

Perspectives on the Roles & Responsibilities of a Middle School Literacy Coach

A Narrative Inquiry: Stories from the Field

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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For the last several years the topic of literacy coaching as a form of professional development for improving teacher practice and raising student achievement has dominated the research landscape. Findings from a wide range of studies focusing on literacy coaching have provided a clear description of factors that can be useful in determining what effective literacy coaches do (Thao, 2013; Collett, 2012). On the other hand an equal amount of evidence exists describing the different roles of literacy coaches that often result in coaches being ineffective by spreading themselves too thin. (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Kissell, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, 2011). To date, literacy coaching roles remain ill defined. Role inconsistencies coupled with shrinking budgets have caused many districts to eliminate or change the coach's position (Ippolito, 2012). Most of what has been gathered regarding literacy coaching has focused on coaches working in elementary schools with little research on the role of the middle school literacy coach (Marsh et al, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to determine and define the middle school coaching roles and responsibilities that teachers, literacy coaches, and principals perceived as most important and the types of support and challenges experienced by the coach. In addition, this study addressed the need for research that centers on the perspectives of those being coached (Shanklin, 2007). More importantly, previous research has determined that knowing stakeholders' precepts might help middle school literacy coaches become more efficient and valuable resources for teachers, principals, and coaches (Thao, 2013).

In this narrative, cased-based, and descriptive study, data analysis of semi-structured interviews, the literacy coach's monthly activity coaching logs, and field observational notes were triangulated to determine which roles and responsibilities were perceived to be most important. Resultant composite narratives of all participants were consistent. The three roles perceived as most important by middle school literacy coaches were identified as Coach as Collaborative Resource Manager, Coach as Coplanner and Coach as Administrative Task Manager (Moran, 2007). Compared to previous understanding of effective coaching roles these roles have the least impact in changing teacher practice. Types of support identified included principal and district-wide support. Challenges identified were funding, teacher resistance, role ambiguity, and establishing relationships. Implications for practice and future research recommendations are discussed.

Dedication

To my parents,
Albert and Rachel Chiola,
who continue to be my most treasured teachers;
to my life partner,
Paul,
my patient companion in this and all of life's journeys;
and
to my extraordinary mentors and coaches,
who I met along the way
who taught me something new every day.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	ii
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review	13
Chapter Three: Research Design & Methodology	29
Chapter Four: Findings	47
Chapter Five: Discussion	112
References	139

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	The Literacy Coaching Continuum.....	10
Figure 2.2	Bean’s Levels of Intensity for Instructional Coaching.....	25
Figure 2.3	Puig & Froelich’s Continuum of Coaching.....	26
Figure 4.1	The Literacy Coaching Continuum.....	78
Figure 5.1	The Literacy Coaching Continuum.....	116

List of Tables

Table 3.1	Participant Selection Chart.....	36
Table 4.1	Data Source: Literacy Coach’s Monthly Coaching Activity Logs for SGS Coach B.D. January 2012- June 2012.....	62
Table 4.2	Data Source: Literacy Coach’s Monthly Coaching Activity Logs for FMS Coach M.L. January 2012-June 2012--.....	63
Table 4.3	Frequency of Activities for Both Coaches from January 2012-June 2012.....	64
Table 4.4	Common Planning Meeting Observational Field Notes SGS.....	66
Table 4.5	Common Planning Meeting 7th Grade Social Studies Teachers –FMS.....	66
Table 4.6	Observational Field Notes - 7th Grade Literacy Coach –FMS.....	67
Table 4.7	Observational Field Notes -Team Meeting with 8 th Grade.....	68
Table 4.8	Observational Field Notes -Common Planning Meeting 8 th Grade.....	68
Table 4.9	Observational Field Notes - M.L. FMS Literacy Coach’s Room	101
Table 5.1	Frequency of Activities for Both Coaches from January 2012-June 2012.....	122
Table 5.2	Common Planning Meeting Observational Field Notes SGS	123

Chapter One: Introduction

I. Background

At the height of the Adolescent Literacy crisis, there was a major thrust to incorporate literacy coaches at the middle school level (Conley & Hinchman, 2004). Since then literacy coaching has emerged as a popular and promising strategy for school reform to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement in reading. A large body of evidence has emerged that supports literacy coaching as a promising form of targeted professional development for improving teacher practice and student achievement (Calo, 2012; Ippolito, 2012; Dorman, 2009, Cassidy, 2007). On the other hand, an equal amount of evidence now exists that describes the inconsistencies in roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach. Results from these studies caution literacy coaches that, as a result of such inconsistencies in their roles and responsibilities, their work may become too broad, minimizing the impact of their work with improving teacher practice. (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Scott, Cortina, & Carlisle, 2012; Bean & Zigmond, 2007). One study in particular concluded that literacy coaching at the middle level had great potential, but it raised questions about coaching implementation and effectiveness (Smith, 2007). Besides defining the role of the middle school literacy coach, research was called for that investigated literacy coaching from the perspectives of those being coached (Shanklin, 2006).

Between the years of 2005 and 2011, the topic of literacy coaching as a promising form of professional development dominated the literacy research landscape accompanied by a swell of publications dealing with literacy coaches (Dorman, 2009; Calo, 2012; Ippolito, 2012; Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008; Cassidy, 2007; Elish-Piper, L'Allier, & Zwart, 2008). However,

evidence exists that interest in literacy coaching has waned due to the inconsistencies in roles and responsibilities as reported in previous research. Each year, The International Reading Association conducts an annual survey of its members to determine the “What’s Hot & What’s Not” list in literacy research. The latest survey conducted in 2014 revealed that literacy coaching was no longer listed as one of the “Hot Topics” but now occupied the position of “What’s Not Hot But Should Be Hot.” This placed the topic of literacy coaching in the third category from the bottom (<http://e339blogspot.com>). As a result of shrinking school budgets since 2012, many school districts that initially invested heavily in literacy coaching have since eliminated coaching positions (Ippolito, 2012).

Although interest in literacy coaching has diminished, several publications recently have dealt with the topic of literacy coaching practices. In the 2014 publication of *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, several articles on the theme of handling challenges of resistance suggest ways to work with teachers. One article focused on the work of the literacy coach, describing it as nonlinear, suggesting that coaches embrace resistance and consider it necessary for transforming teaching and learning (Reilly, 2014). A second one by Stephens and Mills (2014) examined South Carolina’s Reading Initiative and Coaching, revealing that literacy coaching was more about collaborative inquiry into theory, research, practice, and learning. The third article in this series emphasized that it is not enough to only consider the quantity of interactions between the coach and teacher but also the qualities of those interactions (Rodgers, 2014). The issue of collaboration and coaching is examined and described as well as the quantity and quality of literacy coaching at the middle school level in this study.

II. Problem

A problem currently exists involving ambiguity over which coaching roles and responsibilities are found to have the greatest potential for impacting teacher practice. Role ambiguity is a problem because coaching roles are varied, many sided, requiring the coach to assume a set of varied and complex roles (Dole, 2004; Calo, 2012; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). As a result of taking on a variety of roles, the main goal of improving teacher practice is compromised, creating too broad a focus for their work and minimizing the effect on teacher practice (Dole, 2004; Calo, 2012; Thao, 2013). Furthermore, with the combination of role inconsistencies coupled with shrinking school budgets, many literacy coaching roles have been eliminated or at least changed (Ippolito, 2012).

Previous research discussed above indicates that one's perspective of the role of the literacy coach may have a direct impact on the coach's roles and responsibilities. It is reported that that coaching can mean many different things to many people (Dole, 2004). Besides, "simply knowing that literacy coaches are in your schools does not imply anything about how those people spend their time—there is a difference between being a coach and *doing coaching* (Deussen et al., 2007). Furthermore, coaching is a relatively undefined practice that looks different in every situation (Aguilar, 2011). These findings alone justify the need for further studies that attempt to define and explain middle school literacy coaching process from the perspectives of those being coached as explained earlier (Shanklin, 2006). Richard Allington (2006) predicted that until studies are conducted that assist in clearing up this confusion over coaching roles, literacy coaching, like so many other well-intended school reform efforts, will fade into the distance.

Other literacy leaders take a more optimistic view on the future of coaching. Professor Emeritus Rita Bean (2009) believes that the emphasis should be on coaching, rather than on coaches because in some schools there are people who take on coaching roles and responsibilities without being called coaches. To assist in eliminating confusion over coaching roles, the first step is to identify the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches. (Blamey et al., 2008). The purpose of this study at the middle level was to examine and describe the roles and responsibilities most valued from the perspectives of teachers, principals, and coaches. A particular focus of this study was on the many contexts in which the coaches worked with the participants, especially in their interactions with the teachers. These contexts are interpreted as learning formats as described by previous research as a Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007). In addition, this study sought to describe the challenges and supports that middle school literacy coaches encountered when working with the participants in this study.

III. Purpose

The purpose of this descriptive, exploratory study was to determine and define the middle school literacy coaching roles and responsibilities that classroom teachers, principals, and literacy coaches perceive as being most important. Although previous research exists about coaching effectiveness, additional research is needed to address the reality of what coaches do in the context of schools and from the views of those being coached (Shanklin, 2006). By defining the coach's role in the context of their work with teachers and administrators, the results of this study may be used to assist the district and the coaches with adjusting the process in order to maximize the efforts on changing teacher practice, which research has determined is the main objective of the literacy coach's work (Bean, 2004a). Along with defining the coaches' roles, the

types of support and challenges that the coaches encountered in their work with other stakeholders is identified and described. More importantly, the findings from this study may be used as data to inform the overall effectiveness and evaluation of the district's coaching program. Even though this is not a study of coaching effectiveness, certain roles and responsibilities have been highlighted in the literature as having the potential of impacting teacher practice and improving student performance. These will be discussed as they relate to the findings from this study.

IV. Significance

Not only will the findings from this study add to the scant body of research on middle school literacy coaching, as perceived by those being coached, but also more importantly, by capturing the stories through the interviews of principals, teachers and coaches, the findings may shed light on ways to enhance future coaching practices and programs in middle schools (Thao, 2013; Shanklin, 2007). This study also contributes to the research focused on identifying the contextual factors that contribute to successful implementation of literacy coaching (Smith, 2012). Since previous studies of literacy coaching have determined that change in teacher practice, which allows for increased student achievement, will only take place if the coach's efforts are focused on roles and responsibilities that require greater degrees of intrusiveness and are more intense and intra-active (Moran, 2007; Bean, 2004; Puig & Froelich, 2007). Findings from this study can assist districts with effective implementation of literacy coaching. One interesting aspect of this study is in the use of narrative inquiry along with a narrative analysis, which has the potential to promote more genuine dialogue among stakeholders, thereby narrowing the gap between research and practice (Kim, 2010). For the purposes of this study,

narrative inquiry is defined as “a form of narrative experience.” Education and educational studies are a form of experience; therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry as used in this study can be described as descriptive, which relies heavily on narrative data collected by such means as interviews and document analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Both interview and document data were the major forms of data collection for this study. Findings from this study may also be used to identify ways to better prepare those who wish to enter the literacy coaching profession for overall coaching program evaluation. Previous research has documented effective coaching roles and responsibilities that have potential for impacting teacher practice, which is discussed further on in this report, especially as identified and described in the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007). By identifying where the literacy coach is spending most of her time, recommendations can be made that will improve implementation and preparation for coaches in order to have the greatest impact on changing teacher practice.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, middle school literacy coaching as outlined in their Standards for Middle School Literacy Coaches (2004) is defined as a form of professional development that is:

- Grounded in inquiry and reflection
- Participant driven and collaborative, involving knowledge sharing among teachers within communities of practice
- Sustained, ongoing, and intensive

Furthermore, Burkins (2007) defines the literacy coach as someone who is:

an educator with specific expertise in literacy instruction who, through individual coaching and team meetings, formal learning, demonstration lessons, classroom visitations, study groups and various other contexts, works with and for teachers to lead, assist and honor them as they solidify and expand their skills and understanding of literacy instruction (pp.28-29).

The discussion of middle school literacy coaching and the contexts and roles in which they work that prove to be most valued is elaborated on in the literature review section of this report.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach most valued from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and coaches. In addition to identifying the most significant roles of the middle school literacy coach, this study also sought to describe the types of supports and challenges confronting the coaches as viewed by the participants. Therefore, in order to expand understanding of the middle school literacy coaching process, three questions were posed for this study:

- Research question #1: Which roles and responsibilities of the middle literacy coach are viewed as most important from the perspectives of teachers, principals, and coaches?
- Research question #2: What types of support does the middle school literacy coach experience viewed from the perspectives of teachers, principals, and coaches?
- Research question #3: What challenges do the middle school literacy coach experience viewed from the perspectives of teachers, principals, and coaches?

Narrative Inquiry

Historically, educational researchers have used stories to study teaching and teacher education in order to understand the contextualized situations affecting their work and the decisions they make (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Rushton, 2004; Smith, 2007). Like Carter (1993), this researcher, having lived the life of a literacy coach for over five years in a variety of settings, believes that coaching, like teaching, is much too complex and indeterminate to reduce to numbers and mathematical formulae. And so in keeping with this postmodernist philosophy, this investigation of middle school literacy coaching was carried out using narrative, case-based methods. Interviews, documents, and field observations were brought together in order to compose narratives that would tell the story of the roles and responsibilities, supports, and challenges that two middle school literacy coaches encountered in two different schools within the same district.

In utilizing the stance that, like teacher knowledge, knowledge of the literacy coaching process can be viewed as an expression of multiple realities and perspectives that are constructed through the process of interaction and dialogue (Moen, 2006). The perspectives were gathered from teachers, administrators, and the coaches themselves, analyzed for common themes related to the roles and responsibilities, supports, and challenges encountered by the literacy coaches' understudy. Furthermore, these multiple realities result from the many smaller narratives that help individuals make sense of their world and themselves. These composite narratives derived from semi-structured interviews and field observations were then "restored" and interpreted. The process of restorying included common words and phrases gleaned from the participants quotes and semi-structured interviews, which provided evidence for the various interpretations and meaning that literacy coaching held for the participants in this study related to each one of the research questions (Creswell, 2005).

To accomplish this task, a narrative researcher must be mindful to keep questions as open-ended as possible in order to do what most narrative researchers hope to do and that is “capture the richness of the experience in order to study a selected issue in great detail and learn something through the participants’ stories told and retold” (Reissman, 1993; Webster & Mertova, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Smith, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

A social constructivist view of knowledge construction and meaning—making a Vygotskian lens is employed from which to view the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that social interaction leads to meaning and understanding of events. Furthermore, the meaning that is co-constructed about literacy coaching events is further explored and understood through the telling and the retelling of their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

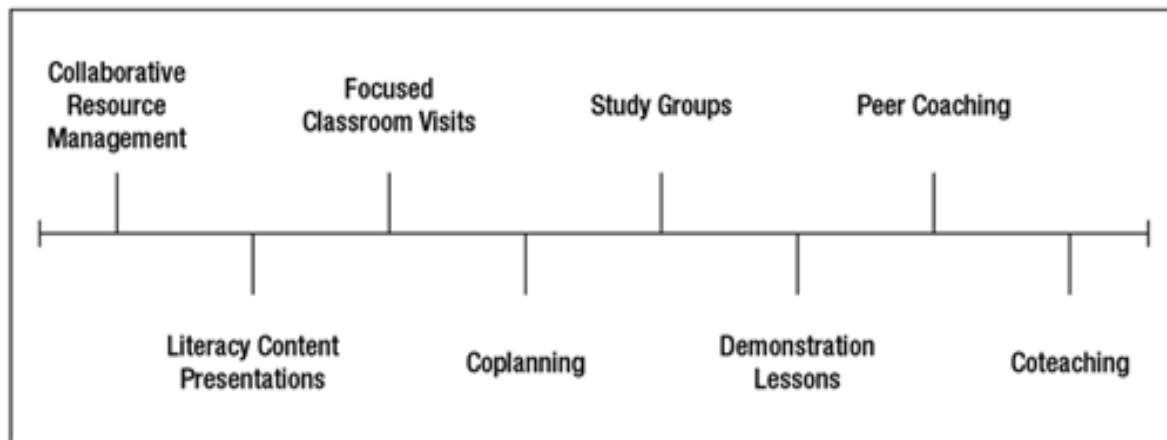
A Vygotskian Perspective of Literacy Coaching on a Continuum

This same Vygotskian lens is critical to understanding how the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach were identified, reinforcing this foundational belief that coaching adults, like teaching, occurs along a continuum of learning situations. Each situation requiring more or less scaffolding, according to the teachers’ needs. Vygotskian thought also informs these learning situations or learning formats. Researcher M.C. Moran in her book *Differentiated Literacy Coaching: Scaffolding for Student and Teacher Success* (2007) explains how the Literacy Coaching Continuum was developed. Moran’s (2007) Literacy Coaching Continuum

was instrumental in the coding process used to establish categories for understanding the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coaches studied for this report.

Figure 1.1

The Literacy Coaching Continuum



Source: Developed by M. C. Moran and Elizabeth Powers (2007)

As shown in Figure 1.1, the continuum presents eight differentiated learning formats for coaching: (1) collaborative resource management, (2) literacy content presentations, (3) focused classroom visits, (4) coplanning, (5) study groups, (6) demonstration lessons, (7) peer coaching, and (8) coteaching. It assumes that there is a progression in the intensity of learning supports that are necessary to sustain a teacher's efforts to become a more reflective practitioner. For example, the scaffolding provided in resource management (at one end of the continuum) is far less intrusive than the assistance that would be apparent in coteaching (at the other end of the continuum). By taking the position that good teaching is dependent on knowledge of where the learner is along with an understanding of where the learner is ready to move next, along a

continuum, facilitate the learning of teachers, they also model this sociocultural concept as a theoretical consideration for all learners (Collet, 2012).

Moran's (2007) Literacy Coaching Continuum shows how multifaceted and complex the literacy role is, requiring the coach to accomplish many professional roles (Burkins, 2007). This requires that the coach balance their work with a variety of schools, contexts, and coaching situations in order "to create a coaching plan that is robust and makes sense" (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007).

Furthermore, Moran (2007) points out that these various coaching formats require varying degrees of "intrusiveness" on the part of the coach interacting with the teacher. She defines the word "intrusive" to indicate "the extent of the coach's involvement in the actual teaching routine and the potential impact of that involvement on a teacher's sense of comfort" (pg.15). The example she cites is a coach who is working with a teacher as a collaborative resource manager will have less direct involvement in the teaching of a lesson than will one who is coteaching a lesson. As a result, a collaborative resource manager is "less intrusive" than a coach who is coteaching.

The Literacy Coaching Continuum acknowledges that teachers are individuals who need and want various kinds of support depending upon content, circumstances, personal experience, and timing. The continuum respects and honors what we know about social constructivist theory and Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development theory and the "More Knowledgeable Other" that teachers use with their own students when planning for and differentiating instruction. Furthermore, according to Vygotsky's theories, learning often involves mentoring provided by a "more culturally knowledgeable person (the literacy coach in this case) who

engages with less experienced or knowledgeable persons (the teachers) in a process known as scaffolding” (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). This way, knowledge is not just transmitted down from one person to another, but rather knowledge is “mutually constructed” and involves joint collaboration between all persons involved in the coaching activity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

For this study, I drew from three sources of the research literature. The first section describes what is currently known about literacy coaching and the varied roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach. The second section focuses on research specifically related to the role of the middle school literacy coach. The final section highlights research that views the process of literacy coaching as a continuum of roles and responsibilities for changing teacher practice and improving student achievement. The findings in the report are then linked back to these sections as they relate to the research questions studied. For the purposes of this study, three research questions were investigated. They were:

- (1) Which roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach are viewed as most important from the perspectives of teachers, principals and coaches?
- (2) What types of support do middle school literacy coaches experience viewed from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and coaches?
- (3) What types of challenges do middle school literacy coaches experience viewed from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and coaches?

A. Literacy Coaching: Roles /Responsibilities & Practices

Most of what we know about literacy coaching comes from studies that focused on the work of literacy coaches helping elementary school teachers improve literacy teaching and learning (L’Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Results from these studies revealed that literacy coaches “wear many hats” and fulfill a multitude of roles (Calo, 2012; Wren & Vallejo, 2009; Shanklin, 2006; Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2005). Some of these “hats” include coach as provider of professional development in one-on one coaching situations or to a group of

teachers that focus on assessment, curriculum resources and literacy strategies (Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2005). In some cases, literacy coaches administer the assessments themselves and use the data to inform classroom practice (Walpole & McKenna, 2005). In other situations, coaches observe teachers using literacy strategies and offer feedback to help teachers become more reflective about their practice (Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2005).

Literacy coaches who coplan with teachers find themselves developing lesson plans and other ways to differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students (Walpole & McKenna, 2005). Planning with principals to deliver curriculum mandates and initiatives is another responsibility many literacy coaches take on (Shanklin, 2006; Taylor, Moxley, Chanter, & Bouleware, 2007). A large part of coaching work involves the coaches as collaborative resource management people to provide materials, texts, other functioning as curriculum experts helping to select the appropriate resources for a school, building bookrooms and libraries in teachers classrooms (Walpole & McKenna, 2005).

In one study that used surveys of randomly selected participants from across the United States, results indicated that the roles were found to be so different and influenced by the contexts within which these coaches worked (Calo, 2012). One of the main goals of this study was to “determine what the reading coaches’ roles and responsibilities were in order to move beyond the assumption of what people thought reading coaches *should* be doing to examine what is actually happening in schools” (Calo, 2012, p. 3). The findings from this study indicated that the roles and responsibilities were “diverse and multifaceted and there was not one consistent view of literacy coaching at the middle school level.” (Calo, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, similar studies discovered that coaches often found themselves taking on roles and routines that have little to do with changing teacher practice (Bean, 2004a; Calo, 2012) and that they ended up spending half

of their time engaged in activities that foster professional growth in teachers and have the potential to impact teacher practice (Bean, Turner, Draper, Heisey, & Zigmond, 2008; Desussen, Autio, Nelssestuen, Roccograndi, & Scott, 2006; Walpole & Blamey, 2008).

Carroll (2007) interviewed thirty reading coaches from twelve school districts across the state of Pennsylvania. The researcher interviewed the teachers to determine their background and preparation, time spent on explicit coaching activities such as modeling and demonstrating, factors within the school that supported or challenged their work as a coach, what coaches perceived their responsibilities to be, and what problems and possibilities there were with their work with teachers. Results of the interview data revealed that more than fifty percent of the reading coaches did not feel prepared for their role when they started out coaching because of their uncertainty of job responsibilities, mainly due to a lack of consistency in the roles they were to perform, as well as expectations of the district and the administrators. The way the principal supported or did not support the role had a strong impact in how quickly the coach was perceived as a valuable resource within the school (Carroll, 2007). This particular study called for further research that examined teachers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches. It is important for researchers to be aware of teachers' perceptions because they work directly with the literacy coach to improve instructional practice. (Dean, Dyal, Wright, Carpenter & Austin, 2012). Specifically, this current study examined the perceptions of not only teachers, but also principals and coaches. As established by the studies discussed earlier, positive or negative experiences with the literacy coach can greatly impact the effectiveness of the literacy coach.

In some roles coaches are often asked to serve as a liaison between the administration and the teachers, communicating policy, data and implementation of initiatives (Sturtevant,

2003;Toll, 2006). This can become a delicate situation requiring coaches to be aware that they should never be placed in a position of evaluation of teachers (Wren & Vallejo, 2009; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Neufeld & Roper, 2003, Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003;Walpole & McKenna, 2005). It has become quite evident through previous research that coaches need to learn to balance their responsibilities, contexts and different coaching situations that they find themselves in if they are to “create a coaching plan that is robust and makes sense” (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007, p.134). More importantly, it has already been established that there is potential danger for coaches if they spend too much time on those roles that do nothing to foster professional development (Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

In the study conducted by Poglinco, et al. (2003) the role of literacy coaches within schools and how the coaches worked with teachers both in and out of the classroom was found to be inconsistent and left up to much interpretation. Teachers were not clear about the coach’s role. Both coaches and teachers felt that there were minimal guidelines in place regarding the coach’s roles and responsibilities. The research suggested that specific guidelines must be in place and communicated to all stakeholders in order to establish concrete roles for the literacy coach.

In a similar study conducted by Bean and Zigmond (2007), discrepancies in the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach were found to exist. One hundred Reading First coaches from one hundred sixty-one Reading First schools documented their time spent working with teachers. The documentation was collected three times per year. Results revealed that the literacy coaches spent less than three hours a week implementing a coaching cycle that involved observing teachers, conferencing with them, providing feedback and co-teaching. Four hours or more per week were devoted to duties that did not fall under the category of literacy coaching, such as attending meetings.

Additional studies of Mraz, Algozzine, and Watson (2008) and Bean and Zigmond (2007) raised implications for research and practice. The importance of a clear job description is important for the effectiveness of the literacy coach. Without these guidelines, the effectiveness of literacy coaches may be greatly compromised. It is strongly recommended that before studies linking student achievement and literacy coaching are carried out, the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches must be established (Dean, Dyal, Wright, Carpenter and Austin, 2012).

Despite the many interpretations of literacy coaching there is evidence now exists that supports that one of the most powerful ways to improve instructional practices and increase student achievement is through coaching (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1998). More importantly, additional research has shown that coaching that is sustained over time and embedded into teacher's classroom work seems to be important for increasing student achievement results in increased student achievement (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

In 2004, the International Reading Association published the *Roles and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States* outlining the association's position on the definition of coaching and the role of the reading coach resulting in the Gold Standard for literacy coaches. Despite the association's publication of this document, roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach continue to vary. One reason for this unclear definition of the role of the literacy coach is the existence of a variety of perceptions among educators surrounding literacy coaching. Some researchers, Rodgers and Rodgers (2007) assert that it's easy for practicing coaches to spend their time working with children because it is much easier than "shifting teacher practice and understanding" (p.123). To do this requires a great deal of effort and energy. This coaching practice is viewed as requiring a great deal of energy and intensity, often creating anxiety on the part of teachers (Bean, 2004a).

Several studies have focused specifically on exploring and/or defining the roles and responsibilities of elementary school literacy coaches (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003; Dole, 2004). A recent study by Bean and her colleagues (2007) found that elementary literacy coaches took on varying roles and approaches to coaching including being a resource, a mentor, a manager, a helper, or a responder. The researchers found that the way the coaches worked with the staff was influenced by the context of the schools in which they worked. They also found that the lack of a consistent and clear job description for the coaches might have influenced their roles and responsibilities as well.

On the other hand, others view this shifting of classroom teachers to better understand effective instructional practices as a collaborative act, one where the coach shares in the learning process (Puig & Froehlich, 2007). Assuming a more collaborative stance might be a way to alleviate much of the anxiety that teachers feel when experimenting with new strategies. In this light, literacy coaching becomes a process whereby coaches act as co-learners, which helps to build trust so that shifts in teaching practices and beliefs can occur. Because a teacher's ultimate aim is to increase student learning and achievement and because it is an outcome of coaching to help teachers achieve this goal, the focus of literacy coaches should be to support teachers (Toll, 2005). Therefore, coaches need to function more as technicians who possess a body of skills and knowledge that help teachers develop similar skills (Toll, 2005). Burkins (2007), on the other hand defines a literacy coach as “an educator with specific expertise and extensive experience in literacy instruction who, through individual coaching, team meetings, formal professional learning, demonstration lessons, classroom visitations, study groups, and various other contexts, guided and works with and for teachers to lead, assist, and honor them as they solidify and expand their skills in and understanding of literacy instruction.” (pp.28-29). Bean (2004) agrees

that the main objective of coaching is to provide guidance and support that will enable someone else to become more proficient but adds one other ingredient to the job description; that of providing feedback. It is the feedback that coaches provide that helps moves teachers to assuming responsibility for continued use of strategies introduced by the coach (Sweeney, 2003). Although the role of the literacy coach is varied, previous research has suggested that there are some coaching roles that are more significant than others. For example, Lyons and Pinnell (2001) describe the role of literacy coaches as that of professional developers who will “introduce, describe, and demonstrate topics in class sessions and then be able to provide direct assistance and coaching in classrooms.” (p.52). Cathy Roller (2006) expands this definition by emphasizing the teacher-to-teacher conversations that occur during class times. She emphasizes the importance of in-class coaching that is the main role of the literacy coach. Along with the in-class coaching of teachers, literacy coaches may be responsible for several tasks: (a) conducting professional development sessions for teachers and school staffs, such as para-professionals (Casey, 2006; Moran, 2007); (b) organizing and conducting study groups with teachers and other staff members to discuss professional readings in a collaborative and collegial manner (Allen, 2006; Casey, 2006; Moran, 2007); (c) managing or organizing literacy resources and materials (Burkins, 2007; Moran, 2007); (d) working with teachers to data-mine and understand how to use data to guide instruction (Burkins, 2007; Moran, 2007); (e) organize team meetings (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Overall, literacy coaches appear to work closely with teachers and support teachers “in their daily work-planning, modeling, team-teaching, and providing feedback on completed lessons” (Dole, 2004, p.462). Literacy coaches are leaders in schools who lead “from behind” meaning that they mentor and support others (Vogt & Shearer, 2003). The danger lies in the fact that complexity of literacy coaching, along with the various definitions of the coach’s

roles and responsibilities may result in a fragmentation of the coaching process thereby reducing the impact of the coach on classroom practice and student achievement (Smith, 2007). Therefore, it is extremely important for all stakeholders in the coaching processes to have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities and practices that are going to prove to be the most beneficial in helping teachers, coaches and administrators achieve the ultimate goal of literacy coaching; helping teachers develop a repertoire of strategies that will work to increase student achievement.

B. The role of the middle school literacy coach

Unlike the research in elementary school literacy coaching previously discussed, research on middle school literacy coaching is limited and still evolving (Blamey et al., 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2010, Calo, 2012). Although agreement exists among researchers that one may find similarities between elementary and middle school literacy coaches, they also agree that they are quite different.

Like their counterpart, middle school literacy coaches were also found to play many roles and wear many different hats (Calo, 2012, Blamey et al., 2008). In one study that explored the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach, surveys of randomly selected participants from across the country revealed that their role, like elementary coaches was varied and influenced by context and situations.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), literacy coaches at the middle level focus their attention on working with teachers, not students. In their report *NCTE Principles of Adolescent Literacy Reform* (2006), they stated that literacy coaches at the middle level can help teachers across content areas learn how to:

“provide a bridge between adolescents’ rich literate backgrounds and school activities; work on school-wide teams to teach literacy in each discipline as an essential way of learning in the disciplines; recognize when students are not making meaning with text and provide appropriate, strategic assistance regarding texts that are authentic and relevant to their life experiences; create environments that allow students to engage in critical examinations of texts as they dissect, deconstruct, and reconstruct in an effort to engage in meaning making and comprehension processes.” (The National Council of Teachers of English, 2006, p.14).

Likewise, a recent study conducted by A. Smith (2007) sought to expand the research base of literacy coaching at the middle level by providing information about the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches at the middle level. This was a multi case study that explored the roles, responsibilities, and contexts within which three middle school literacy coaches from the upper Midwest worked in an effort to explore how context affects the roles played by these literacy coaches.

According to Smith (2007), the roles that middle school coaches assumed fell into two categories: classroom instructional roles and school-related roles. Findings from this study indicated that as a result of the multiplicity of roles along with contextual factors it was difficult to identify whether the coaches efforts had much impact on teacher learning (Smith, 2007).

It is easy to say that coaching is coaching and some scholars have found that similarities exist there however some important differences (McKenna & Walpole, 2010). Moreover, these researchers have found that middle-grades coaches face challenges that do not exist at the elementary level and require a different set of responsibilities and practices.

Based on the research of Snow, Ippolito and Schwartz (2006), some of the contextual constraints include: teachers are organized by discipline rather than grade level, a lesser degree

of awareness on the part of middle school teachers of the importance of literacy and a greater sense of isolation from colleagues. To compound the problem, Sturtevant (2003) reports that a curricular constraint exists in the fact that the curriculum is less flexible and reflects traditional methods of a reliance on lecturing with demands from administration and pressure to cover content.

In searching for reports that examined coaching from the perspectives of those stakeholders involved in the coaching process namely teachers, principals and coaches, one particular dissertation emerged that set out to determine and define the elementary literacy coaching roles and responsibilities (Thao, 2013). Applying a sequential mixed-method, the researcher set out to determine from teachers, principals and coaches, which roles were, valued the most. Findings indicated an inconsistent agreement between the roles and responsibilities of the coaches as perceived by stakeholders. While the quantitative data suggested that the coaches were perceived as coordinators of the reading programs, the qualitative data reported the coaches were spending their time as contributors to student testing (Thao, 2013). The current findings reported in this study indicated just the opposite. Not only was there agreement among principals, teachers and coaches which roles were valued most, analysis of data from coaching logs indicated that both coaches under study in this report spent approximately the same amount of time in what is determined as low-level intensity coaching activities including student test administration considered to be more of an administrative task not impacting teacher practice. These indications are discussed in further detail in the findings section of this report.

Despite the inconsistencies that exist regarding the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach, previous research has documented the potential benefits of literacy coaching. For example, an article that reviewed studies on literacy coaching implemented across eight Ontario

schools explicitly emphasized the effectiveness of coaches on promoting student learning (Lynch & Alsop, 2007). Additional studies reported in the 2010 issue of *The Elementary School Journal* also highlighted the importance of literacy coaches in supporting teachers to change instructional practices and enhance student achievement. In one of those articles, researchers Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) used interviews with thirty-five teachers who has participated in coaching programs to find out what teachers valued about the work of coaches. Findings indicated that teachers valued how the coaches created a space for collaboration, provided ongoing support and taught about research-based instructional strategies Vanderburg and Stephens (2010).

Similarly in another study in the same journal, it was documented that the work that the coaches did with teachers that had the greatest impact fell into five broad categories: “working with teachers (individually or in groups), planning and organizing that supported the work with teachers, management or administrative tasks, school-related meetings and outreach to parents or community, and working with students in assessment or instruction (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010).

It was further documented that most of the teachers involved in the study reported positive perceptions of the coach’s work. Moreover, in the schools where coaches spent more time coaching (as opposed to administrative or planning tasks), a higher percentage of students demonstrated proficiency in literacy tasks (Bean et al., 2010). The findings from these studies validate what is reported in the findings and interpretation sections of this report.

C. Literacy Coaching on a Continuum

As a rresult of findings from this study and others cited earlier, it is more reasonable to think about middle school literacy coaching as existing along a continuum from those who support only working with students on one end to those working only with teachers on the other.

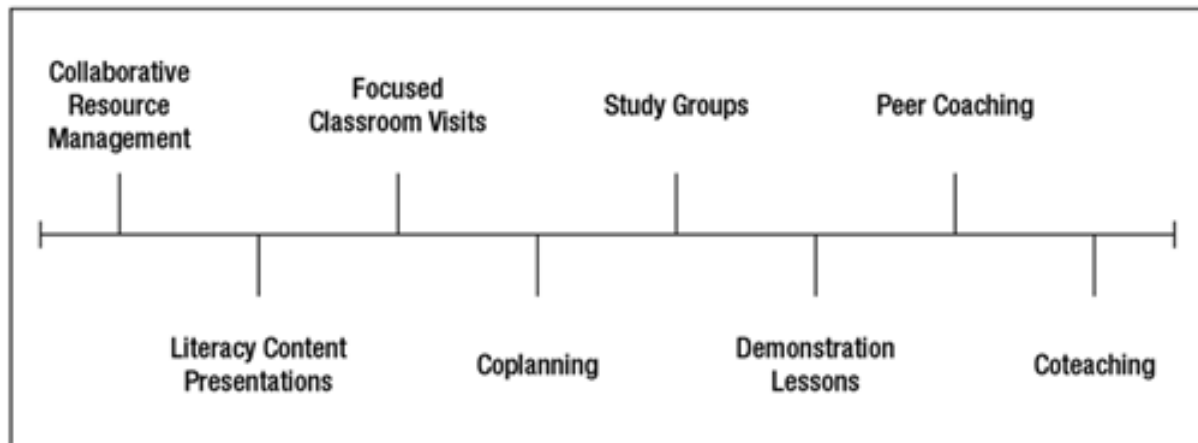
Seeing literacy coaching as a continuum of responsibilities allows for “fluidity of the role” (Calo, 2012 p. 240) and also takes into account the experiences of both coaches and teachers and the influence of the school and district. Furthermore, by presenting middle school literacy coaching as a continuum of roles, rather than “one size fits all” role allows for differentiation, providing “flexibility that is needed as schools and districts identify their needs as an organization and determine how the coach at the middle level might assist in identifying these needs.” (Calo, 2012 p. 240).

Others have assumed a similar stance of viewing literacy coaching as a continuum as a way to deal with the multifaceted roles. M.C. Moran suggests that “a better solution is to limit the focus of the coaching program to a strategic set of objectives and to provide a continuum of customized professional learning opportunities to meet the varied needs of teacher.” (Moran, 2007, p. 12). Moran’s Literacy Coaching Continuum makes it possible for every teacher to “evolve in their practice- “ by providing a “just right” combination of learning opportunities that the teachers themselves had a say in creating thereby focusing on the collaborative nature of coaching relationship (Moran, 2007). This continuum of coaching aligns with the theoretical framework that supports this study. An essential part of Vygotsky’s Collaborative Learning Theory is the notion of scaffolding. It allows the coach as the ‘More Knowledgeable Other’ (Vygotsky, 1978) to provide the necessary scaffold which allows the teacher to learn instructional practices where they are most comfortable, that is within their Zone of Proximal Development with the coach on the side, offering to step in only when it is appropriate. Moran’s (2007) Literacy Coaching Continuum is discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

Below is a graphic display of the Literacy Coaching Continuum.

Figure 2.1.

The Literacy Coaching Continuum



Source: Developed by M. C. Moran and Elizabeth Powers.

Similar to Moran's (2007) Literacy Coaching Continuum, Dr. Rita Bean (2004) suggests thinking about literacy coaching as involving varying levels of intensity. Like Moran's (2007) continuum Dr. Bean has identified that there are three levels of coaching opportunities or learning formats. They are described as Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. They provide a range of coaching roles and responsibilities similar to Moran's (2007) with the added element of intensity that range from those informal that help develop relationships, to more formal types that are somewhat intense to those on Level 3 that are identified as most intense and that "may create some anxiety on part of teacher or coach" (Bean, 2004a). It is these more intense relationships with the coach, that according to Dr. Bean has the potential to move teachers to instructional changes as they get anxious about the work with the coach. Moran (2007) identifies these activities as getting "close to the bone" and allows for teacher reflection on their instructional practices (Moran, 2007). Below is a Bean's Levels of Intensity of Instructional Coaching (Figure 2.2)



Levels of Intensity for Instructional Coaching*

Level 1 (Informal; helps to develop relationships)

- Talking with colleagues about literacy learning and student needs (identifying issues or needs, setting goals, problem solving)
- Developing and providing materials for/with colleagues
- Developing curriculum with colleagues; exploring the SAS portal for exemplars
- Participating in professional development activities with colleagues, e.g., conferences/workshops/professional learning opportunities
- Co-facilitating and/or participating in Study Groups, Book Talks, and PLO interests
- Helping teachers understand student assessment data and identifying areas of focus
- Facilitating conversations with teachers about areas of strength and areas of need
- Looking at school wide data
- Providing small group professional learning opportunities, i.e., PD at faculty meetings

Level 2 (More formal; somewhat more intense; begins to look at areas of need and focus)

- Co-planning lessons and identifying appropriate research-based instructional strategies
- Facilitating team meetings (grade level or content level) to discuss student performance, literacy learning, and using data to inform instruction
- Analyzing student work and identifying areas of strength and areas of need
- Interpreting assessment data (helping teachers use results for instructional decision-making)
- One-on-one support for teachers and reflecting "in" and "on" actions
- Making professional development presentations for teachers
- Beginning the B,D,A cycle of instructional coaching, e.g., before meetings with teachers

Level 3 (Formal, more intense; may create some anxiety on part of teacher or coach)

- Modeling and debriefing lesson design, instructional techniques, integration of technology
- Co-planning, co-teaching, and debriefing lessons (B, D, A cycle of instructional coaching)
- Visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers
- Analyzing videotaped lessons where available and appropriate (360° cameras)
- Facilitating small group professional learning and scenario problem solving
- Facilitating lesson study with teachers
- Providing whole school professional learning

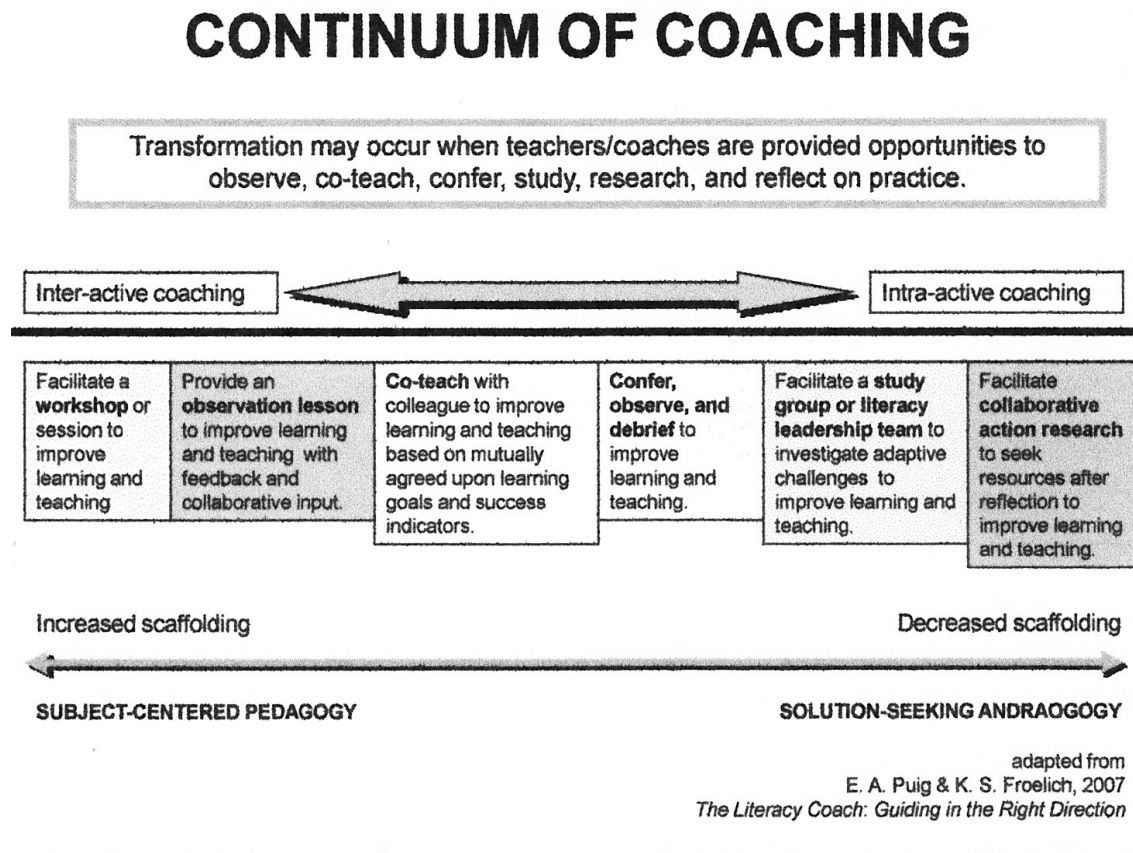
*Adapted from Rita Bean:

Bean, R.M. (Spring, 2004). *Promoting Effective Literacy Instruction: The Challenge for Literacy Coaches*. *The California Reader*, 37(3), pp.58-63.

A third continuum of coaching was developed by researchers Puig and Froelich (2007). Like Moran and Bean, Puig and Froelich present a similar view of coaching opportunities. These two researchers have defined the two ends of their continuum as Inter-active coaching and Intra-

active Coaching. As one can see in the graphic representation below, intensity as described on Bean's (2004) continuum and scaffolding on Moran's (2007) are interpreted as levels of "transformation". These researchers believe that transformation on the part of the teacher might occur if the coaching relationship moves more to the right and is more "intra-active" involving opportunities like conferring, facilitating study group, modeling lessons, observing providing feedback and reflection. as opposed to those described as "Inter-active"

Figure 2.3.



All three continuums provide a unique way for this researcher to view and study the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach. More importantly, following this thread of thinking and studying literacy coaching as a continuum of roles and responsibilities

rather than the ‘one-size fits all’ or standard approach to literacy coaching provides a unique research opportunity as called for earlier (Calo, 2012). More importantly, by studying middle school literacy coaching as a continuum adds to the evolving body of middle school coaching research described earlier. Furthermore, districts can use the methodology described to study middle school literacy coaching in their own districts by applying one of the three continuums described in this study.

Chapter Three: Research Design & Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative cased-based study was to explore the roles and responsibilities of two middle school literacy coaches as viewed from the perspectives of teachers, principals and coaches. In addition, the researcher examined and described the types of support and challenges reported by the participants. This study was conducted with the following three questions in mind:

Research Question#1: What roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach are viewed as most important from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and coaches?

Research Question #2: What types of support do middle school literacy coaches experience viewed from the perspectives of the principals, teachers, and coaches??

Research Question #3: What types of challenges do middle school literacy coaches experience viewed from the perspectives of the principals, teachers, and coaches?

The remainder of this chapter describes the research design, the rationale for selecting a qualitative, narrative approach to study middle school literacy coaching the data collection and analysis used to answer the research questions. This chapter also highlights the methodological issues of reliability, validity and trustworthiness as well as limitations encountered by the researcher.

Rationale

A descriptive, narrative case-based inquiry approach oriented towards discovery, description, and a holistic understanding of middle school literacy coaching roles and

responsibilities was the method for this study. The following section identifies some basic assumptions of this approach and links them to this study of middle school literacy coaching.

Qualitative research assumes that a whole phenomenon is under study and that a complex system cannot be meaningfully reduced to several variables and linear causal relationships. Patton states, "The advantages of qualitative portrayals of holistic settings and impacts is that greater attention can be given to nuance, setting interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and contexts"(Patton, 1990, p.51).

Vygotsky's social constructivist theory along with the conceptual framework based on narrative inquiry discussed in Chapter 1 directed this study to a holistic understanding of the middle school literacy coach's roles and responsibilities. In addition, being open to capturing the participants' stories during interviews "provided the researcher with a rich framework through which he could investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories." (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p.1). In this case, the researcher was interested in studying how principals, teachers and coaches experience middle school literacy coaching and to describe their interpretation of the major roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach, supports and challenges.

Educational researchers have used stories over several decades to study teaching and teacher education. (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Carter [1993) contends that teaching is much too rich and complex and indeterminate to reduce to numbers and mathematical formulae therefore narrative is important for capturing the richness of experience. Besides "teachers like all human beings are storytellers who individually and socially lead storied lives." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p.5). Furthermore, stories provide a rich backdrop for

understanding the contextualized situations in which teachers come to know what they know about teaching and make the decisions that they do (Rushton, 2004).

In line with this thinking the researcher proposed that the stories "restoried" as composite narratives by middle school teachers, principals and literacy coaches during interviews provided the same rich backdrop for understanding the contextualized situations in which literacy coaches come to know what they know about the coaching process and make the decisions about their roles and responsibilities. By conducting a narrative study, the researcher was able to establish a close bond with participants. When participants in a narrative study are allowed to tell their stories and share their experiences about an event, it makes them feel that their stories are important and that they have a voice (Creswell, 2005). It was also noted in the introduction to this study that the use of narrative inquiry coupled with a narrative analysis has the potential to narrow the gap between research and practice (Kim, 2010).

Qualitative research involves fieldwork. Fieldwork implies that the researcher has direct and personal contact with the people involved in a phenomenon in its natural setting. The researcher conducted non-participant field observations with teachers and

Research Design

To answer the questions posed about the beliefs held by middle school principals, teachers and literacy coaches concerning the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach, a narrative case-based design was applied to this study.

Researcher's Positionality

The topic of this research study is of extreme importance to the author because he served as a literacy coach for the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Early Literacy. This researcher had the honor and good fortune of participating as one of the "Reading Coach pioneers" as part of our previous Governor McGreevy's Early Reading Initiative, which was funded by the Federal Government in 2002. Being one of thirty reading coaches hired by the New Jersey Department of Education, this researcher was placed in three schools where more than fifteen percent of the students failed the reading and writing portion of the state fourth grade test in 2001. Having been assigned to three low-performing schools, this researcher's role was to assist K-3 teachers with understanding scientifically based reading strategies and ways to implement effective balanced literacy instruction. Following that experience, the researcher became the middle school literacy coach for the FMS for three years before being promoted to Language Arts Supervisor for teachers in grades five through eight in the district where this study was conducted.

The researcher's role in this research project was that of a non-participant observer. A researcher's own beliefs and experiences could shade perspectives as data is collected and analyzed. Precautions needed to be taken to minimize researcher bias and subjectivity. One way this was accomplished was by incorporating a field note observational protocol (Creswell, 2005). This guide allowed the researcher to capture direct evidence on one side and reflections and feelings to what was observed on the other side. In addition, participants were asked to review the transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews as a form of checks and balances for reducing bias (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

It is important to note that trust had been developed between the researcher and the participants in this study through a previous role in the district thus making it possible for the

participants to participate without fear, or harm for participation. Additionally, triangulation was provided through multiple data sources and collection methods.

Selection of Sites and Participants

"Narrative inquiry often focuses on the experiences of one or few participants rather than those of a larger group."(Creswell, 2005; Chase, 2005). One of the goals of narrative inquiry is to give voice to those whose stories have been previously unheard in educational research (Creswell, 2005; Chase, 2005). Since Shanklin (2006) calls for additional coaching studies that include the perspectives of those being coached, this study focused on a small number of participant voices to be heard including two teachers, two principals and the two coaches. All participants were sent letters of invitation to participate in the study making them aware of the study. Each participant submitted an informed consent form prior to participation outlining details of the study. The Central Office granted the researcher access to school SGS located in the FTPS district in Somerset, New Jersey. It is important to note that both of these schools are Title I schools and as Title I schools are identified by the New Jersey Department of Education as schools in "Need of Improvement". Criteria for selecting the two teachers required at least five years of full time teaching of language arts/literary. It is also important to point out that because of personnel changes at both schools, both of the literary coaches were in their first year of literary coaching at these schools. For that reason, data was collected for a period of six months from January 2012- June 2012 to allow time the coaches to build relationships with the teachers and the principals. The impact of being a newly hired literacy coach is discussed in the findings and linked back to literature with recommendations for further research.

Sampling Procedures

Due to time and job constraints, the researcher adopted convenience sampling for the purposes of this study. Convenience sampling is a procedure whereby “the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available to be studied” (Creswell, 2005, p.149). The advantages of this type of sampling are the availability and a quickness with which data can be gathered (Creswell, 2005).

FTPS District FTPS district is located in Somerset County, New Jersey. It is a large suburban school district made up of nine schools; one high school, one middle school serving seventh and eighth grade students, one intermediate school serving fourth and fifth grade students (the fifth grade is departmentalized and is part of the middle school model), six elementary schools and one high SGS.

FMS is a 7th& 8th grade Title I school with 38% of its total school population eligible for discounted/free lunch. The total school population for 2009-2010 was 1,041 students. According to the 2010 NCLB Report, FMS is designated as a " school in need of improvement year 6" which indicates that this status requires a restructuring plan. As of 2008-2009, student demographics include: 49% African American, 21% White, 20% Latino, 11% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 1% two or more races. (Source: NCES: 2008-2009).

SGS Similar to FMS, SGS is a 5th & 6th Grade Title I School with 34% of students eligible for discounted/free lunch. The total school population for 2009-2010 was 1,045. According to the 2010 NCLB Report, SGS was designated a "School in need of improvement year 5" which

indicates that the school is required to implement a restructuring plan at the end of the year if no improvements are made. As of 2008-2009, student demographics included: 43% African American, 20% Latino, 19% White 18% Asian/Pacific Islander, less than 1% American Indian, Alaskan Native and less than 1% two or more races. It is important to note that these two schools are quite similar in demographic make-up. About a year ago, SGS departmentalized, making the sixth grade part of the middle school model. (Source: NCES: 2008-2009).

Participant Selection

In keeping with the rationale for the use of convenience sampling a maximum of six subjects were selected to participate in the study, two middle school literacy teachers, two principals and two coaches. Both teachers are full-time English Language Arts teachers. One teacher is a sixth grade ELA teacher who teaches at the SGS and one from the seventh grade who teaches at FMS. Both are full-time ELA teachers and have taught middle school language arts for over five years. Each administrator has served in the role of principal of these schools for the last three years. The two literacy coaches selected were in their first year of literacy coaching in the FTPS district. The following section describes in detail each of the participants included in this study.

Participant Selection

Principal of SGS (S.G.) S.G. (pseudonym) was in her twenty-sixth year as a principal. Over the course of thirty years in education she was chairperson for the Middle States Evaluation Committee in New Jersey. She is a member of the International Reading Association. She has eighteen years of teaching experience from teaching first grade through eighth grade. S.G. is in

charge of managing a school with a total enrollment of twelve hundred students comprised of both fifth and sixth grade.

Principal of FMS (P.M.) P.M. (pseudonym) has over fifteen years experience in education first as a science teacher before becoming an administrator. At the time of the study P.M. had completed her third year as the principal of FMS.

Seventh Grade Teacher (E.B.) E.B. (pseudonym) started her teaching career in 2000 as an instructional aide. She has completed over twelve years in education. She completed five years of language arts teaching all in seventh grade.

Sixth Grade Teacher (D.M.) D.M. (pseudonym) indicated that he came from a family of educators. D.M. is originally from Jamaica and at the time of this study completed his fifth year in teaching sixth grade language arts.

FMS Literacy Coach (M.L.) M.L. (pseudonym) coaches both seventh and eighth grade language arts teachers at FMS. She has over seventeen years in education. She was completing her first year as literacy coach at the time of this study having recently completed her ED.D degree. She previously taught grades kindergarten through adult.

SGS Literacy Coach (B.D.) B.D. (pseudonym) started teaching in 1992. She was a lead teacher at a high school in New York City. She has taught first and second grade and was an educational assistant for a middle school special education class in the high school in language arts/literacy. B.D. was completing her first year as a full time middle school literacy coach in FTPS district at the time of this study.

Table 3.1

Participant Selection Chart

Participant Name	Job Title	Number of Years in Education
S.G. (pseudonym)	Principal of SGS	30 years in education 26 years as principal
P.M. (pseudonym)	Principal	15 years in education 3 years as principal
E.B. (pseudonym)	Literacy teacher 7 th grade	12 years in education 5 years literacy teaching
D.M. (pseudonym)	Literacy teacher 6 th grade	5 years teaching literacy
M.L. (pseudonym)	7 th & 8 th grade literacy coach	17 years in education 1 st year as literacy coach
B.D. (pseudonym)	5 th & 6 th grade literacy coach	20 years in education 1 st year as literacy coach

Protection of Human Participants

The permission of the Institutional Review Board of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey was obtained before the study began to insure the protection of the participants' human rights .At the initial meeting with the researcher; each participant signed an informed consent form. The consent form explained the purposes and procedures of the study. It asks for their voluntary participation and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and ensured that there identity and all data collected was confidential. A copy of the informed

consent form is found in the appendices section of this study. In the final report, only pseudonyms were used to identify the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was ongoing and iterative. To answer the research questions, interviews were conducted with two middle school literacy coaches, two principals and two teachers. These interviews were conducted at the beginning of the study in January 2011. A semi-structured, open-ended interview guide was used to capture the stories of the participants. There is one for teachers, principals and literacy coaches. Copies of interviews are found in the Appendices. Flexibility was built in to account for days when school was not in session.

Data collection instruments for this study began with administering of six open-ended, semi-structured interview protocols of all participants. The interviews included some narrative prompts to encourage more of a conversation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that these interviews serve as "a conversation with a purpose" and by starting the interview with such prompts as " Can you tell me about a time you worked with the literary coach or " Can you tell me a story about a time when...?" This allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's lived experiences with literacy coaching through the events that emerge. An important element to the interview preparation was the implementation of a pilot test. The pilot test assisted with the research in determining flaws, limitations and weaknesses within the design of the interview protocol. The pilot test also assisted with making revisions and refinements to the research questions. A copy of the pilot test administered is found in the appendices section of this report. Non-participant observational field notes were recorded during on site visits at both schools during common planning meetings. The protocols were designed to capture direct

evidence on one side and the researcher's reactions and reflections on the other side of the protocol. This provided a way to minimize bias during observations.

Documents included in the collection of data are the literacy coaches' monthly coaching activity logs collected during the months of January 2012-June 2012. The district to use in reporting the work of the coaches created the logs. They were not specifically designed for this study. These logs also reveal with whom, where, and how the literacy coaches work with individuals. All of the coaching logs are found in appendices. All three data sources; interviews, observational field notes and monthly coaching activity logs were then triangulated to guard against any potential bias and check and establish validity. Triangulation as defined by Creswell (2005) is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals such as teachers, principals and coaches in a school setting. All culminates in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. On this account of triangulation, the researcher tries to draw on multiple viewpoints and feels more confident that he may be moving towards accuracy and credibility as he taps into a variety of sources of information; interviews, coaching logs and field observations.

Copies of all protocols used to collect data for this study are found in the appendices at the end of the report. In the next section, the researcher explains the steps used in the interview process. The interviews lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to an hour. They were recorded digitally and later transcribed. The field notes were taken at the common planning meetings. Upon returning to the researcher's office, reflections on field notes were recorded.

Data Analysis

Like data collection, data analysis was an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data. The process of analysis followed the process described by Miles & Huberman (1994). The steps in the process included; data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing

and verification. To further describe the analysis, a form of a Creswell's (2005) five-step process was used. These steps follow in the next section. Data Reduction began with transcription of all six interviews. Once the codes and categories were developed they were then applied to the monthly literary coach logs and other documents in order to identify common themes and emerging patterns related to the research questions under study.

Step One: Initial Reading of Transcripts

After all six digitally recorded interviews were transcribed, the researcher read through the interviews to get an overall sense of what participants were saying with regards to each of the research questions. It was important to get a general overall feel for what the data means. The researcher then went through each interview a second time looking for pertinent themes related to each of the research questions. The researcher highlighted a word, a phrase or attached some kind of label during the second reading that pertained to each of the three research questions. Examples of the color-coding procedure used and emerging categories aligned to the Moran's Literacy Coaching Continuum (2007) are found in the appendices.

Step 2: Organization and Coding of Responses

Next, responses to each research question were sorted and grouped by research question. The researcher read through all the responses to each question, highlighted pertinent information, and developed a master-coding list of response categories for each of the research questions. Within each research question responses categories were highlighted. After the initial coding process, the data was organized into tables listed as "Unordered Responses to Research Question" and another table listed as " Unordered Coded Responses with Codes Applied". These tables are labeled and found in the appendices at the end of this report.

Step Three: Review of Total Transcripts

The master coding lists developed in Step Two for each research question were then used and the full transcript of each participant was coded and displayed in a Data Matrix for each of the three research questions.

Step Four: Completion of Data Analysis & Report of Findings

The analysis of each response to the research questions and analysis of each transcript was conducted. This resulted in identifying themes, patterns and categories for the research questions. These were reported in a Data Matrix that included the research questions and the codes and categories for each of them. This was a way to organize and display the data for each research question. These are found in the appendices at the end of this report. The Literacy Coach Continuum (Moran, 2007) was used as a reference guide to code and categorize data in the documents and field observations. In the final analysis all coded and categorized data sources were triangulated and highlighted in order to identify the most important roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach and as well as the supports and challenges perceived by the participants. Copies of coded documents and observations are found in the appendices section of this report as well as a description of Moran's (2007) Literacy Coaching Continuum.

A second form of form of narrative analysis was conducted with field observation data. Since one of the goals was to investigate the ways in which teachers, principals and coaches experience literary coaching through capturing their stories, it was critical to apply some type of narrative analysis as way of understanding the experiences of participants through negotiating relationships between the researcher and participant (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). By identifying story elements in an interview the researcher can discover significance and outcomes of a specific event or coaching situation. Then, by breaking it down into its story elements, the researcher was able to determine the role the literacy coach played during the common planning

meetings and how she interacted with the participants. To accomplish this form of analysis, an adaptation of Ollerenshaw's Problem-Solution Narrative Structure (2000) was applied to the transcribed interview data. A copy of this narrative structure is found in the appendices.

Step Five: Review of Total Transcript to Ascertain Validity of Findings

The researcher reviewed all transcripts a final time to ascertain that the findings and the themes and patterns regarding major roles of literacy coaches were consistent with the data. Final transcripts were then given to the participants to review for accuracy. A comparison to previous research was made to determine what were the major roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach.

Reliability& Validity/Trustworthiness

In narrative inquiry the arrangement of a story and its quality as research data source do come with expressed concerns (Polkinghorne, 2007). In establishing the integrity of the methodology of narrative inquiry the benefits cannot be viewed without consideration of the risks involved. There is consensus in the literature that it is not appropriate to judge narrative research with the same standards as those applied to more traditional qualitative and quantitative research methods (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2007; Webster and Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry is more concerned with individual truths people have to tell than identifying comprehensive and replicated facts (Webster and Mertova, 2007). This section describes the role of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability applied to this narrative inquiry study.

Credibility

Credibility was achieved through a series of member checking. Member checking is a process of having the data, interpretations, and conclusions validated with those from whom the data was collected. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. Member checking can be done daily in the course of the investigation and is both formal and informal. The six subjects in this study were given the opportunity to look over the data to make sure that what was constructed was an accurate representation.

Additionally, where there was discrepancy about which categories to code several coaching roles, the researcher passed them on to the designer of the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007) for confirmation. For example, coach collaboration was coded by the designer as coplanning, Lab-Site facilitator where the coach sets up the classrooms to be used for teachers to come and observe instruction were coded observations and coach professional development as placed coded to the category of professional development.

Confirmability

Confirmability was achieved through transcribing listening, and re-listening to, reading and rereading to the data collected through semi-structured interviews and observational field notes. Dependability in narrative inquiry is achieved through the trustworthiness of the field notes and interview transcripts.

According to Creswell (2005) researchers can develop trust with their participants by describing one's own perspective-also known as reflexivity meaning that the researcher reflects on his own biases and assumptions throughout the study. One way to achieve reflexivity is through recording reflective notes during the field observations. An observational field note protocol was designed to capture the researcher's reflections.

Transferability

Transferability in narrative inquiry involves providing sufficient information that a person considering application in another surrounding or environment can make the needed judgments of similarity. Due to the small sample size for this study no generalizations were made about other coaches working in other districts. However, it is the hope of this researcher that the events that were portrayed inside this narrative inquiry supplied richness and accounts of detail and ease of access that a person who reads the story should be able make applications of this process in another location in a similar study (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

All phases of this inquiry were sensitive to ethical considerations. The proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Rutgers, The State University and permission was granted to conduct the study. All details concerning processes and procedures for conducting the study along with an informed consent forms and full exemptions are found in the appendices at the end of this report.

For this study in particular, permission to participate was obtained. All participants were appraised of the motivation of the researcher for their selection, granted anonymity and told about the purpose of the study and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any type of penalty or harm.

In addition, contact was maintained with the researcher's advisor, Dr. Lesley M. Morrow, Department Chair of Literacy and Teaching of Rutgers University, The Graduate School of Education, as well as with my other committee members throughout the duration of this study.

Limitations of the Study

Any research method, of course, has its limitations, and narrative is not suitable for all inquiries. Narrative constructions of the participants can never be quite free of the researcher's interpretation of their lives. Furthermore, it was not the intent of this researcher to generalize the findings to any other populations and samples of individuals. Again, the population sample was too small to generalize findings to larger populations. There were other limitations to this study, which need to be identified.

Second, two of the monthly coaching activity logs for the SGS Literary Coach, B.D. that were analyzed did not come from the time of the study but were from November and December of the prior year during the same school year. The intent was to keep the number of coaching logs consistent

Thirdly, observations of the coaches for this study were limited to seven common planning meetings only. There were no other observations outside of the common planning meetings. If the coaches interacted with stakeholders at other times, this researcher did not observe those interactions and record field notes. Findings and results as well as interpretations discussing limitations are described in greater detail in Chapter Four of this study.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology applied to this investigation. A qualitative narrative inquiry design (Patton, 1990) was used to conduct a study that captured how stakeholders; principals, teachers and literacy coaches viewed the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach as well as their supports and challenges. Data collection methods included semi-structured, narrative interviews, review of monthly coaching activity logs and observational field notes. Data was analyzed by following Miles & Huberman's (1994) Three Step Process. Overall,

analysis occurred in a five-step sequence. An additional form of analysis occurred with the filed observations involving the use of Ollerenshaw's Problem-Solution Narrative Structure (2002) as a way to "restory" the field observational notes in order to address each of the research questions. Data was triangulated in order to identify emerging common themes and patterns related to middle school literary coach roles and responsibilities, types of support and challenges of the coaching process.

Chapter 4 : Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of principals, literacy coaches, and teachers as they relate to the literacy coach's roles and responsibilities in two middle schools. This chapter presents the data analysis findings from the semi-structured interviews, field notes collected during observations of common planning meetings, and the coaches' monthly coaching activity logs collected over the six month period that this study was conducted. In order to identify the perspectives of the participants involved in this study, the following three questions were posed:

1. What do principals, literacy coaches, and teachers perceive are the most important roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach?
2. What perceptions do principals, literacy coaches and teachers hold regarding the types of support the literacy coach experiences?
3. What perceptions do principals, literacy coaches, and teachers hold regarding the types of challenges the literacy coach experiences?

Following a description of the cases explored in this study, the perspectives of the principals are presented by themes for each question, followed by the literacy coaches, the teachers, and finally the overall findings. The emergent themes for each research question are presented and supporting quotes are used to provide rich description and in-depth, information which helps to increase the credibility of the study. The chapter, concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Case Demographics

B.D., SGS School Literacy Coach B.D., the literacy coach at SGS School, arrived at the school with over 20 years in education. It was her first year as a middle school literacy coach at SGS School when this study was conducted. She began her educational career in 1992. Prior to becoming a literacy coach, B.D. taught at the elementary, middle and secondary level. She was an educational assistant for a middle school special education class of cognitively and emotionally impaired students. B.D.'s decision to become a literacy coach came while serving as a lead teacher in a high school. B.D. stated:

My principal said that I was motivating and inspiring and she wanted to multiply and to be able to give them effective ways to engage so they can learn successfully.”

M.L., FM School Literacy Coach Like B.D., this was M.L.'s first year as a literacy coach with FM School. To her role, she brought over 18 years in education. M.L. has taught in kindergarten through second grade at the elementary level, fifth grade, seventh grade as well as adults. In explaining why she made the decision to become literacy coach M.L. replied:

I am interested in, you know, learning and teaching. I wanted to expand my scope beyond-a single classroom.

S.G., Principal of SGS School S.G., principal of SGS School has a total of over 30 years in education. She has been in a principal role for the last 26 years S.G. received her masters from Westchester State University. Shortly after graduation, she was appointed principal for the Incarnation School Ewing, New Jersey before arriving in Franklin Township. She has also served as a chairperson for the Middle States evaluation committee working while working with the Middle States Association. Sampson G. Smith is comprised of two grade levels, fifth and sixth. The sixth grade is considered part of the middle school in Franklin Township.

P.M., Principal of FM School P.M. has been in education for over 15 years. Prior to becoming principal at FM School, she was a science teacher in the SB School district. After returning to graduate work, she earned her masters degree to and became an administrator. She has been principal at Franklin for the last 3 years. P.M. shared her reason for becoming principal and stated that,

I felt I'd have a greater impact on the large, you know, setting so I took all my experiences as a teacher, a house name in for the principalship and I uh got one and I'm glad I did.

D.M. Sixth Grade Teacher at SGS D.M. has taught sixth grade English Language Arts/Literacy for the last 6 years all at SGS School. He is originally from Jamaica where his mother was a teacher for over 18 years. D.M. spoke of the influence his mother had on him becoming a teacher:

Seeing the joy that she got from teaching and also the challenges that she faces, I decided that I want to be like her to also make that leap to change kids lives and improve their lives.

E.B. Seventh Grade Teacher at FM School E.B. teaches seventh grade English/Language Arts at FM School. She started her educational career 11 years ago as an instructional aid. This is her fifth year teaching at FM School.

District and School Demographics

FTPS District demographic characteristics FTPS district is located in Somerset County, New Jersey. It is a large suburban school district made up of nine schools; one high school, one middle school serving seventh and eighth grade students, one intermediate school serving fifth and sixth grade students (the school is departmentalized and so the sixth grade is considered part

of the middle school model), six elementary schools and one high school. The middle school sites for this study included FM School and SGS School

SGS School At the time this study was conducted, SGS was a 5th & 6th Grade Title I School 34% of students eligible for discounted/free lunch. The total school population for 2009-2010 was 1,045. According to the 2010 NCLB Report, SGS School was designated a “School in need of improvement year 5” which indicates that the school was required to implement a restructuring plan at the end of the year if no improvements were made. As of 2008-2009, student demographics included: 43% Black, Not Hispanic, 20% Hispanic, 19% White, Not Hispanic, 18% Asian/Pacific Islander, less than 1% American Indian, Alaskan Native and less than 1% Two or more races. It is important to note that these two schools were quite similar in demographic make-up. About a year ago, SGS School departmentalized, making the sixth grade part of the middle school model.

(Source: NCES: 2008-2009).

FM School Similar to SGS School’s demographics, FM School was a 7th & 8th grade Title I school with 38% of its total school population eligible for discounted/free lunch at the time of this study. The total school population for 2009-2010 was 1,041 students. According to the 2010 NCLB Report, FM School was designated as a “ school in need of improvement year 6” which indicates that this status requires a restructuring plan. As of 2008-2009, student demographics included: 48% Black, not Hispanic, 21% White, Not Hispanic, 20% Hispanic, 11% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 1% Two or more races. (Source: NCES: 2008-2009).

What follows is a description of the findings as they relate to each research question. Information from all three data categories; semi-structured interviews, coach monthly activity logs and field observations are assembled into meaningful segments of text and woven into composite narratives of all participants in order to “re-story” the subject’s experience with literacy coaching in order to identify particular themes related to the research questions under study (Creswell, 2005).

Research question 1 - Roles & Responsibilities of the Middle School Literacy Coach

Research question one addresses the participants’ perspectives of the most important roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach. The results are presented by themes in the following order; principals, literacy coaches, and teachers and finally the overall summary of findings.

Three themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the semi-structured interview questions related to the most important roles and responsibilities of the two middle school literacy coaches under study. The findings indicated that all participants, believed that the most important roles and responsibilities of their coaches included coach as collaborative resource manager, coach as administrative task manager, and coach as coplanner.

Literacy Coach as Collaborative Resource Manager

In the role of collaborative resource manager, Moran (2007) describes the work of the coach as one who works with teachers to become familiar with curriculum resources and how to access those resources. It is an opportunity for rich conversation about materials, instructional strategies and grouping practices in addition to collaborating with administrators and developing

goals and plans for the school (Sturtevant, 2003). Moreover, the coach who is mainly a collaborative resource is an expert gather of ‘stuff’ and assists teachers with selecting books and other instructional materials to meet literacy needs. The coach in this role is often found coordinating and maintaining bookrooms, ordering and distributing books to teachers. There is often an emphasis on the coach as curriculum resource or “expert” (Smith, 2012).

The Principal Perspective

S.G.’s Narrative: Principal of SGS School S.G. celebrated with me her 26 years as an administrator. This was her second year as principal of SGS School. She previously served as an elementary school principal at one of the elementary schools before taking on the principal at the middle school. She first thanked me for taking the time to look at literacy coaching in the building. So I asked her to identify from her perspective the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach. S.G. emphasized the importance of collaboration in establishing goals and plans for the school. She stated that:

There’s a partnership...they can share my goals for a unified plan...they can-and they certainly have a hand in shaping them...they’re active participants in shaping that, you know digging into the data, their anecdotal notes, our joint-walkthroughs The goals and the unified plan come out of the informed decisions that we’ve been able to make...that’s the partnership.

Furthermore, S.G. views this role of collaborative resource manager as sharing a common vision for the school and knowing what resources and additional learning the teachers might need to be successful when she stated:

There are times when we’re traveling aide-by-side together speaking a common language and saying there is an area where we may be failing our teachers that directly impact the decisions we make for ongoing professional development...to respect what they see as resources and the fact that they need all the tools at their fingertips.

S.G. stressed the need for collaboration between herself and the coach when she described the collaboration that occurred in a more formal setting, once a month with all the

principals' coaches. As S.G. sees it, it was these formal meetings are that gave all the principals and the coaches a chance to refocus and establish the need for open communication across the district.

P.M.'s Narrative: Principal of FM School P.M. has been principal at FM School for 3 years. Before this she was a science teacher in high school. P.M. began her story by stating that the role of the middle school literacy coach was new since she joined FTPS District. She admitted that she never had worked with one or really heard of the role. P.M. agrees with S.G., principal at SGS regarding the need for the coach to be a collaborative resource manager but then emphasized the need for the coach to be that master teacher and curriculum expert being able to work with teachers at all levels. She stated:

The coach has to be a master teacher because they have to work with diverse skill sets and needs of teachers in the building. So the person has to be impartial willing to put in the time and effort maybe with some very low skilled teachers or antiquated teachers. The coach is that expert, sometimes a kind. In addition they need to be "seeker out" of teachers. The coach is a mentor.

The International Reading Association (2004) reported that a literacy coach must be an expert teacher, collaborating with and assisting teachers to improve instruction. In addition to knowing where to gather the appropriate resources and materials, these same coaches need to be skillful collaborators when working with adult learners in order to determine their needs. (Neufeld, 2003).

P.M. also spoke about the need for collaboration when working on scheduling and for looking at data, conducting Learning Walks together, working on curriculum and other forms of professional development.

The Literacy Coach Perspective

M.L.'s Narrative: Literacy Coach at FM School M.L. began the interview by telling me that

she has been in education for over 17 years. She has taught kindergarten through adults. This was her first year as a middle school literacy coach at FM School. M.L. indicated that being able to manager resources, especially instructional strategies, is critical in her role as a coach

I'm not interested in administration so much as I'm interested in improving teaching and learning. So you know, curricula and instructional strategies are what I really want to do.

When I asked what she thought her primary roles and responsibilities were as a literacy coach, M.L. stated:

The most important thing a literacy coach does is, you know, increase the capacity of teachers. So, help the teachers become better teacher. It's kind of huge and all encompassing.

Probing further, I discovered that it was her role as collaborative resource manager that enabled her to increase the capacity of teachers by being responsive to their needs and making sure they had the resources needed to teach the units of study the teachers were expected to implement. M.L. replied:

I uhm coordinate the common planning units...it's more of an administrative role. coordinating meetings and then hum, I kind of coordinate some purchasing and resources, and task management. Like an administrator, part of my job is to be responsive.

M.L. went on to identify other ways that she works with the teachers:

I try to get unto uhm one or two classrooms a day...informally dropping in to see how things are going. I generally have conversations with three and four teachers that are casual. And I try to have one kind of higher level coaching session which is, you know, intentionally scheduled growth...usually one-on-one. Then I answer emails and all that other kind of stuff.

In following up on the idea of having a one-on-one with a teacher about "intentional scheduled growth", M.L. described those meetings as:

Intentional meetings to change something about their teaching...growth-oriented one. A teacher came in and said, "I can't teach conclusions." So I got her to tell me more. She told me she hated teaching conclusions. And what she realized was that with introductions we have a list of eight to twelve different ways that you can open your introduction. And then you need a bridge. And then you need a thesis statement. And it's like one, two three, boom we're done. You've got a whole toolkit for introductions and. And yah with conclusions, you don't have as much. They're not taught nearly as explicitly. So this is what we're kind of co-developing. This didn't come out of

her or me but out of our conversations together...where I had to push her outside of her comfort zone. A lot of times you have to make sure that you're not the one giving them the answer...but it's somebody else's.

This example highlights the idea that collaborative resource management also involves helping teachers improve instruction by transferring what they learn from the coach about new practices to their classrooms (Neufeld, 2003). M.L. described that it was out of the collaborative conversations that together the coach and the teacher identified the tools and resources students needed for success but it is essential that the coach come to these conversations fully equipped with strategies and resources.

Furthermore collaborative resource managing involves working as a team with teachers to analyze student work. M.L. makes this point that "Inquiry groups where we look at student work together and come up with a list of clear strategies, a toolkit."

Being a collaborative resource manager for M.L. also means being a teacher advocate.

She stated that:

I find myself having to advocate on behalf of my teachers a lot. That they need materials... documenting use of technology showing how computers are being used as our superintendent asked for these kind of things...I'm going to try and document the need for us to have like twice as much technology as we do...advocacy on behalf of the department.

Literacy advocacy as part of being a collaborative resource manager is reflected in two other standards for middle school and secondary literacy coaches: Standard 1, skillful collaborators who function effectively in middle and secondary settings, and Standard 3, skillful evaluators of literacy needs who collaborate with school leadership teams to interpret and use assessment data (IRA, 2006).

B.D.'s Narrative: Literacy Coach at SGS School When I arrived for our interview that morning at SGS School, I found B.D., fully engaged in her roll as collaborative resource manager outside her office busily opening cartons of books and assembling them on long tables placing them in bins according to Units of Study. The room next door she identified as “The Book Room”, a storage room where books of all genres including poetry, biographies, fiction and nonfiction are available for teachers to sign out and use in their classroom. It was obvious that assembling and maintaining the bookroom was no easy task. B.D. 's office is located in the middle of the hallway between the fifth grade ELA/Language Arts teachers and math teachers. The math coach's office is also on this floor and just a short distance away. I later learned that the principal placed the two instructional coaches together so that they could collaborate providing further opportunities for the coaches to pool their resources related to coaching. This is B.D.'s first year as the literacy coach serving both fifth and sixth grades. My interest was in finding out what her experiences were working with the 18 sixth grade teachers specifically what she thought her roles and responsibilities were along with the types of support she had and challenges she encountered.

After a while we went into her office. B.D's office is brightly lit, with one large table in the center where teachers gather for common planning meetings and to plan individually or just have a conversation with her. She told me a bit about her history in education, and I learned that this was her twentieth year education but her first time as a literacy coach at SGS. I began the interview by commenting on the wonderful book room that was created. B.D. commented that it was a work in progress. Upon asking her what she thought the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach were, without hesitation responded with:

Primarily in this school, they view a literacy coach as someone that has resources and that will provide them with resources...getting the book

room ready, ...the expectation is for you to give handouts of what the unit is going to be about. If there are any tests that they need to do with the kids or ideal books to use for a unit. They expect all of that.

Similar to P.M.'s story, the principal of FM School, B.D. also views collaborative resource manager as the curriculum expert as a primary role connected to when she stated:

I think the most important role is that you know your curriculum. You know your material. That you are versed in what you're coaching in. It's really important to be on top of the latest research. It's extremely important to know the implementation of the curriculum and the goals of the school.

The Teacher Perspective

E.B.'s Narrative: 7th Grade ELA teacher at FM School E.B. came to this interview with 11 years in education, 5 of those teaching ELA/Literacy at FM School. I posed the first question about the roles of the literacy coach by asking her to tell me in what ways does she work with the literacy coach to which she replied referring to her role of collaborative resource manager:

She's been very helpful providing materials, books, and any kinds of texts, nonfiction, and resources. I can speak with her about trying to understand some lessons and how they can be organized or how I can present them. Her primary role is a support for teachers

I probed further with asking E.B. to tell me other ways she works with the literacy coach to which she replied. However she continued emphasizing the collaborative resource manager role when she stated:

The coach is a supplier of products and materials; books texts. Programming, kind of like a clearinghouse offering to find materials collating materials from the computer, referencing information, finding a website and information off the Internet as resources, somebody not judging... the coach is a person who is there to get a bigger perspective on what's going on in education. Who I can learn from, a tremendous resource and who's willing to share.

D.M.'s Narrative: 6th Grade ELA Teacher at SGS School D.M. has been teaching ELA/Literacy at SGS for 5 years. Teaching has always been a passion with him since his mother

was also a teacher in Jamaica. When I asked him to tell me what he thought were the primary roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach, he responded with:

It's supposed to be someone who guides, helps, supports and if there is a need for working or strengthening of weaknesses...I see the coach's role as one who disseminates information to teachers in a way that helps them gain knowledge...who shares resources with the teachers so they are equipped with what they need. According to D.M., the literacy coach:

Someone who provides both emotional and physical support and any new information about the curriculum or about changes...the coach is sort of a liaison between the supervisors and uhm the teachers.

Literacy Coach as Administrative Tasks Manager

A second major responsibility of the middle school literacy coaches identified by the participants was the role of coach as administrative task manager. A distinction needs to be made between the type of administrative collaboration described earlier as it relates to the role of collaborative resource manager and the administrative tasks identified as the number one coaching activity for this study. Administrative tasks relate to responsibilities that are not connected to coaches working directly with teachers or others to improve instruction. Rita Bean (2004) defines such administrative tasks spending large amounts of time entering data, duplicating materials, administering tests and data collection and other organizational tasks (Moxley & Taylor, 2006, Moxley, Chanter, & Bouleware, 2007). Furthermore the danger lies in the fact the some coaches may settle into these mundane routines and roles that have little impact on classroom practice (Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

The Principal's Perspective

According to P.M., Principal of FMS the types of administrative tasks that the coach may get involved in and admits that inconsistencies regarding the coach's role do exist. She stated:

There is a disparity of what the coachwork really is in each building. It seems that depending on the principal, coaches could be pulled for administrative types work, which is not their role. One of their responsibilities was working on a schedule as far as having teachers administer Learnia but we worked that out where it went from kind of a New Jersey setting to it, it was just occurring in the classroom. So it was less of a stressful situation.

An additional administrative task identified by both principals involved the coaches going on “learning walks”. P.M. of FMS described these “learning walks” as:

Doing these learning walks on a regular basis with the knowledge of the coach to explain, or expand and then follow up conversations, is only going to help the administrative team learn and then be able to truly observe the impact of teachers, and then we can begin to offer recommendations.

Other administrative tasks that were reported by the participants and documented in the data included the following:

- Completing the monthly coaching activity logs and reporting out to supervisors, principals and central office
- Looking at school-wide and district wide plans for addressing assessments each month
- Running district mandated professional development sessions
- Organizing grade-level teams for district curriculum development and revision work.
- Organizing for visits and planning for district approved consultants
- Attendance at supervisor and other district mandated meetings
- Creating benchmarks for assessments for teachers
- Completing mandated district sponsored training and professional development
- Formal observations by supervisors

The Literacy Coach Perspective

When asked to describe administrative task management, B.D. the SGS literacy coach said :

I would always try to schedule time that I’m in the classroom with teacher. At least one or two periods per day. It’s really important to me but there are always unexpected meetings in the

district. The administrative that we have to do right now...

M.L., FMS literacy coach described administrative tasks as involving such tasks as,

"coordinating meetings and some purchasing and task management like an administrator".

The Teacher Perspective

When asked to describe the responsibilities that go along with the role of administrative task manager, both E. B. ELA 7th grade teacher and D.M., 6th grade ELA teacher commented that

The coach acts as liason with the administration, especially when the curriculum has to be revised, forming teams to revise, arranging professional development as well as completing reports on Learnia data.

Literacy Coach As Coplanner

Moran (2007) describes the role of the coach as coplanner involving the following responsibilities on the continuum as:

- Coplanning lessons and curriculum units with teachers based on a systematic study of student needs.
- Working with teachers to align instruction to learning standards.
- Setting goals and plan lessons with teachers based on analysis of student assessment data
- Examining students' ongoing performance data to identify needs, monitor progress, and modify instruction.

To accomplish this last role the coach meets with teachers to discuss grouping options, assessment results, and specific lesson planning targeted at specific student needs.

Bean (2004) stresses the role of coplanning and recommends that coplanning gives the teachers and the coach a chance to look over student work samples and results from various assessments and to think about how to construct lessons around students misunderstandings and what they find difficult.

In the one of the most comprehensive studies of literacy coaching roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach, the Reading First Implementation Evaluation Final Report (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) included data from a randomized survey on activities coaches viewed as most essential to their roles: they were broken into three categories: teacher support activities, administrative and school support activities and activities that support teacher instruction. Results of that survey showed that 97% of teachers surveyed ranked helping teachers in interpreting assessment results, 95% ranked helping teachers design strategies for struggling readers and 93% ranked helping teachers monitor the effectiveness of strategies for struggling readers. (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2008). This study highlights the importance that coplanning plays in the work of literacy coaches.

The Principal Perspective

S.G., principal at SGS School, believed that the literacy coach as coplanner stating "Is in a partnership with the teachers, assisting them with instruction. This is a primary responsibility."

P.M., principal at FM School, reported that the literacy coach is responsible for: "Coordinating the common planning meetings to review student work and meetings to change something about their teaching".

The Literacy Coach Perspective

Both literacy coaches described coplanning as occurring during the common planning meetings that were held each work and organized according to grade level. M.L., literacy coach at FMS described coplanning activities this way:

It is a time for coordinating the units of study for reading and writing workshop, some sessions involve looking at student work to plan next steps.

B.D., SGS literacy coach, emphasized that coplanning for her teachers meant organizing the units of study for the unit currently under study with the students...sometimes looking over running record data to see how the kids are moving up.

Supporting Data for Question 1

The following tables present data from the individual coach's monthly activity logs as well as a table showing combined totals for the six month period during which this study was conducted. The information describes the frequency of the activity, or number of times the coach engaged in a particular role and the percent of time in that role.

The data clearly indicates that the three most important roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach in these two schools are identified as being; coach as coplanner, administrative task manager and collaborative resource manager.

Literacy Coach's Coach Monthly Activity Logs Jan. 2012-June 2013

Table 4.1 . B.D. Literacy Coach at SGS Coaching Monthly Activity Logs

FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION	% of TOTAL
60	Coplanning	30.30%
59	Administrative Tasks	29.80%
32	Collaborative Resource Manager	16.16%
16	Lesson Demonstrations	8.08%
13	Coach Collaboration	6.57%
5	Walkthroughs	2.53%

5	Lab-Site Facilitator	2.53%
3	Professional Development	1.52%
3	Coteach	1.52%
2	Literacy Content Presentations	1.01%
198		100%

Table 4.1 above provides a breakdown of the monthly coaching activities that B.D. engaged in for six months from Jan. 2012- June 2012. These activities were gathered from the monthly coaching logs that the district requires all coaches to submit each month. These logs were then coded to the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007) in order to identify the roles and responsibilities most engaged in by the coach for the duration of this study.

The data indicates that B.D., the literacy coach at SGS School, spent 30.30% of her time coplanning, 29.80% of her time on administrative tasks, 16.16% as collaborative resource manager, the remaining time was divided between other roles.

Table 4.2 .M.L. Literacy Coach at FMS Coaching Monthly Activity

FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION	% OF TOTAL
111	Coplanning	25.58%
110	Administrative Tasks	25.35%
77	Collaborative Resource Manager	17.74%
42	Educational Discussions	9.68%
26	Literacy Content Presentations	5.99%
21	Lesson Demonstrations	4.84%
20	Peer Coaching	4.61%
16	Focused Classroom Visits	3.62%
4	Study Groups	.92%
4	Professional Development	.92%
2	Lab-Site Facilitator	.46%
1	Coteaching	.23%
434		100%

Table 4.2 above provides a breakdown of the monthly coaching activities that M.L., literacy coach at FM School engaged in for six months from Jan. 2012- June 2012. Like B.D., she is required to submit monthly coaching logs of her work for the month to the administration.

Data for M.L. specifies that M.L., the literacy coach at FM School that she spent 25.58% of her time coplanning, 25.35% of her time on administrative tasks, and 17.74% of her time as collaborative resource manager.

Table 4.3 presents the total frequency of activities, description, and percentages for both literacy coaches. In sum, both B.D. and M.L. spent a total of their time in the following roles: 27.06% coplanning, 26.74% of their time on administrative tasks and 17.25% as collaborative resource managers. Totals indicate that together the coaches spent 53.80% of their time, over 50% of their coaching time as coplanners and administrative task managers and collaborative resource managers. Implications of this will be discussed in the analysis section.

Table 4.3 . Both Coaches' Coaching Activities for 6 Months

FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION	% of ACTIVITIES
171	Coplanning	27.06%
169	Administrative Tasks	26.74
109	Collaborative Resource Manager	17.25%
42	Educational Discussions	6.65%
37	Lesson Demonstrations	5.85%
28	Literacy Content Presentations	4.43%
20	Peer Coaching	3.16%
16	Focused Classroom Visits	2.53%
13	Coach Collaboration	2.06%
7	Professional Development	1.11%
7	Lab-Site Facilitator	1.11%
5	Walkthroughs	.79%
4	Coteach	.63%

4	Study Groups	.63%
632		100%

The next sets of tables present the field observations made during the nonparticipant observations of the five common planning meetings. The direct observations are reported using an observational protocol used to capture both direct observations and the researcher's reflections. The Narrative Analysis Problem Solution Structure was added in order to help support the researcher's findings relating to the roles and responsibilities the literacy coach carried out during the meetings. This data provides support for the overall findings of this study.

Observational Field Notes Coded to the Problem Solution Narrative

Data collected from the observational field notes from 4/17/12-5/16 /12 in the tables that follow revealed that the both coaches were engaged in collaborative resource management identified by their actions during the observations of common planning meetings. Coaches were collaborative resource managers as they engaged in the following activities:

- Distributing resources in the way of poetry units of study
- Sharing and viewing a DVD of poetry reading and how to administer a running record
- Sharing a comprehension strategy with 7th & 8th grade Social Studies teachers
- Reviewing supplemental resources, "Crosswalk Coach" and poetry resources and mentor texts for possible purchase
- Sharing the NJASK Writers Checklists that were ordered
- The discussion of a collating a binder of student work from the units of study as a

resource for first year teachers as well as for reflection on teaching and learning

Table 4.4 Event #1: Common Planning Meeting Observational Field Notes SGS

Date: 4/17/12 Time: 10:00-10:30 Place: 6th Grade

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
Literacy coach 6 th grade teachers Teacher in video demo
Setting
SGS Literacy coach's room One 6 th grade teacher's room where LC distributed poetry units of study. LC held a discussion about teaching poetry for fluency.
Problem
*LC said, "I don't want to put pressure on the teachers as they just got back from break and they were in "Test Prep". Told teachers that she didn't want to take up their time. Poetry needs to be written and read. One teacher asked, "What do you mean try it out?" Teachers asked, "What do we do about fluency?" LC asked teachers, "What would you do for this kid? How are you going to move him to the next level?"
Actions
LC distributed units of study Shared a DVD of poetry reading Asked teachers, "What do you think? LC shared personal experiences with teaching poetry. Suggested a poetry anthology, One teacher asked, "What do you mean trying it out?" LC asked, "Are you okay with this? After video, LC asked, "What do you think? Is this child a choppy reader? What do you think about the teacher's recommendation? ? How are you going to move this child to the next level? No further discussion or responses from teachers. Reminded teachers that before they leave that she wants to band texts with them next time. End of session
Resolution
Distributed poetry units of study LC said, "I'm not going to take up any more of your time?" Suggested teachers teach social issues through poetry. Teachers should create poetry anthology. LC told teachers to get teachers to write like poets. Instructed teachers to watch the video and listen for the recommendation. Reminded them that before they leave that she wants to band texts with them next time.

*LC=literacy coach

Table 4.5 Event #2: Common Planning Meeting 7th Grade Social Studies Teachers -FMS

Date: 5/3/12 Time: 8:20-9:10 -Literacy Coach's Room

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach, and four 7 th grade SS teachers.
Setting
The focus of the meeting was on Rubicon and the units and the assessments that were needed and the concern for special education students. Discussion centered on why FMS was a focus school and the achievement gap between Special Ed and Asian population was greater than 43%. The problem was in how to develop a common pretest assessment.
Problem
The problem was how to create a common pretest assessment. Why was the gap so big between Special Ed and Asian population?
Actions
The discussion began with Rubicon and the units and their assessments. Reasons why FMS was identified as focus school were discussed. The literacy coach asked for feedback to bring back to the language arts teachers about the students' feelings about NJASK. One teacher reported that the kids felt that they did a lot to prepare them for the test. The LC then introduced the strategy Guide-A-Rama a kind of road map with a think-aloud component. The teachers read it to themselves. The LC then asked what they thought about it? She clarified that the emphasis was on an increase in skills and less reliance on the textbook. The LC explained how to model the process in their classes. One teacher offered up the suggestion to have students read and write the tips instead of the teacher generating them. The teachers found it useful. The LC ended the meeting with that's all I have for you today.
Resolution
Interest was expressed to schedule a meeting between Special Ed teachers and the Social Studies teachers to develop a common pretest assessment. The LC gave them the Guide-A-Rama strategy to help with comprehension. She explained how to model it with students. The teachers found it very useful.

*LC=literacy coach

Table 4.6_Event #3. Observational Field Notes Protocol 7th Grade Literacy Coach -FMS

Date: 5/9/12, Time: 7:30-8:16 Place: Literacy coach Room

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach 7 7 th grade teachers
Setting
FMS Literacy coach's room Anchor charts posted around the room; Agenda posted: Crosswalk coach, Rock for Reading packing slips, Rubicon check in, poet/author visit, your concerns for next year.
Problem
The literacy coach asked the teachers how the poetry unit was going? The teachers were concerned that there wasn't enough time to complete the unit. The LC asked about a book study PLC for next year to think about it and plan for it, maybe a support group for the teachers who need to put together a 3 year portfolio or offer one on Danielson framework.
Actions
The meeting started with the LC leading a discussion about the poet in residence. She then distributed copies of the Crosswalk Coach to teachers as resources. She then asked them how the poetry unit was going? Teachers responded well. One teacher shared a poetry resource she uses. The LC asked if it could be considered a mentor text and if more teachers wanted it, she would purchase it for them. Teachers then shared concerns about finishing the unit.

Meeting adjourned 8:16
Resolution
The LC would purchase the poetry resource if others wanted it. The LC said “if you have to shorten the unit make sure the kids reflect on their work-their writing goals and write something short.”
No other responses from group.

*LC=literacy coach

Table 4.7 Event #4 Observational Field Notes Protocol -Team Meeting with 8th Grade Social Studies Teachers Date: 5/10/12 Time: 9:42-10:15 Place: Teacher’s classroom
Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach and the four 8 th grade Social Studies teachers
Setting
One of the Social Studies teachers’ classrooms. The teachers were teaching the Constitution and discussing student’s lack of understanding of primary and student’s inability to summarize, interpret and synthesize information.
Problem
The teachers were discussing concern over students’ inability to summarize, interpret and synthesize primary documents.
Actions
Conversation started with teachers discussing DGF and wheel Franklin is. The focus of the meeting was on a strategy called Guide-A-Rama developed by Harvey Daniels. The literacy coach went on to compare it to a chunking strategy, which calls on students to be active participants as they read. The LC went on to explain the purpose for giving them the strategy. Its one they can use across documents.
Resolution
The LC distributed the Guide-A-Rama strategy to use with the preamble work students were doing. One teacher said that he finally got it and this strategy can be used across a variety of Social Studies texts.

*LC=literacy coach

Table 4.8 Event #5. Observational Field Notes Protocol Common Planning Meeting 8th Grade Date: 5/16/12 Time: 7:30-8:12 Place: FMS Literacy Coach’s Room
Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach and five 8 th grade teachers
Setting
The coach’s room. Agenda on board read: Running record spreadsheet. Unit Sign Ups/binder, B&N presenters, unit pacing and other concerns.
Problem
One teacher asked, “ What are you looking for?” (Regarding the conference binder and sample work samples and reflection sheets. She did not know what the purpose of the binder was.
Another teachers asked, “if we have given you work earlier, do we need to give you more?” How many pieces?
The LC asked if there were any other concerns? One teacher asked again about the binder.
Actions

The LC started by handing out the NJASK Writers checklist she ordered for them to use with the Test Prep Unit. There was a discussion about the upcoming poet in residence event and the schedule. At 7:45 the coach said, “thanks for sending the spreadsheets for running records and that she now has some data for the beginning of school. The she discussed the sign up sheet for conferences 6/18 and to bring work samples for the binder. She explained that teachers are to come for one period with student work from a unit of their choice and they will complete a reflection sheet and attach it to it. One teacher asked, “What are you looking for?” The LC explained. The LC passed around a sign-up sheet and said that the teachers did not have to sign up right there and that they have until Thursday to sign up. A discussion about the author study followed. Teachers asked if there were any surprise authors? Teachers discussed the last unit and time from. The LC finally asked for other concerns.

Resolution

Teachers are to sign up for one class period and bring the work samples and reflection sheet to attach to it. The LC sent a sign-up sheet around. No one signed up there.

Did not have to sign up there and have until next Thursday. The LC explained what the binder was for it serves two purposes; one for new teachers starting out with the units and the other for “you as teachers to reflect on your teaching and students learning.”

*LC=literacy coach

Data Source: Coaching Monthly Activity Logs

Table 4.1 Results for B.D. Literacy Coach at SGS School Coaching Monthly Activity Logs

FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION	% of TOTAL
60	Coplanning	30.30%
59	Administrative Tasks	29.80%
32	Collaborative Resource Manager	16.16%
16	Lesson Demonstrations	8.08%
13	Coach Collaboration	6.57%
5	Walkthroughs	2.53%
5	Lab-Site Facilitator	2.53%
3	Professional Development	1.52%
3	Coteach	1.52%
2	Literacy Content Presentations	1.01%
198		100%

Results show that B.D. spent 30.3% of time engaged in coplanning activities.

Table 4.2 Results for M.L. Literacy Coach at FMS Coaching Monthly Activity Logs from January 2012-June 2012

FREQUENCY OF	DESCRIPTION	% OF TOTAL
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ACTIVITIES		
111	Coplanning	25.58%
110	Administrative Tasks	25.35%
77	Collaborative Resource Manager	17.74%
42	Educational Discussions	9.68%
26	Literacy Content Presentations	5.99%
21	Lesson Demonstrations	4.84%
20	Peer Coaching	4.61%
16	Focused Classroom Visits	3.62%
4	Study Groups	.92%
4	Professional Development	.92%
2	Lab-Site Facilitator	.46%
1	Coteaching	.23%
434		100%

Results show that like B.D., M.L. spent the majority of her time engaged in coplanning tasks as well (25.58%).

Table 4.3 Both Coaches' Coaching Activities for 6 Months

FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION	% of ACTIVITIES
171	Coplanning	27.06%
169	Administrative Tasks	26.74
109	Collaborative Resource Manager	17.25%
42	Educational Discussions	6.65%
37	Lesson Demonstrations	5.85%
28	Literacy Content Presentations	4.43%
20	Peer Coaching	3.16%
16	Focused Classroom Visits	2.53%
13	Coach Collaboration	2.06%
7	Professional Development	1.11%
7	Lab-Site Facilitator	1.11%
5	Walkthroughs	.79%
4	Coteach	.63%
4	Study Groups	.63%
632		100%

Results show that combined, B.D. and M.L. spent a total of 27.06% of their time on coplanning activities.

Data Source Observational Field Notes of Common Planning Meetings coded to the Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Table 4.4 Event #1: Common Planning Meeting Observational Field Notes SGS

Date: 4/17/12 Time: 10:00-10:30 Place: 6th Grade

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
Literacy coach 6 th grade teachers Teacher in video demo
Setting
SGS Literacy coach's room One 6 th grade teacher's room where LC distributed poetry units of study. LC held a discussion about teaching poetry for fluency.
Problem
*LC said, "I don't want to put pressure on the teachers as they just got back from break and they were in "Test Prep". Told teachers that she didn't want to take up their time. Poetry needs to be written and read. One teacher asked, "What do you mean try it out?" Teachers asked, "What do we do about fluency?" LC asked teachers, "What would you do for this kid? How are you going to move him to the next level?"
Actions
LC distributed units of study Shared a DVD of poetry reading Asked teachers, "What do you think? LC shared personal experiences with teaching poetry. Suggested a poetry anthology, One teacher asked, "What do you mean trying it out?" LC asked, "Are you okay with this? After video, LC asked, "What do you think? Is this child a choppy reader? What do you think about the teacher's recommendation? ? How are you going to move this child to the next level? No further discussion or responses from teachers. Reminded teachers that before they leave that she wants to band texts with them next time. End of session
Resolution
Distributed poetry units of study LC said, "I'm not going to take up any more of your time?" Suggested teachers teach social issues through poetry. Teachers should create poetry anthology. LC told teachers to get teachers to write like poets. Instructed teachers to watch the video and listen for the recommendation. Reminded them that before they leave that she wants to band texts with them next time.

*LC=literacy coach

The actions B.D. took during this common planning meeting with 6th grade ELA teachers involved the distributing materials, viewing a video on poetry reading, and ended with a reminder of the next meeting.

Table 4.5 Event #2: Common Planning Meeting 7th Grade Social Studies Teachers -FMS
Date: 5/3/12 Time: 8:20-9:10 -Literacy Coach's Room
 Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach, and four 7 th grade SS teachers.
Setting
The focus of the meeting was on Rubicon and the units and the assessments that were needed and the concern for special education students. Discussion centered on why FMS was a focus school and the achievement gap between Special Ed and Asian population was greater than 43%. The problem was in how to develop a common pretest assessment.
Problem
The problem was how to create a common pretest assessment. Why was the gap so big between Special Ed and Asian population?
Actions
The discussion began with Rubicon and the units and their assessments. Reasons why FMS was identified as focus school were discussed. The literacy coach asked for feedback to bring back to the language arts teachers about the students' feelings about NJASK. One teacher reported that the kids felt that they did a lot to prepare them for the test. The LC then introduced the strategy Guide-A-Rama a kind of road map with a think-aloud component. The teachers read it to themselves. The LC then asked what they thought about it? She clarified that the emphasis was on an increase in skills and less reliance on the textbook. The LC explained how to model the process in their classes. One teacher offered up the suggestion to have students read and write the tips instead of the teacher generating them. The teachers found it useful. The LC ended the meeting with that's all I have for you today.
Resolution
Interest was expressed to schedule a meeting between Special Ed teachers and the Social Studies teachers to develop a common pretest assessment. The LC gave them the Guide-A-Rama strategy to help with comprehension. She explained how to model it with students. The teachers found it very useful.

*LC=literacy coach

This common planning meeting that M.L. held was with the 7th grade Social Studies and focused on developing a common assessment or pretest for that would be equitable for both regular education and special education students. M.L. used the common planning meeting to demonstrate a strategy that might help with the overall comprehension of students. Teachers reported that they would try it out.

Table 4.6 Event #3. Observational Field Notes Protocol 7th Grade Literacy Coach -FMS**Date: 5/9/12, Time: 7:30-8:16 Place: Literacy coach Room**

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach 7 7 th grade teachers
Setting
FMS Literacy coach's room Anchor charts posted around the room; Agenda posted: Crosswalk coach, Rock for Reading packing slips, Rubicon check in, poet/author visit, your concerns for next year.
Problem
The literacy coach asked the teachers how the poetry unit was going? The teachers were concerned that there wasn't enough time to complete the unit. The LC asked about a book study PLC for next year to think about it and plan for it, maybe a support group for the teachers who need to put together a 3 year portfolio or offer one on Danielson framework.
Actions
The meeting started with the LC leading a discussion about the poet in residence. She then distributed copies of the Crosswalk Coach to teachers as resources. She then asked them how the poetry unit was going? Teachers responded well. One teacher shared a poetry resource she uses. The LC asked if it could be considered a mentor text and if more teachers wanted it, she would purchase it for them. Teachers then shared concerns about finishing the unit. Meeting adjourned 8:16
Resolution
The LC would purchase the poetry resource if others wanted it. The LC said "if you have to shorten the unit make sure the kids reflect on their work-their writing goals and write something short." No other responses from group.

*LC=literacy coach

This common planning meeting shows the coach playing the role of collaborative resource manager. She did assist with assisting teachers in coplanning for the poetry unit and made suggestions for completing it given a short time left for the unit.

Table 4.7 Event #4 Observational Field Notes Protocol -Team Meeting with 8th Grade Social Studies Teachers Date: 5/10/12 Time: 9:42-10:15 Place: Teacher's classroom

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach and the four 8 th grade Social Studies teachers

Setting
One of the Social Studies teachers' classrooms. The teachers were teaching the Constitution and discussing student's lack of understanding of primary and student's inability to summarize, interpret and synthesize information.
Problem
The teachers were discussing concern over students' inability to summarize, interpret and synthesize primary documents.
Actions
Conversation started with teachers discussing DGF and wheel Franklin is. The focus of the meeting was on a strategy called Guide-A-Rama developed by Harvey Daniels. The literacy coach went on to compare it to a chunking strategy, which calls on students to be active participants as they read. The LC went on to explain the purpose for giving them the strategy. Its one they can use across documents.
Resolution
The LC distributed the Guide-A-Rama strategy to use with the preamble work students were doing. One teacher said that he finally got it and this strategy can be used across a variety of Social Studies texts.

*LC=literacy coach

This common planning meeting with 8th grade Social Studies teachers focused on students difficulty with lack of comprehension specifically with their inability to interpret, summarize and synthesize primary source documents, The coach again introduced the strategy she showed 7th grade Social Studies teachers to use with comprehension of content material and explained how it could be used across a variety of texts.

Table 4.8 Event #5. Observational Field Notes Protocol Common Planning Meeting 8th Grade Date: 5/16/12 Time: 7:30-8:12 Place: FMS Literacy Coach's Room
Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach and five 8 th grade teachers
Setting
The coach's room. Agenda on board read: Running record spreadsheet. Unit Sign Ups/binder, B&N presenters, unit pacing and other concerns.
Problem
One teacher asked, "What are you looking for?" (Regarding the conference binder and sample work samples and reflection sheets. She did not know what the purpose of the binder was.
Another teachers asked, "if we have given you work earlier, do we need to give you more?" How many pieces?
The LC asked if there were any other concerns? One teacher asked again about the binder.
Actions
The LC started by handing out the NJASK Writers checklist she ordered for them to use with the Test Prep Unit. There was a discussion about the upcoming poet in residence event and the schedule. At 7:45

the coach said, “thanks for sending the spreadsheets for running records and that she now has some data for the beginning of school. The she discussed the sign up sheet for conferences 6/18 and to bring work samples for the binder. She explained that teachers are to come for one period with student work from a unit of their choice and they will complete a reflection sheet and attach it to it. One teacher asked, “What are you looking for?” The LC explained. The LC passed around a sign-up sheet and said that the teachers did not have to sign up right there and that they have until Thursday to sign up. A discussion about the author study followed. Teachers asked if there were any surprise authors? Teachers discussed the last unit and time from. The LC finally asked for other concerns.

Resolution

Teachers are to sign up for one class period and bring the work samples and reflection sheet to attach to it. The LC sent a sign-up sheet around. No one signed up there.

Did not have to sign up there and have until next Thursday. The LC explained what the binder was for it serves two purposes; one for new teachers starting out with the units and the other for “you as teachers to reflect on your teaching and students learning.”

*LC=literacy coach

This common planning meeting focused on assembling a resource binder with samples of student work from the units of study teachers were teaching to be used for self-reflection and to determine what students learned and what teachers needed to teach.

Summary of Findings for Question #1

What are the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach? Three themes emerged related to the roles and responsibilities of the two middle school literacy coaches studied in this investigation. There were: Literacy Coach as Collaborative Resource Manager, Literacy Coach as Administrative Task Manager and Literacy Coach as Coplanner. These emergent themes are further supported by the data collected from an analysis six months of coaching monthly activity logs for both B.D. and M.L, the literacy coaches from SGS School and FM School. A review of the five sets of observational field notes and coded to the Problem-Solution Narrative Structure identified these same three themes.

Although the coaching monthly activity logs show that together the coaches spent 72.05% of their total time as administrative task managers, collaborative resource managers and

coplanners, variations exist in the amount of time spent individually in these roles. Implications of this finding will be discussed in the analysis and interpretation section of this chapter.

- As a collaborative resource manager, participants reported that in this role coaches were often found:
- Working with teachers to become familiar with and tap into available resources.
- Engaged in for rich conversation about materials, instructional strategies and grouping practices in addition to collaborating with administrators and developing goals and plans for the school
- Experts on curriculum and gatherers of ‘stuff’ who assist teachers with selecting books and other instructional materials to meet literacy needs.
- Coordinating and maintaining bookrooms, ordering and distributing books to teachers. There is often an emphasis on the coach as curriculum

Literacy coach as administrative task manager found this role to involve one or more of the following activities:

- Completing the monthly coaching activity logs and reporting out to supervisors, principals and central office
- Looking at school-wide and district wide plans for addressing assessments each month
- Running district mandated professional development sessions
- Organizing grade-level teams for district curriculum development and revision work.
- Organizing for visits and planning for district approved consultants

- Attendance at supervisor and other district mandated meetings
- Creating benchmarks for assessments for teachers
- Completing mandated district sponsored training and professional development
- Formal observations by supervisors

Literacy Coach as coplanner, involves the coach participating in one or more of the following as documented in this study:

- Coplanning lessons and curriculum units with teachers based on a systematic study of student needs.
- Working with teachers to align instruction to learning standards.
- Setting goals and plan lessons with teachers based on analysis of student assessment data and
- Examining students' ongoing performance data to identify needs, monitor progress, and modify instruction.

To accomplish this role the coach meets with teachers to discuss grouping options, assessment results, and specific lesson planning targeted at specific student needs.

Discussion of Findings for Question #1

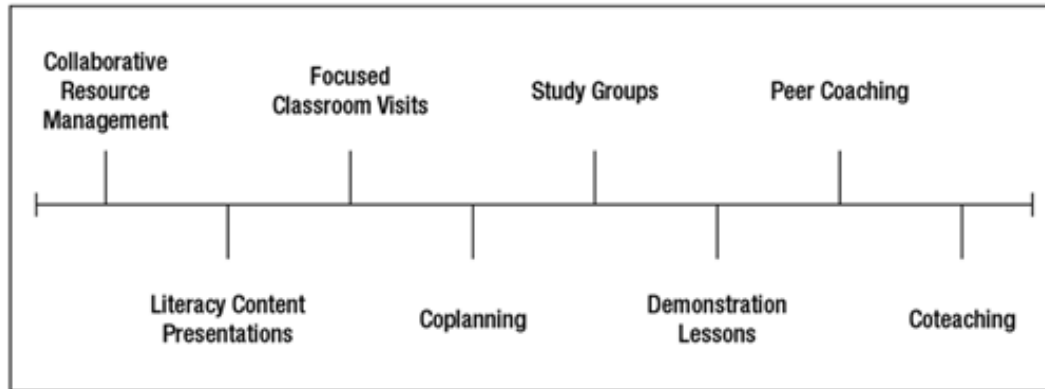
What are the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach?

Literacy Coaching on a Continuum Although both coaches performed three major roles in their schools; collaborative resource manager, and coplanner, that there was not one “right way” to be a literacy coach at the middle school level. They took on additional roles and responsibilities as well. The coach’s roles seemed to fall along a continuum of coaching rather

than fitting into a neat little box labeled “middle school literacy coaching. Therefore, an examination and discussion of the literacy coaching continuum that guided the data collection for this study is needed at this time in order to understand how the results were analyzed and interpreted in response to question #1 regarding the coach’s roles. Figure 1 shows the continuum that was used in determining the types of roles and responsibilities that the coaches performed. The continuum includes a variety of formats for coaching roles and responsibilities. The continuum acknowledges that the roles that coaches assume are influenced by the context of the school, administrator and teacher relationships as well as the coach’s individual experiences and backgrounds.

The Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran 2007, Figure 1.2) is a structure for the kind of participatory professional learning that integrates fundamentals of adult learning theory and provides scaffolds according to the needs of individual teachers, and respects and builds on the knowledge that teachers bring to the table. It is a conceptual framework for organizing, managing, assessing, and sharing information about literacy coaching efforts, which was used to frame this study. More importantly, an understanding of this coaching continuum is critical to data analysis and interpretation for this study. This continuum was used to identify how the literacy coaches were fulfilling their responsibilities with the other participants

Figure 4.1
The Literacy Coaching Continuum



Source: Developed by M. C. Moran and Elizabeth Powers.

As shown in Figure 4.1 the continuum presents eight differentiated learning formats for coaching: (1) collaborative resource management, (2) literacy content presentations, (3) focused classroom visits, (4) coplanning, (5) study groups, (6) demonstration lessons, (7) peer coaching, and (8) coteaching. It assumes that there is a progression in the intensity of learning supports that are necessary to sustain a teacher's efforts to become a more reflective practitioner. For example, the scaffolding provided in resource management (at one end of the continuum) is far less intrusive than the assistance that would be apparent in coteaching (at the other end of the continuum).

Moran's Literacy Coaching Continuum shows how multi-faceted and complex the literacy role is requiring the coach to wear many professional "hats" (Burkins, 2007). This requires that the coach balance their work with a variety of schools, contexts and different coaching situations in order to "to create a coaching plan that is robust and makes sense" (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007, pg. 134; Burkins, 2007) defines the coach as someone who is:

An educator with specific expertise and extensive experience in literacy instruction who, through individual coaching and team meetings, formal learning, demonstration lessons, classroom visitations, study groups and various other contexts, works with and for teachers to lead, assist and honor them as they solidify and expand their skills and understanding off literacy instruction. (pp.28-29).

Furthermore, Moran (2007) points out that these various coaching formats require

varying degrees of “intrusiveness” on the part of the coach interacting with the teacher. She defines the word “intrusive” to indicate “the extent of the coach’s involvement in the actual teaching routine and the potential impact of that involvement on a teacher’s sense of comfort.” The example she cites is a coach who is working with a teacher as a collaborative resource manager will have less direct involvement in the teaching of a lesson than will one who is coteaching a lesson. As a result, a collaborative resource manager is “less intrusive” than a coach who is coteaching.

The Continuum and the Vygotskian Perspective

The Literacy Coaching continuum acknowledges that teachers are individuals who need and want various kinds of support depending upon content, circumstances, personal experience and timing. The continuum respects and honors what we know about social constructivist theory and Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development theory and the “More Knowledgeable Other” that teachers use with their own students when planning for and differentiating instruction. Furthermore, according to Vygotsky’s theories, learning often involves mentoring provided by a “more culturally knowledgeable person (the literacy coach in this case) who engages with less experienced or knowledgeable persons (the teachers) in a process known as scaffolding.” (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). This way knowledge is not just transmitted down from one person to another but rather knowledge is “mutually constructed” and involves joint collaboration between all persons involved in the activity. Conclusions are drawn and numbered and presented based on the data triangulated for this study

Conclusion I: The middle school literacy coach’s major role and responsibility was that of coplanner

The data from the analysis of the monthly coaching logs submitted for this study clearly shows that both B.D. and M.L. spent 55.88% of their time fulfilling the role of coplanner.

Coplanning was identified as involving the literacy coach fulfilling one or many of the following activities:

- Coplanning lessons and curriculum units with teachers based on a systematic study of student needs.
- Working with teachers to align instruction to learning standards.
- Setting goals and planning lessons with teachers based on analysis of student assessment data and
- Examining students' ongoing performance data to identify needs, monitor progress, and modify instruction.

To accomplish this role the coach meets with teachers to discuss grouping options, assessment results, and specific lesson planning targeted at specific student needs. (Moran, 2007).

Coplanning as a form of collaboration is a crucial factor in improving instruction and student achievement. Research indicates that those schools that are having success closing the achievement gap seem to be able to provide a context that promotes and organize collegial conversations based in evidence from reviewing student assessment data (Little, 2006). A distinction is made between coplanning with grade –level groups of teachers and coplanning with individual teachers. It was observed during the common planning meetings with both coaches that group coplanning centered around issues of curriculum and unit planning, resources to support units of study and reviewing assessment results on summative district-wide assessments such as Learnia. M.L. the literacy coach at FM School pointed out that it was those

one-on-one coplanning sessions that focused on coteaching with teachers that were responsible for increasing teacher's capacity. She referred to those sessions as:

The most important thing a literacy coach does is, you know, increase the capacity of teachers. So, help the teachers become better teacher. It's kind of huge and all encompassing...

M.L. labeled these sessions as "intentional growth meetings", meetings that were:

Intentional meetings to change something about their teaching...growth-oriented one. A teacher came in and said, "I can't teach conclusions." So I got her to tell me more. She told me she hated teaching conclusions. And what she realized was that with introductions we have a list of eight to twelve different ways that you can open your introduction. And then you need a bridge. And then you need a thesis statement. And it's like one, two three, boom we're done. You've got a whole toolkit for introductions and. And yah with conclusions, you don't have as much. They're not taught nearly as explicitly. So this is what we're kind of co-developing. This didn't come out of her or me but out of our conversations.

Literacy coaching supports collaboration. Increasingly, evidence suggests that learning is social. One rarely learns in isolation (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2007). Proponents of collaborative learning claim that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking. The shared learning gives students an opportunity to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning, and thus become critical thinkers (Totten, Sills, Digby, & Russ, 1991). Applying this theory to literacy coaching, it becomes clear that the coach, as the "More Knowledgeable Other" (Vygotsky, 1978) collaborating with teachers during the coplanning process leads to increasing teacher's capacity to enhance instructional practices. An example of this type of collaborative learning took place during one of my field observations. M.L. held common planning meeting with 8th grade Social Studies teachers focused on students difficulty with lack of comprehension specifically with their inability to interpret, summarize and synthesize primary source documents, The coach introduced the strategy, Guide-A-Rama to use with students experiencing difficulty with comprehension of content material and explained how it could be used across a

variety of texts. This was new for these teachers and they left with new knowledge and an instructional strategy to increase student comprehension. According to constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), M.L. as the “More Knowledgeable” mediated the conversations about student comprehension of content, while working with the teachers in their “Zones of Proximal Development” and discussing what they were already doing. At one point, M.L. introduced the new strategy and assisted the teachers in constructing new learning around the Guide-A-Rama strategy thereby increasing teacher’s capacity thereby demonstrating the importance of social interaction as the underlying premise supporting the theory of constructivist learning. It was the collaborative nature of the learning process that made this happen. Coaching and coplanning provided the context for constructivist learning to occur in this example. One can see why coplanning is considered a major role and responsibility of the literacy coach.

Conclusion II: The second major role of the middle school literacy coach was that of administrative task manager

For the purposes of this study, administrative tasks are defined as tasks and/or responsibilities that do not impact instructional practices or working directly with teachers. These tasks may include one or more of the following:

- Completing the monthly coaching activity logs and reporting out to supervisors, principals and central office
- Looking at school-wide and district wide plans for addressing assessments each month
- Running district mandated professional development sessions
- Organizing grade-level teams for district curriculum development and revision

work.

- Organizing for visits and planning for district approved consultants
- Attendance at supervisor and other district mandated meetings
- Creating benchmarks for assessments for teachers
- Completing mandated district sponsored training and professional development
- Participating in formal observations by supervisors

Data collected and analyzed from the Coaching Monthly Activity Logs for both coaches Jan. 2012 through June 2012 indicated that both B.D. and M.L. spent 55.15% of their time on administrative duties that do not involve direct contact with teachers outside of delivering district mandates and organizing teams of teachers to review and update curriculum. Again, over the course of six months, these two coaches spent over half their time on tasks not directly related to coaching teachers. Wren & Vallejo (2009) report that many coaches experience a similar danger the danger of taking on roles that have little to do with teachers or classroom instruction. Furthermore, the danger lies in the fact, that if not monitored carefully and balanced with other roles can become routine. (Bean, 2004; Killion, 2009). Research confirms that some coaches spend less than half of their time engaged in activities that support increasing teacher capacity (Bean, Turner, Draper, Heisy, & Zigmond, 2008; Deussen, Autio, Nelsestuen, Roccograndi, & Scott, 2006; Walpole & Blamey, 2008).

According to P.M., Principal of FM School believed that there was a disconnect between the coach's role and the amount of time they spent on administrative duties and indicated that it often depended upon the principal in the building. P.M. referred to it this way:

There is a disparity of what the coachwork really is in each building. It seems that depending on the principal, coaches could be pulled for administrative types work, which is not their role.

D.M. 6th grade ELA teacher at SGS sometimes saw the coach a bit frustrated because she wanted to be in the classroom more however:

They cannot because they have to do administrative duties and responsibilities that are either mandated and so they have to be trained (referring to the coaches being called out to meetings by administration)

Furthermore, Bean (2004) believes that coaches are not administrators, teacher's aides, test administrators, or data entry clerks. She admits that there are times when coaches are responsible for entering data but that they should not be taken away from their primary task of supporting teachers efforts to improve instruction and student achievement. Taylor (2006) found that literacy coaches spent the greatest portion of their day doing assessments and data collection. Moreover, Bouleware (2006, as cited in Taylor, Moxley, Chanter, & Bouleware, 2007) found that literacy coaches who reported spending the majority of their time on professional development with teachers made greater gains in student achievement scores than literacy coaches who reported spending the majority of their time engaged in what I like to call "administrative" tasks. In another study, Rosemary and Roskos (2005) analyzed coaching log data for 87 Ohio Reading First Coaches over the course of a school year and found that coaches in their study engaged most frequently in: carrying out administrative tasks for managing work, performing school and district duties and conducting assessment training and administering assessments directly to students. This finding is significant as it relates to the two coaches under study in this report who reported spending over 50% of their time on it such administrative tasks. The question raised here is what impact does the role of administrative task manager have on increasing teacher capacity and impacting student achievement? Future studies related to how coaches spend their time and the impact on changing teacher practice and student achievement is a recommendation made at the end of this chapter as it relates to the findings reported in this

study.

Conclusion III: The third major role and responsibility of the middle school literacy coach was collaborative resource manager.

According to the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007) the role of the collaborative resource manager is the least “intrusive” and involving one or more of the following activities:

- Effective use of resources as necessary
- Sharing knowledge of successful techniques in classroom management and instructional planning for effective literacy instruction
- Assisting teachers with the appropriate use of core and supplemental materials that align with district and state curriculum
- Helping teachers select books and other instructional materials to meet individual literacy needs
- Maintain a book room
- Identifying needs and making recommendations for appropriate reading and writing interventions
- Coordinate inventory ordering and distribution of texts and other materials.

Data collected from the monthly coaching logs and interviews indicated that together, B.D. and M.L. spent 33.90 % of their time enacting this role in various contexts.

This was the third largest area where coaches provided their services to teachers. Furthermore collaborative resource managing also involved these coaches working as a team with teachers to analyze student work. M.L. makes this point that "inquiry groups are where we look at student

work together and come up with a list of clear strategies, a toolkit".

Being a collaborative resource manager for M.L. also meant being a teacher advocate.

She stated that:

I find myself having to advocate on behalf of my teachers a lot. That they need materials... documenting use of technology showing how computers are being used as our superintendent asked for these kind of things...I'm going to try and document the need for us to have like twice as much technology as we do...advocacy on behalf of the department.

E.B. 7th grade ELA teacher at FM School in referring to the coach's role of collaborative resource manager had this say:

She's been very helpful providing materials, books, and any kinds of texts, nonfiction, and resources. I can speak with her about trying to understand some lessons and how they can be organized or how I can present them. Her primary role is a support for teachers

I probed further, asking E.B. to tell me other ways she works with the literacy coach to which she replied but continued with emphasizing the collaborative resource manager role as one of the primary roles when she stated:

The coach is a supplier of products and materials; books texts. Programming, kind of like a clearinghouse offering to find materials collating materials from the computer, referencing information, finding a website and information off the Internet as resources, somebody not judging... the coach is a person who is there to get a bigger perspective on what's going on in education. Who I can learn from, a tremendous resource and who's willing to share.

Likewise, Calo (2012) in her survey study of 125 randomly selected middle school coaches, found that 80% of them reported spending the majority of their time providing materials and 88% of them provided teaching suggestions. Similarly, in a randomized selection of more than 1600 school-based Reading First coaches, 94% ranked providing training and professional development in reading materials and another 89% ranked assisting teachers with using the core program as critical to their work. Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2008,9) refers to these type of coaches as resource-based coaches looking up research for teachers and helping them choose

appropriate materials.

Before closing out the discussion related to the research question concerned with the major roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach, I feel mention needs to be made of those coaching activities that both coaches spent the least amount of time on but research reports being most effective (Bean 2004; McKenna, 2004; Walpole & Blamey 2008). Those activities include, lesson demonstrations (5.85%), Peer coaching (3.16) and co-teaching (.63%). All three of these activities fall to the right of the Literacy Coaching Continuum, indicating a greater degree of “intrusiveness” with co-teaching being the most intrusive defined as getting close to the teacher’s practice.

Interpretation of Findings for Question #1

Much of what was discovered about the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach in this study is confirmed by the research. The coaching process enacted in these two schools encompassed a variety of activities as presented on a continuum by Moran (2007) from the least intrusive to most intrusive. The least intrusive activities foster relationship building (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). These include collaborative resource management outside the classroom and when planning with teachers to build knowledge and plan instruction. During coplanning the teachers were observed working with the coach to review assessment data and help them understand instructional moves made in certain units of study. Although these are important responsibilities of the literacy coach, it has been documented that it is the roles to the far right of the continuum, those that are more intrusive like coteaching, demonstration lessons and peer coaching that get at the heart of coaching in theory.

Similarly, authors McKenna and Walpole (2008) describe a continuum approach to

coaching designed by Puig and Froelick (2007) that, like Moran's (2007) coaching continuum honors adult learning and emphasizes the need for intensive coach training before beginning to work with teachers. First year coaches, according to Puig and Froelich (2007) coaches should, if possible, use their own classroom as laboratories, modeling effective practices. Coaches should also engage teachers in study groups where together they can read and share information about strategies and the coach sharing his or her experiences before implementing in teachers' classrooms. Although these two coaches were found more to the left of the continuum performing "less intrusive" type coaching duties, none of the field observations revealed that they ran study groups. As a matter of fact, data revealed that together B.D. and M.L. spent a total of .63% of their time in study groups during the time of this study preventing them from those roles described as providing access to the very personal world of teaching on a daily basis (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). An additional reason why these two coaches spent so much of their time on the "least intrusive" coaching routines was since there was no agreed upon definition of the literacy coach's role across the district within schools, often the coaches were left to create their own schedules. Having done so, and after making commitments to teachers, it was not uncommon to find the coaches pulled away from working with teachers to complete more administrative type tasks as described in this study. These took up the second largest percent of their time during the time of this study.

Likewise, Professor Emeritus Rita Bean (2004) has created levels of intensity for instructional coaches (2004) that share similarities to both Moran's (2007) continuum and that of Puig & Froelich (2007). Whereas, Moran refers to certain coaching roles being more or less "intrusive", Bean (2004) designates three levels of intensity; level one which she calls basic and coaches engage in these activities in order to develop relationships with teachers. Some of these

routines include, helping teachers unpack standards, developing and providing materials for teachers, developing workshops and professional development Moran's (2007) collaborative resource manager role. Puig & Froelich would describe these routines as more subject oriented work with teachers and not necessarily those that would lead to "transformation" on teacher's part (Puig & Froelich, 2010, p.128). Finally Bean describes level three routines as more formal, more intense that lead to deeper conversations around instructional coaching, and also increasing student engagement and improving student achievement. These routines include modeling techniques, visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers and advocating reflective practices. Very little time was devoted to these routines by the two coaches observed for this study. As a result, several questions need to be considered regarding the effectiveness of these two coaches, which will be discussed in the implications for practice section and recommendations for future research.

Research Question #2: Types of support

If the goal of literacy coaching is to support teachers in becoming more reflective about their instruction and in changing practice to impact student learning, then coaches require support. Other studies of literacy coaching have found that that the role of the coach is quite multi-faceted and often unclear (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007) and that a f only a few have reported receiving the training and support needed to perform their roles sufficiently ((Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005: Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

It has been documented that regardless of what type of coaching is implemented, success of the coach is largely dependent upon the support the coach receives from district administrators and has been identified as a an area of much needed research (Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

Three types of support were identified and categorized from data collected from the participant interviews; school-based support and district-wide support. School based-support focused mainly on ways that the principal worked to support the coach's support. District-wide support was identified as the support that is put in place by the central office, the superintendent and the board of education and those outside the district.

A distinct form of support was noted as collegial support, coaches supporting coaches in their work.

School Based Support

The Principal Perspective

P.M.'s Narrative: Principal of FMS P.M. started off by referring to a type of infrastructure support; an office, a place of her own in the building. She opened with:

Well, I'm going to talk kind of nuts and bolts, First of all the coach has an office that's large enough for them to have teachers come in. There are tables and chairs that are needed, the coach has made it a very warm and inviting environment.

P.M. then referred to material and resource support that she provided naming books and a computer saying "There's also the back room for supplies and the libraries and such."

Besides a room of her own equipped with a technology, a book room library. P.M. also stated that she "Positioned both math coach right across the hall...placing the coaches in the content area hallways so that they are accessible to teachers right there on a dime."

P.M. also supports the coach by giving her freedom to work with the teachers as she fits. In speaking to this autonomy, P.M. stated:

They really have autonomy as far as working with the teachers or offering PD (professional development) to the teachers. I feel that the coach has really taken the lead on curriculum development and organizing the people. And meeting with them on grade levels. You know to support them

P.M. told me that she values the role of the literacy coach and the importance of trust between principal and coach saying, " I truly support the role, the role is necessary...I'm there to learn from them. I have a 100% trust in their work".

S.G. Narrative : Principal at SGS S.G. Principal at SGS School also identified school-based support that she provides for the B.D. the coach, She stated:

At the building level, I believe that I support the dialogue with the building administration and their counterpart in math... the readiness on the part of the building administration to be available to the literacy coach when they are experiencing particular frustrations, roadblocks on the job.

S.G. mentions a third type of support that coaches provide to one another as another type of support. This is a form of collegial support when she stated "I also think the camaraderie among the coaches of the various buildings is a distinct support for the coaches."

The Literacy Coach Perspective

B.D.'s Narrative : Literacy Coach at SGS School B.D. spoke about district support from the district supervisor in terms of them providing materials and resources. She stated:

Well right now we're in a room and books surround us. The supervisor placed an order and asked me materials were needed for every unit. I handed her the request and she ordered them. Outside of people, I can't think of"

The Teacher Perspective

E.B.'s Narrative -7th grade ELA teacher at FMS: E.B. started out by naming the infrastructure school-based support, a physical supports in her interview. She stated that:

There are physical supports...a specific location-there's a place that they can call their own. And we (teachers) can go separate from the classroom. This environment is a unique place where we can talk about things that matter in the classroom together.

D.M.'s Narrative: 6th grade ELA teacher at SGS D.M. identified two major supports on our conversation, resources and professional development provided by the district. I know for a fact that each month there is a meeting of all district coaches, a “Coaching the Coaches” session supported by the central administration. He stated:

There are two major types of supports that I observed, the training opportunity, opportunity for training, and some resources that are necessary for the day-to-day operation of the job. Hum I am not aware of much other support.

District Wide Support

The Principal Perspective

P.M.'s Narrative: Principal of FMS P.M. spoke of district-wide support in this way. She stated:

District-wide there is support from Central Office and the Board of Education. They (coaches) are supported in their work by the collaborative nature of what’s been going on over the past few years with Columbia Teacher’s College with consultants. They are invited to all meetings.

S.G.'s Narrative: Principal of SGS: S.G. agrees with P.M. when she stated that:

I think there’s a great deal of support beyond the building. The fact that our superintendent values the role of the coach and sees the coach and the principal in leadership together and yet as distinct roles and responsibilities. I think there is tremendous support for the coaches.

The Literacy Coach Perspective

B.D.'s Narrative - Literacy Coach at SGS: B.D. spoke of district-wide support coming from the supervisor when she stated:

Well right now books surround us. The Supervisor placed an order and asked me what materials we needed for every unit. I handed her a request and she ordered them. Outside of people, I can’t think of.

M.L.'s Narrative : Literacy Coach at FMS: M.L. reported feeling supported in a variety of ways the administration supports her work, with materials, books, and money to attend professional development, which comes from the district. She admits that "Sometimes it's hard to figure out where the support is to come from. I have a supervisor."

The Teacher Perspective

E.B.'s Narrative : 7th grade ELA teacher at FMS E.B. did not identify any other types of support outside of school-based support.

D.M.'s Narrative: 6th grade ELA teacher at SGS D.M. did not identify the two major supports, training and materials as either school-based or district based. He said that:

There are two major types of support, the training opportunities and some resources that are necessary for day-to-day operation of the job. Hm I'm not aware of much other support.

Summary of Findings for Question #2:

What kinds of support do middle school literacy coaches have? Results from participant's composite narratives revealed that support for literacy coaches fell into two major categories; school-based and district-wide support. School-based supports included such things as:

- A separate location, a room of one's own, a location for coaches to meet with teachers
- Materials and supplies, a book room for library
- Autonomy to schedule professional development and to determine topics
- A shared vision of the value of the coach's work

- District-wide supports included such things as:
- Support for district sponsored initiatives-like Teacher's College Reading & Writing Project and outside consultants
- Professional development for coaches
- Funding for materials and professional development

A third and distinct type of support was identified by P.M. Principal of FM School and identified as “coach collegiality” coaches supporting each other. Evidenced by the monthly Coaching the Coaches Sessions each month held for coaches to come together for their own professional development and for administrative directives and planning.

Discussion of Findings for Question 2

What types of support do middle school literacy coaches have? Three types of support were identified and categorized from data collected from the participant interviews; school-based support and district-wide support. School based-support focused mainly on ways that the principal worked to support the coach's support. District-wide support was identified as the support that is put in place by the central office, the superintendent and the board of education and those outside the district.

A distinct form of support was noted as collegial support, coaches supporting coaches in their work.

Conclusion IV: School-based and principal support is critical to the work of the literacy coach.

It is well documented that the principal is instrumental in setting the vision and tone for the role and responsibilities of the literacy coach. It is the principal of the building who communicates to the rest of the staff the principal-teacher-literacy coach relationship as outlined in policy set by the central office (Elish-Piper & L'Allier and Zwart, 2008,9). Furthermore it has been established that the principal and the coach must work shoulder to shoulder with a shared vision for the school (Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

S.G. principal of SGS cited the importance of this collaboration between coach and administrator when she stated:

There's a partnership...they can share my goals for a unified plan...they can-and they certainly have a hand in shaping them...they're active participants in shaping that, you know digging into the data, their anecdotal notes, our joint-walkthroughs. The goals and the unified plan come out of the informed decisions that we've been able to make...that's the partnership. There are times when we're traveling aide-by-side together speaking a common language and saying there is an area where we may be failing our teachers that directly impact the decisions we make for ongoing professional development...to respect what they see as resources and the fact that they need all the tools at their fingertips.

While a close partnership between the literacy coach and the principal is necessary for supporting the coach's work, stakeholders are cautioned that the coach should never be placed into a position of evaluation of teachers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders & Supovitz, 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Too much closeness has led some to perceive the coach playing an evaluative role in their interactions with the teachers.

Conclusion V: District-wide support in the form of professional development is critical to the success of coaching efforts.

District-wide support for the two coaches in this study has been identified as coming in the form of professional development provided by the central office administration. One of the major conditions for coaching success that has been cited in the literature is ongoing professional development and mentoring for the coaches themselves (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). In the Franklin Township School district, there are monthly meetings for all school-based coaches called “Coaching the Coaches Sessions”. The Central Office sponsors these sessions and time is granted for coaches to come together in the spirit of collegiality to share successes and challenges and brainstorm solutions to these challenges. In addition to the professional development provided by the district, M.L. coach at FM School stated that the district provided funds to attend professional development outside of the district. Without administrative support and understanding of the importance of the coach’s role, the coach may end up isolated and denied opportunities to impact teacher practice (Bean, 2004).

Interpretation of Findings for Question #2

Findings regarding support from both district and school-based administration are corroborated by research that has come before this study. Coach support comes in the form of resources, materials, “a room of one’s own”. Financial support so that coaches can be sustained with their own professional development has also been established and reported in the literature. One interesting finding with regard to support needs to mention and that is the collegial support that both coaches experienced during their “Coaching the Coaches Sessions” which took place once per month. It established a forum for coaches to learn strategies and to share success stories as well as some of the challenges they were facing. That way, solutions could be brainstormed and discussed.

Research Question #3 Middle School Literacy Coach's Challenges

There were four themes that emerged related to the literacy coach's challenges. They were identified as the following: teacher resistance, defining what coaching means (role ambiguity), establishing relationships and funding. Each one of these challenges is described in the composite narrative of each participant in the next section.

The Principal Perspective

S. G.'s Narrative : Principal at SGS SG began address School began her story about resistant teacher by telling me that this challenge was not just unique to her school. She stated:

I don't think the challenge that I'm going to state is peculiar to this building but I have to be clear that it's our reality. And that would be the clients that the coaches are working with and that would be the teachers for a literacy coach, the teachers of literacy, those teachers who are so resistant to trying something new or realizing that some of our data tells us that what we have been doing has not been successful....So that acknowledgement or refusal to acknowledge it, I think that's where the challenge lies for the coach

There was obvious reluctance for some teachers to admit that some of their practices may not have been working with students. S.G. refers to teachers who for some reason, despite what the data shows, refuse to acknowledge that the students are being successful with what teachers thought was best practice.

P.M.'s Narrative: Principal of FMS P.M. agrees with SG, principal of SGS School that resistance on the part of teachers is critical. She admitted that:

A challenging portion of the role involves the teachers who don't seek out help or professional development or assistance from the coach.
If they (referring to the resistant teachers) are in zone zero in making a paradigm shift even those the rest of us have pulled them or challenged them to move to a new paradigm that movement has not happened.

Beside reluctance and resistance, P.M. introduced another challenge in her story, the issue of “role ambiguity”; or stakeholders having an unclear definition of what the literacy coach’s job is not just in the building in which she works, but throughout the district. P.M. attributes this to confusion to the fact that the literacy coach has to report to many different people. P.M. refers to the effect that having the coach report to so many different people as having a “layering effect to their work”. P.M. stated:

There’s a disparity of what the coachwork is in each building. It seems that depending on the principal, coaches could be pulled for more administrative type work, which is not their role...The coach role itself has limitations...they have to meet with teachers, they meet with their supervisors, they meet with administration so there’s this kind of layering effect to work. Um they might have a particular viewpoint on something. It might not fall on the right ears...their perspective might not be accepted...

The Literacy Coach Perspective

M.L.'s Narrative: Literacy Coach at FMS M.L. found building relationships as most challenging. It was important for her to establish relationships with each person. When I posed the question to M.L., what is the most challenging aspect of your job as a literacy coach? She replied:

It’s the interpersonal work. you have to be open for growth and you have to have a relationship with like each person you’re going to be working with...you have to inspire them to be open to growth...

B.D.'s Narrative: Literacy Coach at SGS I found it interesting that when I asked B.D. about what the most challenging aspect of her work was she indicated that it was “subculture of the school”. In probing further I discovered that it was related to a previously stated challenge, role ambiguity or unclear definition of the literacy coach’s role. B.D. stated:

I find challenging the subculture of the school. What they (the teachers) view as their definition of what the coach’s responsibilities are. Example of that is having a common planning meeting with them and talking about reading skills and immediately having teachers

shut down a conversation and saying,” we do this well. We do this already. This doesn’t need to be a conversation.

Later on, when rereading my notes, it became clear that this example described a form of “passive resistance” which will be discussed in the analysis section of this chapter.

The Teacher Perspective

E.B.’s Narrative: 7th grade ELA teacher at FMS E.B agreed with M.L., the literacy coach that the interpersonal work and resistance are probably the most challenging aspects of the coach’s work. She stated:

Dealing with all types of personalities. Dealing with resistance. There are going to be those people who resist ways of being expected, or taught or required.

E.B was the first to identify a fourth issue in her interview; one that has to do with funding for resources. E.B stated:

Would also be financial economic issues. I think of literacy as dealing with texts that are available to us. And making the choices of what’s best with limited resources. Using their best judgment. I think that would be hard at times.

D.M.’s Narrative : 6th grade ELA teacher at SGS D.M. described the number one challenge as having to do with time. He stated:

The number one challenge is that they (literacy coaches) don’t have enough time, time the essential time to be accessible to the teachers and to play the integral role

I related D.M. issue with time to the previous identified challenge, role ambiguity. As a result of an unclear definition of what the literacy coach is supposed to do, according to D.M. they’re spending time doing other things not related to coaching.

D.M. describes another challenge that which he stated related to the one just mentioned about time. D.M. stated it this way:

Another challenge, which pretty much ties into the same, one are establishing a routine, there is generally another change within the curriculum or in the schedule could sense they want to be in the classroom. They cannot because they have to do administrative duties and responsibilities that are either mandated and so they have to be trained.

Again, this is related to the issue of role ambiguity as it impacts the literacy-coaching role and determines where they spend their time.

The table presented below provides examples of how the researcher interpreted resistance during the observations of the common planning meetings. It is noted that a form of “passive resistance” that M.L. literacy coach at FMS named during our interview earlier.

Table 4.9 Event # 1 Observational Field Notes Protocol
Time: 7:30-8:12 Place: M.L. FMS Literacy Coach’s Room
 Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
The Literacy Coach and five 8 th grade teachers
Setting
The coach’s room. Agenda on board read: Running record spreadsheet. Unit Sign Ups/binder, B&N presenters, unit pacing and other concerns.
Problem
One teacher asked, “What are you looking for?” (Regarding the conference binder and sample work samples and reflection sheets. She did not know what the purpose of the binder was. Another teachers asked, “if we have given you work earlier, do we need to give you more?” How many pieces? The LC asked if there were any other concerns? One teacher asked again about the binder.
Actions
The LC started by handing out the NJASK Writers checklist she ordered for them to use with the Test Prep Unit. There was a discussion about the upcoming poet in residence event and the schedule. At 7:45 the coach said, “thanks for sending the spreadsheets for running records and that she now has some data for the beginning of school. The she discussed the sign up sheet for conferences 6/18 and to bring work samples for the binder. She explained that teachers are to come for one period with student work from a unit of their choice and they will complete a reflection sheet and attach it to it. One teacher asked, “What are you looking for?” The LC explained. The LC passed around a sign-up sheet and said that the teachers did not have to sign up right there and that they have until Thursday to sign up. A discussion about the author study followed. Teachers asked if there were any surprise authors? Teachers discussed the last unit and time from. The LC finally asked for other concerns.
Resolution
Teachers are to sign up for one class period and bring the work samples and reflection sheet to attach to it. The LC sent a sign-up sheet around. No one signed up there. Did not have to sign up there and have until next Thursday. The LC explained what the binder was for it serves two purposes; one for new teachers starting out with the units and the other for “you as teachers to reflect on your teaching and students learning.”

*LC=literacy coach

At this common planning meeting, the coach was encouraging teachers to bring samples of student work for the resource binder to which one teacher asked, “If we gave you work already, do we need to give you more? When the literacy coach passed the sign-up sheet around to the teachers, no one signed up to bring work samples. One teacher asked again, “What are you looking for?” This can be interpreted as a form of “passive resistance” and will be described more clearly in the analysis section of this chapter.

Summary of Findings for Question #3

Four main challenges facing the middle school literacy coaches in both schools were identified in the composite narratives of the participants and the field observational notes. Those challenges were: teacher resistance, role ambiguity or the definition of what literacy coaching is, establishing relationships and funding. These will be described and related to the research literature in the analysis section of this chapter.

Discussion of Findings for Question #3

Conclusion VI: Resistant teachers present a major challenge to the middle school literacy coach

Researchers have previously reported teachers who resist interacting with literacy coaches as their number one concern (Toll 2005), a barrier common to coaching (e.g., Dole & Donaldson 2006). Elish-Piper, L’Allier & Zwart (2008) found that teachers gave many reasons for not allowing the literacy coach into their classrooms. Some reported that they didn’t need any help, “I’m doing fine. I don’t need any help.” (p.12). Similarly, S.G., principal of SGS cited this

form of teacher resistance as not being unique to her school but common throughout the district.

She stated:

I don't think the challenge that I'm going to state is peculiar to this building but I have to be clear that it's our reality. And that would be the clients that the coaches are working with and that would be the teachers for a literacy coach, the teachers of literacy, those teachers who are so resistant to trying something new or realizing that some of our data tells us that what we have been doing has not been

successful....So that acknowledgement or refusal to acknowledge it, I think that's where the challenge lies for the coach.

P.M. principal of FMS agreed with S.G. that teacher resistance was a major challenge as well.

She had this to say:

A challenging portion of the role involves the teachers who don't seek out help or professional development or assistance from the coach.

If they (referring to the resistant teachers) are in zone zero in making a paradigm shift even those the rest of us have pulled them or challenged them to move to a new paradigm that movement has not happened.

E.B, 7th grade teacher at FMS agreed with M.L., the literacy coach that the interpersonal work and resistance are probably the most challenging aspects of the coach's work. She stated:

Dealing with all types of personalities. Dealing with resistance. There are going to be those people who resist ways of being expected, or taught or required.

It was observed during a common planning on 4/17/12 meeting between S.G. literacy coaches at SGS, that she met with resistance when she asked who would like to try out the poetry strategy. Similarly, M.L. coach at FMS met with this same type of resistance. At her common planning meeting with 8th grade teachers, M.L. attempted to get teachers to sign up for a time slot to discuss the resource binder they were building together. Not one teacher signed up right there at the meeting. M.L. did state that they didn't have to sign up right away which this observer interpreted as giving them (the teachers) the opportunity to opt out of the session.

Conclusion VII: Role ambiguity or defining what coaching means presented a second major challenge to the literacy coach.

The literature is clear about one thing with regards to the literacy coach's role. It is one that is at best complex, diverse and requires the coach to wear many different hats in their work (Wren & Vallejo 2009; Bean 2004). As a result of the rising debate on what coaches are expected to do, concern has been raised about their effectiveness because the coach's role is so varied (Walpole & Blamey 2008). It becomes extremely important and reasonable then to expect the coach to take on a few different roles and responsibilities but those roles should be few, very clear, and highly prioritized (Wren & Vallejo, 2009). Furthermore, clarifying the role of a literacy coach would help assure coaches that they are offering teachers and students the best possible program (Lynch, 2010, Elish-Piper & L'Allier and Zwart, 2008). Likewise, literacy coaches in Poglinco's et al's (2003) study indicated that without a clear definition of their role, stakeholders were confused which made the coach's job difficult.

P.M. principal of FMS spoke of this "role ambiguity" as a "disparity of what the coach work is in each building" as presenting a second challenge for the literacy coach. P.M. attributes this to confusion to the fact that the literacy coach has to report to many different people. P.M. referred to the effect that having the coach report to so many different people as having a "layering effect to their work". P.M. stated:

There's a disparity of what the coachwork is in each building. It seems that depending on the principal, coaches could be pulled for more administrative type work, which is not their role...The coach role itself has limitations...they have to meet with teachers, they meet with their supervisors, they meet with administration so there's this kind of layering effect to work. Um they might have a particular viewpoint on something. It might not fall on the right ears...their perspective might not be accepted...

B.D. literacy coach at SGS attributed confusion over the role of the literacy coach to the “subculture of the school and equated with teacher resistance.

I find challenging the subculture of the school. What they (the teachers) view as their definition of what the coach’s responsibilities are. Example of that is having a common planning meeting with them and talking about reading skills and immediately having teachers shut down a conversation and saying, “we do this well. We do this already. This doesn’t need to be a conversation.

Conclusion VIII: Establishing relationships presents a third challenge to the literacy coach.

Establishing trust and building relationships is a critical factor in a literacy coach’s successes and ability to be effective (Bean, 2004, Shanklin 2007). More importantly building rapport and trust is a key to the coaching relationship (Learning Associates, 2004). Without trust, the relationship will not support the changes that teachers attempt to make.

M.L. found building relationships as most challenging. It was important for her to establish relationships with each person. When I posed the question to M.L., what is the most challenging aspect of your job as a literacy coach? She replied:

It’s the interpersonal work. You have to be open for growth and you have to have a relationship with like each person you’re going to be working with...you have to inspire them to be open to growth...

Conclusion IX: Limited funding presents a fourth challenge to the literacy coach.

As school budgets continue to be slashed throughout the country and federal spending on special programs limited, sustainability is key to successful literacy coaching initiatives (Fisher, 2012). In too many places, coaching is initiated without a plan for continued funding and support. As such, coaching programs reinforce a prevalent notion in school professional development —“this, too, shall pass.” The sustainability plan should include the essential components of the coaching plan and the funding mechanisms required for the plan. For this

study, funding for materials that support coaches in their work and professional development was critical to their work with teachers.

E.B. 7th grade ELA teacher at FMS was the first to address the issue of funding and availability of resources. E.B stated:

Would also be financial economic issues. I think of literacy as dealing with texts that are available to us. And making the choices of what's best with limited resources. Using their best judgment. I think that would be hard at times

Interpretation of Findings for Question #3

Researchers have already reported that the number one challenge to literacy coaches is the teacher's resistance to interacting with the coach (Toll, 2005; Dole & Donaldson, 2006, Elish-Piper, L'Allier & Zwart, 2008). This study uncovered that the number one challenge facing the two middle school literacy coaches was resistance, or reluctance on the part of the teachers to engage with the coach. Resistance was expressed both in subtle forms and outright. For example, during the observation of a common planning meeting between M.L., the literacy coach at FM School, one of the teachers said, "if we have given you work samples already, do we have to give you more?" This was interpreted by the researcher as a form of "passive resistance" on the part of the teacher's willingness to contribute to the resource binder the coach was involving the teachers in building. At this same meeting, after the coach passed around the sign-up sheet for teachers to meet with her, not one teacher signed up. That was interpreted as a much stronger form of resistance. A similar situation occurred when B.D. SGS literacy coach was meeting with teachers to discuss reading skills and immediately one teacher declaring, "We do this already. This doesn't need to be a conversation." These provide clear examples of teacher resistance.

Although teacher resistance has been cited as the number one challenge to literacy coaches, research is surfacing that advocates that coaches begin to embrace the resistance and

learn how to work with it. Reilly (2014) uses the metaphor of a rhizome from biology to explain how the coach might frame resistance as something positive and urges literacy coaches “to appreciate resistance and interruptions as critical and necessary for transformative teaching and learning.” However, the author does not go on to describe how this can be done. One interesting note that deserves attention is the comment made by B.D., the SGS literacy coach. When asked which was the most challenging aspect of her work, B.D. replied, “the subculture of the school.” In probing further, she referred to not understanding what the coach’s role was but a question that this researcher asks, could she be referring to a “subculture of resistance”. This is a possible thread to follow in future research on coaching and resistance.

Understanding of the coach’s role was cited as the second greatest challenge to the coach’s work. It has been determined by the research that role of the coach remains ambiguous and that efforts to clearly define the coach’s role have been slow (Walpole & (Wren & Vallejo, 2009; Bea, 2004; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). For this particular study, role ambiguity on the part of the literacy coach was cited by all interviewed as contributing to teacher resistance. Coupled with not understanding the coach’s role is the challenge of establishing relationships with teachers as a third challenge faced by these two coaches. It has been established that building and trust is a critical factor to the success of the coach (Bean, 2004; Shanklin, 2007; Learning Associates, 2004)

With regards to the challenge of funding. Funding as cited as a challenge for the two coaches in this study as it related to providing them with materials and resources, opportunities for professional development and opportunities for professional development. Research is not needed to understand a fact of public school organizations and that is without budgeted money for things like programs, initiatives, and resources are often eliminated. Literacy coaching is now

listed as one of those things. It has been reported that the literacy coaching movement has changed significantly. Ippolitto (2012) reported that most states that invested heavily in coaches have eliminated the positions. Unless districts that continue to support literacy coaching can work to reduce the challenges identified in this study, this researcher is not optimistic about the roles of the two coaches studied in this report.

Limitations of Study

This study was based on administrators', classroom teachers', and literacy coaches' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities as well as the supports and challenges that confront them in their work. There were several limitations to this study. First, two of B.D.'s, literacy coach at SGS School monthly coaching logs were included that were not part of the time frame of this study. Although they were part of the school year in which the study was conducted they were from two months prior to the beginning of the study. This was done to insure that an equal number of monthly coaching logs were reviewed for and analyzed. Second, field observations of coaches were limited to nonparticipant observations of only five common planning meetings over the course of this study leaving the majority of the data being collected from the semi-structured interviews and monthly coaching activity logs. Finally, since the number of participants selected to be studied was small, no generalizations can be made to other districts employing middle school literacy coaches. This narrative case-based study involved two reading coaches situated at two schools in the same district. As a result, implications have been provided for the school district in which the study took place and the school site itself. Practitioners outside the district who read this study should exercise caution and care in regard to the similarities and differences in their settings before considering the application of these

implications as appropriate for their districts. In addition, the sample size of participants in this study is too small to generalize across other populations of coaches.

Implications for Practice

Several implications can be suggested from the interpretative analysis of the role of a middle school reading coach. The school and district must work together when establishing the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach. With demands of the district and principal, the coach will always be challenged to fulfill multiple roles. Once a literacy coach is employed at a school, principals' expectations may add to the complexity. Therefore, it is critical that the district and the school share in the development of the role, duties, and responsibilities of the coach and that the final agreement on these duties must be implemented district wide to ensure continuity in how coaches work in their various school settings.. The stakeholders must consider the overall objectives of the coach and establish clearly define their role to ensure they are carrying out responsibilities that will enhance teacher practice and student achievement.

One interesting finding this researcher feels is worth noting is that the coach from SGS, B.D. during the interview commented that she felt that the coach's role was not clearly understood because they had some many responsibilities to accomplish and that they all seemed to be priorities. This acknowledgement is further substantiated by the literature discussed at the beginning of this report. Along with this commented she also pointed out that the district lacked a culture of coaching This idea leads this researcher to thinking about an additional study that examines what is a culture of coaching and how does it impact on the coach's work.

As a result of inconsistencies in the descriptions of how coaches should

spend their time, it is essential for districts to provide adequate training for reading coaches (Garmston, 2002; Shanklin, 2010; Sturtevant, 2003). Neufeld and Roper (2003) suggested that professional development for coaches follow the guidelines of effective professional development research. Professional development should be (a) grounded in inquiry, (b) collaborative, (c) sustained and ongoing, and (d) connected to and derived from the coaches' work. Coaches should be engaged in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection. If coaches are to be successful, they must have the proper training and have opportunities to collaborate with other reading coaches to learn from them as well

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas of research that would be beneficial to the literacy field to delve more deeply into middle school literacy coaching. Following are suggestions for four avenues of future research.

If one accepts that literacy coaching operates along a continuum of activities as identified in this study, then additional research is needed to find out which of the activities identified i.e. collaborative resource manager, administrative task manager and coplanner result in the greatest potential for teacher change in practice and increased student achievement.

If these activities are equated with a degree of "intrusiveness" with collaborative resource manager having the least amount and co-teaching having the greatest amount, research is needed to determine the correlation between degree of "intrusively" and the coaching activity and the impact on changing teacher practice.

Since confusion on the definition of literacy coaches continues to exist, then additional

research is needed to clarify what the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach should be in order to achieve the desired result of a change in teacher practice and increased student achievement. It is important to find out whether or not literacy coaching has a positive impact on student achievement at the middle school level. Studies such as those by Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2007) and Swartz (2005) can be extended to the middle school level to determine the relationship between literacy coaching and student achievement. Longitudinal studies would be particularly important for this line of research to see the impact that coaching has over time as coaches work with content-area teachers as well. The notion of a culture of coaching provides an avenue for further research as it relates to the effectiveness of the literacy coach's work.

Finally, research needs to be conducted to determine if literacy coaching at this level actually changes teachers' instructional practices. Interviews or surveys of content-area teachers would provide additional information about how and why teachers change or do not change their instructional practices, as well as what role the literacy coach has in facilitating such changes. If such studies find that teachers do not change their instructional practices as a result of working with a literacy coach, this line of research could help identify potential barriers.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Stories from the Field: A Narrative Inquiry Study of Middle School Literacy Coaching

Introduction Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journal:

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time when a teacher dropped into have a conversation with you?"

(Pseudonym) M.L., M.L., literacy coach –“ Well, the teacher came in-she was shaking her head. And she's going, can't teach conclusions.” So I told her to tell me more. And then she's talking about how she just hates conclusions. And what we realized was that with introductions we have a list of 8-12 different ways to you can open your introduction (referring to writing) and then you need a bridge. And the you need a thesis statement...And it's like one, two, three boo, we're done. You've got a whole toolkit for introductions. And when-yeah with conclusions, you don't have that as much. They're not taught nearly as explicitly. So this is what we kind of co-developed.”

“Wow, “ I wrote in my journal, ‘the power of collaborative conversation between a coach and teacher resulted in a toolkit of strategies. I wonder what other ways the literacy coach works with teachers?’”

Positioning myself as a narrative researcher, I was mindful to keep my questions as open-ended as possible to do what most narrative researchers hope to do and that is ‘capture the richness of the experience in order to study a selected issue in great detail and learn something

through the participants' stories told and retold" (Reissman, 1993, Webster & Mertova, 2007:1, Clandinin & Connelly, 1990 p.5, Smith, 2006).

Historically, educational researchers have used stories to study teaching and teacher education to understand the contextualized situations affecting their work and the decisions they make. (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, Rushton, 2004, Smith, 2007). Like Carter (1993) this researcher, having lived the life of a literacy coach for over five years in a variety of settings believes that coaching, like teaching, is much too complex and indeterminate to reduce to numbers and mathematical formulae. In keeping with this post modernist philosophy, this narrative case-based investigation of middle school literacy coaching was carried out. Interviews, documents and field observations were brought together to compose narratives that would tell the story of the roles and responsibilities, and the supports and challenges that two middle school literacy encountered in two different schools within the same district.

Situating the Study

Until recently, the topic of literacy coaching dominated the literacy research accompanied by a surge in the number of publications dealing with the topic of literacy coaching (Ippolito, 2012, Cassidy, 2007). In a survey conducted by members of the International Reading Association in 2014, twenty-five leading literacy scholars and researchers were polled to find out what's hot and what's not. The results of that survey revealed that literacy coaching occupied the number one slot in the "What's Not Hot But Should Be Hot" category. (Ippolito, 2012). The question that should be asked is why the sudden lack of interest in literacy coaching? Does this sudden drop in importance mean that literacy coaching, as a potential for improving teacher practice is fading into the distance like so many well-intended educational reform efforts? (Allington, 2006). Is the decrease in popularity of literacy coaching a result of not enough

empirical evidence regarding the effect that coaches have in changing teacher practice or increasing student achievement? (Rand, 2005) Is literacy coaching too complex of a process to investigate? Where does one begin studying literacy coaching?

To expand the understanding of the role of the middle school literacy coach from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and coaches, this study began by posing the following three questions:

(1) Which roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach are viewed as most important from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and coaches?

(2) What types of support do middle school literacy coaches experience viewed from the perspectives of the principals, teachers, and coaches??

(3) What types of challenges do middle school literacy coaches experience viewed from the perspectives of the principals, teachers , and coaches?

More importantly, earlier studies of literacy coaching identified the need for investigation into the contextual factors that contribute to successful implementation of coaching efforts in changing teacher practice. (Thao, 2013). This study set out to do just that by examining and describing school-based and district wide supports and challenges that impact effective literacy coaching at the middle level.

Theoretical Framework

In keeping with the social constructionist view of knowledge construction and meaning making, a Vygotskian lens is employed to view the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coach. Vygotsky's social learning theory helps us to understand how people in

social contexts learn from one another and informs us on how teachers, principals and coaches construct learning communities. (1978) claimed that social interaction leads to meaning and understanding of events. He suggested that learning takes place through interactions with peers. Consequently, what teachers learn from each other and from the literacy coach is socially constructed. The literacy coach in this case, plays the major role of the facilitator, creating the environment where directed and guided interactions can occur. In this case, the interactions occur along a continuum of learning formats and allows teachers to explore new learning and acquire new skills where they are comfortable. Therefore, following this thread of thinking, knowledge construction occurs within Vygotsky's (1978) social context that involves teacher-coach collaboration on real classroom issues around practices that build on one another's language, skills, and experiences shaped by each individual's culture (Vygotsky, 1978,) along with this constructivist line of thinking as it relates to literacy coaching, the coach assuming the role of the "More Knowledgeable Other" guided the teachers along this continuum of learning as described in the conceptual framework until and scaffolds teachers as they work within their Zone of Proximal Development, to perform a task or grasp understanding of an instructional practice until they can do it independently of the coach. Learning therefore becomes a reciprocal experience for the teachers and the coach. Furthermore, the meaning that is co-constructed about literacy coaching events is further explored and understood through the telling and the retelling of their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2009).

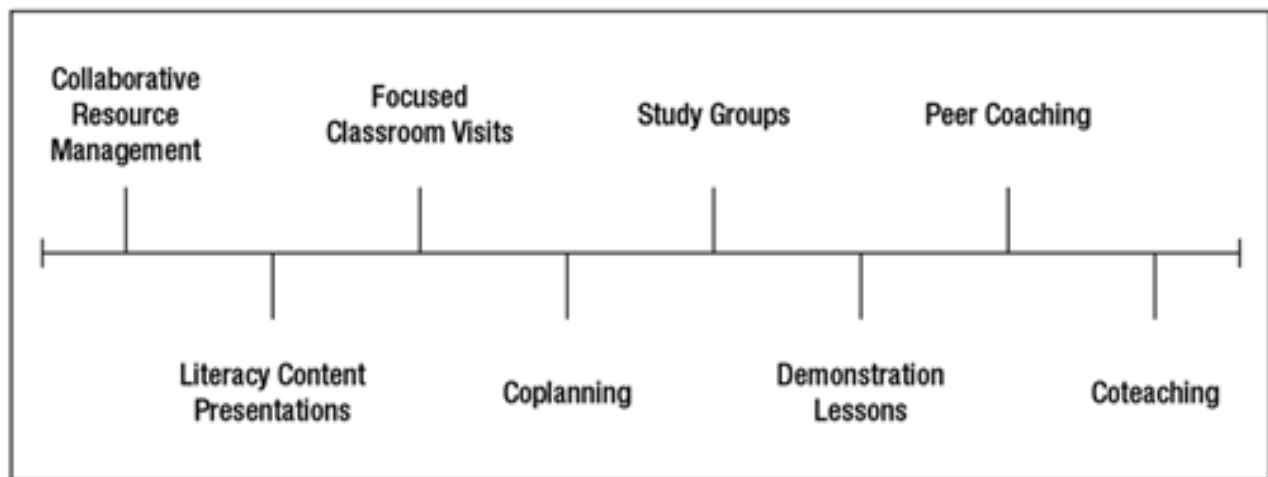
A Vygotskian Perspective of Literacy Coaching on a Continuum

This same Vygotskian lens is critical to understanding how the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach were identified reinforcing, this foundational belief that coaching adults, like teaching, occurs along a continuum of learning situations. Each situation requiring more or

less scaffolding, according to the teachers' needs. These learning situations or learning formats are also informed by Vygotskian thought. Moran's Literacy Coaching Continuum (Figure 1.2 from Differentiated Literacy Coaching: Scaffolding for Student and Teacher Success, 2007) was instrumental in the coding process used to establish categories for understanding the roles and responsibilities of the middle school literacy coaches studied for this report.

Figure 5.1

The Literacy Coaching Continuum



Source: Developed by M. C. Moran and Elizabeth Powers (2007).

The continuum presents eight differentiated learning formats for coaching: (1) collaborative resource management, (2) literacy content presentations, (3) focused classroom visits, (4) coplanning, (5) study groups, (6) demonstration lessons, (7) peer coaching, and (8) coteaching. It assumes that there is a progression in the intensity of learning supports that are necessary to sustain a teacher's efforts to become a more reflective practitioner.

Moran's (227) Literacy Coaching Continuum shows how multi-faceted and complex the literacy role is requiring the coach to wear many professional "hats" (Burkins, 2007). This

requires that the coach balance their work with a variety of schools, contexts and different coaching situations “to create a coaching plan that is robust and makes sense” (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007, pg. 134). Burkins (2007) defines the coach as someone who is:

An educator with specific expertise and extensive experience in literacy instruction who, through individual coaching and team meetings, formal learning, demonstration lessons, classroom visitations, study groups and various other contexts, works with and for teachers to lead, assist and honor them as they solidify and expand their skills and understanding of literacy instruction. (pp.28-29).

Furthermore, Moran (2007) points out that these various coaching formats require varying degrees of “intrusiveness” on the part of the coach interacting with the teacher. She defines the word “intrusive” to indicate “the extent of the coach’s involvement in the actual teaching routine and the potential impact of that involvement on a teacher’s sense of comfort.” The example she cites is a coach who is working with a teacher as a collaborative resource manager will have less direct involvement in the teaching of a lesson than will one who is coteaching a lesson. As a result, a collaborative resource manager is “less intrusive” than a coach who is coteaching.

The Literacy Coaching continuum acknowledges that teachers are individuals who need and want various kinds of support depending upon content, circumstances, personal experience and timing. The continuum respects and honors what we know about social constructivist theory and Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development theory and the “More Knowledgeable Other” that teachers use with their own students when planning for and differentiating instruction.

According to Vygotsky’s theories, learning often involves mentoring provided by a “more culturally knowledgeable person (the literacy coach in this case) who engages with less experienced or knowledgeable persons (the teachers) in a process known as scaffolding.” (Lee

and Smagorinsky, 2000). This way knowledge is not just transmitted down from one person to another but rather knowledge is “mutually constructed” and involves joint collaboration between all persons involved in the coaching activity.

Literature Review

Research on middle school literacy coaching at the secondary level is limited and still evolving (Blamey et al., 2008, Walpole and Blamey, 2010, Calo, 2012). Most of what we know about literacy coaching comes from studies of elementary school literacy coaches. Results from these studies revealed that literacy coaches “wear many hats” and fulfill a multitude of roles (Shanklin, 2006; Toll, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2004,). Unfortunately, according to these same studies, coaches often find themselves settling into roles and routines that have little to do with changing instructional practice (Bean, 2004a; Killion, 2009; Calo, 2012) and that they spend less than half of their time engaged in activities that foster professional growth in teachers and have the potential to impact teacher practice (Bean et al., 2008; Deussen, Aution, Nelssestuen, Roccograndi and Scott, 2006; Walpole and Blamey, 2008). On the Literacy Coaching Continuum discussed earlier, these activities would be considered to be the “least intrusive” on teachers practice (Moran, 2007). These fall to the left of the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Figure 1.2) and have the least impact on changing teacher’s practice like collaborative resource manager, coplanner and administrative task manager. These are discussed in more depth in the findings section of this article. So what roles and responsibilities do middle school literacy coaches engage in? Three areas of the literature were reviewed for this study; roles & responsibilities of the literacy coach, types of support and major challenges.

Roles & Responsibilities

Whether studying elementary or secondary coaching, most researchers agree that the role of the literacy coach is complex and agree that all coaches must balance their work with a variety of schools, contexts and different coaching situations to “create a coaching plan that is robust and makes sense” (Rodgers and Rodgers, 2007, p.134).

The key word here is balance. There is potential danger in the coach spending too much time on those roles that do nothing to foster professional growth (Wren and Vallejo, 2009). Bean (2004) agrees that the main objective of coaching is to provide guidance and support that will enable someone else to become more proficient but adds one other ingredient to the role description; that of providing feedback. Bean believes that it is the feedback that coaches provide that helps move teachers to assuming responsibility for continued use of instructional strategies introduced by the coach (Sweeney, 2003).

It has been suggested that some coaching roles are more significant than others. For example, Lyons and Pinnell (2001) describe the role of literacy coaches as that of professional developers who will “introduce, describe, and demonstrate topics in class sessions and then be able to provide direct assistance and coaching in classrooms.” (p.52) Cathy Roller (2006) expands on this definition by emphasizing the importance of in-class coaching that is the main role of the literacy coach. Additional responsibilities include organizing study groups of teachers and other staff members to discuss professional readings in a collaborative manner, managing resources and materials, conducting data mining with teachers to understand assessments and working closely with teachers to support them in their daily work, modeling team-teaching and providing feedback (Casey, 2006; Moran, 2007, Allen, 2006, Burkins, 2007, Lyons and Pinnell, 2001, Dole, 2004).

Although similarities exist between elementary coaches and secondary coaches, there is agreement that secondary coaching is quite different (Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2008). Secondary coaches reported that resistance came in the form of content teachers' believing that reading and writing could enhance content learning (Schen, Rao, & Dobles, 2005). It is the belief of this researcher that regardless of whether one is coaching elementary or secondary teachers, teachers belief systems and reluctance or resistance presents a major challenge to the literacy coach. Belief systems of teachers was reported to linked to resistance as one middle school literacy coach B.D. reported although the data showed that students were not being successful , it was difficult to move teachers from what she described as “zone zero in making a new paradigm shift event those the rest of us have pulled them or challenged them to move to a new paradigm, that movement still has not happened”.

Types of Support

Findings regarding support for literacy coaching list ongoing professional development and mentoring for the coaches as a critical factor in determining success (Neufeld and Roper, 2003). In addition, a close partnership with the principal and the coach is necessary for supporting the coach's work (Hasbrouck and Denton, 2005, Neufeld and Roper, 2003; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders and Supovitz, 2003; Walpole and McKenna, 2004). Coaches and principals in this both agreed that this partnership was essential to success of the coaching process. S.G. principal of SGS School cited the importance of this collaboration in her narrative describing this partnership in this way, “ There' s a partnership...they can share my goals for a unified plan.they (the coaches) have a hand in shaping them...they're active participants in

shaping the goals...this unified plan comes out of the informed decision-making we make together.”

Coaching Challenges

With respect to the challenges confronting the middle school literacy coach, resistance to literacy coaches is the primary hurdle (Toll, 2005, Dole, 2004; Elish-Piper et al., 2008). It was found that teachers gave many reasons not to work with the literacy coach. A second challenge is role ambiguity. It is clear unless, the coach’s role is clearly identified and understood by all stakeholders, the coach’s job becomes very difficult (Walpole and Blamey, 2008; Lynch, 2010; Elish-Piper et al., 2008; Poglinco et. al, 2003).

Methodology

Setting and participants Data were gathered in two middle school settings within the same school district in a large suburban school district in central New Jersey between January and June of 2011. Participants included two middle school literacy coaches, two principals and two middle school ELA teachers.

Data collection Data sources included semi-structured interviews, monthly coaching activity logs and notes from field observations.

Data analysis Data was analyzed following the steps outlined in Miles & Huberman’s (1994) stages of data analysis. These stages are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification (Creswell, 2005). Data from all sources was triangulated. Initially, interviews allowed for meaningful segments of data to be identified and then were assigned a code or category related to roles and responsibilities of the coach, supports and challenges. This process was guided by thinking about which data best answer the research questions. Data was further

reduced with the help of the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007), which provided pre-established categories, or learning formats for identifying coaching roles and responsibilities.

Data was displayed in the forms of matrices for each of the research questions, which helped to identify themes, patterns and connections between data sources for each research question.

Tables were created displaying the frequency of coaching activities (see Table I). In addition, the Problem-Solution Narrative Structure (Ollerenshaw, 1991) provided an additional method to create a story map, or graphic organizer as a way of narrating and “restorying” the events that took place during field observations (Table 2). Finally, conclusions were drawn based on findings and confirmed through member checking. Inter-rater reliability was achieved by having a colleague code one of the interviews. Final decisions about where to place certain coaching activities on the continuum was referred to the originator of the Literacy Coaching Continuum for verification.

Table 5.1

Activities for Both Coaches for 6 Months

<u>FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>%</u>
171	Coplanning	27.06%
169	Administrative Tasks	26.74
109	Collaborative Resource Manager	17.25%
42	Educational Discussions	6.65%
37	Lesson Demonstrations	5.85%
28	Literacy Content Presentations	4.43%
20	Peer Coaching	3.16%
16	Focused Classroom Visits	2.53%
13	Coach Collaboration	2.06%
7	Professional Development	1.11%
7	Lab-Site Facilitator	1.11%
5	Walkthroughs	.79%
4	Coteach	.63%

4	Study Groups	.63%
632		100%

Table 5.2 Common Planning Meeting Observational Field Notes SGS 6th Grade**Date: 4/17/12 Time: 10:00-10:30**

Coded To Problem-Solution Narrative Structure

Characters
Literacy coach 6 th grade teachers Teacher in video demo
Setting
SGS Literacy coach's room One 6 th grade teacher's room where LC distributed poetry units of study. LC held a discussion about teaching poetry for fluency.
Problem
*LC said, "I don't want to put pressure on the teachers as they just got back from break and they were in "Test Prep". Told teachers that she didn't want to take up their time. Poetry needs to be written and read. One teacher asked, "What do you mean try it out?" Teachers asked, "What do we do about fluency?" LC asked teachers, "What would you do for this kid? How are you going to move him to the next level?"
Actions
LC distributed units of study Shared a DVD of poetry reading Asked teachers, "What do you think? LC shared personal experiences with teaching poetry. Suggested a poetry anthology, One teacher asked, "What do you mean trying it out?" LC asked, "Are you okay with this? After video, LC asked, "What do you think? Is this child a choppy reader? What do you think about the teacher's recommendation? ? How are you going to move this child to the next level? No further discussion or responses from teachers. Reminded teachers that before they leave that she wants to band texts with them next time. End of session
Resolution
Distributed poetry units of study LC said, "I'm not going to take up any more of your time?" Suggested teachers teach social issues through poetry.

Teachers should create poetry anthology.
 LC told teachers to get teachers to write like poets.
 Instructed teachers to watch the video and listen for the recommendation.
 Reminded them that before they leave that she wants to band texts with them next time.

*LC=literacy coach

Findings and Interpretation

What are the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach? Three themes emerged related to the roles and responsibilities of the two middle school literacy coaches studied in this investigation. There were: Literacy Coach as Collaborative Resource Manager, Literacy Coach as Administrative Task Manager and Literacy Coach as Coplanner. These emergent themes are further supported by the data collected from an analysis six months of coaching monthly activity logs for both B.D. and M.L, the literacy coaches from Sampson G. Smith School and Franklin Middle School. A review of the five sets of observational field notes and coded to the Problem-Solution Narrative Structure identified these same three themes.

An analysis the coaching monthly activity logs show that together for a period of six months from January 2012-June 2012, the coaches spent 72.05% of their total time as administrative task managers, collaborative resource managers and coplanners. These are considered to be more to the left of the Literacy Coaching Continuum and are among the “least intrusive” activities.

Conclusion I: The middle school literacy coach’s major role and responsibility was that of coplanner

The data from the analysis of the monthly coaching logs submitted for this study clearly shows that both B.D. and M.L. spent 27.06% of their time fulfilling the role of coplanner. Coplanning was identified as involving the literacy coach fulfilling one or many of the following

activities:

- Coplanning lessons and curriculum units with teachers based on a systematic study of student needs.
- Working with teachers to align instruction to learning standards.
- Setting goals and planning lessons with teachers based on analysis of student assessment data and
- Examining students' ongoing performance data to identify needs, monitor progress, and modify instruction.

To accomplish this role the coach meets with teachers to discuss grouping options, assessment results, and specific lesson planning targeted at specific student needs. (Moran, 2007).

Coplanning as a form of collaboration is a crucial factor in improving instruction and student achievement. Research indicates that those schools that are having success closing the achievement gap seem to be able to provide a context that promotes and organize collegial conversations based in evidence from reviewing student assessment data (Little, 2006). A distinction is made between coplanning with grade-level groups of teachers and coplanning with individual teachers. It was observed during the common planning meetings with both coaches that group coplanning centered around issues of curriculum and unit planning, resources to support units of study and reviewing assessment results on summative district-wide assessments such as Learnia. M.L. the literacy coach at FMS pointed out that it was those one-on-one coplanning sessions that focused on coteaching with teachers that were responsible for increasing teacher's capacity.

Conclusion II: The second major role of the middle school literacy coach was that of

administrative task manager

For the purposes of this study, administrative tasks are defined as tasks and/or responsibilities that do not impact instructional practices or working directly with teachers.

These tasks may include one or more of the following:

- Completing the monthly coaching activity logs and reporting out to supervisors, principals and central office
- Looking at school-wide and district wide plans for addressing assessments each month
- Running district mandated professional development sessions
- Organizing grade-level teams for district curriculum development and revision work.
- Organizing for visits and planning for district approved consultants
- Attendance at supervisor and other district mandated meetings
- Creating benchmarks for assessments for teachers
- Completing mandated district sponsored training and professional development
- Formal observations by supervisors

Data collected and analyzed from the Coaching Monthly Activity Logs for both coaches indicated that both B.D. and M.L. spent 26.74% of their time on administrative duties that do not involve direct contact with teachers outside of delivering district mandates and organizing teams of teachers to review and update curriculum. Again, over the course of six months, these two coaches spent over half their time on tasks not related to coaching teachers.

Conclusion III: The third major role and responsibility of the middle school literacy coach was collaborative resource manager

According to the Literacy Coaching Continuum (Moran, 2007) the role of the collaborative resource manager is the least “intrusive” and involving one or more of the following activities:

- Effective use of resources as necessary
- Sharing knowledge of successful techniques in classroom management and instructional planning for effective literacy instruction
- Assisting teachers with the appropriate use of core and supplemental materials that align with district and state curriculum
- Helping teachers select books and other instructional materials to meet individual literacy needs
- Maintain a book room
- Identifying needs and making recommendations for appropriate reading and writing interventions
- Coordinate inventory ordering and distribution of texts and other materials.

Data collected from the monthly coaching logs and interviews indicated that together, B.D. and M.L. spent 17.25 % of their time enacting this role in various contexts.

This was the third largest area where coaches provided their services to teachers.

Much of what was discovered about the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach in this study is confirmed by the literature. The coaching process enacted in these two schools encompassed a variety of activities as presented on a continuum by Moran (2007) from the least

intrusive to most intrusive. The least intrusive activities foster relationship building (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). These include collaborative resource management outside the classroom and when planning with teachers to build knowledge and plan instruction. During coplanning the teachers were observed working with the coach to review assessment data and help them understand instructional moves made in certain units of study. Although these are important responsibilities of the literacy coach, it has been documented that it is the roles to the far right of the continuum, those that are more intrusive like coteaching, demonstration lessons and peer coaching that get at the heart of coaching in theory.

Similarly, authors McKenna and Walpole (2008) describe a continuum approach to coaching designed by Puig and Froelich (2007) that, like Moran (2007), honors adult learning and emphasizes the need for intensive coach training before beginning to work with teachers. First year coaches, should, if possible, use their own classroom as laboratories, modeling effective practices (Puig and Froelich 2007). Coaches should also engage teachers in study groups where together they can read and share information about strategies and experiences before implementing in teachers' classrooms. Although these two coaches were found more to the left of the continuum performing "less intrusive" type coaching duties, field observations revealed that together B.D. and M.L. spent a total of .63% of their time in study groups. This prevented them from those roles described as providing access to the very personal world of teaching on a daily basis (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). An additional reason why these two coaches spent so much of their time on the "least intrusive" coaching routines was since there was no agreed upon definition of the literacy coach's role across the district, often the coaches were left to create their own schedules. Having done so, and after making commitments to teachers, it was not uncommon to find the coaches pulled away from working with teachers to complete more

administrative type tasks as described in this study. These took up the second largest percent of their time during the time of this study.

Bean (2004) has created levels of intensity for instructional coaches (2004) that share similarities to both Moran's (2007) continuum and that of Puig and Froelich (2007). Whereas, Moran refers to certain coaching roles being more or less "intrusive", Bean (2004) designates three levels of intensity; level one which she calls basic and coaches engage in these activities to develop relationships with teachers. Some of these routines include, helping teachers unpack standards, developing and providing materials for teachers, developing workshops and professional development are equivalent to Moran's (2007) collaborative resource manager role. Puig and Froelich would describe these routines as more subject oriented work with teachers and not necessarily those that would lead to "transformation" on teacher's part (Puig and Froelich, 2010, p.128). Finally Bean describes level three routines as more formal, more intense that lead to deeper conversations around instructional coaching, and also increasing student engagement and improving student achievement. These routines include modeling techniques, visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers and advocating reflective practices. Very little time was devoted to these routines by the two coaches observed for this study. As a result, several questions need to be considered regarding the effectiveness of these two coaches, which will be discussed in the implications for practice section and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings for Question #2:

What kinds of support do middle school literacy coaches have?

Results from composite narratives revealed that support for literacy coaches fell into two major categories; school-based and district-wide support. School-based supports included such things as:

- A separate location, a room of one's own, a location for coaches to meet with teachers
- Materials and supplies, a book room for library
- Autonomy to schedule professional development and to determine topics
- A shared vision of the value of the coach's work

District-wide supports included such things as:

- *Support for district sponsored initiatives-like Teacher's College Reading & Writing Project and outside consultants*
- *Professional development for coaches*
- *Funding for materials and professional development*

A third and distinct type of support was identified by P.M. Principal of FMS and identified as "coach collegiality", coaches supporting each other. Evidenced by the monthly Coaching the Coaches Sessions each month that were held for coaches to come together for their own professional development and for administrative directives and planning.

Conclusion IV: School-based and principal support is critical to the work of the literacy coach.

It is well documented that the principal is instrumental in setting the vision and tone for the role and responsibilities of the literacy coach. It is the principal of the building who

communicates to the rest of the staff the principal-teacher-literacy coach relationship as outlined in policy set by the central office (Elish-Piper et al., 2008,). Furthermore it has been established that the principal and the coach must work shoulder to shoulder with a shared vision for the school (Wren and Vallejo, 2009).

S.G. principal of SGS cited the importance of this collaboration between coach and administrator when she stated:

There's a partnership...they can share my goals for a unified plan...they can-and they certainly have a hand in shaping them...they're active participants in shaping that, you know digging into the data, their anecdotal notes, our joint-walkthroughs The goals and the unified plan come out of the informed decisions that we've been able to make...that's the partnership. There are times when we're traveling aide-by-side together speaking a common language and saying there is an area where we may be failing our teachers that directly impact the decisions we make for ongoing professional development...to respect what they see as resources and the fact that they need all the tools at their fingertips.

While a close partnership between the literacy coach and the principal is necessary for supporting the coach's work, stakeholders are cautioned that the coach should never be placed into a position of evaluation of teachers (Hasbrouck and Denton, 2005; Neufeld and Roper, 2003; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders and Supovitz, 2003; Walpole and McKenna, 2004). Too much closeness has led some to perceive the coach playing an evaluative role in their interactions with the teachers.

Conclusion V: District-wide support in the form of professional development is critical to the success of coaching efforts.

District-wide support for the two coaches in this study has been identified as coming in the form of professional development provided by the central office administration. One of the major conditions for coaching success that has been cited in the literature is ongoing professional

development and mentoring for the coaches themselves (Neufeld and Roper, 2003). In the FTPS district there are monthly meetings for all school-based coaches called “Coaching the Coaches Sessions”. The Central Office sponsors these sessions and time is granted for coaches to come together in the spirit of collegiality to share successes and challenges and brainstorm solutions to these challenges. In addition to the professional development provided by the district, M.L. coach at FMS stated that the district provided funds to attend professional development outside of the district. Without administrative support and understanding of the importance of the coach’s role, the coach may end up isolated and denied opportunities to impact teacher practice (Bean, 2004a).

Findings regarding support from both district and school-based administration are corroborated by research that has come before this study (Bean, 2004b). Coach support comes in the form of resources, materials, and a defined location. One novel finding that is noteworthy is the collegial support that both coaches experienced during their “Coaching the Coaches Sessions” which took place once per month. It established a forum for coaches to learn strategies and to share success stories as well as some of the challenges they were facing. That way, solutions could be brainstormed and discussed collegially.

Research Question #3 What are the middle school literacy coach’s challenges?

Four main challenges facing the middle school literacy coaches in both schools were identified in the composite narratives of the participants and the field observational notes. Those challenges were: teacher resistance, role ambiguity, establishing relationships and funding.

Conclusion VI: Resistant teachers present a major challenge to the middle school literacy coach

Researchers have already reported that the number one challenge to literacy coaches is the teacher's resistance to interacting with the coach (Toll, 2005; Dole and Donaldson, 2006, Elish-Piper et al., 2008). This study uncovered that the number one challenge facing the two middle school literacy coaches was resistance, or reluctance on the part of the teachers to engage with the coach. Resistance was expressed both in subtle forms and outright. For example, during the observation of a common planning meeting between M.L., the literacy coach at FMS, one of the teachers said, "if we have given you work samples already, do we have to give you more?" This was interpreted by the researcher as a form of "passive resistance" on the part of the teacher's willingness to contribute to the resource binder the coach was involving the teachers in building. At this same meeting, after the coach passed around the sign-up sheet for teachers to meet with her, not one teacher signed up. That was interpreted as a much stronger form of resistance. A similar situation occurred when B.D. SGS literacy coach was meeting with teachers to discuss reading skills and immediately one teacher declaring, "We do this already. This doesn't need to be a conversation." These provide clear examples of teacher resistance.

Although teacher resistance has been cited as the number one challenge to literacy coaches, research is surfacing that advocates that coaches begin to embrace the resistance and learn how to work with it. Reilly (2014) uses the metaphor of a rhizome from biology to explain how the coach might frame resistance as something positive and urges literacy coaches "to appreciate resistance and interruptions as critical and necessary for transformative teaching and learning." However, the author does not go on to describe how this can be done. One interesting note that deserves attention is the comment made by B.D., the Sampson G. Smith literacy coach.

When asked which was the most challenging aspect of her work, B.D. replied, “ the subculture of the school.” In probing further, she referred to not understanding what the coach’s role was but a question that this researcher asks, could she be referring to a “subculture of resistance”. This is a possible thread to follow in future research on coaching and resistance.

Conclusion VII: Role ambiguity or defining what coaching means presented a second major challenge to the literacy coach.

The literature is clear about one thing with regards to the literacy coach’s role. It is one that is at best complex, diverse and requires the coach to wear many different hats in their work (Wren and Vallejo, 2009, Bean, 2004a). As a result of the rising debate on what coaches are expected to do, concern has been raised about their effectiveness because the coach’s role is so varied (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). It becomes extremely important and reasonable then to expect the coach to take on a few different roles and responsibilities but those roles should be few, very clear, and highly prioritized (Wren and Vallejo, 2009). P.M. principal of FMS refers to challenge of role ambiguity when she stated:

There’s a disparity of what the coachwork is in each building. It seems that depending on the principal, coaches could be pulled for more administrative type work, which is not their role...The coach role itself has limitations...they have to meet with teachers, they meet with their supervisors, they meet with administration so there’s this kind of layering effect to work. Um they might have a particular viewpoint on something. It might not fall on the right ears...their perspective might not be accepted...

Conclusion VIII: Establishing relationships presents a third challenge to the literacy coach.

Establishing trust and building relationships is a critical factor in a literacy coach’s successes and ability to be effective (Bean, 2004; Shanklin 2007). More importantly building rapport and trust is a key to the coaching relationship (Learning Associates, 2004). Without trust,

the relationship will not support the changes that teachers attempt to make.

M.L. literacy coach at FMS found building relationships as most challenging. It was important for her to establish relationships with each person. When I posed the question to ML, what is the most challenging aspect of your job as a literacy coach? She replied:

It's the interpersonal work. You have to be open for growth and you have to have a relationship with like each person you're going to be working with...you have to inspire them to be open to growth...

Conclusion IX: Limited funding presents a fourth challenge to the literacy coach.

Funding was cited as a challenge for the two coaches in this study as it related to providing them with materials and resources, opportunities for professional development.

E.B. 7th grade ELA teacher at Franklin Middle was the first to address the issue of funding and availability of resources:

Would also be financial economic issues. I think of literacy as dealing with texts that are available to us. And making the choices of what's best with limited resources. Using their best judgment. I think that would be hard at times

The lack of funding has impacted the literacy coaching movement significantly. Ippolitto (2012) reported that most states that invested heavily in coaches have eliminated the positions. Unless districts that continue to support literacy coaching can work to reduce the challenges identified in this study, this researcher is not optimistic about the roles of the two coaches studied in this report.

Limitations of Study

This study was based on administrators', classroom teachers', and literacy coaches' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities as well as the supports and challenges that confront

them in their work. There were several limitations to this study. First, two of B.D.'s, literacy coach at SGS monthly coaching logs were included that were not part of the time frame of this study. Although they were part of the school year in which the study was conducted they were from two months prior to the beginning of the study. This was done to insure that an equal number of monthly coaching logs were reviewed for and analyzed. Second, field observations of coaches were limited to nonparticipant observations of only five common planning meetings over the course of this study leaving the majority of the data being collected from the semi-structured interviews and monthly coaching activity logs. Finally, since the number of participants selected to be studied was small, no generalizations can be made to other districts employing middle school literacy coaches. This narrative case-based study involved two reading coaches situated at two schools in the same district. As a result, implications have been provided for the school district in which the study took place and the school site itself. Practitioners outside the district who read this study should exercise caution and care in regard to the similarities and differences in their settings before considering the application of these implications as appropriate for their districts. In addition, the sample size of participants in this study is too small to generalize across other populations of coaches.

Implications for Practice

Several implications can be suggested from the interpretative analysis of the role of a middle school reading coach. The school and district must work together when establishing the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach. With demands of the district and principal, the coach will always be challenged to fulfill multiple roles. Once a literacy coach is employed at a school, principals' expectations may add to the complexity. Therefore, it is critical that the district and the school share in the development of the role, duties, and responsibilities of the

coach and that the final agreement on these duties must be implemented district wide to ensure continuity in how coaches work in their various school settings. The stakeholders must consider the overall objectives of the coach and establish clearly define their role to ensure they are carrying out responsibilities that will enhance teacher practice and student achievement.

As a result of inconsistencies in the descriptions of how coaches should spend their time, it is essential for districts to provide adequate training for reading coaches (Shanklin, 2010; Sturtevant, 2003). Professional development should be (a) grounded in inquiry, (b) collaborative, (c) sustained and ongoing, and (d) connected to and derived from the coaches' work. (Neufeld and Roper 2003). Coaches should be engaged in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection. If coaches are to be successful, they must have the proper training and have opportunities to collaborate with other reading coaches to learn from them as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas of research that would be beneficial to the literacy field to delve more deeply into middle school literacy coaching. Following are suggestions for four avenues of future research.

If one accepts that literacy coaching operates along a continuum of activities as identified in this study, then additional research is needed to find out which of the activities identified i.e. collaborative resource manager, administrative task manager and coplanner, result in the greatest potential for teacher change in practice and increased student achievement.

If these activities are equated with a degree of "intrusiveness" with collaborative resource manager having the least amount and co-teaching having the greatest amount, research is needed to determine the correlation between degree of "intrusively" and the coaching activity and the

impact on changing teacher practice.

Since confusion on the definition of literacy coaches continues to exist, then additional research is needed to clarify what the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach should be to achieve the desired result of a change in teacher practice and increased student achievement. Studies such as those by Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2007) and can be extended to the middle school level to determine the relationship between literacy coaching and student achievement. Longitudinal studies would be particularly important for this line of research to see the impact that coaching has over time as coaches work with content-area teachers as well.

Finally, research needs to be conducted to determine if literacy coaching at this level actually changes teachers' instructional practices. Interviews or surveys of content-area teachers would provide additional information about how and why teachers change or do not change their instructional practices, as well as what role the literacy coach has in facilitating such changes. If such studies find that teachers do not change their instructional practices as a result of working with a literacy coach, this line of research could help identify potential barriers.

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