coach. I have a new coach this year who is struggling, because she came in with the mindset that she didn't have time to build relationships. We are working to try to overcome that and facilitate how you can build that trust and build those relationships without that being your only focus.

> IC2: I look back and I think, 'Oh my gosh, look where we were two or three years ago, and where we are now.' So, I know that I'm making a difference. But, I think that's because of the relationships that have been built. I'm crossing my fingers, this hasn't happened to me yet, but I know of other ICs that get yanked and moved to other campuses. I know there are lots of reasons. I think that when you're looking at that IC program and why does it work, the time that is spent building those relationships and working with teachers and knowing where they are in the whole grand scheme of things is critical.

The process for IC campus placements involves district leaders as the sole decision-

makers. P1 and P3 explained, during the principal focus group, the desire to have principals

included on this decision-making process of IC placements to support the trust building process

from the beginning.

> P1: I think the challenge is when you lose an IC that knows your campus and knows your teachers. I think that's a challenge because the instructional coach, like the assistant principal, their biggest job is to champion the vision of the principal, and that relationship has to be solid. It has to be a really good fit because if it's not, you're going to have a challenge. I think when they're moved or when the principal doesn't get a good say or an opportunity to court that IC, I think it can be an uphill battle from there.

> P3: Especially when the IC leaving has their trust and a new IC is coming in as the outsider now, they will have to make a concerted effort to gain trust so you can work together. If you have an IC sticking with you, it doesn't impact you. If mine was going to stay, then I wouldn't even be thinking about this, because my IC's doing so well. We're in such a great spot, the trust is high. She's been there three years and our PLC; it's a true PLC going on. Team leaders are saying things that I just want to get up and cheer for them. It's my fear of who's going to be coming in as the IC; I'm feeling like I would have some control in that process if involved in interviewing the candidates.

In Rose ISD, new ICs are hired into the IC program each year. With the IC role of engaging campuses through supporting teachers in instructional change to increase student achievement, there is a significant amount of support that is needed to initiate and sustain learning of all ICs throughout the system. As Fullan (2007) reported, the change process can take as many as five-10 years, depending on the scale of the change. When new ICs are hired or ICs are shifted among campuses, it increases the need for collaborative support systems in place to allow for successful transitions.

Theme 4: Implementation of the PLC Framework

Theme 4, implementation of the PLC framework, was acknowledged by participants as an important component that provided support with building the capacity of instructional coaches within the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD. The PLC framework provides structures and resources for instructional coaches to collaborate with teacher teams, other ICs, and administrators regarding best instructional practices.

Once district leaders in Rose ISD were clear about the vision of utilizing a PLC framework, then the role of the IC became clearer, which resulted in clarity of the program's purpose as well. When the program's purpose became clear, the support for instructional coaches became clearer. Therefore, changes began to occur within the program, as previously discussed in this chapter, such as the *coaching the coach* model for IC support, shifting of purpose in IC meetings, focus on increased collaboration, or learning how to specifically support the PLC framework on campuses. In an in-depth interview, P5 shared how implementation of the professional learning community framework is a priority for her as a principal and is supported by the instructional coaching program.

P5: My top priorities as a principal continue to be connected to professional learning communities and building the capacity of our teachers. A lot of the work that we've done with teams has been around the backwards planning process and about data analysis. If our teachers have the ability to truly analyze their data and respond to what they're seeing with student results, then they're will be able to interdependently and independently create plans that target their kids' needs. This is our fifth year of doing PLCs. Our IC has been instrumental to creating an environment of a really facilitated environment of data analysis through using our data room and using trello boards.

IC6 and P5 both described, during the focus groups, how the ICs support sustainment of the implementation of the PLC framework in Rose ISD.

IC6: I think we [ICs] keep it rolling. I mean I really kind of do see us as the cog in the wheel that keeps things moving as far as PLC. We tend to be in every grade level planning and every extra collaborative planning time, which kind of keeps that moving forward.

P5: Our instructional coach has helped our teams become stronger teams. She's been on our campus for two years and her focus was building those good relationships in the beginning. Through those relationships with teachers, and through trust, she's been able to push our values through our professional learning community. We created a vision statement together last year that we really feel unites everybody's vision for what our school should be. We attend every single planning we can possibly attend, and she will remind teams of our vision. 'Where does that align with the vision?' How does that align with your collective commitments? Can we talk about your collective commitments? And they're open to that, because they have a good relationship with her.

The district provides on-going professional learning community framework training throughout the school year to support leaders with initiation, implementation, and sustainment of professional learning communities on campus. These trainings are facilitated by a consultant and campuses have specific days in which they are expected to attend the training, based on where they are in the change process. Principals, ICs, and teacher leaders are the people from the campuses that attend the trainings, as described by the participants. IC2 shared the benefits of this on-going training during the focus group session.

IC2: A few times a year we all get back together as a leadership team and one of the PLC consultants comes in and guides us. We check in where we are. He always has us look at where we are on a continuum and develop next steps to keep moving forward with the PLC. For example, we had been focused on collaborative planning on our campus and as

we were sitting there and talking during the PLC training, they [teacher leaders] were, like, 'Oh my gosh, we need you to do that again, we really feel like we need you to help us in that again. We're kind of floundering when we come to planning, and we're craving that guidance.' I think the trainings help with that sustainment piece. Even though we've done it and we're making good progress, then it kind of stops if we're not there to keep it all going.

The implementation of the PLC framework throughout the learning organization is described as helpful in sustaining instructional practices even when campuses are experiencing change. P3 expounded on an upcoming change in the role of IC on their campus and how system-wide implementation of the PLC framework will help the new IC during the transition.

> P3: Obviously, the PLC is the district initiative. Or not initiative, but that's our philosophy, we live in that. They [ICs] need to know what that is if we're living in it. I mean I'm assuming my new IC will probably come from within district from another campus, so they've already been exposed to our PLC model. So, it's not going to be hopefully new to them coming into the role, but I'm going to take the new IC to the PLC training with me with a couple of teachers. I think they can help drive those things at the campus and keep them going.

It was recognized by the participants that the implementation of the PLC framework is a change process and that all campuses may be in different places. P2 discussed this campus change process with the PLC framework, during the principal focus group.

> P2: We really looked at those PLC questions and what do we want them [students] to learn? How do we know they've learned it? My IC has been kind of instrumental in bringing that back to the forefront repeatedly when sometimes we lose sight of it. I feel like that's kind of built our capacity in professional learning communities. But, I think each one of us are all at different places and have been on campuses for a different [amount of] time. So, I think that growth in professional learning communities probably looks so very different on every one of our campuses.

Alignment of Themes to Document Analysis Data

The following district documents were examined through the a priori coding data analysis process: instructional coaching handbook (Appendix H), curriculum and instruction visioning document (Appendix I), handouts and agenda of an instructional coaching meeting (Appendix J),

and samples of instructional coach weekly newsletters (Appendix K). The document analysis process supported the research process in reaching triangulation when utilized with the focus group and in-depth interview data collected. The Rose ISD instructional coaching handbook served as an essential resource regarding evidence that specifically documented the written district expectations of all stakeholders involved in the instructional coaching program. This additional method allowed for a more in-depth understanding of this study's research questions.

Instructional Coaching Handbook. The handbook was established in the spring of 2015 by district leaders and shared with all stakeholders involved in the instructional coaching program in the beginning of the fall semester of 2015. This document explains the following regarding the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD:

- History and purpose of the program

- Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders

- Expectations for campus implementation of program

- Expectations for campus assessment of program

- District training and support of program

The purpose that is stated within the handbook aligns to the foundation of theme four, professional learning community implementation, as it is focused on the learning of all students and supporting teachers in being more instructionally effective in meeting students' needs. Below is the purpose statement articulated within the handbook.

> The purpose of the Instructional Coaching Program is to help close the student achievement gap and accelerate learning for all students, specifically, students identified as at-risk, by building teacher capacity through job-embedded professional learning and implementation of effective instructional practices. The instructional coaching program is aligned to the goals and objectives of the campus and district improvement plans. Instructional coaching is about teachers, teacher leaders, coaches, administrators, coordinators and area directors examining practices in reflective ways with the focus on student learning and achievement. The ultimate result is to build teachers' capacity so

they know every student by name and need and be able to respond to those needs in a timely manner specifically for at-risk students.

The components within the IC handbook showed alignment to theme two, program clarity. The handbook not only articulates the purpose of the program, but it defines the roles of each stakeholder from teachers to district leaders. It also states what everyone in the program should expect an instructional coach to be doing but also what an instructional coach should not be doing, as shown below:

> An instructional coach supports and provides training in order to improve classroom instruction that leads to improved student achievement. An instructional coach is one who supports others in building their teaching skills, assists in application of new knowledge, and provides ongoing learning and sustainment. The instructional coach increases the overall quality of effective classroom instruction. An instructional coach is not responsible for performing daily operations of the campus such as serving as a substitute teacher or covering other areas; sorting and keeping inventory of textbooks; performing clerical duties outside of the primary job performance criteria; serving as the administrator designee; serving on the core team.

The district training section of the IC handbook aligns to theme one, structured time for professional learning, as it states the expectations of the professional learning time provided for instructional coaches. This section also aligns to theme three, collaborative support systems, as it includes the purpose of the professional learning time to be collaborative, as indicated below:

> Instructional coaches will collaboratively engage monthly in professional learning to build the collective capacity with teaching and learning, coaching, and change management. It is expected that instructional coaches transfer their shared learning experience with their ILT and campus staff to ensure successful implementation.

As noted previously, all four of the themes highlighted in this study were consistently referenced as foundational components within the IC handbook.

Curriculum and Instruction Visioning Document

This document articulates the expectations for PLC implementation throughout the

district, which is aligned to DuFour et al.'s (2016) three big ideas discussed in chapter two: teacher collaboration, student learning, and focus on results. In fact, these three ideas are the foundation for how this document is organized. Within each big idea, it is stated what is expected at the campus level in terms of implementation. Therefore, the curriculum and instruction visioning document connected to theme four, implementation of the professional learning community framework.

IC Meeting Documents

These documents of an instructional coaching meeting and samples of weekly instructional coaching newsletter were also examined. These two sets of documents connected to themes one and three revealed in this study. The IC meeting documents that were reviewed included collaborative time for instructional coaches to coach together within a triad setting, which aligns to theme one, structured professional learning time, and theme three, collaborative support systems. There was also documentation of a focus on instructional practices to build capacity regarding vocabulary development within the newsletter and the IC meeting, indicating consistent communication of priorities within the IC program.

Alignment of Themes to Conceptual Framework

The themes that were revealed from the data collected and analyzed for this qualitative study align with the components of the conceptual framework explained in Chapter 1 in a variety of ways. The conceptual framework components will be further reviewed in this section to demonstrate how this alignment exists. The specific alignment among the themes and conceptual framework components are highlighted in Table 11.

Table 11

Alignment of Themes to Conceptual Framework Components

Theme	Aligned Conceptual Framework Components
Theme 1: Structured Time for Professional Learning	Human Capital, Social Capital, PLCs, District Administration Support, Campus Administration Support
Theme 2: Program Clarity	PLCs, District Administration Support, Campus Administration Support, Change Process
Theme 3: Collaborative Support Systems	Human Capital, Social Capital, PLCs, District Administration Support, Campus Administration Support, Change Process
Theme 4: Implementation of PLC Framework	Human Capital, Social Capital, PLCs, District Administration Support, Campus Administration Support, Change Process

The findings of this study indicate that all previously stated themes are focused on the intended outcome of building capacity of ICs, which is in alignment with the conceptual framework's intended outcome as well. District and campus leaders were found to be a critical aspect of all themes as they act as partners in all aspects of building the capacity of ICs within the instructional coaching program. The change process was revealed as an important factor within three out of four of the themes due to the ever-changing environment within Rose ISD. This fast-growth district utilized structures to provide program clarity, collaborative support systems, and implementation of PLCs to support the constant change that occurs yearly within the district.

Human and social capital aligned to three out of the four themes as the participants, at all levels of leadership, consistently mentioned building capacity of instructional coaches through development of human and social capital. Social capital is the result of educators building relationships through collaboration (Coleman, 1988; Leana, 2011). Leana's research specified

that there is significant power in utilizing both human and social capital together for capacity to be built most effectively. When building the capacity of instructional coaches, it is important that Rose ISD prioritized opportunities for collaboration regarding their role.

Professional learning community implementation was found to be critical in all four themes as well. The participants' perceptions revealed that the PLC framework provides a structure to support building capacity of all educators throughout the system, including instructional coaches. A professional learning community framework supports finding the balance between human and social capital by focusing on student learning through professional collaboration and monitoring of effectiveness that is based on results for students.

Summary

The 18 leaders who participated in this qualitative study shared their perceptions of the support in place to build the capacity of instructional coaches within the instructional coaching program in the fast-growth district, Rose ISD. The most prevalent supportive systems in place, those that were shared by the participants to build the capacity of instructional coaches, were the four themes presented earlier in this chapter: structured professional learning, program clarity, collaborative support systems, and implementation of the professional learning community framework. Even though the participants' roles and years of experience differed within the district, their perceptions of the systems in place to support capacity-building of instructional coaches were closely aligned. A further discussion of the four themes will be the foundation of the Chapter 5, Discussion and Recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of this qualitative study and conclusions derived from the data related to systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that was the target of this study. A discussion of the implications for action and recommendations for further research are presented in this chapter as well.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the systems in place for building the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in a fast-growth district. The research on leading change through capacity building highlights the importance of systems being in place for this to occur. Despite the research highlighting the importance of systems for building capacity of instructional coaches, the research is still limited regarding the appropriate systems needed to develop the skills of instructional coaches in fast-growth districts. Therefore, I assessed the perceptions of six instructional coaches, six principals, and six district leaders from Rose ISD regarding the school district's support for the elementary instructional coaching program. This process included a triangulation of data collected from in-depth individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. During the data analysis process, a priori coding was utilized in which the data collected were organized into seven preset categories. The categorized data were further reviewed, in which four themes emerged: (a) structured time for professional learning, (b) program clarity, (c) collaborative support systems, and (d) implementation of professional learning communities. The four themes outline the findings regarding how district leaders establish systems to build the capacity of instructional coaches in an ever-changing environment caused by fast growth.

The results support the examination of the following overarching question and three sub-questions. What are the systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

1. What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

2. How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches?

3. What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program?

In this chapter, the revealed themes are connected to the literature reviewed, the conceptual framework components, and the research questions for this study.

Discussion of Findings Related to the Literature

The literature reviewed for this study highlighted that effective learning organizations develop structures for learning together and responding effectively through an ever-changing environment to influence behaviors over time (Brandt, 2003; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Kruse, 2003; Louis, 2006, Senge, 1990). Fullan and Knight (2011) specifically noted that successful instructional coaching programs focus on building capacity regarding lead components of reform: instructional delivery, teamwork, and systematic change. The four themes that emerged from the a priori coding process include these components as well as others that were highlighted in the literature reviewed regarding instructional coaching.

Alignment of Theme 1 to Literature Reviewed

Findings from this study indicate that structured time for professional learning in Rose ISD is utilized to support capacity-building of ICs. This theme is supported by two sub-

categories: district-level professional learning time and campus-level professional learning time. District-level professional learning time included building the capacity of ICs through monthly IC meetings, individual coaching from content coordinators, an annual coaching training, and an annual IC academy. Campus-level professional learning time included building the capacity of ICs through weekly Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings and on-going individualized support for the IC by the campus principal. The participants consistently shared the benefits of structured time for professional learning for the overall instructional coaching program.

Instructional coaches must be effectively taught and continuously work to improve coaching skills, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills (Knight, 2006; Feger et al., 2004). The theme, structured time for professional learning, is also aligned with Poglinco and Bach's (2004) assertion that initial comprehensive training and on-going training are critical for ICs due to the complexity of the role. As Kee et al. (2010) asserted, for instructional coaches to be successful with supporting growth of teachers, they must be specifically skilled in how to coach effectively. The skills provided in the district training are directly aligned to the key skills identified by Kee and colleagues. Feger et al. (2004) indicated that instructional coaches also need support in learning how to manage the new situations they face along the way, through development of problem solving skills.

The district-level structured professional learning time was noted by participants as consistently focusing on the improvement of coaching skills, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills, which aligns to the research of Knight (2006), Fullan and Knight (2011), and Feger et al. (2004) that asserted instructional coaches must be effectively taught and must work to improve these specific skills. The structured time for professional learning in Rose ISD allowed opportunities for ICs to learn together on a regular basis, as noted by the participants,

which aligns to the teamwork component highlighted by Fullan and Knight (2011). Feger et al. (2004) also suggested options for ICs to learn together, such as district meetings, study groups, or online platforms. The participants did not include specific data that aligned to online platforms or specific study groups but district meetings that focused on learning were consistently mentioned.

The literature indicates that building a community among the participants to help them feel connected so as to share experiences and/or emotions is another important component of this type of professional learning. In addition, Feger et al. (2004) indicated that instructional coaches also need support in learning how to manage the new situations they face along the way, through development of problem solving skills, and that continuous district-level professional learning should be provided to support instructional coaches in their work. As highlighted by the participants, the learning opportunities provided during the structured time for professional learning seemed to allow for focus on developing problem-solving skills, as well as support of one another. During monthly IC meetings, it is evident that there is time prioritized for ICs to work in triads to coach each other regarding their own personal experiences. According to the participants, these experiences supported the development of coaching skills and built a sense of community and networking among the ICs. The experiences described by the participants regarding structured time for professional learning is also aligned to one of the lead components of a successful instructional coaching program, teamwork, as noted by Fullan and Knight (2011).

This theme also aligns with the research on building capacity using human and social capital. Coleman (1998) and Leana (2011) described human capital in education as building the capacity of individuals regarding pedagogy and subject knowledge. Human capital can be developed through explicit professional learning, formal education, or experiences gained from

multiple years in the teaching field. Social capital is the result of educators building

relationships through collaboration (Coleman, 1988; Leana, 2011). The monthly IC meetings,

individual coaching from content coordinators, annual coaching training, and annual IC academy

all focus on building the capacity of ICs through human capital. However, it is evident that Rose

ISD builds social capital during this time as well, due to the collaborative nature of all the

professional learning opportunities. This approach aligns with the research findings of Leana

(2011) regarding the importance of combining human capital with the utilization of social capital

to most effectively support student achievement. However, it is important to note that the

influence on student achievement regarding this approach was not part of this study.

Theme 1, structured time for professional learning, also included campus-level support,

which involved weekly ILT meetings and on-going support from the campus principal. These

experiences were described by participants as time that is utilized for the principal and IC to

work collaboratively for instructional change. This time was also described as important in Rose

ISD to understand the individual needs of instructional coaches and support them in professional

growth. Structured time for ICs and principals to work collaboratively aligns with the literature

reviewed as this time supports the establishment of structures and clarity of the instructional

coaching program to achieve optimum results (Von Frank, 2010; Knight, 2011; Barkley &

Bianco, 2011). In fact, Fullan and Knight's research (2011) revealed that, from the instructional

coaches' perspective, the most vital support needed for ICs to be effective in their role is the

support from the principal.

Alignment of Theme 2 to Literature Reviewed

Findings from this study indicate that program clarity has been a specific focus in the

implementation of the instructional coaching program throughout Rose ISD. This theme is

supported by three sub-categories: establishment of program expectations, consistent

communication of program expectations, and consistent monitoring of program expectations.

This theme aligns to the research of Deussen et al. (2007) as they declared that IC role clarity

supports all stakeholders in understanding the link between this professional development

approach and how it can impact student outcomes. It is important for district leaders to

understand that placing ICs on campuses without clarity of purpose may limit the success of the

instructional coaching program (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). Rose ISD leaders shared their

experiences related to the importance of having clarity regarding the instructional coaching

program's purpose and how this further developed over the years through implementation.

Regarding establishment of program expectations, the development of the instructional

coaching handbook and implementation of professional learning communities has been a

significant support to the instructional coaching program, as indicated by the study participants.

The actions of establishing the IC handbook aligns to the work of Deussen et al. (2007) that

specified the importance of establishing expectations for the IC program that can be clear to all

stakeholders involved in the program. Prior to the development of the handbook, the participants

consistently stated that there was a lack of consistency in how the ICs were utilized on campuses

throughout the district. This lack of clarity and misalignment of the IC as a district resource in

the early years of implementation aligns with Fullan and Knight survey findings from 2011.

They found that the lack of role clarity resulted in the ICs not utilizing time for instructional

reform. Through the evidence provided by the participants, the perception is that the newly-

created instructional coaching handbook is clear in detailing the specific roles and

responsibilities within the IC program, which supports the ICs being utilized more for instructional reform throughout the district.

The consistent communication of program expectations included aligned communication from district to principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches. It also included the utilization of a weekly IC newsletter from the district. Both structures were viewed as supportive in maintaining alignment throughout the district of best instructional practices and appropriate utilization of the IC on campus.

The consistent monitoring of expectations was highlighted consistently by the participants as a future need regarding structures in place to evaluate the success of the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD. It is evident that the Rose ISD leadership does not currently have a formal process for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional coaching program. The principal and district leaders reported that the regular monitoring of the IC program is the responsibility of the principal since ICs spend most of their time on campuses, yet there is not specific training to build the capacity of the principals in this area. This gap in the Rose ISD instructional coaching program does not align with the research of Fullan and Knight (2011) regarding the importance of providing professional learning for principals to understand how to effectively utilize and monitor the instructional coaching program. It also does not align to Fullan's (2007) recommendation of monitoring the results of implementation of the innovation taking place, which, in this case, is the IC program. This type of monitoring supports reaching the institutionalization phase of the change process in which leaders understand the span of implementation throughout the organization and can respond to areas that need more support.

Alignment of Theme 3 to Literature Reviewed

The theme, collaborative support systems, was consistently referenced by the participants as a means of building capacity within the IC program in Rose ISD. This theme is also supported by one sub-category, development of trusting relationships. Constructing shared knowledge through collaboration of ICs connects with Hipp and Huffman's (2010) PLC common practices of continuous learning, collaborative structures, and teachers sharing practices together. The collaborative support systems within the IC program described by the participants also aligns with building capacity using human and social capital, as suggested by Feger et al. (2004).

The design of the support system for the Rose ISD IC program includes structures to create the conditions for successful collaboration. These structures include formal and informal collaboration with other ICs, content coordinators, and campus principals. It is evident that the ICs formally collaborate during monthly IC meetings, based on the established collaborative structure during this time. The informal collaboration that occurs among ICs is usually initiated and directed by instructional coaches, as explained by the participants. The network among the ICs was highly valued from the perspective of ICs in support of one another. The formal collaboration between ICs and coordinators occurs during on-going individual coaching sessions and during the monthly IC meetings. The informal collaboration that occurs among ICs and content coordinators is typically based on individualized needs in which an IC may need additional support. The formal and informal collaboration that takes place between ICs and campus principals occurs during weekly ILT meetings and through the on-going support for the IC provided by the principal, as needed. Both the informal and formal collaboration are typically based on campus needs and individual support needed by the IC.

The collaboration that occurs in Rose ISD, as described by the participants, aligns with the assertion of Fullan and Knight (2011) that campus administrators and instructional coaches must work closely through collaboration to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coaching program. Maintaining close lines of communication through collaboration is critical for successful implementation of an instructional coaching program (Von Frank, 2010). The collaborative support systems of the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD are in close alignment with big idea two of the DuFour et al. (2016) PLC framework, teacher collaboration. These collaborative supports are also aligned with Hipp and Huffman's (2010) dimension four, shared personal practice, and dimension five, supportive conditions.

Regarding the sub-category, development of trusting relationships, the collaborative support systems of the IC program are reliant upon having trust at all levels to successfully build the capacity of instructional coaches, as perceived by the participants. This aligns to Bryk and Schneider's (2002) case study research on relational trust as they found the level of relational trust significantly impacted the improvement efforts of the schools. Since Rose ISD is a fast-growth district, the IC program is in constant change with adding newly-hired instructional coaches and principals each year. Participants explained that when campuses are impacted by change, the development of trusting relationships seems to be more difficult as it takes time to establish this level of trust. In addition to the ever-changing environment, another barrier perceived by the principals within the study is the placement of instructional coaches. The process for IC campus placements involves district leaders as the sole decision-makers, as noted by the principals during the focus group session. The principals indicated that it may help with the trust building process if they are involved in the hiring process for ICs.

Alignment of Theme 4 to Literature Reviewed

The theme, implementation of the PLC framework, was recognized by the participants in Rose ISD as a foundational component that supports capacity-building of instructional coaches within the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD. The PLC framework was described by participants as beneficial to the development of ICs as it provides structure, focus, and an aligned vision for instructional coaches to collaborate with teacher teams, other ICs, and administrators regarding best instructional practices. The district's vision for PLC implementation is aligned to DuFour's (2016) three big ideas: teacher collaboration, student learning, and focus on results. This vision is articulated in writing within the curriculum and instruction vision document in which the three big ideas provide the foundation of the document. The vision clearly states what is expected at the campus-level in terms of implementation of the PLC framework.

Rose ISD has implemented the PLC framework throughout the district and provides on-going training to support leaders with initiation, implementation, and sustainment of professional learning communities on campus. The implementation of the PLC framework throughout the learning organization was explained by participants as helpful in sustaining instructional practices, even when campuses are experiencing change. It was recognized by the participants that the implementation of the PLC framework is a change process and that all campuses may be in different places. Rose ISD's implementation of the PLC framework is also aligned with the work of Senge (1990) in which he asserted that an important component of a learning organization is having systems in place that exist to support the organization's shared vision.

Conclusions

With the IC's role of supporting teachers as they implement instructional change for

increasing student achievement, there seems to be a significant amount of support that is needed to initiate and sustain learning of all ICs throughout a district, especially a district experiencing fast growth. Based on the study results and the literature reviewed, having effective systems in place that will build the capacity of instructional coaches to be effective in their role is possibly the lynchpin to an effective instructional coaching program. Specifically, districts having an evaluation system in place for individual ICs that aligns to the instructional coaching program expectations may support ICs, principals, and district leaders in understanding the effectiveness of the IC program and target areas for improvement. Therefore, the results of this study are intended to add to the body of educational research by providing fast-growth districts with ideas for establishing systems and supportive structures that aim to build the capacity of ICs.

Implications for Action

Based on the findings of this study, it seems to be critical for district leaders to plan for all phases of change when designing the instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. Considering processes to initially monitor and evaluate the IC program could potentially support clarity among stakeholders. Establishing program expectations, prior to implementation, that are aligned with the research on instructional coaching may support clarity throughout the district as well. In addition to establishing expectations, the consideration of how these expectations will be consistently communicated may support clarity and aligned practices across the district. When establishing instructional coaching program expectations, the alignment of these expectations to the district vision may be important to consider.

When districts structure professional learning for instructional coaches within an IC program, consideration regarding the frequency and focus of this time may better support desired

instructional reform efforts across the district. Alignment to the district's established expectations for the instructional coaching program seems to further support reform efforts as well. When districts are designing professional learning for instructional coaches, providing time for ICs to collaborate among other ICs, district leaders, and principals may support the development of a collaborative support system throughout the district. Providing structured learning time for principals and ICs to learn together at the district level may support the district's desired instructional reform efforts, considering that this partnership is critical at the campus level. In addition, developing structures that support building the capacity of the principal in understanding how to better support and monitor the instructional coaching program could benefit sustainment of the instructional coaching program.

Recommendations for Further Research

Building the capacity of instructional coaches in a fast-growth district is relatively new to the body of educational research. Thus, the sustainability of an effective instructional coaching program through a specific focus on program evaluation would benefit from further research, especially in large, fast-growth districts. Examining and understanding in more depth the barriers that exist when evaluating the success of an instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district could benefit the sustainment of these programs.

In this study, six elementary campuses represented a small sample of the schools that currently exist in the large growing district in this study. Similarities were found within the data collected from elementary principals, instructional coaches, and district leaders, suggesting alignment of the structures and systems in place for building the capacity of elementary instructional coaches. However, future studies that could extend this study to understand the

systems in place to support instructional coaches in secondary schools as well would provide a more system-wide approach and may provide district leaders with a valuable perspective.

Concluding Remarks

The research questions served as a guide throughout this study; therefore, it is important that they are addressed specifically. The research questions were answered through the utilization of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions from multiple perspectives and levels of leadership throughout the district. The response to the overarching research question will be discussed first and the sub-questions will be discussed thereafter.

What are the systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study? For the purposes of this study, a system has been defined as a structure where specific strategies are established and consistently utilized to create common understanding and maintain alignment throughout a school district (Fullan, 2010). The data collected and analyzed from district leaders, principals, and instructional coaches within Rose ISD revealed that structured time for professional learning, program clarity, collaborative support systems, and implementation of a professional learning community framework were all important structures consistently utilized to build the capacity of instructional coaches within a fast-growth district.

What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches? The processes utilized to examine the needs of elementary instructional coaches were identified as a gap within the findings. It is evident that there were no formal program evaluations conducted by the district or campuses. The current process that is in place that most closely relates to determining needs of ICs is the individual coaching between the content coordinators

and the IC. However, the district does not have a specific process in place for how this information is utilized beyond the content coordinator and the IC. The principal's role within the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD is to monitor and evaluate the program on their campus; however, there were no specific processes in place for this to occur. Yet, according to the participants, the principal does not receive specific training on this part of his or her role. Therefore, there is more to learn regarding these processes, as indicated in the recommendations for further research.

How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches? The structured time for professional learning partially answers this question because of the vast opportunities for professional growth that were discussed by the participants. Even though the participants stated the benefits of the learning opportunities, understanding how this makes ICs more effective in their role is still unanswered due to the missing component of program evaluation.

What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program? The identified structured time for professional learning, specifically the individual coaching from the content coordinators, supports verification that the instructional coaching program is in place. However, the lack of confirmed program evaluation highlights the need for a more system-wide approach to ensure the program is functioning as designed.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

        Limited research exists in understanding the systems in place to build the capacity of instructional coaches in fast-growth districts. In this study, I examined the systems in place to

support building the capacity of instructional coaches in a fast-growth district. The findings revealed systems that were perceived as successful by the 18 participants of this study; the findings also highlighted specific gaps within the instructional coaching program in Rose ISD. The specific systems in place to build the capacity of elementary instructional coaches include structured time for professional learning, program clarity, collaborative support systems and implementation of a professional learning community framework. Rose ISD has made great strides within the five years of IC program implementation regarding role clarity and establishing expectations to increase consistency throughout the district. However, the next steps seem to include further understanding of systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional coaching program to further support sustainment in an ever-changing environment of a fast-growth district.

APPENDIX A

UNT INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNT

A green light to greatness:

THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE

January 26, 2017

Dr. Miriam Ezzani
Student Investigator: Christy Fiori
Department of Teacher Education & Administration
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 17-017

Dear Dr. Ezzani:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled "Supportive Systems for Building Capacity of the Elementary Instructional Coach." The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. **Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only, January 26, 2017 to January 25, 2018.**

Enclosed are the consent documents with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and **use this form only** for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications. **If continuing review is not granted before January 25, 2018, IRB approval of this research expires on that date.**

Please contact The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Chad Trulson, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

CT:jm

APPENDIX B

UNT INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Supportive Systems for Building Capacity of the Elementary Instructional Coach

Student Investigator: Christy Fiori, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Teacher Education and Administration.

Supervising Investigator: Dr. Miriam Ezzani (Co-Supervising Investigator: Dr. Frances van Tassell)

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study that involves investigation of a rapidly growing school district and how the campus and district leaders utilize systems of support with implementing the instructional coaching program.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to participate in an interview and/or focus group about your experiences and perceptions of the support in place for the instructional coaching program in a rapid growth district that will take approximately 30-60 minutes of your time. Interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded, submitted for professional transcription, and this data will be analyzed using pre-set categories to determine themes, if any exist. These records will be maintained for three years and then will be deleted.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you; but we hope to learn more about how systems and structures are aligned district-wide in order to accommodate and support continuous improvement of the instructional coaching program.

Compensation for Participants: None

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Names of participants and school will not be used; pseudonyms will be assigned to protect identities. All records and information will be kept on a remote storage device and locked in the office of the Supervising Investigator. As per federal regulations, the research participants' information will be maintained for three years and then will be deleted.

Office of Research Integrity & Compliance
University of North Texas
Last Updated: July 11, 2011

Page 1 of 2

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
FROM 1/26/17 TO 1/25/18

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Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Christy Fiori at christyfiori@my.unt.edu or Dr. Miriam Ezzani at miriam.ezzani@unt.edu.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights:

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Christy Fiori has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

For the Student Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

_____   _____

Signature of Student Investigator   Date

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APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The purpose of this study is to examine how the structures established for elementary

instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a

fast-growth district. I will begin the focus group session by informing the focus group

participants about the study. In addition, an explanation will be provided regarding the

recording of the interview and that responses will be strictly confidential. Participants will also

be informed that if there is something to say off the record, then I will oblige by stopping the

recording midstream for their commentary. Each participant will be given a number to state

prior to responding verbally to support the transcription process and to assure identity

protection.

1. What have been your experiences with instructional coaching (IC)? (background)

2. Can you tell us how the IC program has evolved or changed during that time?

3. What is the purpose of the instructional coaching program?

     a. In what ways do you feel the IC program is improving student outcomes? Can you

        provide an example?

     b. How does the IC program support implementation of PLCs? Can you provide an

        example?

     c. What barriers have you found with the current model?

4. What professional development have you received as an instructional coach?

     a. What other opportunities contribute to your learning of the IC model program?

     b. How has the professional learning supported you in your role?

5. Can you tell us about a time when you felt well supported by your principal as an IC?

     a. What other campus principal actions have supported your development as an IC?

     b. Do you at times find IC learning opportunities to be limited?

6. What feedback have you received from teachers, other instructional coaches and/or principals on successes and challenges in regard to the instructional coaching program?

    a. How does the campus share feedback with the district in regard to the instructional coaching program?

    b. How does the district share feedback with the campus in regard to the instructional coaching program?

7. How do you measure your success as an IC?

    a. What specific tools do you use?

    b. How do you measure the personal growth of teachers that you are coaching?

    c. What might be getting in the way of sustaining the IC program in your school and district?

8. How are expectations of ICs conveyed from the district to campus?

    a. How is progress monitored by the district on these expectations?

    b. How is progress monitored by the campus on these expectations?

9. If you could make one change in your district's IC program, what would it be?

    a. What brought about this idea for change?

    b. What benefits do you foresee this change would support?

10. Do you have any final comments or anything else you want to add? (probing)

I will end the interview by thanking the interviewee and explaining the next steps in the research process. I will again assure the interviewee that his or her identity will not be revealed in connection with the answers given in the interview.

Cross-references of interview questions with the overarching research question and three subsequent questions are described below:

- What are the systems in place to build capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 2-9

- What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 5-8

- How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 4-7

- What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 3, 6-8

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PRINCIPALS

The purpose of this study is to examine how the structures established for elementary instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. I will begin the focus group session by informing the focus group participants about the study. In addition, an explanation will be provided regarding the recording of the interview and that responses will be strictly confidential. Participants will also be informed that if there is something to say off the record, then I will oblige by stopping the recording midstream for their commentary. Each participant will be given a number to state prior to responding verbally to support the transcription process and to assure identity protection.

1. What have been your experiences with the instructional coaching (IC) program? (background)

2. Can you tell us how the IC program has evolved or changed during that time?

3. What is the purpose of the instructional coaching program?

    a. In what ways do you feel the IC program is improving student outcomes? Can you provide an example?

    b. How does the IC program support implementation of PLCs? Can you provide an example?

4. What professional development is received by instructional coaches?

    a. What other opportunities contribute to your IC's learning?

    b. How has this supported ICs in their role?

5. Can you tell us about a time when you felt you supported your IC?

    a. What other actions have allowed you to support the development of your IC?

    b. Do you at times find learning opportunities to be limited for ICs?

6. What feedback have you received from teachers, instructional coaches and/or

other principals on successes and challenges in regard to the instructional coaching program?

 a. How does the campus share feedback with the district in regard to the instructional coaching program?

 b. How does the district share feedback with the campus in regard to the instructional coaching program?

7. How do you measure the success of your IC?

 a. What specific tools do you use?

 b. How is the personal growth of teachers measured from accessing the IC program?

 c. What might be getting in the way of sustaining the IC program in your school and district?

8. How are expectations of ICs conveyed from the district to campus?

 a. How is progress monitored on these expectations?

 b. How is progress monitored by the campus on these expectations?

9. If you could make one change in your district's IC program, what would it be?

 a. What brought about this idea for change?

 b. What benefits do you foresee this change would support?

10. Do you have any final comments or anything else you want to add?

I will end the interview by thanking the interviewee and explaining the next steps in the research process. I will again assure the interviewee that his or her identity will not be revealed in connection with the answers given in the interview.

Cross-references of interview questions with the overarching research question and three subsequent questions are described below:

- What are the systems in place to build capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 2-9

- What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 5-8

- How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 4-7

- What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 3, 6-8

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PRINCIPALS

The purpose of this study is to examine how the structures established for elementary instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. I will begin each interview by informing the interviewee about the study. In addition, an explanation will be provided regarding the recording of the interview and that responses will be strictly confidential. The participants will also be informed that if there is something to say off the record, then I will oblige by stopping the recording midstream for their commentary.

1. What are your top priorities as a principal?

    a. How is the instructional coaching (IC) program related to these priorities?

    b. How do you communicate these priorities?

2. How would you describe the IC's role on your campus?

    a. How has this role changed over time on your campus?

    b. What has been your role in the IC program?

3. What challenges have you faced with supporting your IC in his/her role?

    a. What do you think contributed to the challenges you faced?

    b. How did you overcome these challenges?

4. What does a typical day look like for an IC on your campus?

    a. How does your IC determine how they spend their time?

    b. How is the ICs scheduled monitored?

5. What district actions have supported the IC program?

    a. What other opportunities contribute to your understanding of how to support your IC?

    b. How do you determine the support your IC needs?

6. If I were to attend a meeting between you and your IC, what would that look like?

    a. How do you determine how often you meet?

    b. How do you determine what is discussed during your meetings?

7. If I were to attend a meeting in which your IC is supporting teachers, what would that look like?

    a. How does the IC determine which teachers to support?

    b. How is success of this support measured?

8. If you were granted three wishes in regard to the IC program, what would they be?

    a. What brought about this idea for your wish?

    b. What benefits do you foresee these wishes would support?

9. How are expectations of the IC program conveyed from you to the staff?

    a. How is progress monitored on these expectations?

10. Do you have any final comments or anything else you want to add?

I will end the interview by thanking the interviewee and explaining the next steps in the research process. I will again assure the interviewee that his or her identity will not be revealed in connection with the answers given in the interview.

Cross-references of interview questions with the overarching research question and three subsequent questions are described below:

- What are the systems in place to build capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

        Interview Questions that Align: Questions 3, 5-7

- What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

Interview Questions that Align: Questions 1-3, 6-7

- How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Question 5

- What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 2, 4, 6-7, 9

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The purpose of this study is to examine how the structures established for elementary instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. I will begin each interview by informing the interviewee about the study. In addition, an explanation will be provided regarding the recording of the interview and that responses will be strictly confidential. The participants will also be informed that if there is something to say off the record, then I will oblige by stopping the recording midstream for their commentary.

1. How would you describe your role as an IC on your campus?

2. What are your top priorities as an IC?

    a. How are your priorities determined?

    b. How do you communicate priorities with your principal?

3. What challenges have you faced in your IC role?

    a. What do you think contributed to the challenges you faced?

    b. How did you overcome these challenges?

4. What does a typical day look like for you as an IC on your campus?

    a. How do you determine how you spend your time?

    b. How do you communicate your schedule with the principal?

5. What district actions have supported you in your role as an IC??

    a. What other opportunities have supported you in your role as an IC?

    b. What has limited you in your role as an IC?

    c. Can you describe the process of communication between IC's and the district?

    d. Can you describe the process of communication from you to the campus?

6. If I were to attend a meeting between you and your principal, in regard to IC, what would that look like?

    a. How often do you meet?

    b. How do you determine how to structure meetings?

7. If I were to attend a meeting in which you are supporting teachers, what would that look like?

    a. How do you determine which teachers to support?

    b. How do you measure your success when supporting teachers?

8. If you were granted three wishes in regard to the IC program, what would they be?

    a. What brought about this idea for your wishes?

    b. What benefits do you foresee these wishes would support?

9. How are expectations of the IC program conveyed from your principal to the staff?

10. Do you have any final comments or anything else you want to add?

I will end the interview by thanking the interviewee and explaining the next steps in the research process. I will thank the interviewee and explain the next steps in the research process. I will again assure the interviewee that his or her identity will not be revealed in connection with the answers given in the interview.

Cross-references of interview questions with the overarching research question and three subsequent questions are described below:

- What are the systems in place to build capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

        Interview Questions that Align: Questions 3, 5-7

- What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 1-3, 6-7

- How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their capacity as effective coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Question 5

- What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are implementing the instructional coaching program?

    Interview Questions that Align: Question 1-2, 4, 6-7, 9

APPENDIX G

INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: DISTRICT LEADERS

The purpose of this study is to examine how the structures established for elementary instructional coaches can support sustainment of the overall instructional coaching program in a fast-growth district. I will begin each interview by informing the interviewee about the study. In addition, a written explanation will be provided regarding the recording of the interview and that responses will be strictly confidential. The participants will also be informed that if there is something to say off the record, then I will oblige by stopping the recording midstream for commentary.

1. What is your role in the district?

2. What have been your experiences with the instructional coaching (IC) program?

3. What is the purpose of the instructional coaching program?

    a. What are the top priorities of the instructional coaching program?

    b. How has the IC program evolved or changed over time?

4. What professional development is provided for instructional coaches in your district?

    a. How does the district evaluate the instructional coach's implementation of the professional development with teachers on campus?

    b. What other opportunities contribute to the learning of instructional coaches?

5. What district actions support the development of ICs?

6. What campus principal actions support the development of ICs?

    a. How do principals determine the support that is needed to develop their IC?

    b. Do you at times find learning opportunities to be limited at the campus level?

7. What feedback have you received from teachers, instructional coaches and/or principals on successes and challenges in regard to the instructional coaching program?

    a. How and when is feedback given?

    b. What prevents or facilitates feedback?

    c. How is feedback used or acted upon?

8. What is the process for measuring the professional growth of instructional coaches?

    a. What specific tools are used?

    b. What are the benefits and/or limitations to the process in place?

9. How is the IC program evaluated?

    a. Who is responsible for evaluating the IC program?

    b. How is the evaluation information utilized?

10. What communication occurs between the district and campuses regarding the IC program?

    a. How are expectations of ICs conveyed from the district to campus?

    b. How is progress monitored?

11. Do you have any final comments or anything else you want to add?

I will end the interview by thanking the interviewee and explain the next steps in the research process. I will again assure the interviewee that his or her identity will not be revealed in connection with the answers given in the interview.

Cross-references of interview questions with the overarching research question and three subsequent questions are described as follow:

- What are the systems in place to build capacity of elementary instructional coaches in the fast-growth district that is the target of this study?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 4-9

- What processes are in place to determine the needs of elementary instructional coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 5-10

- How does professional development for elementary instructional coaches build their

    capacity as effective coaches?

    Interview Questions that Align: Questions 4-6, 8

- What structure is in place to verify that elementary instructional coaches are

    implementing the instructional coaching program?

    Interview Questions that Align: Question 3-4, 7-10

APPENDIX H

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING HANDBOOK

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

A. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2012, Rose Independent School District implemented an Instructional Coach Model to support the attributes of a professional learning community. The model supported job-embedded professional learning and implementation of effective instructional practices. The specific focus was on shared practices, collective learning and application to help close the student achievement gap and accelerate learning for all students. Additionally, the model served as a communication link between the district and campus. The instructional coach position was and still is hired and assigned by the district and supervised by the campus principals.

In the spring of 2015, the model was revisited and further developed in order to bring coherence and clarification to the differing roles. The objectives of the refined Instructional Coaching Program are to:
- Clarify the Instructional Coaching Program as defined by the district
- Define and align the roles and responsibilities of Instructional Coaches, Administrators, Elementary Content Coordinators, Area Directors and Teachers
- Promote a knowledge base of effective strategies
- Assist teachers in improving their practice through coaching and instructional modeling
- Refine instructional strategies and provide feedback through the coaching cycle
- Collaborate with teacher planning teams
- Serve on campus Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)
- Facilitate on-site professional learning
- Participate in on-going and extensive professional learning (campus and district)

B. PURPOSE OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM

The purpose of the Instructional Coaching Program is to help close the student achievement gap and accelerate learning for all students by building teacher capacity through job-embedded professional learning and implementation of effective instructional practices.

The Instructional Coaching Program is aligned to the goals and objectives of the campus and district improvement plans. Instructional coaching is about teachers, teacher leaders, coaches, administrators, coordinators, directors and area directors examining practices in reflective ways with the focus on student learning. The ultimate result is to build teacher capacities so they know every student by name and need and be able to respond to those needs in a timely manner.

C. RATIONALE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM

An Instructional Coach will be instrumental in:
- Build the capacity of the campus staff
- Supporting the professional learning communities culture
- Working collaboratively in advancing achievement for all students in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies at the campus and district level
- Serving as liaisons between district and campuses through sharing of best practices
- Increasing teacher effectiveness through providing job-embedded professional learning of research based practices

D. WHAT IS AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH?

An instructional coach supports and provides training in order to improve classroom instruction that leads to improved student achievement. An instructional coach is one who supports others in building their teaching skills, assists in application of new knowledge, and provides ongoing learning and sustainment. The instructional coach increases the overall quality of effective classroom instruction.

E. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

An Instructional Coach must:
- Possess, demonstrate and cultivate the pedagogy of teaching and the ability to select appropriate instructional strategies based on student needs
- Demonstrate effective verbal and written communication
- Possess advanced skills in planning, prioritizing and taking actions which lead to self and campus
- Be knowledgeable in the change management process in leading people to achieve desired results
- Have strong interpersonal skills and ability to establish trusting relationships
- Be a skilled collaborator
- Be an evaluator of curricular and instructional needs
- Be skilled in planning, delivering and supporting professional learning
- Be solution driven and reflective

F. AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH IS **NOT**

Responsible for performing daily operations of the campus such as:
- Serving as a substitute teacher or covering other areas
- Sorting and keeping inventory of textbooks and instructional materials
- Performing clerical duties outside of the primary job performance criteria
- Serving as the administrator designee
- Serving on the Core Team

Responsible for staff and student supervision and support such as:
- Being assigned as the official mentor to new teachers
- Taking sole responsibility of LLI instruction on the campus
- Evaluating teachers
- Providing information to the campus administration that would be used for evaluation documentation
- Taking primary responsibility for the instruction of an assigned group of students
- Disciplining students in an administrative capacity
- Assuming full responsibility for gathering and reviewing student data
- Serving as chair or coordinator of extracurricular activities (e.g. Watch Dog, Student Council, Lone Star Challenge, Spelling Bee, UIL)
- Taking primary responsibility in leading grade level collaborative planning and Backwards Planning for Learning (BP4L)
- Assuming full responsibility for writing and developing teacher action plans for the Student Support Team (SST) and Accelerated Instruction Plan (AIP) for SSI

SECTION II – THE INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM

A. GENERAL ROLES OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

Learning Leader and Facilitator

To serve as the lead learner through modeling and facilitating learning opportunities for campus staff including but not limited to:
- Engaging in continuous learning through professional development opportunities and professional reading to build his or her own capacity
- Practicing and reflecting about his or her learning
- Designing and leading job-embedded professional learning
- Facilitating other forms of professional learning (e.g. working with curriculum coordinators and/or consultants)
- Assisting with development of plans for sustainment of new learning

Instructional Specialist and Content Facilitator

To support the implementation of state standards through district adopted curricula and use of effective instructional strategies including but not limited to:

- Modeling best practices of instruction
- Differentiating instruction
- Assessing for learning
- Facilitating a better understanding of the structure of the written, taught and assessed curriculum in order to increase teacher content knowledge
- Unpacking standards to guide identification of essential knowledge and skills

Teacher Learning Partner

To increase the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction based upon but not limited to:

- Collaborating
- Co-Planning
- Implementing the Coaching Cycle (Preconference, Modeling/Co-Teaching/Observing, Post Conference)
- Fostering trusting relationships with teachers and staff
- Supporting the Learning Walk process

Grade Level Team Supporter

To build capacity within teams through a gradual release model. This includes facilitating conversations during team collaboration and/or BP4L to determine instructional decisions including but not limited to:

- Analyzing formative and summative student assessment data and designing targeted instruction using RISD curricular resources to improve student learning
- Encouraging and modeling vulnerability and transparency by dialoguing and sharing each other's data as well as what strategies worked well and didn't work well
- Assisting with the development of common formative assessments

Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)

To support and communicate campus and district initiatives with the community including but not limited to:

- Working collaboratively with the campus leadership teams to design, implement and assess change initiatives ensuring goal alignment and focus on intended results
- Using data to establish campus improvement goals and action plans
- Involving teachers in the implementation of the campus and district instructional goals to support district and campus improvement plans
- Informing teachers about instructional practices that impact students
- Advocating for student learning based on data to improve instruction
- Participating in all district meetings and professional learning sessions that pertain to their role and sharing with their campus

District Partner

To foster a shared responsibility between campuses and the district to know every student by name and need, and respond to those needs by including but not limited to:

- Attending and participating in all district meetings and professional learning sessions
- Synthesizing and applying the learning through providing job-embedded campus professional development for teachers and staff
- Communicating curricular and instructional updates to teachers and staff in a timely manner
- Attending and participating in Instructional Coach Learning Team (ICLT) meetings
- Ensuring the responsibilities and the role of the IC are carried forth to guarantee the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program
- Fostering a partnership between campus and district
- Engaging in the coaching process with district level coach

B. GENERAL ROLES OF CAMPUS ADMINISTRATOR

Communicator

To build understanding of the interconnectedness of the Instructional Coaching Program, campus improvement plans and district initiatives including but not limited to:

- Articulating the purpose and components of the Instructional Coaching Program to staff **annually**
- Promoting, supporting, and sustaining the Instructional Coaching Program
- Leading and communicating to staff about the district and campus initiatives in relation to the Instructional Coaching Program
- Maintaining the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program by supporting all key people to align their actions to their appropriate roles and responsibilities as outlined in this handbook.

Facilitator

To plan collaboratively and coordinate professional learning including but not limited to:

- Fostering a safe and trusting environment
- Aligning professional learning with the campus and district goals and improvement plans
- Intentionally creating conditions for teachers to access the Instructional Coaching Program

Instructional Leader

To support coaches and teachers in the Instructional Coaching Program including but not limited to:

- Implementing and sustaining the campus and district initiatives
- Scheduling, planning, facilitating weekly meetings with the ILT to examine data and assist in campus-wide planning and learning opportunities
- Advocating for student learning based on data to improve instruction
- Sharing research-based best practices
- Committing to meet regularly with the instructional coach to reflect and support his or her personal growth
- Promoting and modeling continuous learning through engaging in professional reading and learning opportunities

Supervisor

To support, supervise and evaluate the instructional coach including but not limited to:

- Clearly communicating the expectations with the IC in regard to the Instructional Coaching Program
- Ensuring the coach complies with campus and district expectations of the role and job responsibilities
- Providing timely feedback through observations and dialogue that allow for ongoing professional growth
- Informing the Curriculum and Instruction Team of curricular, instructional and coaching concerns
- Evaluating the instructional coach using the district approved evaluation instrument

District Partner

To foster a shared responsibility between campuses and the district to know every student by name and need, and respond to those needs by including but not limited to:

- Attending and participating in district meetings and professional learning sessions that support the work of the IC
- Synthesizing and applying the learning through providing job-embedded campus professional development for teachers and staff
- Scheduling timely opportunities for the IC to communicate curricular and instructional updates to teachers and staff
- Ensuring the responsibilities and the role of the administrator are carried forth to guarantee the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program
- Fostering a partnership between campus and district

C. GENERAL ROLES OF CURRICULUM COORDINATOR
Communicator
To build understanding of the interconnectedness of the Coaching Program, campus improvement plans and district initiatives including but not limited to:
- Articulating the purpose and components of the Instructional Coaching Program
- Leading and communicating to ICs, administrators, coordinators, and directors about the district initiatives in relation to the Instructional Coaching Program
- Maintaining the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program by supporting alignment between actions and the designated roles and responsibilities as outlined in this handbook for themselves and the IC.

Facilitator
To plan collaboratively and coordinate professional learning including but not limited to:
- Fostering a safe and trusting culture for continuous growth
- Supporting the Instructional Coaching Program
- Facilitating Instructional Coach Learning Team (ICLT) meetings
- Aligning professional learning with the campus and district goals and improvement plans

Instructional Leader
To support instructional coaches, administrators and directors in the Instructional Coaching Program including but not limited to:
- Supporting implementation and sustainment of district initiatives
- Advocating for student learning based on data to improve instruction
- Sharing and modeling research based best practices to support IC implementation of job-embedded PD at the campus level (e.g. district PD, learning walks, ICLT meetings)
- Committing to meet with the instructional coaches to reflect and support his or her role
- Empowering and building capacity in ICs to deepen their learning through various methods
- Promoting and modeling continuous improvement through professional reading and learning
- Implementing the Coaching Cycle (Preconference, Modeling/Co-Teaching/Observing, Post Conference) with campus instructional coaches

Campus Partner
To foster a shared responsibility between campuses and the district to know every student by name and need, and respond to those needs by including but not limited to:
- Supporting and guiding high levels of learning for all students
- Collaborating with and supporting the IC in planning targeted professional development based on campus needs
- Communicating curricular and instructional updates to instructional coaches, administrators, coordinators and directors in a timely manner
- Advocating for student learning based on data to improve instruction
- Ensuring the responsibilities and the role of the coordinator are carried forth to guarantee the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program
- Fostering a partnership between campus and district

D. GENERAL ROLES OF DIRECTOF OF ELEMENTARY C&I AND AREA DIRECTOR
Communicator
To build understanding of the interconnectedness of the Instructional Coaching Program, campus improvement plans and district initiatives including but not limited to:
- Articulating the purpose and components of the Instructional Coaching Program
- Promoting and supporting the Instructional Coaching Program
- Leading and communicating the district initiatives in relation to the Instructional Coaching Program
- Supporting the campus administration in maintaining the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program

Facilitator
To plan collaboratively and coordinate professional learning including but not limited to:
- Fostering a safe and trusting culture of continuous improvement
- Aligning professional learning with the campus and district goals and improvement plans
- Intentionally creating conditions to support the Instructional Coaching Program

Instructional Leader
To support instructional coaches, coordinators and administrators in the Instructional Coaching Program including but not limited to:
- Supporting campus and district initiatives through collaboration in regard to the IC Program needs
- Meeting with the ILT to examine data and assist in campus-wide planning and learning opportunities
- Advocating for student learning based on data to improve instruction
- Sharing research-based best practices
- Promoting and modeling continuous improvement through professional reading and learning
- Providing timely feedback through observations and dialogue that allow for ongoing professional growth

Supervisor
To support, supervise and evaluate the instructional coaching program including but not limited to:
- Ensuring campuses comply with district expectations of the role and job responsibilities
- Informing the Curriculum and Instruction Team of curricular, instructional and coaching needs

Campus Partner
To foster a shared responsibility between campuses and the district to know every student by name and need, and respond to those needs by including, but not limited to:
- Supporting and guiding high levels of learning for all students
- Attending and participating in district meetings and professional learning sessions that support the work of the IC
- Ensuring the responsibilities and the role of the director/area director are carried forth to guarantee the fidelity of the Instructional Coaching Program
- Advocating for student learning based on data to improve instruction
- Fostering a partnership between campus and district

E. GENERAL ROLES OF CLASSROOM TEACHER
Instructor
Reflect, refine and implement effective instructional practices to increase student achievement including but not limited to:
- Aligning instruction to TEKS (written, taught and assessed curricula)
- Effectively identifying and responding to students' learning needs
- Collaborating with instructional coach
- Collaborating with campus teams

Learner
To engage in continuous learning including but not limited to:
- Participating in all relevant learning opportunities supported by the instructional coach (e.g. collaboration time, campus based PD, one-to-one coaching, co-planning with the coach, book studies)
- Creating learning goals that meet the needs of individual students
- Implementing instructional frameworks that align with campus and district expectations
- Exploring, implementing, and adhering to best practices
- Learning and implementing differentiated learning strategies
- Initiating opportunities to collaborate with IC to support successful implementation of instructional best practices

Learning Partner
To engage in professional collaborative relationships including but not limited to:
- Fostering a safe, trusting environment with peers and coach
- Participating actively in the coaching process
- Participating actively in the BP4L process

Assessor
To participate in data conversations that influence instructional decisions including but not limited to:
- Creating and analyzing formative and summative assessment data to guide instruction for all students
- Knowing every child by name and need to systematically monitor growth over time

SECTION III – CAMPUS IMPLEMENTATION OF COACHING PROGRAM

As members of a professional learning community, our vision is to work interdependently in teams focused on learning, collaboration, and results. We have a shared responsibility for each student's learning and growth through the following understandings:
- Participation in instructional coaching is most effective when the purpose of coaching as well as the roles of coaches, administrators and teachers are clearly articulated and communicated
- Instructional coaching programs are most effective in improving student learning when a variety of data sources are used to guide campus decisions
- Knowledge and experiences are built around the TEKS (written, taught and assessed curricula)

A. How does a campus implement the Instructional Coaching Program?
Campuses implement instructional coaching through a process such as the following:
- Administrative team communicates with staff the purpose and the roles of instructional coaches annually
- Explain how the coaching model supports improvement of student learning
- Instructional and administrative staff review relevant data and campus improvement plan (CIP) to determine campus focus for coaching through the decision making process
- Coaches and administrators participate in district trainings relevant to instructional coaching

Throughout the implementation of coaching at a campus, coaches are able to:
- Work with teachers to align instruction to state standards
- Facilitate and participate in learning walks to see and learn from other classrooms (within and between campuses)
- Organize study groups, job embedded workshops and book studies
- Work with collaborative groups to examine student work and plan instruction
- Attends all coaching trainings and share information and strategies with the ILT and campus staff
- Help to establish shared vocabulary, background knowledge and experiences, and collaborative relationships
- Provide opportunities to engage with teachers through the coaching process
- Collaborate with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to establish a calendar for professional learning
- Adapt to changing needs of students and teachers

B. How does a campus assess the effectiveness of the Instructional Coaching Program?
Campuses assess the instructional coaching program by consistently identifying ways in which the program is effective and determining areas of growth through a variety of data sources such as, but not limited to:
- Campus instructional surveys that allow staff to share successes and challenges that have occurred during the year in supporting student learning as a direct impact of the coaching program
- Personal reflection on behalf of the instructional coach that leads to further development of the coaching program through the IC reflection tool

- Analysis of student performance data as it relates to the CIP

The ILT collects and analyzes the data sources to revise and sustain the implementation of the Instructional Coaching Program through a reflective process.

SECTION IV – DISTRICT TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

A. What time and organizational structures will be provided for the ongoing professional learning for instructional coaches?

Instructional Coach Learning Experiences
IC Meetings:
Instructional coaches will collaboratively engage monthly in professional learning to build the collective capacity with teaching and learning, coaching, and change management. It is expected that instructional coaches transfer their shared learning experience with their ILT and campus staff to ensure successful implementation. Below is the specific time structured during these IC meetings to ensure the district goal and philosophy of the program is achieved:

- Teaching & Learning (Pedagogical and Content Knowledge): 2 Hours
- C & I Communication: Curriculum document updates, etc.: 30 minutes
- Change Management: role clarification, learning leader focused, book study, etc.: 1 hour
- Coaching Skills: 30 minutes

Personalized Support: Coaching the Instructional Coach

Coordinators will provide monthly coaching support to individual instructional coaches at each campus. Guidance and support will be personalized for each instructional coach through a reflective model based on the following:

- Campus goals and IC goals
- Deepening their role of the Instructional Coach
- Managing change
- Mentoring
- Designing Professional Learning

Instructional Coach Learning Teams
Instructional coaches will collaboratively engage in small teams throughout the year to foster continuous learning and build a shared mindset district-wide.

The expectations of this collaborative time is as follows:

- The purpose of the elementary learning teams (PLT, APLT and ICLT) is to build lateral capacity throughout the district and provide support for fellow campus leaders in guiding campus improvement.

- Each learning team will identify one common goal aligned to the Visioning Document. PLT, APLT and ICLT teams should adopt the same goal or the team goals should closely align in order to promote a focus that results in continuous improvement impacting student achievement.

- Utilize the action plan format to develop team goals, strategies, progress monitoring and accountability measures.

- Each learning team will meet a minimum of 4 times per year.

- Each team member is expected to not only commit time to their team but ensure a high level of engagement during each team meeting.

APPENDIX I

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION VISIONING DOCUMENT

As members of a professional learning community, our vision is to work interdependently in teams focused on learning, collaboration, and results.

Learning
We acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our schools is to help all students achieve high levels of learning, and therefore, we are willing to examine all our practices in light of their impact on learning.

The priorities for our shared work will include the following:

A. Schools will build collective knowledge of the TEKS and use the district scope and sequence to create learning targets.
B. Schools will develop and implement common formative assessments to monitor student mastery and guide instructional decisions.
C. Schools will plan for learning to meet the needs of each student by responding to the four essential questions of a professional learning community:
   - What do we want students to know and be able to do?
   - How will we know if students have learned it?
   - How will we respond when they have not learned it?
   - How will we respond when they already know it?
D. Schools will create and implement rigorous and relevant learning opportunities that meet the needs of each student, including intervention and enrichment.

Collaboration
We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all. Collaborative teams will be inclusive and work interdependently with all departments to meet the needs of each student.

The priorities for the shared work of our collaborative teams are:

A. Schools will protect the time collaborative teams are given during the school day and year to meet on a regular basis.
B. Schools will work in collaborative teams to clarify what students must learn, gather evidence of student learning, analyze the evidence, identify best teaching strategies, and share these strategies across all teams.
C. Schools will ensure that collaborative teams implement the district curriculum while empowering the teacher to differentiate instructional activities to meet the various needs of students.
D. Collaborative teams will analyze common assessments to guide instructional decision making and planning.

Results
We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams, and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement. The priorities for our shared work are:

A. Schools will analyze data from various sources, including assessments, to identify strengths and areas for growth in curriculum and instruction.
B. Schools will respond to the data by differentiating instruction and personalizing student learning opportunities.

APPENDIX J

SAMPLE AGENDA AND HANDOUTS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING MEETING

Agenda

❄1 Intro and Collective Commitments
❄ 2 C&I Updates
❄ 3 Collaborative Planning & Protocols
❄ 4 Coaching Triads
❄ 5 SpEd & ELL Voice Over
❄ 6 Book Study

C&I Updates

Dyslexia Testing Update
STAAR Simulations
IC Handbook
Overview of Special Education Department Document

Vocabulary Strategies--Debrief

How have you shared/applied your new learning about academic vocabulary instruction from last month's IC training...
- Within the ILT?
- Within collaborative planning?
- Within an individual coaching opportunity?
What were the results? What is your next step?

Purpose of Protocols

Read pages
1. What Protocols Are - pg. 7-8
2. Aspects of a Protocol- pg. 9
3. Reasons for Using Protocols - pg. 11-12
4. Why Protocols Work - pg. 12
5. The Nuts and Bolts of Using Protocols - pg. 17
6. Types of Questions - pg. 17-18

Four "A"s Text Protocol

Assumption
What assumptions does the author of the text hold?
Agree
What do you Agree with in the text?
Argue
What do you want to Argue with in the text?
Aspire
What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to (or Act Upon)?

Process for Team Collaboration

Four PLC Questions that guide instruction
1. What do we expect all students to learn?
2. How do we know when they have learned it?
3. How will we respond when learning has not occurred?
4. How do we respond when learning has already occurred?

Collaborative Planning

1. Decide the purpose.
2. Decide what pre-planning and curriculum documents are needed.
3. Choose student artifacts or data to be reviewed or analyzed.
4. Devise key questions to facilitate team discussions.
5. Guiding Questions to Consider:
   a. What is a structure to put in place to target struggling teams?
   b. What are some questions you might ask to move through the structure?
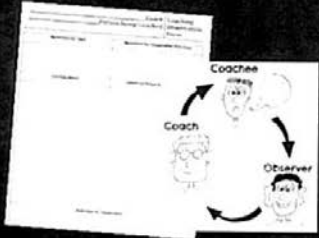
Create a Protocol

Table Share

PROTOCOLS
for Professional Learning

1. What new learning do you have about protocols?
2. What new coaching moves can you now take back to your teams to facilitate collaborative planning?

Coach, Coachee, Recorder

Coaching Triads

Coachee
Coach
Observer

Reflect

- What did you do really well in your coaching?
- What do you wish you could have done better?
- What area(s) are you going to focus on for your next session?

APPENDIX K

SAMPLES OF DISTRICT NEWSLETTERS TO INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

Coaches Corner

KEEPING COACHES IN THE KNOW

CURRICULUM FEEDBACK SURVEY

Please complete the curriculum feedback survey for each grade level by November 4th.

COACHING TIP: PRESUMING POSITIVE INTENT AND POSITIVE PRESUPPOSITIONS

Check out this article from Results Coaching Global on maintaining a coaching mindset.

MATH–THE PROCESS SKILLS

- Below is a reminder of a NCTM article that we shared a couple of years ago regarding supporting and not interrupting "student thinking". The full article is located in the hub under Lone STAAR Professional Learning folder.
- Problem Solving support and resources for students and teachers are located on the cluster planner.
- What is Number Sense? is a 30-minute video demonstration of the concept of number sense. The power in Number Talks is helping us build number sense.
- Helpful hints for Small Group instruction.

TABLE 1

Become aware of teaching moves and of potentially taking over students' thinking.

Warning signs for taking over children's thinking

Warning signs	Questions to consider before proceeding	Potential alternative moves
1. Interrupting the child's strategy	Do I understand how the child is thinking and will my ideas interfere with that thinking? Will the child be able to make sense of my ideas?	• Slow down: Allow the child to finish before intervening. • Encourage the child to talk about his or her strategy so far. • Ask questions to ensure that the child understands the problem situation and how the strategy relates to that situation. • Ask whether trying another tool or strategy would help.
2. Manipulating the tools	Will the child still be in control of the problem solving? Will my problem representation make sense to the child?	
3. Asking a series of closed questions	Will my questions be about the child's thinking or my thinking? Will the child still have an opportunity to engage with substantive mathematics, or will my questions prevent him or her from doing so?	

Coaches Corner

KEEPING COACHES IN THE KNOW!

NOVEMBER 11, 2016

VOICE-OVER COACHING

Here is the link to the voice-over coaching reflection form. Please try this strategy with a teacher on your campus before our next IC meeting and complete the Apply and Reflect questions.

MATH

- K-5 District Math Essentials Outline
- Friendly Reminder: Complete the Exemplars Survey

GT RESOURCES

Here is a link to the GT resources that were shared at the last IC meeting. These will also be available on the IC Learning Hub course.

ESL VOCABULARY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MATH AND SCIENCE – NEW!

Our ESL teachers have created ESL Vocabulary Accommodations to support students with CBAs in math and science. This resource is good for *all students*, not just ELLs. ESL teachers looked at academic words and other words that students may struggle with on CBAs. We have included screenshots below of where you can locate these resources. This resource will continue to be added throughout the year.

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