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A Case Study of the Roles and Perceptions of Writing Coaches

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A Case Study of the Roles and Perceptions of Writing Coaches

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the three incredible people who bravely and candidly participated in this inquiry, "Tabitha," "Beatrice," and "Celeste." They are pillars of excellence both as writing instructors and as mentors to others. They truly believe in the potential of all students and teachers, and they dedicate their expertise and passion to all who are lucky enough to work with them.

I further dedicate this inquiry to all who answer the calling to be a teacher. I pray they harbor the fortitude and drive to be better each and every day, wake with a thirst for knowledge, and possess an appetite for success, so they can meet the challenges of our ever-changing world.

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something to contribute to the profession. You make the people around you feel special, so they can believe in their own potentials and realize them.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of writing coaches, a form of embedded professional development, which had the opportunity to assist teachers in deepening their pedagogical knowledge of writing instruction. Furthermore, this inquiry sought to describe middle school teachers' (N = 235) perceptions of how writing coaches may have impacted their beliefs and pedagogy with regard to writing instruction. At the time I conducted this case study, no extant literature existed to describe the roles, responsibilities, or perceptions of writing coaches, and this inquiry sought to fill that void.

In an intrinsic case study, the researcher's own interests guide the inquiry. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and archival data informed the inquiry. Furthermore, a non-experimental quantitative survey complemented the qualitative data. I analyzed qualitative data as I collected it through constant-comparative analysis beginning with open coding of individual cases, proceeding to axial coding across site cases, and finishing with selective coding across site cases, at which point I integrated relevant empirical research. I reported descriptive statistics for the non-experimental quantitative survey data.

The findings of this inquiry do not generalize to other populations, but the results of data analysis may inform future study and practice. I uncovered teachers regarded the writing coaches in this inquiry positively, but did not explicitly communicate any change in beliefs or practice with regard to writing instruction. Furthermore, I discovered although writing coaches are deemed "coaches," they spend more of their time performing responsibilities which categorize them as teachers and administrators. A posteriori data trends revealed writing coaches faced

many challenges: high-stakes testing, unclear roles and responsibilities, balance of their many roles and responsibilities, micromanagement, and inability to impact teacher practice. Lastly, I outline a model, which requires future testing under experimental conditions, to explain how the challenges writing coaches face may serve to lower their loci of control, perceptions of effectiveness, and job satisfaction.

The themes I discovered through data analysis led me to make recommendations with regard to future research and practice. This inquiry described three writing coaches' roles, responsibilities, and perceptions, but future study, both qualitative and quantitative, is needed to more fully describe and explore the phenomenon. The model I developed through qualitative data collect and analysis would require testing in inquiries with an experimental design. I recommend future research in the causal cascade to discover how the efforts of writing coaches and other academic coaches may impact teacher pedagogy and practice and eventually student learning. Furthermore, I endorse future studies into academic coaches' loci of control and challenges. Although this study sought to explore the roles, perceptions, and perceived impact of writing coaches, it truly became a study of the challenges perceived by writing coaches and the factors which may contribute to job dissatisfaction and perceived ineffectiveness. For this reason, I make specific recommendations to support writing coaches in their attempts to perform their jobs excellently

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Historical Context

On December 8, 1975, *Newsweek* published the article, "Why Johnny Can't Write," that began:

> *If your children are attending college, the chances are that when they graduate they will*
>
> *be unable to write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and*
>
> *lucidity. If they are in high school and planning to attend college, the chances are less*
>
> *than ever that they will be able to write English at the minimal college level when they*
>
> *get there. If they are not planning to attend college, their skills in writing English may not*
>
> *even qualify them for secretarial or clerical work. And if they are attending elementary*
>
> *school, they are almost certainly not being given the kind of required reading material,*
>
> *much less writing instruction, that might make it possible for them eventually to write*
>
> *comprehensible English.* (Sheils, p. 58)

Writing instruction, like other content areas such as math, science, and reading, had not escaped the climate of reform as evidenced by public demands. *Newsweek* claimed unqualified teachers, unable to write well themselves, had an overdependence on lessons that privileged creativity over grammar, structure, and style, which caused a deficit in American students' ability to write for academic purposes. It sparked an outcry from the public demanding educational reforms for the perceived "writing crisis." Subsequently, for the last quarter of the twentieth century continuing into the present, the teaching of writing developed into a concern at the forefront of

the educational establishment, as well as the nation (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Education Week, 2009; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011).

In 2003, the National Commission on Writing released *The Neglected "R,"* identifying a contradiction in which writing, apparently a means of transforming the self and the world, becomes "increasingly shortchanged" (p. 3) as students progress through school toward college. Furthermore, reports like the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated only 24% of students at the 8th and 12th grade level were deemed "proficient" in writing with over 70% deemed basic or below basic. Despite these numbers, students graduate from high school with an apparent understanding of "the basics" (Applebee & Langer, 2006), yet colleges and universities spent $1 billion to $2 billion a year on writing remediation for students who enter undergraduate programs without the skills to succeed (Jaschik, 2008); meanwhile, large corporate employers expended an estimated $3.1 billion on remedial composition courses because their employees could not write effectively (The College Board, 2004). Seemingly shocking numbers like this caused the country to ask whether the school system provides relevant, beneficial writing instruction in its secondary schools. Ultimately, politicians and the public blame K-12 educators, and this pressure forces districts and teachers to reflect on instructional decision-making.

Although some educators do an excellent job teaching writing (Applebee & Langer, 2006), keeping abreast of the changes in writing instruction over time can be a daunting task for educators. With technological changes, new workplace demands, and a shifting culture of globalization, writing today is much different than what teachers taught in the 1970's. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) published a policy brief in 2008 called *Writing Now,* which outlines and describes the complex concept of what writing in a changing world can

look like from the traditional expository essay to the complexity of hypertext. The organization's official position statement advocates for teachers to take a holistic approach to writing in which grammar instruction is not taught in isolation, but as part of a nonlinear "process model." Effective student writers often take part in iterative, reflective processes in which they shape and reshape a piece of writing many times from initial concept to publication. Students benefit from explicit instruction in the types of iterative behaviors, such as revising to better communicate the purpose of the piece to its audience, to help students monitor and modify their own writing while still actively engaged in the process of writing. Although teachers report an increased use of the process-approach to writing in their classrooms, it is unclear what teachers mean by this and how they actually implement these strategies in their classrooms, and they complain "the assessment emphasis on on-demand writing is out of alignment with curriculum and instruction that emphasizes an extended process of writing and revision" (Applebee & Langer, 2009, p.26).

Additionally, NCTE recommends writing needs to be varied, authentic, and suited to real-world purposes; however, the current proliferation of standardized tests narrow the focus of writing instruction (Murphy, 2008). Students need to have real audience awareness and the ability to shift how they write for many different purposes to be successful in this century. Furthermore, authentic writing will allow for substantial collaboration during all stages of the writing process, especially through the use of technology. NCTE argues writing assessments need to look very different from a one-time standardized assessment or high-stakes test in which students work in isolation to respond to decontextualized prompts. These types of tests, separate from instruction, provide teachers with little or no useful feedback on how to really help students improve their writing (NCTE, 2008).

Change in writing ability needs to happen as a student goes through the process of writing where teachers can give quality feedback to help guide students in the ways of thinking that will help them better construct and revise a piece (NCTE, 2008). Complicating matters, Yagelski (2012) claims many teachers and administrators do not see themselves as writers, may have attended colleges where writing was subordinate to literature and reading and still often view writing as "a procedure—and a tedious one at that" (p. 189). Where do practicing teachers turn for more support when their own experiences as students in the classroom look very different from the classroom environments now, and their colleagues may be ill-equipped to help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need for success?

My Evolution as a Writing Teacher

Within my inquiry, I shift between the first person and the third person. The first person represents the subjectivity within the research process. Ideas stated in the third person represent theoretical principles and the larger body of academic knowledge also necessary to conduct a rigorous inquiry.

I found myself asking how to best teach writing to my own students as a blossoming teacher when I realized I learned how to write largely due to Dr. Ronald (pseudonym), the professor in my undergraduate American literature course. Where do I turn to become a better writing teacher? Writing instruction was largely absent from my schooling save for the general mechanics of writing and standardized test preparation. In school, it was customary for teachers to assign a piece of writing and expect me to complete it sans direct instruction. I remember teachers passing back papers with endless red marks, mostly grammatical in nature. Some, despite the myriad of errors, found a one hundred percent scrawled in the corner. Along with the

free "A's", I passed state assessments and even a few advanced placement tests, so I thought I was a well-prepared, even a good writer by the time I reached college.

Dr. Ronald helped change all of that. He asked me to analyze literature without a decontextualized prompt forming everything around a thesis I had to imagine, and I will never forget the pit in my stomach accompanying the "C" on my first essay. The grade was unthinkable. How could I, a good writer, get a "C"? I was a straight "A" student. I hung my head low worried I would never figure out what the teacher wanted, so I could earn my coveted "A." However, instead of simple grammatical corrections or vague comments, Dr. Ronald took the time to write each student a few paragraphs explaining how the formatting of our argument was incorrect or poorly supported. I began to understand how to craft a piece rather than just write a paper, and I eventually earned an "A-" on the final essay in his course. I began to see myself as a writer, and although his notes were after-process, my reflection on this experience caused me to advocate for the process-approach to writing instruction.

As a teacher, I realized students need greater support to flourish as writers as I needed Dr. Ronald's comments while I was writing, not afterward (NCTE, 2008). They need to explore published writing and work with instructors and classmates to see models of good writing and co-craft in order to understand how a writer plans, organizes, and supports a piece depending on purpose and audience. Through personal reflection on my own experiences as a teacher and a student, participation in the local site of the National Writing Project's Summer Institute in 2009, and completion of my Master's degree in 2010, I became a better writing teacher and my students grew as writers. Consequently in this process, I became a model for other teachers at my school site, eventually earning the position of Subject Area Leader (SAL) the same year.

This role put me in contact with SALs from other district middle schools to share ideas and practices through our monthly meetings. Our position as a liaison between the district and the schools began to take on an air of support for our site-based teachers as we anticipated the pressures of new standardized testing and the increased rigor which would accompany the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Soon, we were expected to lead the language arts departments at our middle school providing localized professional development (PD) and support for teachers while still teaching six periods of language arts ourselves. The idea was good, but the execution was difficult as our one planning period offered little time to support a staff of language arts teachers in addition to planning and assessing our own instruction.

Soon, a few of my colleagues stepped into different roles where they were no longer in a classroom of their own. They had become writing coaches who had the potential to impact writing practices school-wide. I thought to myself:

> This is the answer. This is how teachers can receive on-going, professional support to hone their abilities to teach writing. If only I had this support system as a new teacher—if only my middle and high school teachers had access to a writing coach...

Professional Development in the Reform Era

I attended primary and secondary school in the 1990s and early 2000s where I took high stakes standardized tests in 8th and 10th grade; I know the pressure as both a student and a teacher.

The national perception of educational crises beginning in the late 1950s gave rise to the present era of extreme accountability for school districts and teacher preparation programs. However, the changes demanded by the public and outside reform efforts ultimately fall on the shoulders of teachers, and good teaching is dependent on those teachers on the front lines

(Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Spillane, 2000). For those already in the classroom, PD opportunities are a major means of staying abreast of current research and developments within one's field. However, there are currently a myriad of PD activities available to teachers, and with the increasing demands on the classroom teacher coupled with the demands of teachers' personal lives, teachers need to be selective in the activities in which they choose to invest their time (NCTE, November 2006).

From district to district, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to what truly constitutes continuing education in teaching (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Franke, Carpenter, Ansell, & Behrend 1998; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Saxe, Gearhart, & Nasir, 2001). Scholars generally agree successful PD connects content knowledge to practice (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al. 2001), encourages active learning strategies with teachers collaborating in professional communities (Borko, 2004; Lieberman, 1995; National Staff Development Council, 2012), is focused on the contextual needs of the participants (Guskey, 1994), and must span an appropriate amount of time for the integration of new knowledge and skills (Cohen & Hill, 2001). Recently, research on effective PD added the necessity of an ethic of care amongst participants (Flint, Kurumada, Fisher, & Zisook, 2009; Noddings, 2003).

Even if teachers participate in continuing education, PD is undergoing reform efforts of its own across all content areas (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Corcoran, Shields, & Zucker, 1998; Loef-Franke, Carpenter, Levi, & Fennema, 2001). Educational researchers now advocate for a shift from traditional in-service workshops delivered through a banking model where outside experts impart their knowledge to a passive group of participants in favor of an aspirational model of teacher inquiry where collaboration in formal and informal PD settings,

such as professional learning communities, can occur (Day & Sachs, 2004; Fichtman & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Little, 1993; Flint, Zisook, & Fisher 2011).

With the aforementioned problems of the traditional banking model or workshop approach, districts are beginning to pilot embedded forms of PD to try to capture what scholars believe about successful PD. One major form is that of the instructional coach, a form of teacher leader (Taylor, 2008). Although the literature on job-embedded coaching as a means of professional support for teachers dates back many decades, (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Showers, 1985), empirical evidence of the merits of coaching in the context of large district-wide PD initiatives has yet to catch up (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010).

The National Writing Project: PD Beyond the District

A major contribution to my identity as a writer, the National Writing Project (NWP), is an alternative to school district PD initiatives focusing on writing instruction. The NWP has shown its ability to engender sustained changes in teachers' ability to understand the practice and teaching of writing through collaborative, teacher-led inquiries into their practices (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Whitney, 2008). Since James Gray founded the organization in 1974, the NWP has held a view in line with NCTE (2008) when it comes to the teaching of writing. Both organizations propose writing should be taught as a holistic process with real-world attention to purpose and audience. However, the NWP offers a unique means of extended PD whose mission "focuses the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation's educators on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners" (NWP, 2007). The organization is available to all teachers, pre-kindergarten through university, practicing any and all content areas. By taking part in one of nearly 200 sites' Invitational Summer Institutes (ISI), teachers participate in

iterative, collaborative writing groups, take part in research, and build upon their recognized, existing expertise. Upon completion of the ISI, educational professionals enter a cadre of teacher consultants committed to sharing their knowledge with other teachers.

As a participant in the local Writing Project's ISI, I have firsthand knowledge of the transformative experience. Through individual research probing my own interests, ongoing collaboration with colleagues from all content areas and grade levels, and the support of a wonderful group of professionals, I reexamined the ways I wrote and the ways in which I taught writing. I simultaneously became an expert and a work in progress. The vision of NWP valued my current competence as a writer and writing instructor, but it also pushed me to reflect on the places I could be better. The adventure no doubt made me a better writer, but I know I became a better teacher. I also feel I have the ability to impact practicing teachers through what I know, as well as through the process of reflection and writing.

Likewise, other individuals who share in the ISI often report feeling more prepared to create, teach, and assess writing (Whitney, 2008). Furthermore, students of teachers who participate show "significant gains in writing performance" (NWP, 2007). Sadly, many teachers are unable to participate in the NWP's ISI due to a limited process of candidate selection and a month-long commitment over the summer. Therefore, they depend on the models of PD provided by their school districts with coaching models theoretically able to provide the kind of lasting partnerships considered transformative by NWP teacher consultants (Whitney, 2008).

Coaching: School Districts' Answer to Extended PD

As mentioned, districts try to replicate the kinds of ongoing, collaborative PD opportunities offered by the NWP through academic coaches who have the opportunity to interact with teachers of all content areas on a consistent basis. In an NWP Summer Institute,

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teachers work collaboratively bouncing ideas off of one another and examining their own practice to grow under the guidance of senior NWP fellows. Coaches have the opportunity to lead the teachers at their school sites in a similar fashion which is why the district in my inquiry utilizes on-site coaches.

Research into literacy coaching places a larger emphasis on coaching reading, rather than a combination of reading and writing, which make up literacy (Applebee & Langer 2009). Subsequently, academic reading coaches exist in many school districts as a fiscally prudent means of extended PD charged with implementing scientifically based reading research strategies within instruction (Al Otaiba, Hosp, & Dole, 2008; Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; International Reading Association, 2004; Sailors & Shanklin, 2010; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010). Hypothetically, these coaches have the opportunity to facilitate collaborative learning communities over an extended period of time allowing teachers a continuous resource to increase their knowledge of teaching pedagogy and content area skills and knowledge (Ippolito, 2010).

There existed a growing body of research on the nature of reading coaches' work (International Reading, 2004; Elish-Piper & L'Alier, 2010; Gross, 2010; Walpole & Blamey, 2008), as well as their effectiveness and impact (Elish-Piper & L'Alier, 2007; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010; Walpole et al., 2010). However, empirical evidence providing insight in to the work, beliefs, and impact of writing coaches was sparse (Steckel, 2009; Troia, G. A., Lin, S.C., Cohen, S. & Monroe, B. W., 2011). When professionals participate in extended PD opportunities, like the situations created by the NWP, positive changes in teaching can occur (The National Writing Project, 2007, 2008; Whitney, 2008). Similar to the extended collaboration offered by the NWP, writing coaches provided the chance for ongoing

collaboration over the course of an entire school year making the potential for teacher change greater than the traditional workshop. Studies have shown teachers who interact with literacy coaches feel more empowered to implement new reading strategies in their own practice, but not necessarily writing strategies (Ross, 1992; Sailors & Price, 2010; Steckel, 2009).

Rather than add responsibilities to its reading coaches, the district in which my inquiry took place added writing coaches to address writing instruction at school sites with the greatest need. As reading and writing are inextricably intertwined, writing coaches merited the same empirical investigation as their reading counterparts, particularly in the secondary setting with regard to their roles, beliefs, and perceived impact on teacher beliefs (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Showers & Joyce, 1996). At the time of this inquiry, no analyses centered on writing coaches, which made this study vital to understanding the roles, responsibilities, and perceived impact of writing coaches.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore an embedded form of professional development, writing coaches, which may aid teachers in developing the pedagogical skills and knowledge to develop student writers. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing instruction. Three writing coaches volunteered to take part in this exploratory inquiry.

Research Questions

The investigative nature of the inquiry was guided by the following research questions but not limited by these questions:

1. In what ways do three middle school writing coaches perceive their professional roles and responsibilities?

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2. What professional roles and responsibilities do three middle school writing coaches exhibit while working in their respective middle schools?

3. In what ways do the three writing coaches perceive their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers?

4. In what ways do middle school teachers (n = 47) perceive writing coaches impact their writing beliefs and pedagogy?

Methodology

As little extant literature on writing coaches existed at the time of this inquiry, I chose an intrinsic case study to frame the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. In an intrinsic case study, the researcher is guided by his or her own interests and does not seek to extend current theory or generalize across cases; rather he or she means to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). I analyzed data during collection through constant-comparative analysis beginning with open coding of individual cases, proceeding to axial coding across site cases, and finishing with selective coding across site cases, at which point I integrated relevant empirical research.

Theoretical Framework

As I collected and analyzed the data from observations, interviews, and documents, these theories undergirded my thinking process. This study sought to explore the perceptions of writing coaches and teachers. Therefore, I believed it needed to operate under the tenets of constructivism as defined by Yvonna Lincoln: "an interpretive stance which attends to the meaning-making activities of active agents and cognizing human beings" (as cited in Paul, 2005, p. 44). Cochran-Smith (2005), Darling-Hammond (1996), Dewey (1933), Grossman, (1990), Piaget (1954), Vygotsky (1978), and Zeichner (2005), have argued for the constructivist nature

to learning in regards to teacher education. Boreen and Niday (2000) have shown a constructivist approach to mentoring and coaching can be beneficial. Furthermore, teachers construct their knowledge based on personal experience situated within social contexts (Putnam & Borko, 2000). I believed writing coaches would interact with teachers, school personnel, and students, and any knowledge they constructed would not be done in isolation. Additionally, in PD situations, this philosophy decries the traditional "outside expert" and asks participants to be active learners who bring valuable information to the learning situation. I imagined writing coaches working with teachers as coaches who would push teachers to be reflective through conversation rather than through sit-and-get PD sessions.

Theorists believe constructivism is the foundation of learning (Piaget, 1954; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). For this inquiry, Lev Vygotsky (1978) proposed three major themes which I believed would apply to the work of a writing coach:

1. Social interaction
2. The more knowledgeable other
3. The Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky focused on the idea people do not form experiences in isolation of society. The connections between people and their situations are invaluable to the creation of shared experiences. Students play an active role in learning situations where the teacher is no longer the "sage on the stage," imparting knowledge to a passive group of learners. Learning becomes far more of a collaborative process in this light whereby both the teacher and the learner contribute to learning for all. Writing coaches existed as a part of the school climate and worked with members of the school community forming relationships with colleagues and students (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's idea of the "More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)," was important to this inquiry. This term refers to a person whom others can view as a teacher, a coach, a peer, or even some form of technology which would offer a greater understanding of a particular concept or skill. In this inquiry, teachers, administrators, and students viewed the writing coach as the MKO. Also, the "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)" (p.84), the area in which a student is able to perform a task with the support of a MKO, becomes important as Vygotsky believed it was in this zone learning occurred. I believed the writing coach could also guide teachers and students toward the ZPD.

Costa and Garmston's (2002) Theory of Cognitive Coaching, a strategy in which the district trained SALs and writing coaches in order to better support teachers at their respective school sites, also supported this inquiry. Within this theory, coaches may take on many levels of support including coaching, collaborating, consulting, and evaluating teachers. Although coaching in many settings does not usually involve evaluation, Costa and Garmston mention this as a plausible function of the coaching process.

During the processes of mentoring, peer assistance, supervision, coaching, and evaluation, much mental activity takes place. Three dimensions or maps occur within cognitive coaching: planning, reflecting, and problem-solving, and teachers constantly make decisions between these maps. Furthermore, students constantly make decisions involving planning, reflecting, and problem-solving when engaging in the writing process. Cognitive coaches can help others navigate these ways of thinking through maintaining a trusting rapport and engaging in meditative questioning. Prior to data collection and analysis, I believed this theory would be realized in coaching conversations writing coaches held with teachers regarding teaching

practices. However, writing coaches acted as cognitive coaches for students, rather than teachers as I assumed, and aided students in navigating the process of writing for the state assessment.

Significance of the Study

Since 1966 when scholars began intensively critiquing the best methods for teaching writing at the Dartmouth Conference, continuing through the reform efforts of the 1990's and into the present, student writing ability remains a national concern. Teachers face continued pressure to perform to high standards often measured solely or primarily by student achievement scores on state or national tests (A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorizing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2010). Writing continues to be measured through standardized assessments like NAEP, the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) Writes, and numerous state high-stakes tests. These assessments treat writing as something to be accomplished in one sitting, rather than as a process, but they are the standard through which student achievement and teacher ability is measured. The educational community continues to provide PD centering on reading (Al Otaiba, Hosp, & Dole, 2008; Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; International Reading Association, 2004; Sailors & Shanklin, 2010; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010), and teachers are left asking where to turn for support in the teaching of writing.

Although studies have shown reading coaches provide teachers with support needed to successfully teach reading (Dole, 2004; International Reading Association, 2004; Steckel, 2009), without this inquiry it was unknown whether writing coaches provided the type of ongoing, PD needed to help teachers become successful teachers of writing. Furthermore, without proper description and exploration, it was also unknown which strategies they advocate when coaching

teachers to teach writing. Defining what writing coaches do and what they believe can ensure

coaches communicate research-based strategies for teaching and assessing writing.

This study may also be valuable to teachers, coaches, and administrators because it

provided data regarding how to structure coaching models to guide the work of writing coaches.

The discoveries could be used to expand, modify, or create similar programs throughout the

district or even inform other districts. This can further help clarify how writing coaches allocate

their time and evaluate the fiscal decisions regarding this form of intervention. Furthermore, this

study provided useful information to other districts who may wish to implement a similar form

of embedded PD. Lastly, this study outlines the challenges writing coaches face and how these

challenges may externalize locus of control, and ultimately lead to lowered perceived

effectiveness and job satisfaction. Further study will be needed to fully understand how

challenges may impact writing coaches.

Basic Assumptions

As a former SAL in the district in which this inquiry took place, the writing coaches in

this study were colleagues, and I formed an opinion of the purpose and possible roles and

responsibilities writing coaches may have exhibited based up my collaboration with them in

professional development settings. I believed the language arts supervisor and reading supervisor

created writing coaches to support teachers in being better teachers of writing. These

assumptions led me to postulate ways in which I would have approached the roles and

responsibilities of a writing coach. Had I been a writing coach, I would have spent a good

portion of my time modeling for teachers and working directly with teachers to coach them to be

better teachers of writing. Before the inquiry, I inferred social interaction theory, the idea of an

MKO, and the zone of proximal development would influence the relationship writing coaches

had with teachers. My personal experiences in professional development settings often involved interaction with others, mentors or outside experts who helped me grapple with new skills and knowledge, and timing—in order for me to want to learn something new, I needed to perceive the need for improvement in an area and feel empowered to implement the new knowledge, skills, or techniques I learned.

Furthermore, I believed writing coaches would use the techniques involved in cognitive coaching to stimulate deeper reflection in conversations with teachers. I believed through reflective questioning, pausing, paraphrasing, and probing, coaches have the ability to help teachers more deeply reflect on their own observations. I surmised through this cycle, writing coaches have the opportunity to become an MKO and a cognitive coach by engaging in dialogue with teachers and helping them re-map their current ways of thinking to become better teachers of writing. I found some of my perceptions wrong and these theories realized differently in current practice once I began data collection and analysis. Finally, as no extant literature which studied writing coaches existed at the time of this inquiry, I believed writing coaches would be similar to literacy coaches, and I conducted my review of literature on the evolution and study of literacy coaches in order to guide this inquiry.

Limitations

The findings of this intrinsic case study apply to the participants in my study as they exist in a bounded system and therefore cannot generalize to other populations (Stake, 1995). Qualitative data analysis relies heavily on the researcher's interpretations of the data. Hermeneutics, the philosophy which advocates firmly grounding the interpretation of all text in the historical context, does play a role in the limitations of this study (Schleiermacher, 1998; however, I used a focus group interview with all participants to minimize any misconceptions in

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data analysis. Furthermore, the participants were my colleagues who may have told me what I

wanted to hear; however, the other side of this coin is since they were comfortable with me, they

offered candid responses. Additionally, any self-reported data may be ambiguous or biased. The

small sample size is not a limitation of this study in regard intrinsic case study; however, survey

response was low and possibly does not represent what teachers at the coaches' respective school

sites believe. The survey data are non-experimental, so the low response rate does not impact the

verisimilitude of the inquiry.

Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms includes words and phrases pertinent to understanding

the common language in this inquiry.

Advisor: a possible role of a writing coach in which he or she acts as a role model to demonstrate

the teaching of writing and form personal relationships with teachers he or she coaches; see

below underneath "mentor" for additional scholarly sources to further define this term. It is

uncertain whether the mentoring relationship would be one suggested by Feiman-Nemsar &

Parker (1993) as guides, educational companions, or agents of cultural change or more similar to

peer-coaching as suggested by Joyce & Showers (1982).

Beliefs: viewpoints held by individuals in which they express their opinions about a subject,

especially as it relates to opinions concerning writing and writing instruction; see also,

"perceive" and "perception" below. The definition of beliefs for this inquiry holds with Paul

(2005) who describes beliefs as "alternatives that reflect different worldviews and interests" (p.

5).

Effectiveness: a term to describe a writing coach's perceived ability to impact teacher and/or student behavior or the school climate in a manner understood as positive by administration, the coach, teachers, and/or students. Effectiveness can be defined as:

> …being mutable (composed of different criteria at different life stages), comprehensive (involving a multiplicity of dimensions), divergent (related to different constituencies), transpositive (altering relevant criteria when different levels of analyses are used), and complex (having nonparsimonious relationships among dimensions). (Cameron, 1978, p. 604)

Impact: to influence the "practice, professional knowledge, attitudes, program structure, and the field" of individuals and/or institutions (Belzer, 2003, p. 44)

Intrinsic Case Study: a particular situation located within a bounded system one seeks to explore because "one wants better understanding of this case" (Stake, 1995, p. 237). Stake further outlines the purpose is not to understand an abstract construct or build theory; however, through the process "the research may do just that" (2005, p. 237).

Mentor: synonymous with advisor; a possible role of a writing coach in which he or she acts as a role model to demonstrate the teaching of writing and form personal relationships with teachers he or she coaches; it is unclear whether the mentoring relationship would be one suggested by Feiman-Nemsar & Parker (1993) as guides, educational companions, or agents of cultural change or more similar to peer-coaching as suggested by Joyce & Showers (1982).

Middle school: a school intermediate between an elementary and a high school including students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade

Pedagogy: beliefs held by individuals concerning teaching, especially as they relates to the teaching of writing; this can be defined to include beliefs involving "classroom instruction and

interaction," including all interactions between faculty, students, and content, as well as "tasks and assignments," such as related job duties such as coaching conversations, paperwork, and administrative tasks (Grossman as cited in Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, p. 426)

Perceive: to think, feel, believe, or interpret a person, place, thing or idea with the end result in an opinion of that person, place, thing, or idea

Perception: an interpretation or opinion of a person, place, thing, or idea resultant from the way in which an individual thinks, feels, or believes; these can be seen as infinite "alternatives that reflect different worldviews and interests" (Paul, 2005, p. 5).

Professional roles and responsibilities: job duties assigned to a writing coach by administration or undertaken by the writing coach through his or her own volition; through an exploration of these roles and responsibilities, I expected to uncover the kinds of "knowledge," "skills," and "commitments" writing coaches would need to be prepared to help all teachers and students "achieve to their greatest potential" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 2-3).

Teacher: any instructor holding a temporary or professional teaching certificate employed at a school site which employs a writing coach. Writing coaches may be a factor to help teachers become "adaptive experts" who will continually seek to add to their current knowledge and skillset to guide all students toward their potentials (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Writing coach: a teacher in a non-supervisory role embedded within teacher's daily lives designed to coach other teachers toward being better teachers of writing and therefore increasing students' ability as writers; one that would engage in the idea of coaching as defined by Grant (2003): "coaching [is] a goal-directed, results-oriented, systematic process in which one person facilitates sustained change in another individual or group through fostering the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee" (p. 147).

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Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In the first chapter, I outlined the historical context and inherent problem leading to the statement of the purpose for this inquiry. I followed with an outline of the methodology I chose for this inquiry and preliminary research questions. Afterward, I briefly discussed my a priori beliefs and the theoretical framework. Lastly, I discussed potential limitations and defined terms outlined in my research questions.

Chapter 2 is a review of extant literature. With no extant literature focusing on writing coaches, Chapter 2 reviewed the development of the literacy coach, the assumed counterpart of writing coaches, and their roles and perceptions. I also reviewed teacher perceptions of literacy coaches, literacy coaches' impact on teacher behavior, difficulties coaches encounter, and professional development in writing instruction.

Chapter 3 described the methodology I used to answer the research questions. I included a description of the participants, their respective school sites, and a transparent overview of the data collection process. This chapter concluded with an overview of the methods of data analysis.

Chapter 4 included the data and analysis of the study. I wove discoveries from observations, interviews, and archival data into the analysis as I extrapolated themes. I provided descriptive information regarding the non-experimental teacher survey as well.

Chapter 5 restated the background information from the study as well as the purpose and a priori research questions. I then discussed the implications the findings of the study suggested as well as made suggestions for future research.

Summary

Increased attention to the teaching of writing has developed since the late 1950's. Student achievement in writing is tied to teacher ability, and concerns regarding teacher ability place larger scrutiny upon continuing teacher education. School districts rely on varied PD models to deliver continued instruction and support to teachers, with the goal being to utilize a model that will impact teacher behavior. Little is known about utilizing a coaching model to empower teachers to become better teachers of writing. This study provides important insights into roles and beliefs of writing coaches, what may impact the perceived effectiveness of writing coaches, and whether or not significant changes in teacher behavior may occur.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore an embedded form of professional development, writing coaches, which may aid teachers in developing the pedagogical skills and knowledge to develop student writers. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing instruction. The review of literature utilizes extant literature concerning job-embedded PD opportunities focusing on literacy and PD in writing instruction with explicit focus on inquiries involving the roles and perceptions of literacy coaches.

Review of Extant Literature

I begin this chapter by discussing the inclusion parameters and search terms for compiling the studies relevant to this review. I continue with a review of the extant literature on job-embedded literacy coaching and teacher's PD in writing instruction. I conclude each section with gaps in current research and make suggestions for further research.

Inclusion Criteria

The studies included in this review explore language arts PD and literacy coaching in K-12 settings. I determined inclusion criteria prior to the collection of relevant research articles. To begin, I applied publication criteria. I considered only studies published in a book or a refereed journal, as well as theses and dissertations. This eliminated journals not employing a peer-review process. Through this choice, I hoped to acquire studies of sound research methodology and

practice. Lastly, the studies needed to have participants in K-12 settings, as this review seeks to

determine the impact of writing coaches in secondary school settings. In a preliminary search, I

limited the studies to those taking place in secondary settings, as I will situate this inquiry in

middle school; however, I found most published studies on coaching took place in elementary

settings. Therefore, I chose to expand the publication criteria to include the full spectrum of K-12

settings.

I searched two databases, JSTOR and Google Scholar using the keywords

"PD+coaching" yielding 22 results, followed by "coaching+writing" yielding 27 results,

followed by "writing coach+ teaching" yielding 10 results, and finally "coach+PD" yielding 11

results. Following the identification of relevant studies, I conducted a bibliographic search by

examining the content of the reference lists of the relevant literature.

Secondly, I turned to ProQuest to look for relevant dissertations. After an initial search

for "writing coach" yielded over 16,000 results, I narrowed the search to include "literacy

instruction," "teacher education," and "PD," and limited my search to secondary settings. I chose

to limit the dissertations in this review to secondary settings as my study will take place in

middle school, and unlike published journal articles, there was an abundance of studies on

literacy coaching at the secondary level.

No articles, books, dissertations, or theses collected for this review specifically explored

the idea of a writing coach; rather, researchers use the terms literacy coach or reading coach

when referring to models of job-embedded coaching designed to coach teachers in language arts

and literacy practices in K-12 settings.

The Evolution of the Literacy Coach

The idea of improving PD and in-service programs through coaching developed before researchers studied it in depth. Much of the early literature on coaching stemmed from experiential retellings of classroom practices. Joyce and Showers (1981, 1982) are often credited with being the first researchers to empirically explore coaching, calling their model "peer coaching." They first completed a meta-analysis of the extant literature on PD at the time (1980) examining over 200 studies to look at how the different components of the training processes influenced teaching practice. After analysis, they posited coaches were a substantial factor in PD. As peers, coaches could provide feedback through collaborative conversations geared to guide the involved parties in introspection to modify instruction and meet students' needs. They found coaching facilitated the learning of new skills, as well as the augmentation of a teacher's current skill set (1981, 1982). Consistently over time, Joyce and Showers (1995, 1996) found teachers involved in coaching conversations practiced new skills more consistently and applied them with greater accuracy than teachers who practiced alone. Furthermore, these studies began to examine not only how teachers best acquire new skills, but also how they integrate them into their current repertoire of classroom practices. Subsequent qualitative studies showed verbal feedback became the primary method through which coaches could help teachers improve (Costa & Garmston, 2002, Kent, 1985; Neubert & Bratton, 1987; Rogers, 1987).

Sparks & Horsley (1989) described coaching as one of the main forms of PD calling it observation/assessment, yet at this time, many teachers were uncomfortable participating as they perceived it to be evaluative in nature. They turned instead to traditional banking models and individual guided staff development. However, coaching did not become widely utilized in language arts and reading classrooms until reform efforts of the late 1990's culminating with No

Child Left Behind (2001). The national legislation's renewed focus on reading and mathematics called for interventions within classrooms creating new roles for teachers and professionals.

Literacy coaches evolved from the idea of reading specialist, an early position designed to intervene directly with struggling readers; however, coaching soon emerged as a primary function of the reading specialist (Dole, 2004). Vogt and Shearer (2003) began describing the roles of reading specialists through qualitative inquiry. They outlined the pre-, during, and post phases of collaborating with teachers. Originally designed as clinical supervisors, Vogt and Shearer found through peer coaching and cognitive coaching, reading specialists could guide teachers to be self-reflective. They would encourage development rather than provide evaluation. This study is important because it showed cognitive coaching could stimulate reflection about the process of teaching and it began the transition from reading specialist to reading coach.

Symonds (2003) also described coaches as an effective method of district wide PD in models apart from the traditional reading specialist role. In the three districts in her study, reading specialists worked with groups of teachers, observing classrooms, demonstrating lessons, connecting teacher behavior to student achievement, and providing PD to the staff. This descriptive study also showcased coaching as it began to emerge from these interactions.

As practicing teachers, soon known as reading specialists, began engaging more and more with other teachers, the relationship evolved into literacy coaching (Cassidy, Garrett, Maxfield, & Patchett, 2010). They spent less time working directly with struggling students in their own classrooms and more time providing on-going support to colleagues. The new role required exploration to describe the responsibilities and perceptions of the new professionals.

Currently, it is unknown whether writing coaches underwent the same kind of evolution as literacy coaches. This inquiry is designed to investigate their roles and duties within a school,

but it may uncover the history which led to their implementation. The next section focuses on exploring the roles and perceptions of literacy coaches in the extant literature.

The Roles and Perceptions of Literacy Coaches

Poglinco and colleagues (2003) in a funded study through the Consortium for Policy Research in Education explored the roles of coaches in America's Choice schools in grades K-8 relating to the implementation of readers' and writers' workshops. Utilizing a qualitative method of observations and interviews in 27 elementary and middle schools, they looked at both defining the role of coaches in America's choice schools, as well as exploring the fidelity of executing reading and writing workshops. They uncovered a common problem in the role of a literacy coach, in that "there does not appear to be one 'official' written job description for coaches that is shared by all America's Choice schools" (Poglinco et al., 2003, p. 9). This led to many coaches learning their roles through experience and traditional PD methods. Also, although both coaches and principals in the study perceived placing a coach in an administrative role would undermine the coaching process, they were in an informally evaluative role when providing feedback to teachers. Furthermore, the rollout of the reading and writing workshop initiatives were not the same across sites. The researchers concluded the work of the coaches influenced the teachers implementing the standards-based strategies and made recommendations to further study the contexts which influence the ability of coaches to fulfill standards-based reform efforts.

Marsh, Sloan McCombs, and Martorell (2010) conducted a statewide examination of Florida middle-school reading coaches utilizing a purposive sample from eight of the largest school districts. They sought answers to three research questions: What are the characteristics and "quality" of coaches in Florida middle schools? What policies and practices do districts and schools use to support high quality coaches? To what extent are indicators of coaching quality

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related to teacher and student outcomes? In a study informed by both quantitative and qualitative data, they combined survey research with case studies involving interviews, observations/shadowing, and focus groups. They found most coaches held the required reading state certifications and were rated highly by principals and teachers with whom they worked. Model estimates suggested significant ($p < .05$) associations with perceived improvement in teaching and higher student achievement as a coach's experience knowledge and skills increased. The discoveries of this study suggest students performed better on assessments and teachers perceived greater gains in their own skills when two coach qualities increased: amount of education and time spent as a coach. Coaches with more experience and higher degrees were linked with greater student achievement and an increase in teacher perceptions of their own growth. However, again this study found there is little attention given to what defines effective coaching and how coaches gain the skills and knowledge needed to be effective in their roles.

Smith (2007) completed a dissertation using a multiple case study design as a participant observer to answer two questions regarding middle school literacy coaches: What roles do middle school literacy coaches play in different school settings? In what ways do contextual factors, and coaches themselves, affect these roles? Three coaches were the focus of his study, two who coached at one middle school each, and one in a more rural area who was a shared coach among seven middle schools. Smith used three week-long observations/shadowing sessions, interviews, and coaches' written reflections to develop composite biographies of each coach. Roles generally fell into two categories, classroom instruction or school-related. School contexts, such as organizational factors, school and class climates, and principal/coach relationships influenced the work of coaches. Two important findings emerging from this study involved the idea of a fragmented coaching process interrupted by district and school mandates

as coaches' time was pulled in multiple directions and coaching methods which only partially align with teacher's professional knowledge. Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio (2007) similarly found the role of literacy coaches differed from school to school, whereas Bean and Zigmond (2006) reported coaches were pulled in so many different directions, they spent less than three hours a week fulfilling the classroom instruction-related duties, such as observing, modeling, and co-teaching. These qualitative inquiries point out a very real dilemma when defining the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches. Different schools and districts have different needs and challenges, which can change the roles coaches play on even a daily basis.

Another dissertation (Boulware, 2007) examined the demographics of Florida literacy coaches, their perceptions of what factors influenced positive student change on FCAT reading, and the relationship between time spent on literacy coach activities and the mean change in high school students making FCAT reading achievement gains. This study combined descriptive data in multi-level case studies, including survey and interview data, and regression analyses. Most literacy coaches were white women with teaching backgrounds in reading or language arts and had varied experience and training, most having taught more than ten years. Boulware suggests the regression analyses demonstrated "slightly observable descriptive patterns that hinted at relationships," (p. 67) but the complex causal cascade cannot be explained through multiple regression. Furthermore, this study was limited to self-reported survey data and interview information. However, he also found support systems integral to the success of a literacy coaches which could combat frustrations like having a lack of time, teacher apathy, and overwhelming responsibilities. For her dissertation, Wilson (2011) sought to understand the roles and responsibilities in the decision-making process of a literacy coach, as well as the influence of his or her decisions, in a secondary setting. This qualitative case study utilized purposeful sampling

to select secondary schools implementing a coaching model with literacy coaches. On-site, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with coaches and teachers and field observations comprised the data. As a result of data analysis, Wilson believes coaches use data collection and analysis to inform instruction, training by coaches helps teachers acquire new knowledge to help struggling readers, and coaching improves teacher responsiveness and student engagement. If principals help support a positive coaching environment, the collaborative atmosphere can help coaches build trust and rapport with the faculty increasing the opportunities for growth. Since coaches operate within the parameters set by administration, the attitude and support from principals and district leaders can greatly impact the roles, responsibilities, and possible achievements of coaches.

Lilly (2012) examined the role of the literacy coach with respect to the learning orientations of four secondary content area teachers in his dissertation. He hoped to discover why teachers sought out literacy coaches, how literacy coaches responded to teacher needs, and how teachers demonstrated changes in their learning orientations as a result of these interactions through systematic grounded theory design. He analyzed investigative interview and coaching logs through constant comparison, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding and uncovered the importance of breaking down the isolationist barriers of high school departments depended on the level of trust between coach and coachee. This could lead to changes in teachers' knowledge of literacy vocabulary, educational theory, practice, and skill, as well as teachers' perceptions about literacy.

Currently, literacy coaches take on many roles from mentor to evaluator and from confidant to critic. Their varied roles and responsibilities change from district to district and from school to school. With the ultimate goal of impacting student achievement through enhancing

teacher knowledge, the exploration of literacy coaches themselves begins the causal cascade. Writing coaches may possess some of the same professional responsibilities as their literacy counterparts. Whether they work with students, teachers, or both is currently unknown. It is imperative research explores the roles of writing coaches to see how they may impact practicing teachers and student achievement. The remainder of this literature review will look at how literacy coaches impact teachers.

Teacher Perceptions of Literacy Coaches

Only one study looked specifically into how teachers perceived literacy coaches. Steckel (2009) studied urban literacy coaches at the elementary school level. Teachers viewed the most successful coaches as excellent teachers themselves who could model methods of teaching that led to student improvement in their own classrooms. Also, these coaches could stimulate reflective thinking allowing the teachers being coached to change their behavior from within. Again, this study took place at the elementary level, showcasing how research into literacy coaching lacks focus on secondary students. However, this study is important as it relates directly back to the qualities teachers believe coaches need to possess in order to be perceived as successful. Interview questions from this inquiry helped inform the questions for the focus groups and individual interviews with writing coaches.

Literacy Coaches' Impact on Teacher Behavior

Early examinations of coaching as it influenced teacher behavior were limited to classroom accounts. Johnston and Wilder (1992) reported on a peer coaching model in which English Language Arts (ELA) teachers came together to discuss shared concerns. Through working with their peers, they thought the teachers involved were more successful in implementing a new reading and writing program. Although these firsthand accounts serve to

inspire others to change, research was necessary to confirm whether or not literacy coaches can impact teacher behavior positively.

Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, and Grogan (2006) studied the Literacy Specialist Project (LSP) in Ohio schools. They focused on the schools' literacy specialists and the teachers with whom they were working. Vignettes of conversations showed how reflection on teaching could be accomplished through coaching conversations. They also advocate for the following design principles in the literacy project: (a) "High-quality PD directly connects to student learning goals that are clear and accepted by all." (b) "PD involves active learning for teachers." (c) "PD is embedded in the context of work in schools and classrooms." (d) "PD is continuous and ongoing." (e) "PD is based on an ongoing and focused inquiry related to teacher learning, student learning, and what we know about good instruction." (f) "Coherence is evident in all aspects of the PD system" (pp. 427-430).

In a longitudinal study of a yearlong PD program involving literacy coaching for 6th and 9th grade teachers, Cantrell and Hughes (2008), examined teachers' efficacy for teaching literacy and collective efficacy. Paired sample t-test analyses of pre and post efficacy survey revealed higher teacher efficacy resulted in greater implementation of literacy strategies learned through PD. These findings were further supported by qualitative data from observations and interviews. A major limitation of this study was the group of teachers was not compared to a control group, so the growth of teacher efficacy cannot solely be attributed to the coaching component of the PD.

As part of a larger study describing how and why literacy coaches negotiate varied identities in order to be beneficial to the teachers and schools they serve, Rainville and Jones (2008) studied power and positioning between literacy coaches and classroom teachers in a K-5

setting. Qualitative data in the form of interviews, observations, video-recorded observations, field notes, and artifact collection highlight the importance of coaches' relationships with teachers in order to engender the productive conversations that can lead to teachers examining and improving their practice.

In a study of K-3 teachers in 24 diverse schools employing the Minnesota Reading 1st PD Program, Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) conducted a similar qualitative study. The researchers shadowed eight coaches for six to eight hours taking detailed notes and transcribing conversation when possible. They found the coaches utilized the district's protocols when conducting classroom observations. Through collaborative conversations, they were able to build connections with the teachers whom they were coaching using data from the observations to give concrete examples of where teachers could improve. Also, they asked questions prompting the teachers to be more self-reflective, rather than simply telling teachers what they should do next.

In a subsequent study of the America's Choice model of Literacy Workshop in elementary settings, Hoffman (2009) reiterated teachers value the role of the literacy coach as a knowledgeable, supportive, individual who is available to help when needed. However, factors supporting changes in teachers' self-efficacy were intrinsic rather than extrinsic. For example, a teacher's desire to seek out colleagues, take risks, self-reflect, and create social change were greater predictors of higher self-efficacy. These findings were based on self-reported survey data, as well as qualitative interviews, focus groups, and observations.

In another study involving an elementary school setting, Belcastro (2009) utilized a descriptive case study to look at the nature of talk a literacy coach used to guide coaching conversations with three kindergarten teachers. The study found the coach was very intentional

when choosing language dependent on the person with whom she was conversing. Content knowledge, listening ability, and skillful questioning allowed her to have great success during these coaching conversations. Again, the coach's education was important in her perceived success. Furthermore, this dissertation highlighted the importance of establishing relationships between the coach and teachers, as well as the teachers' willingness to be coached.

Quantitative studies began to explore the impact of literacy coaching; however, qualitative or mixed-methods studies continue to dominate the extant literature. Sailors and Price (2010) use a random effects pretest-posttest comparison group design and multi-level modeling to explore whether a two-day PD workshop or the same workshop with the added support of on-going coaching will lead to increased intentional comprehension instruction by teachers, and subsequent increase in the reading achievement of low-income students. They found statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) and large effect (Cohen's $d = .64$) favoring the group with coaching when exploring teachers' opportunities to engage in cognitive reading strategies. Similarly, when looking at constructed explanations, they found significant differences ($p < .05$) and large effects (Cohen's $d = .78$) favoring the coaching group. In regard to their second research question regarding student achievement, students whose teachers received coaching scored on average 11.27 points higher than students whose teachers did not. Although their models cannot account for all group differences, the findings suggest coaching supported teachers in the implementation of cognitive reading strategies.

Similarly, Matsumura and colleagues (2009) sought to investigate the implementation and effect of a coaching program on instruction and learning. The purpose of the coaching program was to first give the coaches the skills and knowledge they would need to be literacy coaches before sending them into schools as coaches and also to improve the organizational

structure of schools and districts to support effective coaching. This study had participating

schools randomly assigned to the coaching program or the district's existing PD resources.

Teachers at each site completed baseline and post-surveys, and they were also observed

throughout the year teaching a reading comprehension lesson. The researchers assessed student

achievement through two standardized assessments. Regression analyses, repeated measures

analyses of variance, and HLM analyses produced the following findings: teachers participating

in the experimental setting increased their participation in literacy coaching over teachers at

control settings, and schools' social resources, specifically principals' leadership, influenced the

frequency and types of coaching, as well as the teachers' perceived usefulness of coaching. One

surprising finding was schools that had a previous strong sense of collaboration participated less

frequently in coaching, as coaches had a more difficult time becoming a part of the existing

relationships. Recent quantitative and qualitative longitudinal studies explore the impact literacy

coaching may have over time. Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) conducted a multicohort

quasi-experimental study as a district implemented a coaching model over time in grades K-2.

Able to follow children through the grade levels as the schools implemented the coaching with a

value-added model, they found 16% larger gains in student achievement for children

participating in schools with coaches, rising to 28% in year two, and 32% in year three. Attebury

and Bryk (2011) conducted a four-year longitudinal study, using descriptive data and

hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to explore teachers' willingness to participate in coaching

sessions. Although a limitation of this study was the small sample size for HLM, they found

teachers' own conception of their role, their willingness to engage in innovation, and their prior

PD experiences greatly predicted the number of coaching sessions in which they engaged. At the

school level, school size greatly predicted the number of coaching sessions that took place by

each teacher, as logic would state the more teachers for which a coach is responsible, the more the coach's time must be divided among each teacher. Despite this finding, average coaches interacted with 80-90% of teachers with each teacher participating in 0.79 one-on-one coaching sessions per month. Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, and Boatright (2010) conducted another longitudinal study exploring what junior high literacy coaches learn in the context of district initiated reform and what policies and organizational structures districts have in place to support them. They hypothesized coaches are also learners and discovered problems in the learning trajectories of coaches through their case study. They utilized the Vygotsky space as the lens through which to analyze the qualitative data, finding coaches are often unsupported as they try to coach teachers. Who then can coach the coach?

Dugan (2010) sought to determine the effectiveness of coaches as perceived by administrators, teachers, and the coaches themselves, and to understand the factors that contributed to this effectiveness in her dissertation. Fifty-four administrators, 242 teachers, and 191 coaches took part in the Literacy Coach Perceived Effectiveness Scale, a survey developed to measure perceptions of effectiveness. The teachers rated the effectiveness of coaches significantly lower (score of 42) than administrators (score of 50.6) or the coaches themselves (score of 52.2). Findings from the study suggest years of coaching experience and university-level training in topics related to literacy coaching were very important to the perceived effectiveness of the coaches.

Elder and Padover (2011) examined a peer coaching program with 7 coaches and 18 coaches in a private school setting in Pennsylvania through an action research design in order to decide how the program could be integrated with a continual improvement cycle. This coaching program operated on various philosophies including Costa and Garmston's (1993) Cognitive

Coaching Model, Masterful Coaching (Hargrove, 2008), and The Blended Coaching model developed at the New Teacher Center at Santa Cruz, California. Electronic surveys assessed the effectiveness of the program using a four-point Likert scale ranking and open-ended questions. Surprisingly, although the coaches believed time spent coaching was not appropriate, both coaches and coaches would recommend coaching to colleagues. Coachees thought they saw an improvement in their teaching, and coaches also perceived they learned more about their own teaching practices through this process. Overall, both groups thought the experience improved teaching and would appreciate more time for coaches to observe teachers and provide feedback.

The relationship between teachers and coaches is complex. Power and positioning, personality, and perception all play into how literacy coaches can impact practicing teachers. However, research evidences positive impact on teacher behavior through coaching. The next step in the causal cascade is to impact students, one further step removed from literacy coaches. The studies in this section seem to indicate coaches can positively impact teachers. The study methods and findings influenced the design of this inquiry.

Difficulties Coaches Encounter

An important synthesis of research by Snow, Ippolitto, and Schwartz (2006) focused on the difficulties encountered by literacy coaches at the middle and high school level. In the middle and high setting, literacy coaches are often working with larger faculties increasingly isolated within their own classrooms and content-area departments. The teachers they work with may not feel a part of any one department and may feel hesitant about collaborating with peers. However, they also found many literacy coaches work only with teachers and only indirectly with students.

Gibson (2006) did a qualitative verbal analysis of transcribed sessions with four literacy coach/teacher dyads at the K-2 level. She used grounded theory to look at the co-constructed

coaching conversations and how literacy coaches went about furthering their own expertise. She revealed challenges in the coach's maintenance of an expert stance, a factor important to the coaching process, which is honed through experience and reflection on the part of the coach.

Burkins and Ritchie (2007) also explored challenges faced by literacy coaches in the pre-observation, observation, post-observation coaching cycle. Through qualitative analysis of transcribed coaching cycles, they found coaches' own perceptions of success/failure, clarity of language, and external factors influenced teachers' decisions to implement new ideas. Furthermore the need for mutual trust between coach and teacher played into teachers' ability to get past wishing to hear what they themselves wanted to hear, rather than more specific, constructive teaching points to push them forward in their ability as instructors. Since the coaches in this study encountered numerous challenges in dialogues with teachers, Burkins and Ritchie propose the need for further PD on behalf of the coaches themselves.

Summary of the Literacy Coach

This section begins an examination of early coaching literature and the evolution from a reading specialist to a literacy coach. Early qualitative studies explore and define the roles, responsibilities, challenges, and relationships of literacy coaches leading toward quantitative studies seeking to divine the effectiveness and impact of literacy coaches on teacher behavior and student learning.

There are few researchers who try to fully connect the causal cascade from coach to teacher to students, perhaps because the relationship is convoluted. However, all of the studies in this literature review focus on literacy as defined by the teaching of reading. Why is it that literacy, a supposed marriage of reading and writing, still leans more heavily toward reading?

Next, this review focuses on PD within writing to begin to understand why research overlooks PD in writing.

Professional Development in Writing Instruction

The transformation of how teachers teach writing through the decades is paramount to a discussion of teacher PD in writing. Until the 1970's when James Gray founded the National Writing Project, little attention was paid to the process of writing. Past instruction relayed a skill-set in which attention to grammatical structure superseded the underlying mental processes which accompany the planning, drafting, revising, and editing of a piece of writing (Rose, 1997). Writing was something one could build if he or she knew how to form letters, acquire vocabulary, diagram sentences, understand grammar, and put this into paragraphs. As research showed (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983), these practices did not transfer into creating the proficient products on which they focused.

The National Writing Project advanced the idea that real-world purpose and audience could engage students in the process of writing, inside of which grammar and vocabulary could be learned through intentional noticing of syntax and diction. In this model, the idea of recursiveness within the writing process emerged (Shaughnessy, 1977). Blossoming writers would often make mistakes they had seemingly mastered beforehand only because they attempted more complex writing techniques in the cycles of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. By traveling back and forth between these phases, a piece of writing is only done when the writing finally achieves the purpose for the specific audience for whom it is meant. It is generally agreed that the process approach to teaching writing is preferred (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983; Hillocks, 1995; Moffett & Wagner, 1992).

However, few studies examine PD opportunities designed to help teachers be better teachers of writing. In her dissertation, Brutsman (2006) looked at how a district-wide PD course would help beginning teachers become proficient in instructing the Six Traits of Writing. Her case studies shed light on how teacher participation in the course led to implementation of material, artifacts, and practices learned. She found three themes were either arbitrary or consistent including whether or not teachers routinely implemented new teaching practices, missed opportunities to use artifacts acquired from the course, and organizational alignment. Of the five beginning teachers involved, only one successfully implemented the curriculum learned in the PD experience which she stressed would impact what students across the district would learn and require beginning teachers to have mentors who can demonstrate successful implementation of writing strategies.

Holman (2010) conducted a two-part study for her dissertation to examine how teacher perceptions, attitudes and behavior changed with the support of an intervention coach and whether or not the use of the intervention coach improved the writing of first grade students. She used non-experimental pre and post teacher surveys to assess perceptions, attitudes, and behavior coupled with a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group and intervention group to look at the impact of an intervention coach on student data. The intervention coach worked with the teacher and students in the intervention group over a period of ten weeks. Students completed a pre- and post-writing assessment graded with an Arkansas first-grade writing rubric. Findings from the qualitative data indicated the use of an intervention coach had positive results on the teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and behavior. Holman also claimed to show statistically significant results ($p < .01$) from t-tests with independent groups when comparing the pre- and post- writing assessment data, although a major limitation of this study is the small number of

participants (N=88) with the researcher in the role of the intervention coach. Also, this study does not look into the other possible factors which may impact the writing development of first grade students. English language arts teachers have the opportunity to participate in the National Writing Project, long known for its contribution to PD in writing. The few studies I found examining the impact of the National Writing Project on teacher practice and student achievement were commissioned by the organization themselves. Both showed that systemic, ongoing PD opportunities within the context of a community of practice led to life-changing practice as teacher, a greater sense of self-efficacy, and the development of teacher-leaders in the field (The National Writing Project, 2007, 2008).

Holmes examined how the Virginia Writing Project's Summer Institute, a site for the National Writing Project, influenced the PD of 11 teachers in her qualitative dissertation not only for the summer, but for a period of 20 months (2009). She sought to answer five questions: What were participants' perceptions of the PD experience? What influences did the writing project have on teachers' classroom practices? To what extent did participants perceive the Summer Institute program as a fitting form of PD? What did teachers believe were the factors of PD that would be useful to people who design PD experiences? What was the perceived enthusiasm participants showed toward writing project PD? After analyzing data, which included application essays, focus group interview transcripts, individual interview transcripts, artifacts, teachers' final Summer Institute Reflection, and an e-anthology posting, she found this experience was effective for some, but not all of the participants. Although it was a quality experience and all teachers perceived it contributed to their learning, six elements influenced how positive the participants perceived the experience. These included: time spent in PD activities, feelings of increased intellectual growth, emotional involvement, leader participant

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relationships, peer teaching and leadership opportunities, and networking through planned continuity activities. The higher they rated these categories, the more they found the experience appropriate.

Recent reforms in PD situate the learning experience within a community of practice where PD is made stronger when teachers come together to learn about a shared concern. Learning is a two-way street where new knowledge following multiple trajectories shapes the learning of the individual, which in turn shapes the knowledge of the greater community (Campbell, Verenikina, & Herrington, 2009). Studies have shown positive effects on learning when teachers are working together (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Fernandez, 2002). Teachers in these studies cited the additional support of peers and mentors through collaboration, discussion, coaching, and observation made it easier to implement the PD activities into their practice. However, limited research concerning PD in the teaching of writing exists.

Summary of Professional Development in Writing Instruction

Greater attention to the role of PD in teachers' workplaces, especially concerning the teaching of writing is necessary (Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009). A focus on the concrete practices of everyday teaching in collaboration with colleagues forms a huge, on-going part of PD, which requires further investigation and reflection. The study of writing coaches is necessary to fill the void in the extant literature. Most studies in this review are grounded in qualitative methodology.   More recent quantitative studies of literacy coaches followed the qualitative studies, which were exploratory in nature. Nearly all studies of literacy coaching took place in elementary settings with only one study (Smith, 2006) looking at middle school literacy coaches through a qualitative case study design. More research is needed into the full causal cascade surrounding literacy coaching, especially as it pertains to the impact of literacy coaching

on teachers and on student achievement. Measures to look into student achievement need to involve writing, not just reading comprehension and fluency. More so, further research into literacy coaching in secondary schools is needed, as there is a paucity of research, qualitative or quantitative, in those settings. More studies over time are necessary to fully gauge the impact of coaching; however, the majority of these large-scale studies are funded studies in which districts invest a significant amount of money into the implementation of literacy coaches. When the budget is tied to the success of a program, the perceived success of that program may be inflated. This intrinsic case study begins to explore an embedded form of professional development which may aid teachers in developing the pedagogical skills and knowledge to develop student writers.

Summary of Literature Review

With regard to literacy coaches, this review illuminated the development of literacy coaches from reading resource teachers and intervention specialists who worked primarily with struggling students (Dole, 2004; Vogt & Shearer, 2003) to reading and literacy coaches who worked with teachers (Cassidy et al., 2010). Currently, there is no single definition of literacy coaches as their roles and responsibilities take many forms and change dependent upon the contextual needs, and this led me to believe I may see a similar pattern across cases in regard to the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches. I also wondered whether I would see writing coaches working solely with teachers, or would they work with students, as the precursors to literacy coaches did?

Qualitative research seemed to indicate teachers believed literacy coaches positively influenced classroom practices (Johnston & Wilder, 1992) and perceived coaching conversations could lead to greater examination of one's practice (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Rainville & Jones, 2008). This inquiry hoped to gain a preliminary understanding of how teachers viewed writing

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coaches as the overarching goal was to explore the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches to first better understand the position before exploring the possible impact this position could have on teachers and/or students. This literature informed the non-experimental survey.

Research into the perceived effectiveness of literacy coaches is scarce, while research into writing coaches is non-existent. Current studies focus on qualitative methods as the exploration of this phenomenon is in its infancy. Furthermore, although these studies take place in secondary settings, all studies fail to focus solely on middle school sites. It is clear from this review of literature, inquiries such as this one are necessary to fully understand the roles, responsibilities, and perceived effectiveness of middle school writing coaches.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore writing coaches, an embedded form of professional development, which may aid teachers in developing the pedagogical skills and knowledge to promote student writers. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing instruction. The review of literature produced no extant studies focused on the roles, responsibilities, or perceptions of writing coaches. A qualitative intrinsic case study informed by non-experimental quantitative data is most appropriate because there was no empirical evidence to describe writing coaches in the K-12 setting (Patton, 2002). Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the data-collection instruments and data analysis methods I employed to investigate the beliefs and roles of writing coaches.

Intrinsic Case Study

Logical positivism as the primary philosophy of inquiry dissolved around 1950 and qualitative inquiries began to gain merit in academia. In the late 1960s, Glaser and Strauss (1967) pioneered grounded theory to bridge qualitative data collection with quantitative data analysis. Yin (1984/2003) further forged a path for the rigorous use of case study as a means to generate knowledge. Current use of case study celebrates rich information, uniqueness of cases, and pragmatic use of information (Patton, 2005). Stake (1995) describes intrinsic case study as that which seeks to gain a better understanding of individual(s) in a bounded system for all their

"peculiarities and ordinaries" (p. 237). I envisioned this intrinsic case study of writing coaches because these people were my colleagues, and I was interested in what they did for teachers and students. After I conducted a review of the literature, I realized current research focused on reading or literacy coaches with nothing focused solely on writing coaches. I chose an intrinsic case study design bounded within one school district (Creswell, 2007). Stake (2000), stated:

> Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied…We could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods—but we concentrate at least for the time being, on the case. (p. 435)

It is important to note other researchers, such as Robert Yin (2003), stress the method in conjunction with defined cases, but I designed this study with Stake's above definition in mine. This study combines qualitative and quantitative data to explore the perceptions of three individual writing coaches in regard to their roles, responsibilities, and perceived effectiveness, as well as teacher perceptions of writing coaches. I wanted to study each writing coach's personal view of reality and look to see if their perceptions were similar. The analysis began at the individual level with each writing coach located at a separate middle school site. Then, I conducted a cross-case pattern of analysis. Furthermore, I was interested in teachers' perceptions of writing coaches, so I piloted, refined, and provided an electronic survey to all teachers at the coaches' school sites.

Over time, critics have denounced the work of intrinsic case studies as preliminary to generalizable studies, and I agree; however, the foundation of a good study needs to rest upon some sort of solid understanding and generalization should not be emphasized in all research (Campbell, 1975; Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Simmons, 1980; Stake, 1995). In response to

Stake (1995) classifying his work, *God's Choice*, as an intrinsic case study, Peshkin noted, "I

mean to present my case so that it can be read with interest in the case itself, but I always have

another agenda—to learn from the case about some class of things. Some of what that will be

remains an emergent matter for a long time" (as cited in Stake, 1995, p. 238). I, like Peshkin,

have an agenda. I am interested in writing coaches and what they do, and more so, I want to find

ways in which teachers can help guide students to be better writers. However, I also learned a

dissertation is not the place to conduct you life's work. At the same time, I wanted this

dissertation to act as a compass hinting at where to go next. For that reason, I included both

defined a priori research questions as well as the opportunity to explore.

Additionally, although this study is primarily a qualitative study, there is a portion

informed by non-experimental survey data and statistical data. I recognized the need for

descriptive statistics to describe the teachers' perceptions of writing coaches. This study was

primarily a study of the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of three writing coaches;

however, as I was led by my own interests in the intrinsic case, I wanted to explore the teachers'

preliminary beliefs regarding writing coaches, and the most effective means to garner this data

were in the form of a non-experimental electronic survey. Similarly, I report statistical data in

regard to my observations of in what ways writing coaches allocate their time compared with

how writing coaches themselves recorded how they spent their time. The mixed-methods portion

of this study is small, but necessary to more fully understand this case.

Research Questions

 I chose the following questions to guide, but not limit, the inquiry:

1. In what ways do three middle school writing coaches perceive their professional roles

   and responsibilities?

2. What professional roles and responsibilities do three middle school writing coaches exhibit while working in their respective middle schools?

3. In what ways do the three writing coaches perceive their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers?

4. In what ways do middle school teachers ($n = 47$) perceive writing coaches impact their writing beliefs and pedagogy?

Sites

I selected the sites in this inquiry from a large urban district in the Southeast. At the time of the study, 44 middle schools existed in the district, sixteen of which employed a writing coach. The students at these sites consistently failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and were not proficient on the state-wide assessment utilized to measure student writing proficiency. In order to be considered proficient, a child must receive a score of 4.0 or higher on a zero to six point scale. Each site received Title-I funding because a high number of the student population was considered economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, the school sites in this inquiry recently underwent a drop in the state's "A" through "F" rating scale in overall site scores. Although three schools participated in the inquiry, all locations employing a writing coach had the option of taking place in the study pending participant consent.

Middle school, adolescent literacy, and middle school writers had not received much attention, compared with elementary or high school, although these critical years are where students learn the skills and dispositions to be successful in high school and beyond (Blanton, Wood, & Taylor, 2007; Burns, 2008; Nichols, Rickelman, Young, & Rupley, 2008). Although adolescents are always growing and changing, middle school is a pivotal experience for learners.

In elementary school, students learn the mechanics of how to read and write, but it is in the middle where students are now conversely asked to use their knowledge of reading and writing for learning across all content areas. All site names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Site A

The community considered Site A to be a rural school on the outskirts of the district. It was the largest of the sites in the study with almost 1500 students and 107 faculty and staff. The percentage of teaching staff considered highly qualified was 89.75%. Approximately 65% of the student population was Hispanic, 25% was White, and 7% was Black. According to the state, only 33% of students passed reading in 2013, yet 62% of students passed the writing subtest. From 2005 until 2011, the state rated the school a "C" on an A through F scale with "A" being the highest and "F" being the lowest; however, for 2012 and 2013 Site A earned a "D."

Site B

Located centrally within the district, Site B was considered a suburban magnet school with a concentration in environmental studies and animal science. The smallest site, it had approximately 650 students and 54 faculty and staff. The percentage of teaching staff considered highly qualified was unreported on the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Approximately 40% of the students were Hispanic, 29% were Black, and 26% were White. In 2013, only 35% of students were proficient on the state reading assessment, yet 37% were proficient on the writing assessment. The state rated Site B to be a "C" from 1999 until 2012 with a brief jump to a "B" in 2002 and 2003. However, it dropped to a "D" in the most recent data from 2013.

Site C

Site C is located in the central portion of the district and considered urban. At the time of the inquiry, there were approximately 900 students and 74 faculty and staff. The percentage of teaching staff considered highly qualified was 74%. Approximately 52% of the students were Black, 20% of the students were Hispanic, and 19% of the students were White. The state reported 39% of students passed the 2013 reading state standardized test, yet 49% passed the writing assessment. From 1999 until 2003, Site C fluctuated between an "A" and a "B" rating dipping once to a "C" in 2000. However, from 2004 to 2011 the school maintained a "C" rating rising to a "B" in 2006 and 2010. The most recent school data show school grade dipped to a "D" in 2012 and 2013.

Study Participants

I first gained IRB and school district approval to solicit participants and conduct research within the district. In order to locate participants, I attended a district writing coaches' meeting, in which all coaches from the district gather together so the district can disseminate information to them. At this meeting, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the study as well as participants' commitments. All sixteen writing coaches received informed consent documents and eight of the sixteen expressed interest in participation. Working with my major professor, I selected three individuals whose respective school sites provided for a difference in size and student population during the data collection process and whose backgrounds were seemingly different. Upon identification of the school sites, I approached the respective principals to ensure I would be able to conduct my research at their sites. At this point, I obtained informed consent documents from the three coaches. All names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Celeste

A White female in her mid-forties, Celeste was the first participant I observed and interviewed. She earned her undergraduate degree in both theater and British literature and completed an alternative certification program (ACP) in order to become a teacher. Her first experiences in the classroom were teaching theater, but when budgets for electives began to shrink in the late 1990s, she moved to a 7th grade language arts position.

Early on in her career teaching writing, she participated in her local Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute to hone her ability to teach. This experience and her love for teaching writing prompted her to earn her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on writing instruction. Consequently, she earned her National Board Certification. She currently has 14 years of experience teaching language arts with the last two and one half as an academic coach.

Celeste says she felt called to teach in a high poverty, high needs school and joined Site B in 2010. Her students achieved great success on the state writing assessment regardless of whether they were general education students, exceptional students, or English language learners (ELLs). During her time as an 8th grade language arts teacher more than 95% of 8th grade students passed the state writing assessment; a majority of these students were her students. Consequently, with twelve years total teaching experience and in the middle of her second year teaching 8th grade language arts at Site B, she felt compelled to accept a position as the school's academic writing coach.

Tabitha

Tabitha is a White female in her early thirties who was the second participant I observed and interviewed in the inquiry as her school offered a different situation with respect to student

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population and size. Prior to working as an educator, Tabitha earned her undergraduate degree in radio television and worked as a news reporter at a small news station. After about a year and a half, she wanted to return home, and subsequently speaking with family, she took a "leap of faith" and walked her resume into a local middle school where she was hired as a 6th grade reading teacher.

Her first experiences teaching involved her learning on the job. She completed the district's alternative certification program and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement program. When she realized she enjoyed teaching, she eventually went back to school earning her master's degree in Educational Leadership in her fourth year of teaching as she wanted the option to become an assistant principal or principal. She has a total of ten years teaching experience with the last three as an instructional coach.

Tabitha began her career at Site A as a language arts teacher when the school opened in 2005 transferring from her previous middle school. Her organizational skills and willingness to collaborate with others made her a leader in the department, and administrators promoted her to be the SAL. In 2010, her principal noticed her students consistently did well on the writing assessments and used Title I funds to allow her to become a part time writing coach where half of her day was spent being the teacher of record for three periods of students and the other half as the school's coach. After a year in this situation, she transferred to being the full-time writing coach at Site A. Her three year tenure as writing coach is the longest of any coach in the inquiry.

Beatrice

Beatrice is an African American female in her mid-thirties who is employed at an urban school without a magnet program. Beatrice earned her undergraduate degree in English after deciding she did not want to be an engineer. Her family, professional educators, counseled her to

begin teaching. Subsequently, she completed an ACP program in another district in her first year teaching.

Soon, she realized she enjoyed teaching and earned her master's degree in Instructional Leadership, a degree designed to prepare teachers to be educational leaders, not necessarily administrators. This degree allowed Beatrice to deepen her knowledge of creating and delivering professional development for teachers. She is currently working toward her Ph.D. in education and plans to defend her dissertation later this school year.

Bringing 9 years of teaching experience, Beatrice heard about the coaching position after transferring into the district in which the study was conducted and was enticed to apply in order to impact whole-school writing. Her tenure as writing coach at Site C is the shortest of the three in the study at a year and a half.

Table 1: Summary of Participant Demographics

	Years Teaching Experience	**Site Type**	**Highest Degree Earned**
Celeste	14	Urban, Magnet Site B	MAT Curriculum and Instruction & National Board Certified
Tabitha	10	Rural Site A	MAT Educational Leadership
Beatrice	9	Urban Site C	MAT Instructional Leadership & All but Dissertation (ABD) for Ph.D.

Survey Participants

Once I received district approval, the consent of the participants in the case, and their principals' approval, I solicited teacher participants for the survey portion of this inquiry through the internal email communication at their respective sites. As a writing coach was available to each teacher at a school site, the survey was open to each faculty member in a teaching position regardless of content area taught. I hoped to solicit nearly 120 of the 235 possible faculty members; however, 47 teachers responded to the survey despite two reminders. Teachers may

not have had time to respond to this survey as the window took place in December before

teachers were leaving for the winter break. The results of this survey are non-experimental and,

as questionnaires and surveys are appropriate to descriptive research, the results of this survey

are meant to describe this situation to more fully explore the roles and responsibilities of writing

coaches (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Teachers had the option to click on the link to the survey via the email. I utilized

SurveyMonkey to administer a ten-question survey containing a combination of Likert-style

questions and one open-ended response. Willing teachers first encountered a waiver of informed

consent outlining the purpose of the research and the potential risks and benefits. By clicking the

button to enter the survey, they waived their informed consent. After completion of the survey,

each teacher had the option to enter a raffle to win a $50.00 Visa gift card. They voluntarily gave

identifying information in order to enter the raffle which was kept anonymous to all but myself

and major professor.

Data Collection

I utilized four methods of qualitative data collection: interviews, observations, archival

data in the form of documents, and one open-ended survey item. I detail these methods below

then describe the quantitative survey items which I applied to research question three.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the primary means of data collection for this intrinsic

case study. I choose to utilize Seidman's (1991) format for conducting interviews. I held two

individual interviews with each participant lasting 40 minutes to one hour each all of which I

recorded and transcribed. I staggered the interviews two weeks apart as data analysis took place

in an iterative process during data collection. I transcribed and analyzed all interviews soon after

they were conducted, so I could begin the process of coding and memoing as close to the meeting as possible in order to limit bias and steer the inquiry. I did this in order to make changes to the interview questions and confirm or deny emergent codes. After I finalized emergent themes, I held a final focus group interview with all three participants to ask them to make meaning of my findings and confirm or deny my interpretations.

Seidman believes in the first phase of an interview, it is important for researchers to ask about the life experiences of the participants. This is to help establish how and why individuals form present beliefs and opinions from past experiences. I asked the coaches about their previous interactions with coaches and mentors, their experiences writing, both as a teacher and a student, and past ideas about the role of a coach at a school site.

In the second interview, I asked concrete questions about the current situation. It is here I asked direct questions about the coaches' perceptions of their role(s), their beliefs about teaching and assessing writing, and their beliefs about coaching and mentoring in their current job. I took great care to allow for these interviews to be open-ended in order to explore a range of variability and reach theoretical saturation when theory-building, so although I had a list of general questions, the interviews were not limited to my original list. Please see Appendix A for the original questions I used to frame the interview as well as subsequent questions I used to probe deeper into the individuals' lived experiences.

Within the focus group interview, I asked the coaches to reflectively make meaning of their current situations. I reminded them of some of their answers in regard to their beliefs, and I probed them to further make connections between the first and second interview answers. Lastly, I shared the emergent theories to serve as a member check and tweak any possible errors in my understanding. Please refer to Appendix B for a list of focus group interview questions.

Observations

In order to further explore writing coaches, I observed each on five occasions: twice at their respective school sites for eight hours each time and again at three separate district meetings, twice for seven hours and a third for three hours. I logged a total of seventy-five hours of observation among the three coaches. I staggered the observations by two-week intervals in order to allow time to analyze data. While observing, my focus remained on the role of the coach and all other parties involved were not named specifically and/or I recorded pseudonyms. Although I was a complete observer, the coaches routinely explained my presence.

During this time, I kept a two column researcher journal. In the first column, I engaged in continuous monitoring in which I watched the coach and people with whom he or she interacted, and I recorded what I saw and heard as accurately as possible (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). In the other column, I recorded my opinions and my interpretations as they arose. Following each observation, I set up a table of the interactions to prepare the data for coding.

Archival Data

Schools must complete publically accessible SIPs in order to justify and monitor their procedures for increasing student achievement. I secured a copy of each site's SIP beginning with the year the school first introduced the writing coach looking for mention of the writing coach as an intervention to further inform my descriptions of their roles and responsibilities, as well as any perceived impact on teachers. Coaches in the study also voluntarily shared their coaching logs on which they detail how their time is spent on a daily basis.

Furthermore, I looked at past writing scores as measured by the state assessment and available school-based writing assessment information. I examined writing scores three years

before introduction of a writing coach up until the present to look for possible trends in student writing achievement that may have been influenced by the presence of a writing coach.

Survey Data

Data collection included a teacher survey consisting of a mix of ten open-ended and Likert-style items. See the section "Study Participants" for details on survey dissemination. I adapted questions from the literature and piloted the worthiness and usefulness of these questions over the previous summer with teachers attending district PD who work at sites not employing a writing coach in order to refine the instruments. In this way, I did not inadvertently solicit teachers to both rate my survey and be a part of the inquiry. Rather than completing the survey, the teachers involved rated the questionnaires as salient, possibly salient, or non-salient, in addition to making comments about the clarity of each question. Research shows teachers who believe a questionnaire to be salient averaged a 77% return rate dropping to 42% when the instruments were rated non-salient (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007: Groves & Singer, 2006). Furthermore, the visual outline of the questions can impact how respondents perceive the saliency of survey items (Stern, Smyth, & Mendez, 2012). I grouped teachers based on their teaching assignment with content area teachers in an assignment other than an ELA or Reading classroom. See Table 2 for a summary of results. Percentages indicate the teachers who marked an item as "salient." Only ELA teachers rated the Section 2 survey items, as content area teachers lacked the academic vocabulary to judge each item. Based on results from the survey, I removed survey item 7 from Survey Section 2. Each item from Section 3 of the survey had over 90% of respondents rating the items as "salient," so I kept each of these items (N=65). Please see Appendix C for a sample of the surveys.

Table 2: Teacher Perceptions of Survey Section 2

Teacher Assignment	N	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
ELA/Reading Teacher	31	83.9% N=26	100% N=31	90.3% N=28	90.3% N=28	96.8% N=30	90.3% N=28	71% N=22

Data Analysis

I created an initial case record for each participant and continually analyzed the data as I conducted the study. This consisted of the chronological ordering of archival records in the form of coaching logs and SIPs, observational field notes, as well as transcriptions of individual interviews. The overall purpose of qualitative data analysis was to identify common ideas, patterns, and/or themes from archival documents, observations, and interviews.

Step 1: I obtained archival documents including the SIP and coaching logs. Coaches provided a copy of their site's SIP and sent me a copy of their coaching logs through email over the course of the study. After each observation and interview, I immediately transcribed the information from audio cassettes and field notes to a Microsoft Word document. The SIP and coaching logs were Microsoft Word documents. I printed all data into hard copies.

Step 2: As I collected data, I began by coding the first round of interview data, data from the first observation of each participant, and archival data utilizing open coding in a microanalysis, a line by line analysis, of the data in order to form a basic description (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I conducted this analysis on printed copies of typed data, so I could memo and note patterns pertinent to the research questions.

Step 3: I repeated step two for the second round of observations.

Step 4: I repeated step two for the third round of observations and interviews.

Step 5: I utilized the constant comparative method to look for larger categories moving toward a conceptual ordering of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with the specific research questions in mind.

Step 6: I looked across cases to for emergent themes, patterns, and ideas relevant to the research questions.

Step 7: I communicated the relevant themes, patterns, and ideas in detail with direct quotes to support their integration into this dissertation.

Although this process appears linear, it is actually cyclical as data collection and analysis required constant comparison to emphasize "systematic rigor and thoroughness from initial design, thorough data collection and analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 489). Between interviews, I engaged in paper and pencil open coding, axial coding, and memoing. I began by reading the case records line-by-line writing my thoughts and expanding on thoughts through memoing. Soon, repetitive themes emerged, and I was able to narrow these themes to categories at the individual level. As I found recurring categories and themes, I looked across cases to "identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2005, p. 453

For the Likert scale survey items, I tabulated survey results and reported descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency, frequency, and percentages. Further research will be needed to make inferences about any possible changes in attitude or behavior.

Monitoring Verisimilitude

Qualitative data analysis requires a considerable degree of personal interpretation, and hermeneutics was a factor constantly on my mind during data collection and analysis. During data collection, I made sure to monitor my own thoughts, preconceptions, and beliefs in the right hand column of my researcher journal to guard against bias. See Appendix D for a sample of the

two-column journal I utilized to record observable categories on the left and my own thoughts on

the right. After each observation and interview, I immediately transcribed the interview and

researcher field notes. I emailed a copy of the transcribed interviews and the observational notes

without my personal notes to each participant, so they could have the opportunity to read the

transcripts for errors. They did not find any errors or make any adjustments. Afterward I

confirmed there were no errors, and I began coding the data as I mentioned in the previous

section.

During the process of coding, I continually wrote memos in the margins of the

transcriptions. I needed to create a distinction between my own thoughts and in what ways the

data answered the research questions. When I discovered larger categories in Step 5 listed above,

I shared these emergent themes with the participants at a district meeting where we each were

attendants. They confirmed the emergent themes, and I moved on to Steps 6 and 7 to look across

cases and communicate relevant themes, patterns, and ideas. After I placed relevant direct

quotations underneath each theme, I shared again with the participants in a focus group

interview, and they confirmed my analyses. At this point, I began to delineate the discoveries in

Chapter 4.

Summary

This chapter outlined the purpose of the research study as well as the research questions.

It discussed the research design including the site, the case participants, the survey participants,

and the means for data collection. It included a brief discussion of results from a study which

piloted the survey response items. In its examination of the method of data analysis, it discussed

the iterative process of qualitative data analysis as well as how I reported descriptive statistics for

non-experimental, quantitative survey data. Finally, it discussed how I monitored for bias to

ensure verisimilitude through member checks and the focus group interview.

Table 3: Summary of Research Questions, Data Sources, and Method of Analysis

Research Question	Data Sources	Method of Analysis
1. In what ways do three middle school writing coaches perceive their professional roles and responsibilities? 2. What professional roles and responsibilities do three middle school writing coaches exhibit while working in their respective middle schools? 3. In what ways do the three writing coaches perceive their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers?	Archival Data (SIP, coaching logs) One-on-one interviews Focus group interview Observational data & researcher journal	*Step* 1: I obtained archival documents including the SIP and coaching logs. Coaches provided a copy of their site's SIP and sent me a copy of their coaching logs through email over the course of the study. After each observation and interview, I immediately transcribed the information from audio cassettes and field notes to a Microsoft Word document. The SIP and coaching logs were Microsoft Word documents. I printed all data into hard copies. *Step 2*: As I collected data, I began by coding the first round of interview data, data from the first observation of each participant, and archival data utilizing open coding in a microanalysis, a line by line analysis, of the data in order to form a basic description (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I conducted this analysis on printed copies of typed data, so I could memo and note patterns pertinent to the research questions. *Step 3*: I repeated step two for the second round of observations. *Step 4*: I repeated step two for the third round of observations and interviews. *Step 5*: I utilized the constant comparative method to look for larger categories moving toward a conceptual ordering of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with the specific research questions in mind. *Step 6*: I looked across cases to for emergent themes, patterns, and ideas relevant to the research questions. *Step 7:* I communicated the relevant themes, patterns, and ideas in detail with direct quotes to support their integration into this dissertation.
4. In what ways do middle school teachers ($n = 47$) perceive writing coaches impact their writing beliefs and pedagogy?	Non-experimental teacher survey with Likert style questions and one open-ended question	I calculated and reported descriptive statistics for the Likert-style questions. I utilized the above method of qualitative analysis for the one open-ended survey question

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter provides a platform for the voices of the individuals who participated in the qualitative interviews, observations, and open-ended survey item; communicates the findings within the archival data; and it reports descriptive statistics from the survey. First, I review the purpose of the study and research questions. I follow with a summary of my methods of data analysis to provide the explicit means by which I analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data. Next, I delineate the discoveries of the a priori research questions. For research questions 1 and 2, I outline each role the writing coaches perceived and exhibited separately. Underneath each role, I describe the responsibilities they perform as a function of each position. Following a discussion of the roles and responsibilities, I outline the findings for research question 3 to explain in what ways the district and site administration evaluate writing coaches. Afterward, I summarize the quantitative and qualitative survey data I collected to answer research question 4 concerning teacher conceptions of writing coaches' impact. Finally, I report the discoveries of a posteriori trends occurring in data analysis focusing on coaches' perceived challenges to describe the professed problems coaches encounter. These challenges stem from external sources over which the writing coaches have no control.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore writing coaches, an embedded form of professional development. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing

instruction. Data from observations, interviews, and documents informed the inquiry. Non-experimental quantitative survey data also informed the analysis.

Research Questions

The inquiry was guided by the following research questions but not limited by these questions:

1. In what ways do three middle school writing coaches perceive their professional roles and responsibilities?

2. What professional roles and responsibilities do three middle school writing coaches exhibit while working in their respective middle schools?

3. In what ways do the three writing coaches perceive their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers?

4. In what ways do middle school teachers (n = 47) perceive writing coaches impact their writing beliefs and pedagogy?

Data Analysis

I continually engaged in data analysis as I collected qualitative interview and observational data. This data included approximately five and a half hours of transcribed interviews with writing coaches amounting to fifty pages of transcription. The interview data accompanied observational data I recorded through a researcher journal. I originally took paper and pencil two-column notes over seventy-five hours of observations. I then transcribed the research journal into a word processor soon after each observation. All observational recordings appeared on the left with my own reflections on the right. I amassed thirty-eight pages of 1 ½ inch-spaced transcribed observations. I aggregated the survey respondents' open-ended responses pulled from the pool of teachers at the coaches' respective sites and generated another

three pages of data. Over the course of the study, writing coaches also shared with me coaching

logs in which they recorded their time spent in an excel spreadsheet. Although the

interviews/observations took place over eight weeks, I amassed twelve weeks of coaching logs

from each participant totaling seventy-two pages as they graciously shared all completed

coaching logs. Finally, I secured a copy of each site's SIP with an average length of fifty-eight

pages. In all, I printed nearly three-hundred pages of raw data.

I began a microanalysis, a line by line analysis, of the data I collected after my first

observation and interview of each writing coach in order to form a basic description (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). Sixty codes originally emerged in the first two weeks of the study following the

first set of interviews and observations, one for each writing coach totaling three separate

interviews and three separate observations. Table 4 presents the original sixty open codes.

Table 4: List of Original 60 Open Codes

Academic vocabulary	Control	Helping students	Perfection	Reflection
Administrative task	Conversation	Helping teachers	Perseverance	Relationships
Art vs. formula	Data	Helping whole school	Personal ability	Self-reflection
Balance	Decision	Impact	Personal experience	Standardized testing
Beliefs	Dependable	Improvement	Positive outlook	Stress
Buy-in	Difficulties	Knowledge base	Pragmatism	Success
Challenge	Drive instruction	Leadership	Pressure	Supportive
Classroom management	Evaluation	Mentoring	Professional development	Teaching is hard
Coaching	Family	Micromanagement	Professional relationships	Teaching writing
Conferencing	Feedback	Models	Quitting	Time
Confidence	Flexibility	Organization	Rapport	Unclear role
Conflicting belief	Frustration	Passion	Reality vs. perception	Validation

*Open-codes generated in a line-by-line microanalysis of the first interview with each participant
as well as the first observation of each participant.

Before the second round of observations, analysis of coaching logs, and initial inspection of each site's SIP, I examined the codes looking for groups, and I was able to cluster the original codes into twenty-eight coding categories. I looked for synonyms and areas where I could begin to categorize the original sixty codes into more focused codes for the next round of observational data. I also looked for areas that did not relate to the research questions directly and did not repeat across cases reliably. See Appendix E for an example of how I reduced the sixty original open codes. Table 5 organizes the reduced list of twenty-eight codes to remove redundancy and make coding more manageable. The second round of observations took place in the third and fourth week of the study. Following each observation, I immediately transcribed the data from my researcher journal, utilized the reduced list of twenty-eight codes to analyze the data, and found the patterns continued across all participants.

In the early stages of coding during weeks one through four, three codes repeated across all observational and interview data from each participant as well as the archival data from coaching logs and from each site's SIP: administrative task, coaching, and teaching. In addition to these recurring codes, the following recurred across all coaching logs, interviews, and observational data from each participant: academic vocabulary, balance, conferencing with students/teachers, conflicting beliefs, decision, evaluation, helping teaching, impacting whole-school, mentoring, micromanagement, pressure, professional development, reality vs. perception, standardized testing, stress, time, and unclear role. I began to postulate how these codes might be related to one another keeping track of my thoughts in the margins of the raw data. I realized academic vocabulary, administrative tasks, coaching, conferencing with students/teachers, helping teaching, mentoring, professional development, and teaching could begin to answer research questions 1 and 2 regarding the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches. Similarly,

standardized testing, evaluation, and impacting whole-school may begin to answer research question 3 regarding how coaches perceive their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers. At this time in the inquiry, the teachers at the respective sites had not completed the online survey for me to collect the data in order to answer research question 4.

However, the remaining repeating codes did not fit the original a priori research questions. Balance, conflicting beliefs, decision, micromanagement, pressure, reality vs. perception, stress, time, and unclear roles arose based on interview and observational data. Standardized testing and evaluation also were in some way related to what I began to perceive as challenges the writing coaches faced. This study had more to tell, but I needed to go back to the participants to observe them a third time and interview them again in order to check my interpretation of the data after analysis.

Table 5: List of 28 Open Codes After Redundancy Eliminated

Academic Vocabulary	Conferencing with Students	Decision	Improvement	Professional Development	Time
Administrative Task	Conferencing with Teachers	Drive Instruction	Instructional Leadership	Reality vs. Perception	Unclear Role
Balance	Conflicting Belief	Evaluation	Mentoring	Standardized testing	Validation
Classroom Management	Control	Helping Teachers	Micromanagement	Stress	
Coaching	Data	Impact Whole School	Pressure	Teaching	

* I derived the codes in this table from the original 60 open codes for use when coding the second observation of each writing coach in the study.

After I coded the initial round of interviews, two observations, and archival data, the repetition of concepts allowed me to achieve a conceptual ordering of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In week 5 of the study, I realized I could further reduce the twenty-eight codes to fit five repetitive categories: 1. Administrative Responsibilities, 2. Coaching Responsibilities, 3.

Ensuring Success on State Standardized Tests, 4. Facing Challenges, and 5. Teaching Responsibilities. Administrative Responsibilities included tasks coaches perceived they took off of the plate of a site-based assistant principal or principal, and evaluation, where coaches appraise the effectiveness of classroom teachers, either for formal or informal purposes. Coaching Responsibilities included tasks related to coaching teachers to become better teachers of writing. Ensuring Success on State Standardized Tests involved coaches' perception of effectiveness, how to measure her perceived effectiveness, and her ability to impact students and teachers school-wide. Teaching Responsibilities included references to writing coaches working directly with students to improve their writing ability. Table 6 presents the twenty-eight codes categorized beneath each of the five focused codes.

Next, I conducted my final individual interview and observation with each coach in weeks five and six, transcribed the data immediately following each session, and used the five focused codes to code the transcriptions. At this point, the teachers at the coaches' sites responded to the online survey, and I also coded the open-ended survey responses using the five focused codes. The five focused codes appeared in both the interview data as well as observational data, and my observations matched the coaches' perceptions; however, it became clear a large portion of the open codes fell within the category of "Facing Challenges." This category did not fit any of my a priori research questions, but I believed it to be important enough to report in the findings because coding in this category far superseded any other focused code.

For the Likert scale survey items from the teacher survey data, I tabulated survey results and reported descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency, frequency, and percentages. I discuss the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative survey data when I

describe the outcomes of research question 4 later in the chapter. Next, I illustrate the findings

for research questions 1 and 2 in regard to the perceived/observed roles of writing coaches and

the responsibilities they fulfill for each role. Appendix F details a timeline of data collection and

analysis integrated with the steps for qualitative data analysis outlined in Chapter 3.

Table 6: Focused Codes with Embedded Open Codes

Administrative Responsibilities	Coaching Responsibilities	Ensuring Success on State Standardized Tests	Facing Challenges	Teaching Responsibilities
Administrative Task	Coaching	Data	Balance	Academic Vocabulary
Evaluation	Conferencing with Teachers	Drive Instruction	Conflicting Belief	Classroom Management
	Helping Teachers	Impact Whole School	Control	Conferencing With Students
	Instructional Leadership	Improvement	Decision	Teaching
	Mentoring	Standardized testing	Micromanagement	
	Professional Development	Validation	Pressure	
			Reality vs. Perception	
			Stress	
			Time	
			Unclear Role	

*The table presents the twenty-eight open codes categorized within each of the five focused codes.

Research Questions 1 & 2: The Roles and Responsibilities of Writing Coaches

The first two research questions were: (1) In what ways do three middle school writing

coaches perceive their professional roles and responsibilities? and (2) What professional roles

and responsibilities do three middle school writing coaches exhibit while working in their

respective middle schools? Through data analysis, I found administrative responsibilities,

coaching responsibilities, and teaching responsibilities repeated in coaches' interview data, my

observational data, and archival data. Because I believed they exhibited the responsibilities of

administrators, coaches, and teachers, I asked the coaches in a focus group interview whether they perceive they performed the roles of administrators, coaches, and teachers. All participants believed these were the three major categories or roles they performed, and it was their obligation to balance the responsibilities each role required.

Poglinco and a team of researchers uncovered a common problem in the role of a literacy coach, in that "there does not appear to be one 'official' written job description for coaches that is shared by all America's Choice schools" (2003, p. 9). Similarly, this problem was evident in the exploration of the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches across the three sites (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Zigmond, 2006). Beatrice expressed:

> I've noticed they [some schools] are actually looking for a writing coach and some schools are looking for a writing resource teacher. And however, that's what I meant by there are these different pockets which you fill because our job description says writing resource teacher, but they expect us to coach in addition to being that teacher. It seems like now there, to me, there's been a disconnect regarding what I thought this position was going to be and what it actually is.

Her statement encompassed the emergent problem where perceptions and beliefs of coaches do not match the reality of the workplace situations. In Chapter 5, I discuss a framework for how locus of control may be paramount to perceptions of professional success and job satisfaction, and how different variables may make the coach's job more or less challenging. Furthermore, because of the myriad of roles and responsibilities, I observed coaches spent 14.58% of their time simply planning their schedules, which the coaches echoed in their coaching logs recording 12.63% of their time spent planning.

I further divided this section into an outline of the three major roles writing coaches exhibit beginning with the role in which they spent a majority of time and ending with the role in which they spent the least amount of time: teachers, administrators, and coaches. I measured time spent in each role through analysis of observational data and coaching logs.

Role 1: Writing Coaches Are Teachers

The term "writing coach," widely utilized throughout the district at school sites and at district SAL meetings is not the official term for the position. I discovered the technical term was writing resource teacher (WRT). As Tabitha mentioned, "[I]t's the students who need the knowledge and skills to perform on the day of the state writing test. So at the end of the day, it's the students who really need to be worked with."

In a discussion of the most important roles and responsibilities during the initial interview, Tabitha stated, "Number one it includes working with students." Beatrice concurred in her initial interview, "[Y]ou're supposed to be working with students regularly as a teacher— that's what a teacher does." Tabitha quickly added, "8th grade mainly because that's what we're graded on right now is [the state writing test]." At the time of the inquiry, only 8th grade students' state writing assessment scores counted toward the school's state issued grade; therefore, writing coaches spent nearly all of their teaching time with 8th grade students. In reality, coaches spent 43.75% of their time teaching students during my observations and 37.22% of their time according to their coaching logs. In both cases, coaches spent the greatest portion of their time in classrooms teaching students over any other responsibility or role. Like the reading specialists Symond studied (2003), coaches worked with groups of teachers, observed classrooms, demonstrated lessons, and connected teacher behavior to student achievement. Figure 1 breaks down the time I observed coaches spent per task. By combining Teaching/Co-

teaching and Pull-Out Students, writing coaches spent nearly half of their time directly working

with students as teachers.

Researcher Observation of How Coaches Spend Their Time by Task
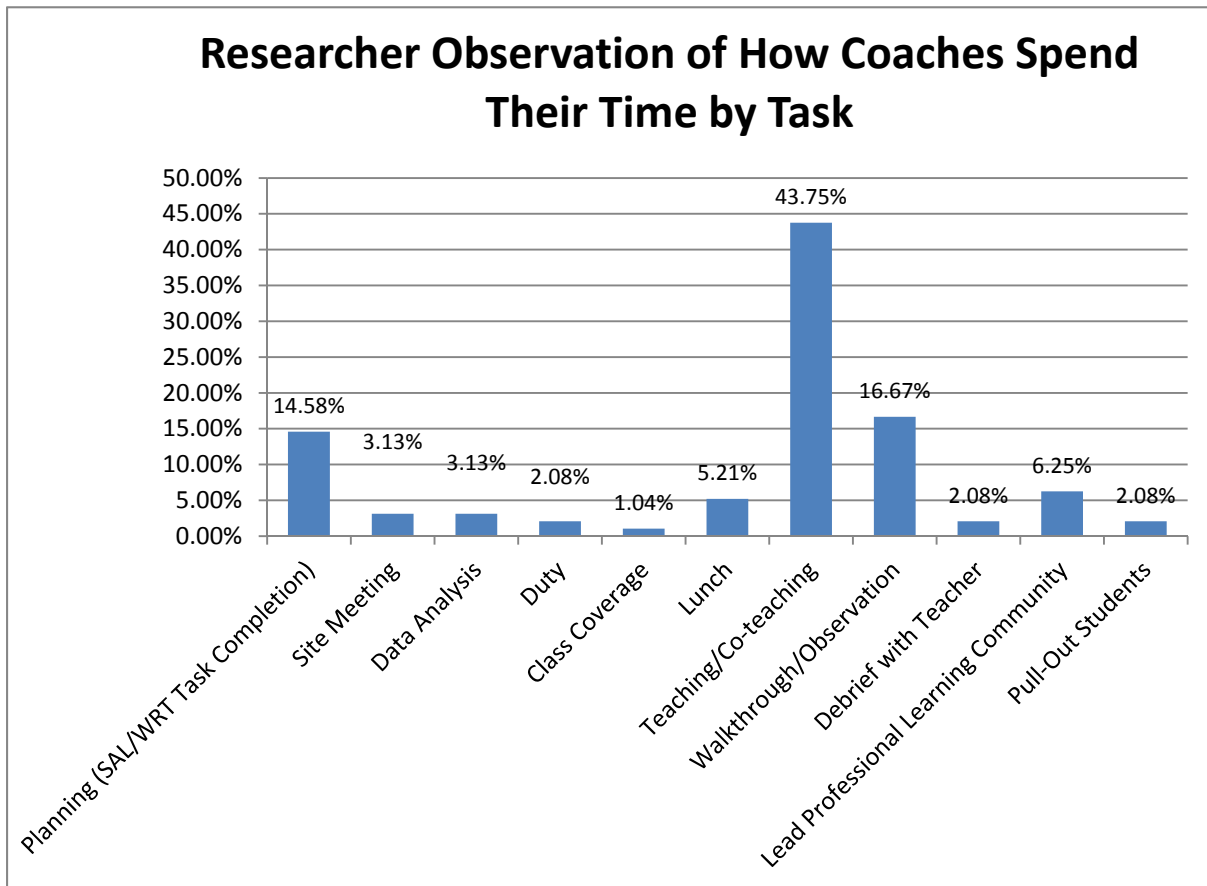
Figure 1: Researcher Observation of How Coaches Spent Their Time by Task

Similarly, Figure 2 depicts data compiled from coaching logs over a twelve week period

which correlates with my observations. Although coaches did not log time pulling out small

groups of students, they logged 37.22% of their time as Teaching/Co-teaching which indicated

most of their time was spent working directly with students. The other categories indicated on

Figures 1 and 2 designate other roles coaches play outside of teaching responsibilities, but in

both my observation and coaches' recordings, they spend the most time in a teaching role

working with whole classes, small group pull-outs, and even individual students.
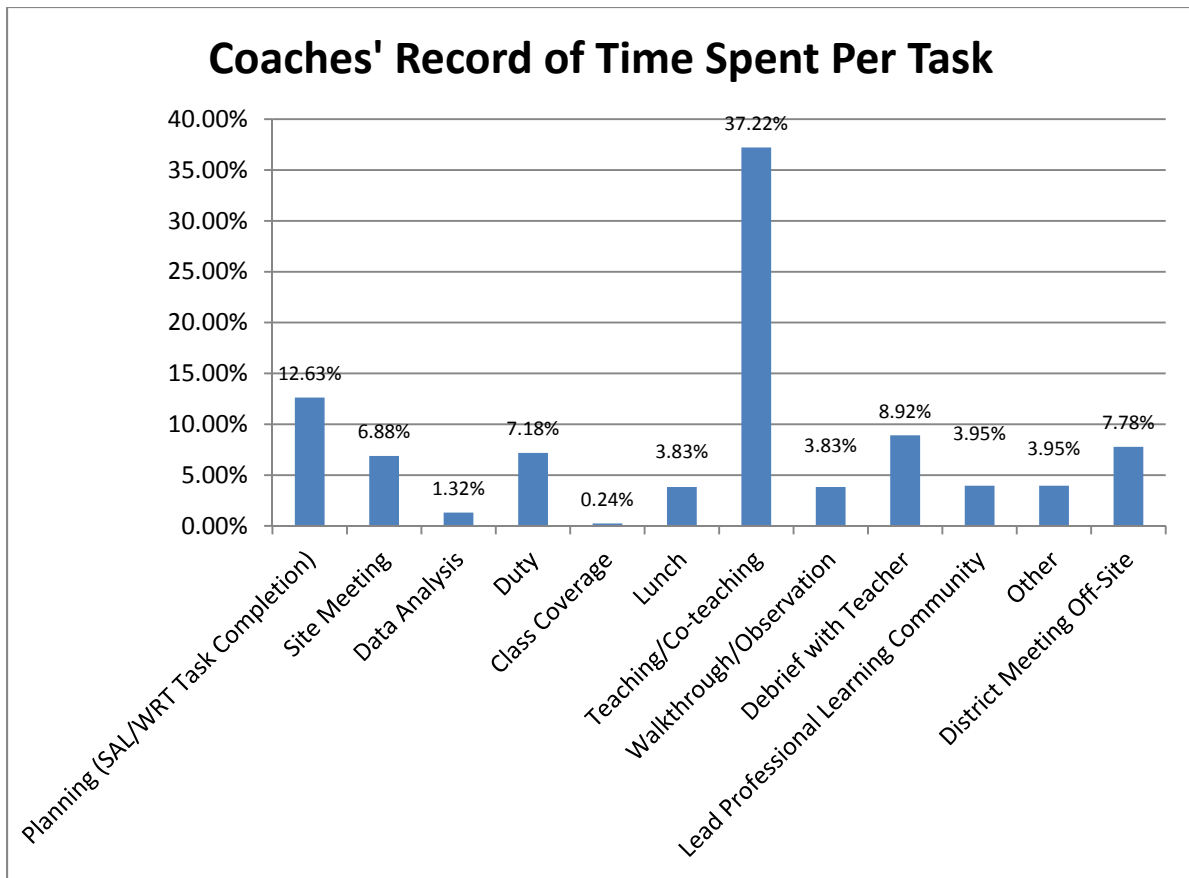
Figure 2: Coaches' Record of Time Spent Per Task

Teaching Responsibilities. As teachers working directly with students either in classrooms or with small-groups of students, writing coaches performed responsibilities similar to classroom teachers. The following section discusses the responsibilities writing coaches fulfilled when they were in a teaching role to answer research questions one and two. I separated their responsibilities into categories to outline what the performance of each duty looked like across sites. The main responsibilities writing coaches exhibited as teachers were: conferencing cycles, small-group pull-outs, classroom management, and maintenance of positive relationships with students. I follow with a section on writing coaches' beliefs on writing instruction.

Analysis of archival data led me to initially postulate these categories as teaching responsibilities. The SIPs outline the focus of their instruction to be on "elaborative skills" and

"Writer's Workshop framework of instruction." Although the cycles focused explicitly on teaching to a prompt, the philosophy behind the coaching cycle does take a process approach to teaching writing, like Writer's Workshop, which experts prefer (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983; Moffett & Wagner, 1992). Afterward, I observed coaches delivered lessons geared toward proficiency on the state writing assessment and engaged in what they called "conferencing cycles" in order to push students toward proficiency. I analyzed notes from my researcher journal and used interview data as well as the focus group to outline the responsibilities that appear in this section.

   Conferencing Cycles. Students examined models of text, co-construct, write, and revise during these conferencing sessions. Tabitha articulated:

   [T]he conferencing cycle is the strategy that we've really, really, really grasped on to, and

   I saw it work last year, so I went full force into it this year even sooner in the year than I

   did last year um 'cause I didn't know any better last year.

She believed conferencing cycles allowed her to reach each of her 8th grade students and effectively push them toward proficiency on the state writing assessment. When I observed Tabitha she had already "personally met with every 8th grader one on one twice" where she "literally sat down [to see] their writing and [speak] to them about their writing." A typical conferencing cycle consists of three consecutive school days in an 8th grade classroom where a writing coach walks students through the progression of reading and responding to a state writing assessment style writing prompt. See Figure 3 for an outline of the conferencing cycle.

   According to observational data and explicit interview data from the focus group interview, writing coaches begin Day 1 of these conferencing cycles with direct instruction designed to review the structure of a four-paragraph essay are. Dependent on the students'

proficiency level as communicated by the classroom teacher, writing coaches will either model

how to unpack the prompt and brainstorm for their essay or have students complete these tasks

on their own.

Day 1	
Direct Instruction: Review structure/format of state writing assessment essay	Conferencing: Unpack prompt and brainstorm for essay
Day 2	
Conferencing: Write introductory paragraph	Conferencing: Write body paragraph 1
Day 3	
Conferencing: Write body paragraph 2	Conferencing: Write concluding paragraph
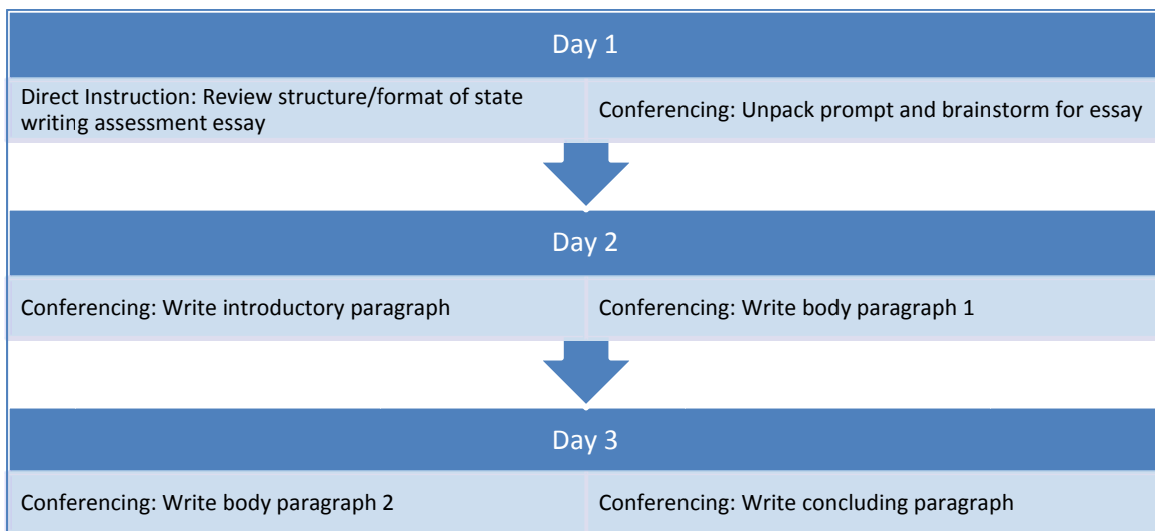
Figure 3: Outline of Three-Day Coaching Cycle Lesson Format

Unpacking the prompt is a strategy writing coaches advocate in order to help students

fully understand what their writing task is. Brainstorming involves planning for the structure and

content of the essay response. The writing coach and classroom teacher then require the students

to check in periodically while writing by approaching a set conferencing station. Here, the

writing coach and the classroom teacher remain for the rest of the period and students come back

to the station as a system of checks and balances to ensure each step in the writing of their essays

is done correctly. Based on my observation of writing coaches and cooperating teachers'

directions, the students are not allowed to move forward in their planning or writing unless given

permission by the teacher or writing coach who will affix a visual marker, such as a sticker, to

the students' papers. Tabitha summed up Day 1 of a conferencing cycle:

> So um that first day is basically the students unpacking the prompt, beginning to plan
>
> their essay[s]. They come back and check in um where we check their plan and say, "Is

this reason going to work? What are your two anecdotes? Okay, if you don't have an anecdote, then you need to pick a new reason." All those things. We sign off on their plan. Then they go start their introduction.

At times during these cycles, the writing coach modeled the process of composition on a document projector or shared student writing during these lessons. They did this in order to point out specific academic vocabulary such as topic sentences, anecdotes, and commentary to make sure students included these pieces in their writing. Belcastro (2009) found literacy coaches used very intentional talk when guiding coaching conversations with teachers. The coaches in my inquiry utilized intentional domain-specific vocabulary to guide students during the writing process. Celeste and Tabitha delivered a similar mini-lesson on commentary during these conferencing cycles in which they provided models of writing to students. Tabitha stated:

> What's important is we need to teach you strategies on how to put commentary into your essays. What we see is all the essays that score high have commentary in them…We're going to review commentary again, and then I'm going to show you four or five ways to put commentary into your papers.

Celeste echoed a similar mini-lesson on commentary in an entirely unrelated lesson:

> Remember yesterday when I was in here, we talked about commentary? Then remember what we did at the very end? We watched some Bill Cosby yesterday. I'm going to give you the actual transcript of what he said. So here's your job…I want you to underline any place where you think he's using commentary.

The classroom teacher and writing coach continue this system of modeling, student writing and check-ins for Days 2 and 3. On Day 2, a student's goal is to finish his or her introduction and body paragraph 1. On Day 3, he or she should finish the second body paragraph

and conclusion. Students come back to the conferencing station at the end of each paragraph and/or whenever they get stuck where either the writing coach or classroom teacher will engage in a conversation with them about their writing. Sometimes this conversation is short consisting of praise when a student follows the desired format or writes something which exhibits strong voice such as when Tabitha whisper read, "Wow, 'be riddled with the burden of uncertainty.' I got nothing to say. Incredible." Other times, coaches had to ask the student a series of questions in order to prompt him or her to reformat or expand upon what he or she wrote such as when Beatrice said:

> Watch your words because you need space between those words. What do you mean by that? We gotta make that easier to understand. [pause for student to explain writing] Good, so you followed every part of that formula. Can you fit in another anecdote? [student nods] So which one of those starters could you put in a sentence here? How about, 'Would you want to…' or 'Do you want to…'

This is a form of Costa and Garmston's (2002) Theory of Cognitive Coaching, of which all coaches were aware having attended a professional development workshop while attending a district SAL meeting in 2012. Students constantly need to make decisions during the process of writing, and coaches asked them a series of questions to guide them toward proper formatting and elaboration. It is a coaching conversation designed to push students toward being metacognitive and reflective of their own writing in order to pass the state assessment. Like the art of teaching which involves planning, reflecting, and problem-solving, student writers navigate these phases of planning, drafting, and revising in the iterative process of writing. Writing coaches acted as cognitive coaches to allow students to traverse these levels of thinking in the writing process.

At the end of a coaching cycle, students should have an essay which meets the state's criteria for proficiency. The goal of this process is to help students examine their responses during the writing process to assure adherence to an approved formula for success. The writing coach and classroom teacher worked in tandem to ensure all students achieve proficiency through a series of checkpoints; this also allowed them to identify students in need of intensive one-on-one intervention.

Beatrice likened the conferencing cycles to a coaching cycle:

The reality is um I don't feel like I do enough coaching with my teachers, and what we've talked about at our meetings, really we coach more our students than we do our teachers. Like our students are in coaching cycles. We coach them through the writing process, where you know we observe them, and then we uh we teach or we uh co-teach. We learn with them. Then we um assess again and then we re-teach the skill and we re-visit again. So the whole like observation—co-teacher model and then you uh observe again then you debrief. We do that with our students.

In this capacity, coaches tap into the three major themes Lev Vygotsky (1978) proposed with students:

1. Social interaction
2. The MKO (More Knowledgeable Other)
3. The ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development)

In the conferencing cycles, coaches tried to reach students within the ZPD during the writing process rather than after-process. In this way, they sought to help students become metacognitive during the writing process to draft an essay appropriate for the purpose and audience. Writing coaches existed as one of two MKOs in the room, the other being the classroom teacher.

Working in tandem with the teacher, they held conversations with students about their writing. As Beatrice stated above, "We [the writing coach and teacher] learn with them," and the entire process takes place through a series of social interactions.

   Small-Group Pull-Outs. Coaches also had the opportunity to engage in some form of small group pull-outs or one-on-one tutoring sessions in which they seized opportunities for writing instruction and the creation of positive relationships with students. Tabitha had not yet completed any pull-outs, but she did block off time for them in the future. She reported:

   I will email the teachers in January and ask them to send me a list of the top

   troublemakers, the top behavior disruptions, and the top really unmotivated students in

   their classes...And those kids are called down to the office in small groups separately, and

   myself and an administrator sit with them and kind of give them a pep talk.

This pull-out session was designed more to motivate the students and outline other incentives to perform rather than tutor. In this way, writing coaches were teachers who were expected to motivate students who exhibited idle behavior and manage students who exhibited challenging behavior. Other one-on-one tutoring sessions resulted from teacher identification of struggling students. The following is an excerpt from a one-on-one conversation between Beatrice and a student whose classroom teacher was at a loss to help her:

   Beatrice: What are you working on in Mrs. V.'s class?

   (Student pulls out materials and opens them to a page without speaking)

   B: Did you already start working on it?

   S: I left it at home.

   B: (Reads directions) Did you already do the research?

S: Yes.

B: So which topic do you want to write about?

Beatrice did not let the student's lack of preparedness deter her from a teachable moment. After assessing the situation, she familiarized herself with the assignment and posed an open-ended question to engage the student to take initiative to begin writing. Although writing coaches were not the teacher of record in 8th grade language arts classrooms, they were required to have a strong working knowledge of the curriculum. Without hesitation, Beatrice picked up where the classroom instruction left off and walked the student through planning out a logical essay in the above scenario.

Classroom Management. Apart from requiring a strong foundation in curricular knowledge, coaches exhibited the ability to make flexible decisions regarding instructional delivery in response to classroom management issues. While walking from one classroom to the next, Beatrice came upon a teacher crying because she received some bad family-related news, and she stepped into her science classroom for momentary coverage. The students were talking and playing, yet she quickly seized upon the moment for writing instruction circulating around the room to help students construct answers: "And why? And why? Can you expound a little more on your paper? Add a little more detail." When the substitute arrived, most of the class was working on the day's lesson. Similarly, Celeste handled a flippant student remark while redirecting the students to the lesson goal:

Celeste: We're gonna do a webliner—going to do a backwards map.

Student: Why do we have to learn about writing when we don't need it?

C: Because I want to torture you and it's working. The first sentence is our topic sentence or our claim…

Celeste then made that same student read aloud the sample body paragraph and discuss how what he had read contained an anecdote. On a separate occasion she led the class in a collective groan to vent before beginning a lesson on writing. She knew how to take a situation in which classroom management could have become an issue and diffuse it with humor. The writing coaches in the study all were able to make quick instructional decisions relying on their knowledge of the subject matter to redirect students back to the task.

Create Positive Relationships with Students. In my observations, students approached the writing coach with questions about writing just as they would their classroom teacher of record. Students shared writing in structured writing conferences during co-teaching lessons as well as informally approached the coaches during their classroom walkthroughs. The students were so comfortable approaching writing coaches because it was evident rapport and relationships were important. Coaches viewed the creation of positive working relationships with their students as important to teaching and ultimately increasing state writing test proficiency. Tabitha said:

> [T]he kids need to love me because I need them to love writing even though they hate writing, and I need them to perform on that test. So I really need to be the cool person um who comes in and teaches writing and gives them incentives for writing…

In her conversations with students in the classroom, she surprised me with her knowledge of the students whom she had only been working with for a few days. After high-fiving a student whose paper she checked, she exclaimed:

> Oh good, you did the comma between two adjectives. (Looking at me) It's because she [the student] does all that reading. (Looking back at the student) Good thing you are doing Battle of the Books again.

Tabitha and the other coaches in the study showed a genuine interest in the students with whom they worked. In the middle of an interview with Celeste, a student interrupted to see if she could eat lunch with him, and she kindly told him to return the next day. She added a similar sentiment:

> I should also tell you that's [sic] another part of the job is that I become everybody's mommy on campus. But that's part of my personality as well, but every child just wants to come in and visit…so I have become the school mom.

Additionally, Beatrice maintained, "I'm doing what I need to do for my kids," despite any external factors. At the foundation of a solid learning experience, coaches believed they needed to develop positive relationships with their students to best facilitate collaborative learning experiences that result in success for their students.

While sitting in the back of a classroom, a boy approached Beatrice to share a personal story and vent his frustrations. Afterward, she helped him organize his topics into a body paragraph. Within fifteen seconds of finishing up with him, another girl quickly replaced him and Beatrice launched directly into helping her:

> Do you think you can make that more vivid? You know what I mean when I say fibbing? Describe it in a way that I can see what you mean and then use your commentary by using one of those sentence starters on the wall. Now you are developing your evidence. That's a really good start. See what you can do when you do all your work?

Both students were entirely comfortable approaching Beatrice with their writing and personal stories although she was not an active participant in their teacher's lesson.

An important part of coaching is to celebrate with the students when they make progress as writers. Tabitha headed a weekly incentive program called Freeze Pop Friday where teachers nominate kids who have shown improvement, and she called the students down for a treat. She

explained this is a low-budget way to get the students excited about writing and working toward passing the state writing assessment.

Coaches' Beliefs about Writing Instruction. I had seen evidence of good teaching, as far as the process approach to teaching writing, as well as the ability to make quick instructional decisions based on a strong pedagogical foundation. However, all coaches in the inquiry completed coaching cycles with their students and designed lessons which focused exclusively on state writing assessment preparation. Teaching formulaic writing to pass a test and creating strong writers who can craft writing based on purpose and audience did not seem to go hand in hand, and I wondered whether or not writing coaches believed in the process approach to teaching writing.

However, through observations and conversations with the coaches, all three coaches believed explicit modeling, conferencing cycles, feedback in the process of writing, and student-owned reflection are paramount to student success. Tabitha called conferencing "the biggest eye-opener of my entire teaching career." She continued, "I have never seen something work so well than I've seen with that, and I have seen the most struggling writers become so much more confident because I had a few minute one-on-one conversation with them about their writing." In this process, coaches worked with students in the recursive cycles of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing through intentional noticing (Shaughnessy, 1977). Celeste added:

> I needed to know what was going on inside their heads um because it was more about we focus on the product, but I guess as a teacher what I've realized is if I don't understand what their process of writing is, I can't help them.

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In her own time as a classroom teacher and presently, Beatrice pushed "a lot of explicit writing instruction…gave my students time to reflect…and [I] would talk about their writing one-on-one like writing counsel."

Writing coaches believed instruction in writing needs to be very focused on the end product, in their case the state writing assessment; however, the same philosophies would apply to all genres of writing. They embraced the process approach to writing and accepted student work as proficient when it achieved the purpose for the specific audience (Emig, 1971; Graves, 1983; Hillocks, 1995; Moffett & Wagner, 1992). They embraced models of good writing and wrote for and with their students. Beatrice stated, "It [the end product] might have just been a paragraph, but it was something to build them up towards…so I kind of chunked the assignments along the way and focused on different writing skills they would really need in order to be successful." The chunking of skills and interjection of mini-lessons in the conferencing cycles were evident as was the feedback in process. Likewise, Tabitha hammered home her beliefs on the process of modeling literacy for her students at a 6th grade PLC meeting. She told the teachers in the meeting, "And say, it's not something you can just skim and scan…You are going to have to read it once and go back and read it. Model that for them. If they see you doing that, it's like, 'Wow, he just read the story three times.'"

Celeste bemoaned her personal experiences as a student in the classroom, "There was no metacognition, and there was no explicit modeling. There was never a time that I remember co-construction with a teacher. Of all the feedback I got, [it] was after process, not metacognitively during the process." They believe after-process feedback is pointless because as Celeste continued, "What do I care? Why are you conferencing with me because I'm going to take this paper, and I'm gonna throw it in the trash on the way out." Rather, they favored student

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metacognition of writing during process. Beatrice described how she provided feedback in addition to conferencing:

> I would always show them the rubric that I used to um assess…and allow them to you know self-assess…And the goal was because I wanted them to be reflective, I wanted them to look at the expectations for the bar that was going to be used to measure the quality of their writing…

Coaches also believed collaboration and conversation between students was an essential portion of writing instruction, and it was their job to create the conditions for conversation and to facilitate collaboration. During one of my observations, Celeste co-taught in a classroom for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). She led the lesson while the teacher, who spoke Spanish, sat translating with the group of students who had not yet developed basic interpersonal skills in English. "Now, I'm going to give you one index card…The person with the longest hair is going to do the writing today…Remember, same topic sentences, they are not supposed to chew gum." The students, familiar with the format of Celeste's lessons, began working in groups to write an anecdote with commentary to convince the reader why chewing gum in school could be bad; however, each group had a different "tool" they used when writing. She sat with the group assigned to write an emotional guilt trip and spelled "peers" in response to a question. Other groups used commentary strategies like negation and cause/effect. Suddenly, she exclaimed, "Yes! I love your air quotes there as if they are not really your friends at all." In moving throughout the room, she looked for areas where she could praise students as well as push their writing to be better.

Throughout the lesson, she continued to circulate working with each group during the process of writing to answer questions and pose questions when they met writer's block. At the end of the lesson, she shared each paragraph and pushed their thinking further:

Now, we have another group who did something interesting. The dissected their anecdote and put some commentary in the middle of the anecdote. Interesting. So what did we learn about commentary? Does it always have to go at the end?

Summary of Coaches as Teachers. Overall, I believe writing coaches are another teacher who can provide extra help and support to students who may struggle to pass the state writing assessment; however, they exhibited strong curricular knowledge and ability to manage students. Tabitha was adamant when she, speaking to me said, "[I'm] not this lady that has to come in because we suck at writing. You know what I mean? I'm an asset; I'm an advantage. I'm a benefit, not because we're bad, and she's here because we suck." She believed she was an asset to these students in helping them pass the test. Celeste also accepted this aspect of her role:

[Y]ou know, I don't see anything wrong with these kinds of positions in schools especially with underperforming students because what we are offering them is the opportunity to engage in higher level classrooms in their high school years.

However, there is frustration as well, as Celeste continued, "It's just bittersweet. You know, I think that there could be more done with our position, but not when one day in the writing life of a child is paramount to how we determine their future." In Beatrice's perfect world, she would structure her job so she could be a source of writing knowledge school-wide rather than just to ensure proficiency on the state writing assessment:

In an ideal world to me, like a resource teacher would be like a wheel teacher where every student in the building funnels through this recourse teacher for an elective. It

doesn't matter what grade, 6th, 7th, 8th, whatever. I'm a resource teacher; I have a period, kids assigned to me just for writing. Scores will move, quality writing will take place, great.

Responsibilities of Writing Coaches as Teachers

Primary Focus:
- Ensure 8th Grade students demonstrate proficiency on state writing assessment

Secondary Foci:
- Hold one-one-one pull outs with struggling students and non-workers
- Conduct small group pullouts
- Design, deliver, and/or oversee tutoring programs
- Conference with students
- Teach/co-teach in classrooms
- Create positive relationships with students
- Design and implement incentive programs

Figure 4: Summary of Teaching Responsibilities

However, Beatrice settled to impact the 8th grade students with whom administration determined she would work. I describe these conflicting beliefs further when discussing how writing coaches face challenges. The next section discusses the second major role writing coaches fulfill as administrators and the corresponding responsibilities the writing coaches exhibited.

Role 2: Writing Coaches Are Administrators

After working directly with students, I observed writing coaches spent the next largest portion of their time at their school sites completing administrative duties including the performance of walkthroughs (Peterson, et al., 2009), action as a liaison of information to faculty, data analysis, participation in or facilitation of site-based meetings, impromptu classroom coverage and lunch supervision, and scheduled duty. Also, writing coaches believed

they are the instructional leader in writing meant to lead the school in all writing initiatives. Lastly, writing coaches sporadically disciplined students. See Figure 5 for a breakdown of how much time coaches spent on each administrative task according to coaching logs and researcher observation. On average, the coaches recorded they spent about 19.5% of their time fulfilling administrative tasks. Individually, the time coaches spent performing administrative duties did not vary more than 1-2 percentage points except underneath "Duty" because Tabitha did not have an assigned duty on a daily basis. Therefore, she recorded substantially lower hours in this category. Conversely, my observations indicated coaches spent about 26% of their time as administrators, much higher than the coaches indicated on coaching logs. As I observed on three separate occasions at each writing coach's site and the coaches recorded their time on logs over twelve weeks, it is important to note the discrepancies between the data. Coaching logs may give a more accurate picture of how coaches spent their time, yet they were self-reported. I observed more walkthroughs in the nine days I spent observing and fewer site-meetings, but this may be because coaches made sure not to invite me on days they would be involved in meetings. Similarly, they may have chosen to skip their assigned duty on dates I observed.

However, the coaches indicated they do not want to be seen as an administrator although they performed administrative duties. Tabitha insisted, "I don't act like an administrator, and I try my best to really act as um just a resource and not as a boss." In the next sections, I outline the various administrative responsibilities writing coaches exhibited.

Teacher Evaluation and Assessment of School Climate. Previous studies suggested teachers and coaches are uncomfortable when teachers view coaches as evaluative entities (Sparks & Horsley, 1989). All three coaches performed walkthroughs in which they entered teachers' classrooms looking for specific evidence of teaching practices as outlined in each sites

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respective SIP. They aggregated the data they gleaned, reported it to administration, and used it to drive future professional development efforts within the language arts department.

Tabitha summarized the purpose: "I perform walkthroughs where I kind of pop in unannounced and see what's going on. And you know check out their higher level questioning, and check out you know the objective on the board and the lesson they're teaching." Celeste described the walkthroughs as "really looking at what tools am I seeing as evidence in your classroom from your toolbox, and what tools can I give you that are going to make the most impact on student achievement and learning?"
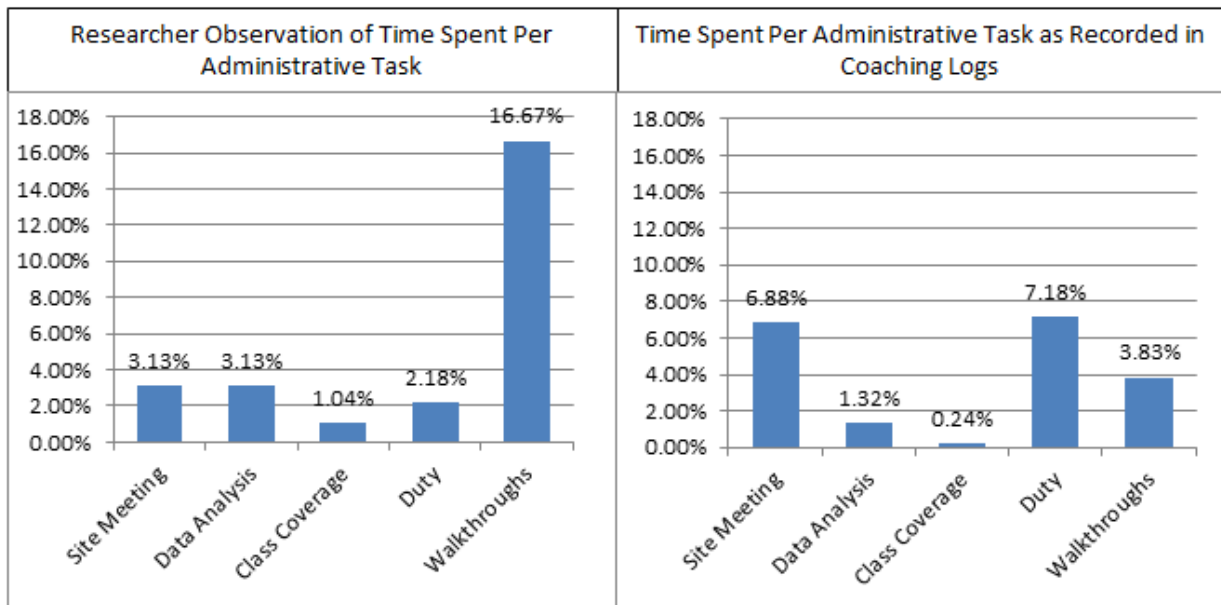
Figure 5: Writing Coaches' Time Spent Fulfilling Administrative Responsibilities

Beatrice added she needs to make "sure that…the right curriculum is being used" and "teachers are meeting regularly to discuss their students and their plans for instruction." My observations of each coach corroborated these interview statements as I spent 16.67% of the forty-eight hours of observation shadowing coaches during these evaluative walkthroughs. During this time, the writing coaches utilized a curricular checklist to look for evidence of

teacher learning objectives, evaluate interactions with students, and check for use of the county curriculum. See Appendix G for a copy of the form writing coaches utilized during these walkthroughs. Afterward, the teachers provided the walkthrough forms to the teachers whom they observed and/or made plans to debrief with teachers, although I never observed a debriefing session. They also made the data they gleaned available to administrators as they aggregated departmental walkthrough data and emailed it to supervisors.

Because they provided this data to administrators, I brought up these walkthroughs in conjunction with possible teacher evaluation in each separate individual interview, and the tone of our conversations turned. Celeste hesitated before she said, "Well, I don't know that I would call it evaluate. Um in that I don't have any authority over their formal evaluation." Tabitha added, "Even though I have that role where I go in and do observations, really it's just for data. None of it has anything to do with their evaluations; it's just to show trending on our campus." She was adamant when she stated "[t]hey (teachers) don't see me as an evaluator; they don't see me as a supervisor or boss." However, Beatrice offered a different perspective when she candidly remarked:

> [T]he reality is that our administrators and our district leaders, they use the information
> that we give them to help form their understanding of a teacher which in that minute right
> there becomes evaluative. If I say, that Ms. Q. (pseudonym) is a weak teacher, then when
> district comes in…they are going to be looking for evidence of her weakness. So even
> though I didn't mean it in an evaluative way, because I said it, they now have that
> understanding of that teacher.

She goes on to add "if that teacher is poor, then in the back of their mind, they [administrators] still do expect you to address it." In a way, coaches acted as the on-the-ground eyes and ears of

administrators in teachers' classrooms. Beatrice earlier stated she was "responsible for, uh making sure…the right curriculum is being used, that uh teachers are meeting regularly to discuss their students and to discuss their plans for instruction." In this context, she checked on her teachers to see to what extent they performed their jobs.

Although these walkthroughs provided data for coaches to help teachers improve, they may also have influenced administrative evaluations inadvertently. Administrators rely on the coaches' evaluation of teachers whether consciously or subconsciously when they review walkthrough data. Furthermore, they may have formed opinions of a teacher's practice based solely on data they did not collect firsthand, especially if they had little time to observe each teacher teaching. The idea of evaluation in combination with coaching made coaches and teachers uncomfortable (Sparks & Horsley, 1989; Poglinco et al., 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). I further discuss this inherent problem in the section Facing Challenges.

Liaison. Since coaches were not in front of students all day, administrators used them to sit in on meetings in order to convey information to the staff. Tabitha described this role: "I'm a liaison where I pass on information from the district and/or from my administration because I meet with my administration on Fridays, and I pass on the notes to my department." Writing coaches spent approximately 6.88% of their time in site-based meetings and an additional 7.78% of their time at off-campus district meetings according to coaching logs. In this capacity, they filtered information from administration to the language arts department, so, out of respect for teachers' time, teachers would not need to attend a meeting or read a memo.

Data Analysis. Writing coaches according to Celeste "spend a lot of…time trying to assess numbers." As Wilson (2011) found in her inquiry designed to understand the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches, writing coaches used data collection and analysis to inform

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instructional decisions. In the school improvement plans, there were numerous references to coaches' responsibilities for measuring "student progress in core, supplemental and intensive instruction." All coaches mentioned data analysis and trend data. At least once a month, each coach orchestrated school-wide on-demand writing assessment to evaluate and track 8th grade student progress toward proficiency on state writing assessment. For this, they created and distributed testing packets to 8th grade teachers. All 8th grade students participated in mock testing sessions in which they planned and responded to a coach-created prompt in a timed-writing situation. Once students finished, writing coaches in conjunction with the classroom teachers scored the essays on a holistic 0-6 point rubric generated by the state. See Appendix H for a copy of the state scoring guide. All writing coaches participated in a holistic scoring training at a district meeting to prepare them to score accurately. Data-driven instruction seems to be a district-led initiative, but they stated teachers had trouble finding time to compile, analyze, and interpret the findings; therefore, this responsibility fell to coaches. It was not uncommon for writing coaches to score most or all of the 8th grade essays in order to alleviate time for teachers or to ensure valid data when they did not trust the ability of a classroom teacher to score accurately. In a focus group interview, Beatrice and Celeste both expressed concerns regarding the ability of some of the language arts teachers in their departments to accurately assess writing and ultimately to effectively teach; however, Tabitha perceived the teachers at her site were capable, and she was only being helpful. Regardless of the reason, writing coaches aggregated and examined the data for trends across the campus as well as specifically by teacher after they scored all papers.

The results of these sessions helped writing coaches and teachers evaluate past instruction and plan future instruction. It was then their task to decide "What did the last formative

assessment that we…gave mean for the progress of student instruction?" In the opinion of coaches, teachers find it difficult to interpret this information due to lack of time or expertise. Translating assessment data into instructional practice can be tricky. Celeste explained, "I'm spending my time um trying to coach or walk teachers through how to transfer the information they have in numbers into classroom instructional practices." Her teachers did not have the skillset to interpret the data in order to drive instruction. Even when teachers were proficient enough to score essays, Tabitha collected the essays from each 8th grade language arts teacher and "pulled a period from every 8th grade teacher to analyze them…and did a tally sheet of what they were missing and what was lacking and what was good." In this way, she could plan topics for subsequent lessons to help take the school scores to the next level with the overarching goal of pushing all students toward proficiency on the state exam. Although the main goal was for Tabitha to understand data trends, she did share this information with teachers, so they could plan lessons. She stated she only worked closely with the one teacher new to language arts to help the teacher make sense of the data and other veteran language arts teachers "got it" on their own.

Even in informal settings, coaches tried to drive instruction with evidence from some form of data. Whenever Tabitha was in the classroom she "kind of made notes and analyzed that data…kind of keeping tracking of okay this kid really has these elements down, but they're missing these elements." She could then personalize subsequent instruction for a particular student or classroom. For example, the trend data showed students needed instruction in writing commentary, as the academic vocabulary word came up again and again in lessons I saw all three coaches deliver. When students wrote an expository or persuasive essay, they were focused and organized according to the rubric which could guarantee them a score of a "2" at most. A

score of "2" is not passing. Students needed to score at least a "4" in order to show proficiency. In order to score higher, students must provide support, and students wrote examples in an attempt to prove their claims; however, they were not always fully commenting on how their examples proved their points and refuted possible counterclaims. Writing coaches believed the difference between a "3" and a "4" involved the commentary students used to explain their thoughts. Students needed to logically argue their opinions and fully explain examples. Therefore, the lessons I saw writing coaches deliver were geared toward teaching students different forms of commentary.

Although coaches reported spending 1.32% of their total time assessing data, I observed coaches spend 3.13% of their time grading or analyzing the results of monthly assessments. There seemed to be a slight discrepancy between what I observed and how the participants recorded their time. In a focus group interview, coaches shared they can be slightly biased toward recording teaching responsibilities rather than administrative or coaching responsibilities as the goal is to spend 80% of their time working with students. Although they were told the coaching logs are not for evaluative purposes, administrators had previously stated coaches would be evaluated by how they spent their time. So, as a result, they use log tasks "creatively," as Celeste put it. However, all participants reported although the data analysis was necessary to drive instruction and measure student progress toward state writing assessment proficiency, it took up too much of their time.

Student Supervision During Non-Class Time. All three writing coaches in the study had to perform duty during which time they were responsible for student supervision. Each writing coach had an assigned duty before or after school for which they needed to provide supervision at a designed area of the school. When coaches were in the classroom, they also

aided the classroom teacher in monitoring students between classes. Beatrice and Celeste reported they additionally held cafeteria duty during one of the lunches. Their specific responsibilities varied according to their post, but their overall purpose was to enforce school rules and ensure student safety. When writing coaches were on duty before or after school or between classes in the hallways, they monitored students to ensure they complied with the county code of conduct. Similarly, they performed this same responsibility during lunch duty, but they had the additional responsibility of calling students by table to ensure everyone had the opportunity to go through the lunch line in an organized fashion.

Celeste stated, "[P]eople view your schedule um because it is a flexible schedule as having flexible time. Those two aren't synonymous." Beatrice said, "I'm required to have like my fifteen minutes of duty [each day] every semester, but then also because I'm a coach and have free time, I also have an extra thirty minutes of duty throughout the school day." In past years as a coach, her main administrative duty was "basically doing lunch duty and class change," but she was able to express to administration her qualms regarding possibly being seen by students in a negative light.

I observed writing coaches spent 2.18% of their time on their regularly assigned duty and 1.04% of their time providing classroom coverage for absent teachers. Coaches recorded similar time spent on their regularly scheduled duty at 0.24% of their time; however, they reported having to provide classroom coverage for teachers 7.18% of their time. In this capacity, writing coaches can be used as substitute teachers in the event a school site is unable to secure enough substitutes for the day. This led to more questions, as I was unclear as to what subject areas for which they cover. I observed Beatrice covering for a science teacher who was crying in the hallway due to a family emergency, but administration was able to relieve her once a substitute

arrived to replace the teacher. Administrators may believe writing coaches are a better option to utilize as coverage for when a teacher is absent as the only other alternative is to split the classes of an absent teacher up amongst other classroom teachers. On the one hand, this could increase consistency and student safety as students' schedules will not be disrupted; however, when this happens, a writing coach cannot perform the duties she had planned on for that day.

Instructional Leader in Writing. Writing coaches reported their administrations claim they would "not only be working with language arts, but…would be working with our science and our social studies people as they are making their changes into Common Core…"All three sites included a section of the school improvement plan in which "reading and writing across the curriculum" was to take place with the writing coach working in conjunction with the reading coach as well as Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (RTI) team to oversee implementation. The MTSS/RTI team seeks to ensure all students meet instructional goals. All sites followed the district-generated verbiage to describe the responsibilities of the MTSS/RTI team. Appendix I outlines the responsibilities of the MTSS/RTI team taken from the school improvement plans. Overall, a MTSS/RTI team groups students into separate tiers. Tier 1 students succeed when teachers implement the general education curriculum without accommodations or modifications. Tier 2 students succeed when teachers implement accommodations such as small-group instruction and modified pacing. Tier 3 students require significantly more intervention. As a member of this team, the writing coach was responsible for ensuring teachers follow the general-education curriculum and assisting teachers in the accommodation or modification of the general-education curriculum when students did not demonstrate proficiency on teacher-generated or coach-generated assessments.

In this light, administrators allowed them to be "an instructional leader for other content areas in the area of writing" and also make "instructional decisions within the language arts department." The extent to which principals delegated decision-making power to writing coaches depended on the site. From observation, this power is limited to decisions about professional development opportunities to offer in writing such as the specific content and focal audience for these workshops and coaching cycles. Specifically, the SIPs charged writing coaches to oversee professional development to support elaborative skills, writer's workshop, and support teacher assessment. In all cases, the attention remained on ensuring state writing assessment success. The SIPs outlined coaches as a member of the MTSS/ RTI team, yet although they logged time in site-based meetings, they did not delineate the type of meetings they attended in coaching logs. Furthermore, I did not see coaches attend a MTSS/RTI meeting.

Within the language arts department, the SIPs placed the writing coaches as leaders in the department who must ensure teachers will work "collaboratively…in PLC to implement the Plan-Do-Check-Act model." This model asked teachers to plan instruction, deliver instruction, and check to see if their instruction had positive impact on student learning through data collection and analysis. The Act Phase of this model had teachers evaluate whether students needed remediation or were ready to move on to the next concept in the curriculum.

Furthermore, administration often asked writing coaches to perform other duties for which either they themselves did not have time or could not find a leader. As leaders and experts, coaches found themselves chairing committees, interpreting school data for teachers, and completing state paperwork such as publically accessible school improvement plans. Celeste maintained her administration would often state, "Oh, there is this committee that needs heading up. You take care of it." She continued, "[A]gain, any kind of academic lead team meetings,

we're with all of those, and we're heading up those. And the data for the school ends up falling on our shoulders…" Additionally, Beatrice headed a tutoring program providing the lessons for "a few teachers" who were "turned into tutors" due to having "a few extra periods off. Celeste later added "the data for the school end up falling on our shoulders, any kind of school improvement plan…,talking points for…meetings." It seems administration trusted writing coaches to perform these duties, but performing administrative duties took time and planning which coaches believed could be better spent working with students and teachers. From site to site, these roles varied and posed a very real challenge to coaches (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Zigmond, 2006.)

Student Discipline. The three different administrative staffs required coaches to perform other tasks unique to each site. Beatrice described the role as a "quasi administrator," not having the full influence of an actual administrator over faculty or students. At her site, Beatrice was a disciplinary intervention between the classroom teacher and administration. At times, she was the last intervention before a teacher wrote an official referral on a student. Tabitha, a coach for almost three years, stated "[M]y previous administration actually did have me fill in as an administrator, you know, random days throughout the year when they needed somebody." At the time, she was earning her Master's in Educational Leadership, so when administration became busy or lacked personnel, they asked Tabitha to process referrals, intervene with other forms of student discipline, and assist in supervision during student lunches. Neither Celeste nor Beatrice processed student discipline officially, and during my observations, I did not see any writing coaches process student referrals. All efforts to maintain discipline involved classroom management, yet all coaches mentioned administrative discipline as an infrequent function of this role.

Summary of Coaches as Administrators. Writing coaches were teacher-leaders at their respective school sites. Not being held to a set schedule, they filled many administrative tasks as required. They provided writing-focused professional development workshops and coaching to teachers on campus, specifically 8th grade language arts teachers; however, they were also expected to support content area teachers as they implemented the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Additionally, coaches willingly conveyed information and skills gleaned in district and site meetings to teachers with full loads of students who did not have the time. They oversaw committees and tutoring programs for small groups of students and teachers, and they found themselves responsible for completing mandatory paperwork and data dissemination. Often, they covered for a teacher who was absent, and although seldom, they filled in for absent administrators. Often, they believed the extra administrative duties they performed would better be served in a way as to "support writing instruction for…students." All coaches were conflicted regarding their role as evaluators. However, although they record spending only 3.83% of their time in this fashion, I observed 16.67% of their time involved classroom walkthroughs. In focus group, the coaches stated this discrepancy was purely coincidence; however, I was left wondering whether they were accurately recording how they spent their time.

Responsibilities of Writing Coaches as Administrators

- Evaluate teaching staff informally
- Act as Instructional Leader in Writing
- Collect, Analyze, and Disseminate Data
- Act as Administrative Liaison
- Ensure Student Supervision
- Committee and Special Project Leaders
- Fill in for Absent Administrators

Figure 6: Summary of Administrative Responsibilities

Role 3: Writing Coaches Are Coaches

In the literature review void of previous studies on writing coaches, I found literacy coaches evolved from the idea of reading specialists, early positions designed to intervene directly with struggling readers (Dole, 2004 & Vogt and Shearer, 2003). As I collected and analyzed data, I found writing coaches were more like writing resource teachers because the majority of their time was spent in interventions for struggling writers, but additionally, they took on roles and responsibilities outside of a classroom teacher. I assumed their relationships with teachers would have caused their role to evolve into a writing coaching as the reading specialist evolved into a literacy coach (Cassidy, Garrett, Maxfield, & Patchett, 2010). However, although they are called writing coaches, the technical term is writing resource teacher, and they spent the least amount of time engaged in coaching responsibilities. Although coaching was a function of their position, it was the smallest function.

Coaching responsibilities included planning or debriefing with a teacher and facilitating PLCs. Modeling also fell into this category, but it is my opinion coaches did not mark the time they spend in classrooms as modeling because it took away from the goal that they must spend 80% of their time working with students. Although the categories may overlap, nine times out of ten, the focus of a coach's time in the classroom was student learning rather than modeling for a teacher with the purpose of debriefing and collaborative reflecting afterward. See Figure 7 for a breakdown of coaching responsibilities versus teaching and administrative responsibilities. Collectively coaches recorded nearly 13% of their time spent on coaching duties; however, I only observed coaching-related activities about 8% of the time. Individually, coaches logged between 10% and 15% of their time spent performing duties related to coaching such as planning with teachers and debriefing after observing teachers. Beatrice stated, "somewhere in the

description it says you support teachers, you model for teachers…" The actualization of this role varied from site to site. I assumed I would see writing coaches actually coaching teachers. Each SIP outlined the coaches' responsibilities which included coaching non-highly qualified instructors: "The coach co-plans, models, co-teaches, observes and conferences with the teacher on a regular basis."
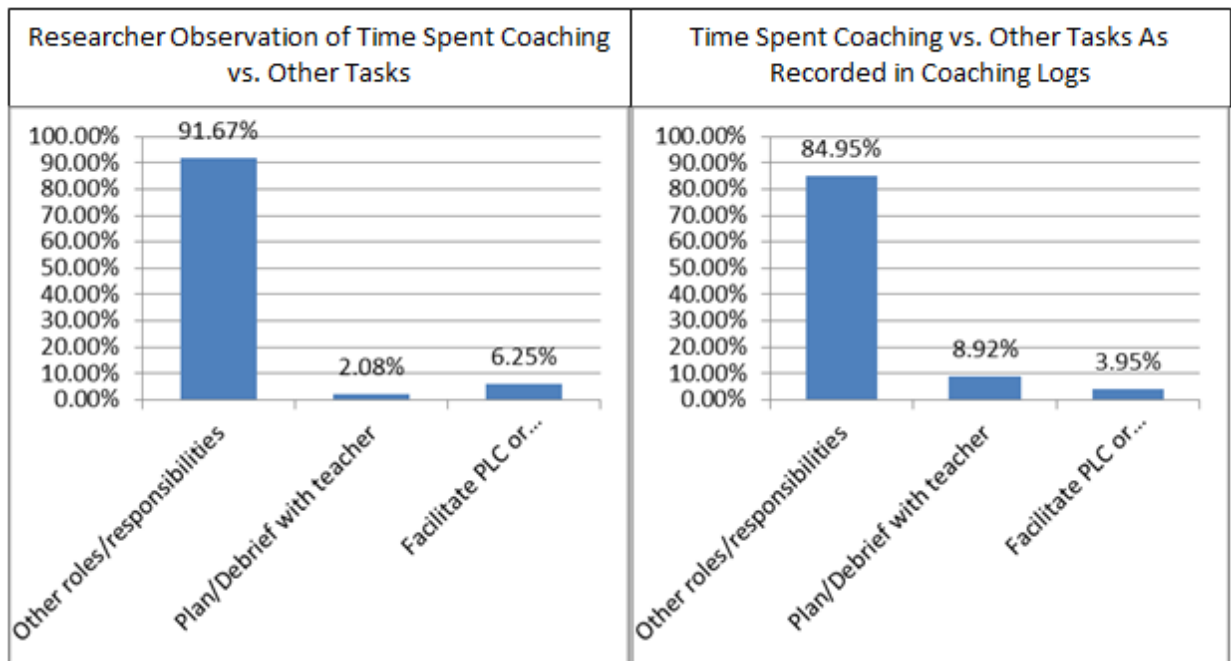
Figure 7: Summary of Coaching Role Compared to Other Roles

It was unclear if writing coaches must work with all non-highly qualified content areas as that information was not included in the plans. If they were to work with all non-highly qualified teachers, they could work in any core academic subject (English, Civics, Reading, Government, Language Arts, Economics, Mathematics, History, Science, Geography, Foreign Languages, Arts) possibly with ESE teachers and with 6th grade reading teachers who must possess the reading endorsement if they do not hold a K-6 teaching certificate.

Despite my preconceptions of coaches' duties and what was outlined in the school improvement plans, the coaching of teachers encompassed a smaller portion of their job responsibilities. I observed writing coaches spent 6.25% of their time leading professional learning communities (PLCs) or language arts department meetings and only 2.08% of their time planning or debriefing with a teacher.

Collectively, writing coaches logged seventy five hours facilitating PLCs; however, this made up 0.06% of their recorded duties. Similarly, coaches logged over one hundred hours of planning and/or debriefing with teachers, but this figure equated to 0.09% of how they spent their time. The subsequent sections outline the responsibilities writing coaches exhibited as they coached teachers.

Provide Support for Classroom Instruction. Writing coaches existed in a support role to teachers assisting them in performing duties as classroom teachers regarding planning, instruction, and assessment. Although modeling instruction was secondary to the overall goal of helping students be successful on the state writing assessment, teachers benefit vicariously through the efforts of writing coaches. Tabitha stated:

> I can't even imagine a school not having a writing coach just because I think that there
> are so many mundane little things that go on…I feel like just having that person who's
> available for those teachers…just make it that much more beneficial.

Because of the emphasis on the state writing assessment, 8th grade teachers received a majority of their attention; however, each writing coach in this study was the SAL for her department and acted as a resource for 6th and 7th grade teachers as well. In my analysis of how writing coaches spent their time, I found they are pulled in many directions, yet the coaches maintained their teachers are pulled in just as many directions. Tabitha stated: "Um I take a lot of burden off my

teachers. I've had many teachers say we are so blessed to have a writing coach full time because you do some of the things that we feel like we don't have time to do." Celeste said new teachers especially need her support:

> I have um three of them who are brand new to teaching meaning they have taught less than two years in the classroom. Um, so they're making new teacher mistakes all over the place, as they should. They…need time to develop teaching identity and they need time to know what works and what doesn't, and …teaching in a high poverty, high needs, high stress situation…

However, she also stated she exists to support teachers with "limited pedagogy" and "instructional problems." Because of this, coaches spent a portion of their time planning with teachers; Celeste added "The other thing I do is a lot of planning with teachers, um planning for the end in mind." She supported new and struggling teachers in the creation, delivery, and assessment of lessons designed to scaffold students toward success on the state writing assessment. Because coaches believed teachers' time is precious, they tried to take most of the burden associated with lesson planning for the state writing assessment off of teachers' to-do lists. Celeste stated, "Because our current district curriculum is geared toward Common Core instruction, which really has a focus on textual evidence, there is not a lot of opportunities for decontextualized prompts there…That means somebody has to create the lesson for that." Similarly, Tabitha created and supplied her department with similar state writing assessment preparatory material:

> [S]o if we're going to do monthly writes, I am providing the prompts to them and providing the planning page, and…you know doing those little kind of paperwork type

things…it still really helps them in the long run because they're not having to take

planning time to come up with things like that.

Writing coaches developed lessons designed to push students toward proficiency on the state

writing assessment, created the materials necessary for these lessons, disseminated the

information to teachers, and dependent upon the ability level of the teachers, delivered the

lessons to students, assess the results, and interpret the findings.

Coaches also interacted with students in the classrooms of seasoned veterans to support

school-wide proficiency on the state writing assessment. Tabitha explained: "The teacher I'm

with is perfectly capable of conferencing on her own, but were the two of us able to see more

students and get more feedback across? Absolutely." She believed two teachers conferencing

with students about their writing made for more conversations about writing and allowed for

students to be more metacognitive about the process of composition.

Writing coaches also existed as an "extra person to pull the students out if they need

additional help or to be in the classroom with them for additional help." When a teacher

exhausted his or her ability to help a student succeed, they turned to writing coaches to pull these

students out for small group and one-on-one sessions. For some students, it was the result of a

learning disability, for other students it was a behavioral factor. Although pull-outs and small

group instruction directly supported students, it allowed for the teacher to take his or her focus

off of a challenging situation to maintain instructional momentum in the classroom. Tabitha, who

held the title of writing coach longest summarized this duty:

I think there's been a shift. Three years ago when I took the job, it was you're working

with students, you're going to do pull-outs. Um, you're gonna tutor them. You're gonna

get them where they need to be for writing. Um, if that means going into the classroom

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and teaching, then you're gonna do that....we're also in a support role for the teachers, and if we have struggling teachers, it is also our job to help them in order to help the students in the long run.

Because of this, the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches often overlapped and blurred.

Facilitate PLCs. The coaches in this inquiry were all SALs at their school sites who had the flexibility in their schedules to interact with each group of grade-level teachers. Teachers were expected to meet regularly to discuss instruction. Administration expected writing coaches to lead the discussions in PLCs and to facilitate talk between teachers. Of all the coaches, Tabitha spent the most time working in PLCs with all grade levels. She stated, "I meet with them weekly during PLCs...we plan together, we analyze data together, we create lessons...I...have constant contact with them through either email or just touching base." The goal of PLC facilitation was to help teachers to stick to the county curriculum guide while effectively evaluating the instruction that takes place in their classrooms. The following is an excerpt from a 6th grade PLC meeting Tabitha facilitated during my observation:

Tabitha (T): I'll create...a soft calendar. Um, and then the week we get back from break and PLC, I'll bring it to show you guys and the other 6th grade teachers, but at least that will give you an idea of what to do.

Participant 1 (P1): I have a question. I think a lot of their issues...they could all be scoring higher if they could shape their own opinion on things. They are so used to just regurgitating information.

T: Is it because the prompt is not allowing them?

Participant 2 (P2): The last prompt we did…it was two articles and it asked them to explain how two weather events are different, and they tell them the same thing in two articles.

T: What happened was last year, they gave that prompt with only the first story. Well, kids didn't think it was real, so the responses were ridiculous. So this year, they gave them an informational article and a picture. Unfortunately, in the direction we're going with Common Core, it's no longer necessarily where they get to come up with an on-their-own-come-up-with-what-they-are-going-to-write-about…

Tabitha helped the teachers stay on pace through the creation of a pacing calendar utilizing their input from what worked in their classrooms. She also conveyed information from district meetings to help explain why students experienced confusion over the baseline writing prompt. As the state shifted to the CCSS, the district was already planning for new forms of assessment, so Tabitha has been preparing the 6th grade teachers to design and deliver lessons to help students write in response to a text.

Embedded Professional Development. Coaches existed as an embedded form of professional development as I assumed in Chapter 1. Topics for professional development varied depending on the needs of the school, but writing coaches decided upon topics based on observations in teachers' classrooms and questions directly from teachers. Beatrice relayed a typical teacher's question:

[A] teacher may say, "You know what? I keep getting—you know we're low on this as a department, and I know that I suck in this area. Can you help me as it relates to asking those HOT questions? I don't even know how to write one."

In this situation, the teacher was referring to higher order thinking (HOT) questions. She was able to conduct in-service workshops to aid language arts teachers in writing HOT questions tailored to specific lesson goals.

School Improvement Plans outlined the specific responsibilities coaches had dependent on individual site needs. These needs included professional development in differentiated instruction, text complexity, writing text-dependent questions, and close reading lessons. The latter were in response to Common Core State Standards initiatives which focus on close-reading a text and answering questions with support from textual evidence. Differentiated instruction involved teachers planning and implementing instruction based on the specific needs of the learners in their classrooms.

Often, writing coaches worked in conjunction with other site-based academic coaches to design and present professional development seminars and trainings. In her first individual interview, Celeste shared she was fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with the reading coach on her campus and they "provide professional development once a month to all of our social studies, language arts, reading, and elective teachers on reading and writing and literacy in the classroom." Furthermore, they hosted "lunch and learns where we position ourselves in the teacher resource room during lunch and teachers can come and we have certain topics that they ask for." Lunch and learns were smaller, less formal professional development meetings in which a handful of teachers may participate in a roundtable discussion on a topic. Beatrice and the math coach at her site have also formed a working friendship. They often collaborated side-by-side looking for places they can integrate one another's work even though the content of their trainings was different. Beatrice noted students who struggle in writing often

struggle in other academic areas, and she discovered successful practices by cooperating with other departments,

Often, teachers just wanted a quick way to obtain more resources to support what they are teaching. Tabitha stated:

> They really see me as a peer and come into my office on a regular basis and say, 'Hey, when you taught this, do you have something for it? Or do you remember anything about this? Do you have any ideas about this?

She went on to describe how a teacher had come to her earlier that week and left with so many resources when she exclaimed, "Oh my gosh! I should just come here more often." Tabitha was so excited to pass on the "files and files and files of lessons and things" she had saved to teach writing. She also displayed examples of resources in her office, such as "a word wall that's student generated," to give her teachers visual examples of classroom practices that could positively impact student writing.

Modeling. In my observations, writing coaches spent 43.75% of their time instructing students, and similarly they recorded spending 37.22% modeling or co-teaching in coaching logs. The classroom teacher was present in most situations, except for when Celeste filled in for the 8th grade teacher recovering from surgery. It was difficult to ascertain whether or not this constituted modeling as the main focus of a coach's presence was to facilitate student learning demonstrated through proficiency on mock state writing assessment activities. However, coaches often came in to deliver a lesson depending on what they saw in walkthroughs through teacher requests. Also, teachers remained in the room when coaches delivered lessons. In many ways, this situation was an opportunity for strategic mentoring practice where teachers may have viewed coaches as an experienced teacher whom they could watch in order to enact similar

teaching techniques at a later time (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). However, Sparks (1986) found modeling sessions were far more effective in producing change in mentees when followed with peer coaching, mentee observations, and discussions between coach and mentee. Unfortunately, I was unable to observe any time during which coaches entered a teacher's room with the purpose of modeling a strategy for the teacher although all coaches stated they had done this in the past. Furthermore, I only observed one session in which Celeste had a coaching conversation with a teacher after delivering a lesson in that teacher's room.

For example, Tabitha related the story of one time when she modeled a teaching practice for a teacher in her department. When one of her teachers struggled to teach students commentary Tabitha "came in for three days and either taught or co-taught or modeled a commentary lesson." She was lucky because that teacher is "always coming…because she wants to do it right," and so Tabitha had the opportunity to be in that teacher's classroom as she transitioned from teaching another subject to language arts. Two veteran teachers also had Tabitha come in "because they think it's good for the kids to see a fresh face." She shared:

> [S]o like the teacher I was with last week, she just said, "My kids need help with commentary, and I don't know how to teach it." So…I um found commentary lessons…went in and taught the lesson, and actually the teacher was taking notes while I was teaching…

Overall, I did not observe a session explicitly designated as modeling; however, all coaches indicated this was a responsibility in their job description and a byproduct of being in the classroom teaching or co-teaching.

Coaching Cycles. Actual coaching cycles comprised less than 10% of coaches' responsibilities as recorded on coaching logs. I only observed one session during which a writing

coach spoke privately to a teacher about practice in a structured fashion during planning rather than in between classes or during a PLC. However, all coaches maintained they actively seek out these cycles whenever they can fit them into their schedules. Celeste described the experience as "… a coaching cycle in that I plan with teachers the day before or we talk about what I'm going to need to push in for. Then, it's debriefing with the teacher after I teach the lesson or after we partner teach the lesson…" Tabitha echoed her explanation:

> If I have a teacher struggling with instruction, I will do a coaching cycle with them where I will sit down with them, talk about you know the concern or issue I might have seen in a walkthrough or a concern they might come to me with. Then I will go in and model for them, then I will co-teach with them. Then I will observe them and meet with them again.

Celeste and Tabitha conveyed the idea of "push[ing] in" because of some deficit either observed in a walkthrough or brought to their attention by the classroom teacher. I did not observe Beatrice in a coaching cycle, but she explained she used a similar format comparable to Celeste and Tabitha:

> So I engaged in coaching cycles with them, where a teacher would say to me, "You know, I really don't know how to chunk my instructional time, and I feel like I never finish a lesson…I end up ending in different places with one period, and I really don't know how to make sure that I'm not taking too much time on my bellwork and not taking too much time on my classwork and making sure there's a closing for every lesson." And so, I model that process for her, where I let her, you know, plan a lesson, timed it out, how long it should take for each task…I modeled for her how to incorporate the time as you're teaching, so that it's great for the kids, but it's great for you because you know you gave yourself eight minutes for this part of your lesson, and the time goes off and

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you're nowhere near finished, you're brain automatically starts going into overdrive as to what else can I set out or what am I going to move to the next stage? And obviously I'm behind schedule. Or if you're moving through the many parts of your lesson and the timer's going off and you're like this is perfect it's smooth sailing. Then, you know you're on track to do what you need to do for the day, and it really just took me modeling that for that teacher twice. They got it. Now the timer is a regular part of their instruction, they understand that if students aren't ready they don't move on and they also don't take an excessive amount of time on a task that shouldn't have taken that much time. That there are students that got it, great, make note of the ones that didn't, and those are the ones to do that small group instruction with you later.

Through discussion and modeling, Beatrice was able to help one teacher plan her lessons in a way that better allowed her to keep track of time and still reach the lesson objectives. Often, teachers just need exposure to a strategy in order to begin to assimilate the practice into their own routine. However, Celeste warned about the difference between working with students and working with teachers:

I know a lot of my…coaching friends have just gone on coaching cycles where they're conferencing. And they're calling it coaching cycles, but that's not really what they're doing. They are really doing metacognitive conferencing, and they are overriding whatever bad teaching practices are happening in their school by trying to individualize instruction while students are working on that metacognitive writing process.

In these moments, teachers may have the opportunity to observe and ask questions, but the cycle was not explicitly designed to meet teacher needs. This practice did not allow the teacher to reflect on his or her own practice, as coaches took control away from the classroom teacher in an

effort to "fix" whatever the coach perceived to be deficient. Instead the goal was to aid students in meeting the purpose and audience associated with proficiency on the state writing assessment. Also in the focus group interview, the writing coaches in my study mentioned their colleagues, who did not take part in my study, used the terms "conferencing cycle" and "coaching cycle" interchangeably. In a "conferencing cycle," the attention is more on the student rather than the teacher, and this is not a true coaching cycle.

In addition to modeling, coaches used a questioning technique similar to the technique Costa and Garmston (2002) advocate when attempting to push the coachee toward being reflective of practice. Celeste gave an example of how she starts these sessions: "Okay, I did this lesson today, and remember, what was our purpose? So, what do you see happening in the classroom?" The following is an excerpt between Celeste and a cooperating teacher I observed during a coaching cycle:

> Celeste (C): Okay, so what did you notice about them today?
>
> Teacher (T): They weren't very confident just in pulling out how they relate. Well, in the beginning they couldn't see the anecdotes. Once you gave them the example, they were doing a little better. I don't know if it was the context.
>
> C: One of the things I noticed that…there really is no such thing as clean writing…One of the things I noticed about your students was once they started to wrestle with the ideas, there was a lot of deep, great conversation…But um what I realized is you now remember we said that in their last papers they had no commentary, and we didn't expect to see it because we didn't teach it yet. So tell me what the rest of your week is like. Did they finish their embedded assessment?
>
> T: We talked about doing that tomorrow with partners.

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C: If it were me, I would…

Although Celeste advocated the use of the questioning technique, in practice I found she answered for the teacher more than she allowed the teacher to come to an answer herself. I only observed one conference in all of my observations between Celeste and a teacher. During this conference, Celeste led the conversation, rather than ask probing questions of the mentee. In a separate individual interview, she understood the importance of encouraging teacher reflection, yet in practice, she did most of the talking. Beatrice stated she used this questioning technique to probe teachers to reflect on practice; however, I did not observe her coach any of her teachers. However, Beatrice specified:

That [cognitive coaching] is something they joke and say I'm really good at because I trick them into thinking about the things that I want them to kind of think about. And by that I mean I know like I see the problem. Like I see one of the problems. And I don't want to say, "Hey your problem is blank blank blank." I want it to kind of click for themselves, so um we ask them you know prompting questions.

Despite her retelling, I did not observe any of the coaches utilize the questioning technique in a way that encouraged the teacher to speak and reflect more than the coach. However, during one observation, Beatrice participated in a district-led walkthrough aimed at monitoring school compliance to district curriculum. In a debriefing with her district liaison, the liaison used the questioning technique to probe Beatrice to explore the current status of her language arts department with regard to district-approved best practices as well as her next steps. It surprised me to see the coach being coached in the manner I expected to see with teachers. Coaches were learners too (Reed, 2009). I believe coaches are aware of cognitive coaching, but not using this technique with fidelity. Additionally, Beatrice referenced a book another writing coach shared at

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a district meeting, which all the coaches read, and outlined the process for helping teachers reflect on their practice:

> [N]ormally, you ask them questions about what their plans were for the day and what do they think was successful? Did they think anything was unsuccessful? What were some of the decisions they made to make those successful elements appear? And you know what do they think they could do differently to address those areas that they believe were weaknesses in their lesson? And um what one takeaway could they see themselves implementing right away that they may need additional help or support with? And in that process that the teacher kind of guides the discussion and where we go.

In theory, teachers guide the discussion and coaches help them probe more deeply in the process of reflection on practice. However, teachers may be unaware of the reflective process, and Tabitha went on to anticipate what the teacher may need to do in order to improve. This is often dependent on the skill level and experience of the teacher:

> I've already prioritized which fire needs to be taken care of right away, sometimes the teacher opts for fire number two, for fire number three. And as a coach I work on them in fire number two or I give them suggestions, or we plan for fire number two, and I strategically try to figure out how I'm going to get them to see fire number one. Now sometimes it's blatant…and I smile. I just have to say, the reason why these kids are off the wall is because there is no clear system in place for them. Now, how we develop that system is up to the teacher. I don't dictate like this is what you need to be doing, but what are some of the behaviors you want to stop? And what's the system you think you can work with to get those behaviors to stop. So if kids are always calling out, and that's a problem for you, what are we going to do about that? Cus' if we don't do anything about

it, tomorrow is going to be just like today, and how many todays can you handle before

you walk out? So, most of those conversations are always reflective.

The tricky part seemed to be getting teachers to focus on the most pertinent "fire." Beatrice and

the other coaches may be answering for their teachers in the event a teacher does not focus on the

area the coach feels would have the greatest positive impact on classroom practices and student

learning. In a perfect world, when coaches ask questions of teachers, it places the power of

reflection in the teachers' hands. It makes the expertise shared between coach and coachee.

Tabitha explained further:

… I don't really want to tell them what to do because I don't want to be a dictator. And I

also don't feel like I have that authority. Like I am your colleague and I may have more

expertise than you in some areas, but I'm willing to learn from you, and I know you can

learn from me. So I don't ever want to come in and be like this is the way it has to go.

The depth of these conversations can also depend on the skill level of the teachers because the

teacher may not have the ability to reflect on his or her practice deeply without the aid of the

coach. Beatrice continued with a paraphrased dialogue between herself and a teacher from a

phone call earlier that day:

Teacher (T): Um so what's the enrichment lesson for Monday, cus' I'm seeing first

period again, and I don't think we have a lesson.

Beatrice (B): Well, what do you think we should do?

T: Oh, well I was thinking blah blah blah blah blah blah.

B: You know what? That could work. I need to speak to administration about it anyway.

I think this would be the best route to go.

T: Yeah, I totally agree.

B: If not, um, what do you want to do?

T: Well can we just like do my own lesson instead of one that you prepare?

B: Oh yeah, cus' I haven't prepared one anyway, so yeah, that'll work. So just have a backup plan.

In this instance, Beatrice found the questioning technique to be empowering to teachers: "So she walks away feeling really confident. It wasn't me telling her what needs to be done… it was her idea that I validated and supported, so she's more inclined to take my suggestions later." However, the success of the questioning technique can depend on the situation; she pointed out the drawbacks to asking teachers to respond through reflective questioning, "Um sometimes teachers are just that bad and you don't have time to coach them through." This comes back to the time constraints coaches have to guarantee student success on the state writing assessment. Coaches believed at times action is needed sooner rather than later, and they could not wait for teachers to have a realization on their own. This may be why Celeste answered her own questions for the cooperating teacher. Dependent on the level of expertise and experience of the teacher, coaches needed to make strategic decisions regarding coaching opportunities.

After all walkthroughs, Tabitha believed it was important to have a discussion about what she saw in the teachers' classrooms:

So every time I do an official walkthrough, I call them in individually, and I show them their percentage and talk to them about what elements they were missing or what elements could be worked on or what they were doing really well.

I only observed one formal discussion between Celeste and a cooperating teacher, but each coach tried to touch base with all the teachers in the language arts department regarding walkthrough

and formative assessment data. However, many coaching cycles were really coaching moments in between class periods where Tabitha or another coach asked teachers to reflect on the process:

>Tabitha: Oh how do you think that went? Or what do you think we should change for this period?
>
>Teacher: I don't know if it's 'cus it's Friday, or it it's because of the activity, but they just don't seem as on top of it as they were yesterday

Tabitha then worked with the teacher in conversation to brainstorm some of the causes for the students' struggles and changed what they could do to make it better for the next class. She modeled flexibility in the process of teaching and helped that teacher realign instructional decisions in the moment. She summed up how she can tell if a coaching cycle in combination with informal conversations with teachers is working:

>[I]f the first time I do a walkthrough, if nine out of my ten teachers haven't written their objective correctly, but then I meet with them individually and go over with them the formula for writing objectives, and then the next time I go in, they've written it correctly, obviously they've picked up something from that.

Likewise. Beatrice held conversations with her teachers following walkthroughs in order to drive instruction or open the channel to talk about pedagogy within the language arts department. She used information from walkthroughs to frame discussions within PLCs:

>I start to infuse different ideas and topics to shape our PLC and a teacher may say, "You know what? I keep getting—you know we're low on this as a department, and I know that I suck in this area. Can you help me as it relates to asking those HOT (higher order thinking) questions? I don't even know how to write one."

Bringing walkthrough information to teachers' attention allowed for teachers to be made aware of potential areas for improvement and coaches capitalized on these teachable moments.

  Coaching Summary. The title "writing coach" is deceiving. In discovering the official term "writing resource teacher," it made sense why coaching duties were often informal and secondary to student instruction. Writing coaches saw themselves as a resource for all teachers at their school site in writing, with particular attention to the language arts department. In this capacity, they had the opportunity to be on-going sources of professional development and coaching through site-based workshops and coaching cycles. However, coaching duties were often consequences of coaches being in the same place at the same time as a teacher, such as delivering a lesson. In these settings, teachers had the opportunity to learn from coaches modeling and to exchange reflective thoughts with coaches between classes and during lulls in activity during lessons. These opportunities did not clearly constitute a reality. Only in cases where teachers actively sought out feedback from coaches or coaches noticed egregious flaws in teacher practice were coaches actively participating in coaching cycles. Time is a major factor as coaches were under pressure to increase student scores on the state assessment.

Responsibilities of Writing Coaches as Coaches

- Support person for classroom instruction
- Facilitator for professional learning communities
- Data analyst
- Model for teachers
- Embedded professional development resource
- Lead coaching cycles

Figure 8: Summary of Coaching Responsibilities

Research Question 3: The Evaluation of Writing Coaches

Research question three sought to answer in what ways three writing coaches perceived their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers. However, whether a writing coach performed the role of a teacher, an administrator, or a coach, their responsibilities existed to ensure school-wide student proficiency on the state writing assessment examination. Coaches tied their effectiveness to student test scores above all else. Tabitha explicitly stated her main responsibility and the tenet on which she is evaluated is "first and foremost…to increase the writing scores at my school." In a subsequent interview, Celeste concurred: "So now our job has shifted from resource teacher to the [state writing assessment] security blanket." Again, Beatrice noted early in her second interview, "[Y]ou focus on making sure those writing scores like by any means necessary; it's like writing, writing, writing, writing."

Similarly, when probed to reflect on her main role, she stated:

> Above anything else, it's to improve the scores. I wouldn't even say maintain because writing coaches are only at low-performing Title I schools. If we maintain our scores, then there's no growth, and we'd still be at 40% of students proficient, which is horrible…So I think my job is to make sure there's growth by any means necessary.

Throughout our conversations, we would come back again to the idea the state writing assessment scores dominated all decision-making within the job of a coach because ultimately their evaluations rested on those scores. Beatrice laments, "It's just scores, scores, scores, and what can we do to get those scores?"

In a focus group interview, the coaches also clarified their principal completed an evaluation. See Appendix G for a sample employee evaluation document for non-classroom individuals. This evaluation focused on six areas: instructional impact, planning and preparation,

professional behaviors, professional relationships, professional skills, and communication. Instructional impact holds the greatest weight with 10 points awarded to individuals deemed outstanding. Coaches reiterated state writing achievement scores dictate their score in this area and may impact whether coaches receive high marks in planning and preparation, professional behaviors, and professional skills. Also, the coaches designated some areas arbitrary. Celeste believed part of the evaluation judged "silly things, like professional behaviors and showing up to work on time." In Chapter 5, I make recommendations for evaluating writing coaches the coaches believed would more accurately and fairly capture the responsibilities they perform as told to me in focus group interviews.

Because of the emphasis on student testing, I found writing coaches did not primarily exist in a supportive role to teachers as I previously assumed and stated in Chapter 1. Instead, a majority of their time is spent working directly with students followed by performing administrative tasks. Coaches perceived state writing assessment scores dominate their own perceived effectiveness as well as how administrators ultimately view their efforts. According to Tabitha:

> [I]n order to increase the scores, I have to know where my students are, I have to know where my teachers are, and I have to have the knowledge and the strategies to get them where they need to be—both the students and the teachers.

She summarized why coaches need to perform multiple roles and responsibilities in order to help students and teachers grow as writers and instructors of writing, respectively. All coaches anxiously awaited release of the scores in mid to late May to see if they will score highly, especially in the area of instructional impact.

Research Question 4: Teacher Conceptions of Coaches' Impact

The final research question sought to answer in what ways middle school teachers perceive writing coaches impact their writing beliefs and pedagogy. Two-hundred and thirty five teachers worked among the three sites in the inquiry. I emailed an introductory letter with the link to an online survey to all teachers at each site which offered a chance to win one $50.00 Visa gift card for voluntary survey completion. Teachers provided the information I collected through the electronic survey. A total of forty-seven teachers responded to communicate their perceptions of writing coaches; this was a 20% completion rate. I deleted one response for which the individual did not mark any answers, and I assumed he/she followed the link in error. Three of the remaining forty-six respondents failed to provide demographic information, and I removed their responses making the total survey pool forty-three teachers. Appendix C provides a copy of the survey. See Table 7 for descriptive information regarding participant demographics.

Survey respondents were diverse in the courses they taught, the years of experience they held, and their highest degree earned. Overall, the teachers in the sample held a bachelor's degree and taught in a Language Arts or Reading classroom. A large number of teachers with fifteen or more years teaching experience participated. A majority of the teachers reported they had a positive relationship with the writing coach at their school sites, would seek out the advice of a writing coach for teaching writing, and believe her to be a valuable source of professional development.

See Figures 9 through 12 for a summary of response rates for each survey question. Over half of the teachers reported they were able to conference with the writing coach at their site at least once a month. Attebury and Bryk (2011) had similar findings with 80-90% of teachers in their inquired interacted with coaches 0.79 times per month. Every language arts teacher save for

two reported they agreed (n=3; 23%) or strongly agreed (n=8; 62%) they conferenced at least once a month with their site's coach. This would correlate to coaching logs in which coaches logged their time spent modeling in language arts teachers' classrooms. The sole student intervention specialist and physical education teacher also strongly agreed they were able to conference with the writing coach monthly. Years teaching experience and highest degree earned did not seem to impact whether or not teachers reported that they conferenced with the coach as I found no significant trends in the data.

Table 7: Survey Demographic Information

	n	%
Course Taught		
Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)	3	6.98%
Business Technology	1	2.33%
Civics	1	2.33%
History	6	13.95%
Language Arts	13	30.23%
Mathematics	4	9.30%
Media Specialist	2	4.65%
Music	1	2.33%
Physical Education	1	2.33%
Reading	6	13.95%
Science	4	9.30%
Student Intervention Specialist	1	2.33%
Years Teaching Experience		
0-2	6	13.95%
3-5	6	13.95%
6-8	7	16.28%
9-11	5	11.63%
12-14	5	11.63%
15+	14	32.56%
Highest Degree Earned		
Bachelor's	24	55.81%
Master's	17	39.53%
Doctorate	2	4.65%
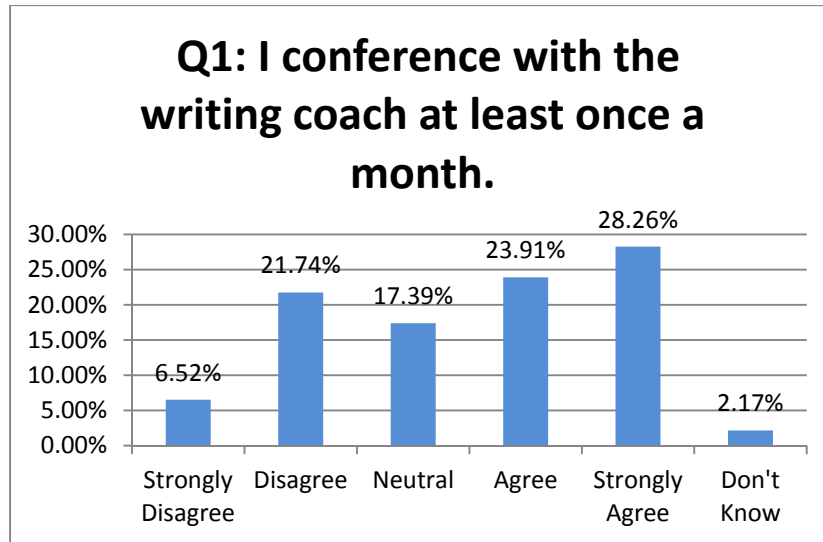
Figure 9: Summary of Likert Item 1

Surprisingly, reading teachers reported varied interaction with the writing coach despite the relationship between reading and writing (Applebee & Langer 2009). Each marked a different category from strongly disagreeing through neutral through strongly agreeing. The remainder of the content areas and elective teachers varied. The music teacher and business education teacher marked disagreed which I interpret to mean they do not meet at least monthly with the writing coach. Likewise, the two media specialists were neutral and disagreed that they were able to meet respectively. One AVID teacher strongly agreed, one agreed, and one strongly disagreed. History teachers split down the middle with three teachers reporting disagree and three teachers agreeing; the one civics teacher, also a social science, agreed he/she was able to meet monthly. Science teachers reported much like the reading teachers. One science teacher disagreed, another was neutral, the third agreed, and the final respondent strongly agreed. Coaches spent the least amount of time with math teachers. Two of the three math teachers in the study disagreed concerning their ability to conference monthly and one was neutral and one agreed.
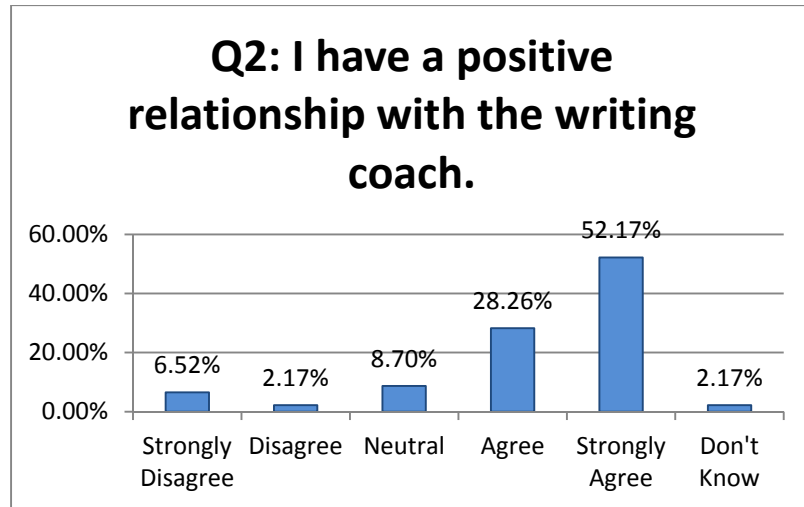
Figure 10: Summary of Likert Item 2

In evaluating their relationship with the writing coach, all but one language arts teacher in the study believed they had a positive relationship with the coach at their site. The three teachers who strongly disagreed they had a positive relationship were the music teacher, one of the three AVID teachers, and a reading teacher. One language arts teacher disagreed he/she had a positive relationship, but marked he/she was an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) language arts teacher.

Teachers who disagreed their relationships with the writing coach were positive existed at either end of the spectrum in years teaching experience. The music teacher who strongly disagreed had one year of experience, while the AVID teacher and reading teacher who also strongly disagreed, had twenty and nineteen years teaching experience respectively. The teacher with the most experience, forty-three years, believed he or she and the writing coach did not possess a positive relationship. Highest degree earned did not seem to correlate with whether or not the respondent believed his/her relationship to be positive.

Q3: I will seek out the advice of the writing coach when I need help teaching writing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
2.17%	0%	2.17%	34.78%	58.70%	2.17%
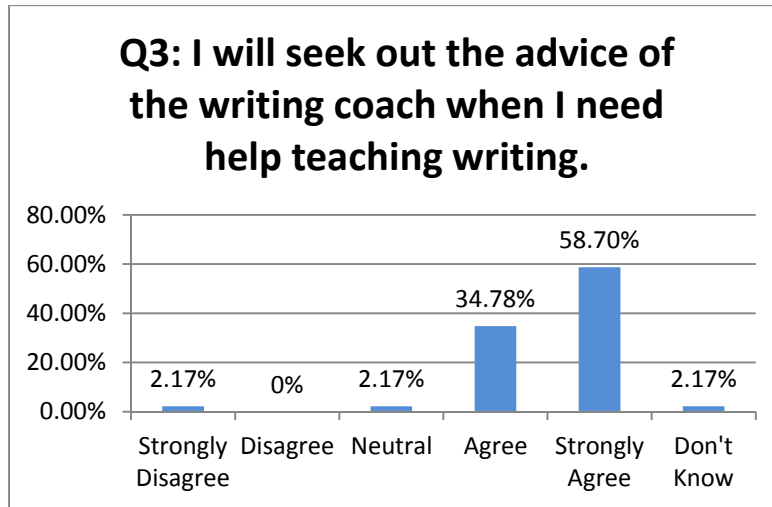
Figure 11: Summary of Likert Item 3

Only one teacher in the inquiry reported he/she strongly disagreed he/she would seek out advice from a writing coach when teaching writing, and this respondent, the AVID teacher with twenty years of teaching experience, also reported his/her relationship with the writing coach was not positive. The one neutral response was from a math teacher with nineteen years teaching experience. Highest degree earned and years teaching experience did not seem to impact whether or not teachers reported they would seek out the advice of a writing coach when it came to teaching writing; the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Likewise, this trend repeated when I asked teachers to evaluate whether or not the writing coach was a valuable source of professional development. The same AVID teacher who reported he/she would not seek advice reported he/she believe the writing coach was not a valuable form of professional development with the remainder of teachers categorizing the writing coach as valuable on-site professional development. The neutral response came from a science teacher with seven years teaching experience. However, highest degree earned and years teaching experience did not seem to impact the response. Overall, 92.48% of survey respondents reported writing coaches were a valuable source of professional development.

Q4: The writing coach is a valuable source of professional development.
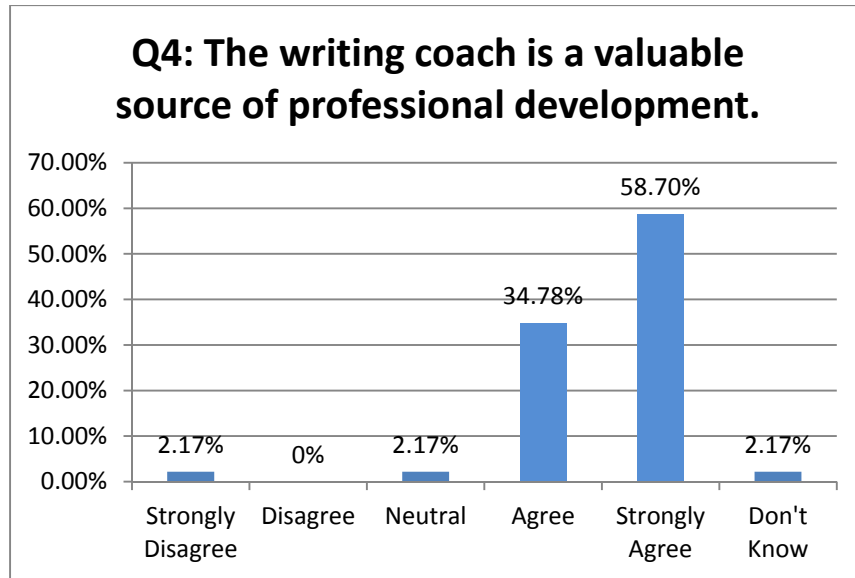
Figure 12: Summary of Likert Item 4

Open-Ended Teacher Responses

I included one open-ended response question on the survey to discover teachers'

perceptions of how the writing coach has influenced them as professionals with specific regard to

how writing coaches may impact their beliefs about writing and writing instruction. Teachers

made a variety of positive comments to share how writing coaches impact them at their school

sites and in their practice; however, they did not explicitly state in what ways writing coaches

influenced their beliefs or pedagogy with regard to writing. Findings from data analysis indicated

teachers believed writing coaches were a valuable form of professional development who

support teachers' instruction and act as a knowledgeable resource for teachers. The following

section delineates two responsibilities teachers believed coaches fulfill in their role as a writing

coach.

Support Teachers' Instruction. Teachers perceived writing coaches as support persons

to help them become better instructors with the end goal being to positively impact student

learning. This echoes previous findings where coaches facilitate learning of new skills and

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augment a teacher's current skill set (Joyce & Showers, 1981, 1982). Language arts teachers

believed coaches achieve this through modeling, professional development (Cantrell & Hughes,

2008), and conferencing with students in the classroom whereas content area teachers believed

coaches achieve this through collaboration on lessons and providing resources for writing across

the curriculum. It is unknown whether verbal feedback was the primary means through which

coaches could help teachers improve as suggested by past studies (Costa & Garmston, 2002;

Kent, 1985; Neubert & Bratton, 1987; Rogers, 1987.)

One language arts teacher described the coach at her site as being able to "come into a

difficult class and get them to do things I could only imagine." Through modeling, coaches help

language arts teachers "write…objectives," "teach lessons differently," "creat[e]

accommodations," and "maintain the pacing" in order to "stay on track with District objectives."

When teachers conduct one-on-one writing conferences, they believed writing coaches "assist in

writing conferences to assist students on an individual basis," thereby reaching more students

than one teacher can. Teachers also mentioned writing coaches give "advice on how to score"

and "help with data" to aid teachers in tracking student progress toward state writing assessment

proficiency goals. Lastly, they were thankful coaches acted as liaisons to keep teachers "posted

on developments in Language Arts from the District" in "PLCs." They believed these PLCs

helped bring them together to plan for instruction and discuss shared concerns (Johnston &

Wilder, 1992).

Reading teachers also benefited from writing coaches through professional development

and communication. One reading teacher believed:

[O]ur writing coach is actively involved in all language arts classes on a regular basis

which reflects in student writing in all subject areas. We are able to connect what the

students are doing in LA (language arts) to our curriculum since we are always well

informed. As a reading teacher, this enables us to use common language since we are also

writing in our curriculum.

Another reading teacher thought "training opportunities to improve writing strategies" influenced

him/her.

Although coaches did not report being able to spend much time in content area

classrooms, content area teachers believe coaches promote writing across the curriculum. One

teacher believed the writing coach "provid[es] resources and tools that can be implemented in

my Social Studies Classroom." The Civics instructor lauded the writing coach who "has put

together various writing activities that have been extremely helpful and ha[ve] helped me

implement writing techniques in my classroom." Another History teacher believed the writing

coach "worked with certain students…with reading and writing projects" in his/her classroom.

The Business Technology teacher also thought his/her coach "has offered resources to aid

in teaching our students to become stronger writers." An AVID instructor believed they

"collaborated on lesson plans to meet the needs of our students." Another AVID instructor

related the writing coach's aid to positive gains and writing assessment scores: "She has helped

me in planning writing activities that will reinforce what my students are learning in Language

Arts that will help prepare them for the [district writing assessment]." The district created a mock

version of the state writing assessment 6th and 7th grade students take while 8th graders take the

state administered test. It is a practice session to help prepare students for the testing scenario

they will encounter in 8th grade.

In math, the writing coach helped one teacher show "how kids can take notes to improve

their learning process." Another math teacher believed the writing across the curriculum

initiative helped him/her "incorporate writing in a non-Language Arts classroom." The last math teacher in the study went so far as to say "I love her idea for the writing across the curriculum…" He/she believed the coach "has raised many scores across the school" in reference to meeting state writing assessment proficiency goals.

Writing coaches influenced science classrooms as well. One teacher perceived the coach "helped me learn and implement new strategies to teach writing." A second science teacher believed coaches "provid[e] whole school direction regarding writing goals." The third science teacher mentioned a coach influenced him/her by giving "advice on how to score;" this is perhaps an example of how other subject areas may be involved with scoring student practice tests or assessing writing within content area classes.

Go-To Person on Campus. Even outside of supporting classroom instruction, faculty members perceived the writing coach as a valuable resource to support a positive school climate (Hoffman, 2009). This may be because, as the business teacher stated, the writing coaches' "vision is the same." The student intervention specialist considered the writing coach to be "vital in my conferences with students when they fall behind in their classes." The physical education teacher stated: "Our writing coach not only focuses on writing, but she also tackles other parts of the school, such as Relay for Life. The kids enjoy her and are excited when she comes in to teach a class." Repeatedly, teachers believed writing coaches were "such a positive role model not only to our students, but to the faculty as well." They were willing to "drop everything" and were "always…available to support me." One math teacher stated: "She goes above and beyond." Similarly, an AVID instructor stated, "My writing coach is always willing to lend a helping hand…"

Summary of Teacher Survey

Regardless of whether or not teachers conferenced with coaches regularly or believed they had a positive relationship with the writing coach at their site, overwhelmingly they would go to the writing coach for support in writing instruction as they viewed her as an important form of professional development. Over 90% of teachers who responded agreed or strongly agreed a writing coach was a valuable source of on-site professional development and would go to a writing coach for support when teaching writing. Teachers thought this way irrespective of subject taught, years teaching experience, or highest degree earned.

In as little as a few words to a few sentences, most teachers answered the open-ended survey item: In what ways has the writing coach influenced you as a teacher, specifically with regard to your writing beliefs and pedagogy? I discovered teachers believed writing coaches existed to support student learning as a model of good teaching and a resource for teachers. They also believed the writing coaches were a positive force school-wide whom they could go to for assistance at a moment's notice. No teachers specifically mentioned how a coach influenced his/her writing beliefs or pedagogy apart from stating "help with scoring" or "improved writing instruction." I assume the previous comments refer to the state writing assessment. No teachers mentioned a coaching cycle in which a coach personally worked with him/her to reflect on teaching.

Challenges Writing Coaches Face

As I continued to ask myself what the data were a study of and what the participants were trying to tell me, I realized much came back to the idea of how coaches face and overcome challenges. All three participants indicated a good evaluation and more importantly student learning and growth measured through the state assessment was paramount. I perceived they

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wanted to excel in their positions and fulfill the responsibilities each role encompasses. However, Beatrice summarized the core variable upon which all other coding eventually revolved: "[t]he problem with being a coach is all the things you can't control." I did not set out to explore the challenges faced by writing coaches, but through conversation and data analysis, this section is vital to understanding the experiences of the participants. All of the roles, responsibilities, and traits coaches exhibited came back to challenging aspects of the position and ways coaches could cope with their challenges. The next section discusses five major challenges writing coaches face.

Challenge 1: Unclear Job Roles and Responsibilities

Coaches' perceptions of their job responsibilities and roles often differed from the actual execution of those roles. Brustman (2006) found organizational alignment influenced whether or not teachers successfully implemented the efforts of a PD opportunity designed to help teachers be better teachers of writing. When roles and responsibilities are unclear, the behaviors of writing coaches may be out of alignment with school and district goals. Also, the clarity of coaches' roles and responsibilities directly impacts to what extent they have control over their situation and indirectly impacts coaches' perceived effectiveness. Site and district administration directly impact the realization of coaches' roles and responsibilities, and writing coaches then filter their interpretation of administrative expectations through their personal lenses. However, what coaches believe they should do and what they are told to do often do not coincide. Beatrice, Celeste, and Tabitha acknowledged the importance of ensuring school-wide proficiency on the state writing test as the overarching goal, but that does not completely correspond to their beliefs about creating literate students. District and administrative goals superseded coaches' beliefs at times and cause the locus of control to shift toward being external. Celeste expressed, "[Y]ou

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know, there's a disconnect there between what could the job entails and what the job really needs to entail." The pressure to quickly increase scores on the state writing assessment leaves coaches at a pedagogical crossroads. For example, Beatrice remarked:

> There's so much pressure to do what is going to move the numbers of your students, and that's really my focus because at the end of the day I feel like it has to be my focus in this position because if my students don't move by year two then the lens is reflected back on me. And yes, there may have been a lot of things in play last year that prevented it, those things really aren't in play this year. So, if they don't move it's my fault, and that's what I've told myself. But that kind of conflicts with my own personal views of education because to me it's so much more than testing. You know, I want to build teachers.

The outside influence of state mandated testing made writing coaches question their effectiveness in their ability to help students become better writers and teachers become better teachers of writing. Because the state measured school performance through high-stakes testing, administration first and foremost cared about test scores. Perception versus reality influenced coaches' sense of control; when their perception did not match reality, they perceived a loss of internal control and greater job dissatisfaction. Beatrice continued, "It seems like now there, to me, there's been a disconnect regarding what I thought this position was going to be and what it actually is. And maybe I didn't pay attention in my job description…" The difference between her awareness of what she thought this position could be and what it is negatively influenced her job satisfaction. Celeste believed, "[O]riginally, the district had told us our job was to improve learning and writing and teachers and you know, it…was kind of like this nirvana position...so a lot of us were seduced by the sexiness of that." Once coaches realized test scores, an

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uncontrollable, outside force, were the major means of evaluation, the way in which they viewed their job changed. Celeste explained:

> [W]e were told…we would be taking on a position that would impact writing student-wide…We had the liberties to do that in the first year of the writing coach cadre and many of us did take that opportunity to make effective change. Um, all of us who did take on that role, our scores, [state writing] scores, didn't yield the kind of results that the district had hoped that we would.

She then echoed Beatrice's sentiments: "It's just bittersweet. You know, I think that there could be more done with our position, but not when one day in the writing life of a child is paramount to how we determine their future." Langer (2002) used data from a five-year study on 25 secondary schools to examine how schools could plan literacy curriculum that did not place so much emphasis on one day in the writing lives of children, yet make high-achievement on state assessments a natural byproduct of active student learning. She found classrooms that engaged the readers and writers in authentic real-world settings, rather than contrived on-demand testing, coupled with on-going professional development for teachers had greater lasting impact on student learning. Deliberate teaching to a high-stakes test narrows the curriculum to the subjects that are tested (Au, 2007), in this case the creation of an expository or argumentative essay, ignoring the many other purposes and audiences for writing. In a meta-analysis of 123 documents, Graham and Perin (2007) found large effect sizes for curricula which taught students strategies to plan, revise, and edit their own work (0.82) as well as provided professional development for teachers in the process approach to teach writing (0.46). Furthermore, this study echoed the findings confirmed the components of successful writing curriculums the National Writing Project advocates: peers working together, inquiry, and process approach to instruction.

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However, the writing coaches did not have the authority to impact curricular decisions regarding writing instruction unless they could prove these decisions could positively impact how well students perform on the state writing assessment right away. It seems the individuals in my inquiry would rather drill on-demand writing because they are expected to dramatically increase scores in a short amount of time. In order to show an increase in scores, writing coaches focused on building an essay around decontextualized prompts which followed a formulaic writing structure. Across all sites, coaches used similar academic vocabulary and taught concurrent lessons with the end goal of student proficiency on one test. All practices directly conflicted with their beliefs in taking a process approach to writing instruction. Unfortunately, teaching to the test, which may work in the short-term, does not transfer into later writing situations, and this practice continues despite past researcher. As Applebee stated in the 1980 report to the U.S. Department of Education: "One of the major problems with an overemphasis on mechanical writing tasks is that the students may never learn to use such resources on their own, relying instead upon the structure or scaffold that the teacher has provided" (101).

Furthermore, coaches' loci of control shifted further toward external when they were expected to perform multiple duties. Beatrice stated:

I feel like there's a disconnect between what we're instructed our responsibilities are and what it may actually look like at your school site…there's like um you know division that's been given to me and to us from the district…I believe at least at my school site the expectation is that writing scores do need to move, but there are additional responsibilities that are put on my plate that don't necessarily coincide with making sure writing scores move…[F]or instance, um we're teachers, but they communicate with as if we're coaches, but um we're also like administrators...so when my school wants me to

have the coach-hat, I'm supposed to have the coach hat on. And then when I'm supposed

to be considered a teacher, then they want me to be held responsible for teacher things

such as duty…

Site administrators dictated coaches' priorities. At her school, Celeste was discouraged by the

amount of time she spent supervising students in the lunchroom and passing periods:

Um it takes an hour of my day to do lunch and sidewalk duty out of a 7 ½ hour time that I

could be with students and teachers…[I]t ends up that we (academic coaches) have to

cover for each other, so it's now uncommon that you would have two hours in any given

day because you're doing two different sets of lunches. So again, you know that just

reduces the time that you actually have in the classroom.

She went on to vent her disapproval when she factored in what the district spent for that

supervision: "[C]ertainly the district paying me thirty dollars an hour every day over the course

of the year to do a lunch duty…that's a lot of money they are spending for student supervision

only and not impacting student achievement." Tabitha, who had more leeway to focus on

coaching and teaching responsibilities, did not experience some of the frustration Celeste and

Beatrice encountered when directed to sit on duty or head up side projects such as tutoring and

character education.

Being asked to straddle multiple responsibilities is frustrating to coaches. Beatrice

explained the difficulty of trying to juggle various tasks:

I think I kind of like being a resource teacher more than a coach. I want like either-or

[sic]. I don't want to live in the world of both…But the resource teacher has more

interaction with the students whereas the coach has more interaction with the teacher and

with admin. And, I believe that the district…and our administrators want us to be both,

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but our job description says resource teacher…I think, and that is why the water is so muddled—because it says resource teacher and there are resource teacher expectations, but then they want you to coach, which they kind of blur some of those lines together cus' some of our responsibilities are things coaches would do, but we're not coded as a coach. So I don't know if for supplement purposes because reading coaches get an extra supplement as a coach; I don't know what it is, but I think that gives us a little bit of a grey area.

Coaches wore many hats. At times they were asked to be teachers, at times they were asked to be administrators, and at other times they were expected to coach. With a myriad of responsibilities, coaches were expected to balance numerous spinning plates. Beatrice lamented: "[A]t the end of the day, no one is going to say to you, 'Well, what were all the other things on your plate that stopped you or prevented you from hitting this goal?' They're just going to ask you, 'Why didn't you hit the goal?'" With numerous responsibilities, coaches spent a great portion of their time planning their schedules in an attempt to balance their responsibilities and find time to perform each well. The absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities coupled with the pressure to perform detracted from an internal locus of control. Writing coaches were frozen and isolated in the decision making process when it was not clear to which responsibility they should allocate their time.

Challenge 2: Not Enough Time to Balance Responsibilities

Because they had a flexible schedule, administrators often viewed writing coaches as having more time for side projects and additional roles. Subsequently, time became a major factor in directly influencing locus of control and indirectly determining coaches' perceived effectiveness. Incidentally related to time was the size of the coach's school, which influenced

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the amount of time they had to reach individual students and teachers. Coaches did not have the luxury to allocate time toward practices and activities that did not have the chance to positively impact state writing assessment scores; however, they were often asked to perform additional responsibilities outside of teaching or coaching. Smith (2007) and Zigmond (2006) found literacy coaches' experienced challenges from numerous interruptions from school and district mandates during which their time was pulled in multiple directions. Writing coaches experienced the same challenges to fulfill their classroom-related duties. First and foremost, coaches needed to find ways to directly impact student learning, usually through teaching or co-teaching.

Beatrice believed she was burdened by tasks that did not relate to writing. She disagreed with her function in a school-wide tutoring program aimed at allowing students to make up failed credit hours during the school day:

So, it's a little frustrating to know that of the hours you have in the day that your administrator would want you to spend forty-five minutes in a classroom babysitting kids who didn't do their work in class to do it during the school day and it doesn't directly connect to your role as a writing coach per se because nothing that you're doing in that period is going to impact the quality of your writing scores.

This was forty-five minutes every day in which Beatrice could have worked with a classroom of students or coached a teacher. She had to find ways to balance her teaching and coaching responsibilities around this administrative duty. Celeste vented her frustration upon transitioning from a classroom teacher heading a committee to a coach: "People view your schedule because it is a um flexible schedule as having flexible time. Those two aren't synonymous…when I was in the classroom before, I had a team of people. Now it's become just me…" Her administration

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believed she would have the time to individually perform the work an entire committee previously handled.

Despite the time coaches allocated toward administrative tasks that did not impact teaching or learning, they were still expected to spend most of their time helping students to succeed on the state writing test. Celeste shared:

Um, our superintendent in our district has required, "required," and I say that in air quotes, required, 'cause um our contract says that we're supposed to be with students an average of three hundred minutes a day which would put us at 62.5% of our day, but our superintendent has said that all coaches will be in the classroom 80% of their day or six hours a day you're with students, not including an hour for lunch duty, you know, and where does the rest of that time go for the rest of the things that you need to do?...So, there's this vision that we're just living in the classrooms with teachers and we're planning...but the time isn't there to like make it all happen.

In the coaching logs I examined, only Tabitha was able to log 80% of her time with students. Unlike Celeste and Beatrice, Tabitha's administration did not require her to supervise students for any portion of the day. Although coaches wanted to spend the time with students as they feel they can directly impact writing scores through interaction with students in classrooms, with the additional tasks placed on coaches it was nearly impossible to spend six hours a day teaching. During the weeks Tabitha reached this goal, she was checking emails and planning outside of normal work hours. She reflected:

What I realized is that there were weeks where I barely got that 80%, and there was no time. So I feel like there's a little bit of disconnect between what I thought about 80%. In my head, I thought, "Oh, that's teaching"…and I found that it was very, very difficult to

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get everything done and still hit that 80% even when I was in classrooms almost like all

day every day.

The amount of time district personnel and administration expected coaches to spend with

students seemed skewed. The goal of reaching 80% seemed lofty at best when Tabitha

exclaimed:

Sometimes I didn't even have a planning period during the day because it was my goal to

get to every 8th grade class at least twice, and in order to do that I was literally scheduled

every day for two months.

At the same time, coaches were expected to positively impact teacher practice. Beatrice

tried to find the time to meet with teachers in a structured fashion, but she had to prioritize her

time based on what will quickly impact state writing assessment scores:

I don't have the time to do a full coaching cycle with my teachers because it impacts, it

takes away from the time I'm actually working with students. Because as a teacher, you

work with students. But then as a coach, you're supposed to be working with teachers.

So, I can honestly say that I have not engaged in a full coaching cycle with no one

teacher this year. Not one.

I expected to see coaching cycles taking place, but when I observed coaches throughout their

daily routines, it was apparent they filled every hour of their day with a task, often even a

working lunch. Most coaching took place informally because of time constraints.

When asked about finding time to help integrate other district initiatives or perceived best

practices, Tabitha stated:

I have to get these kids doing [the state writing assessment] style prompts and LDC

(Literacy Design Collaborative) and CIS (Comprehension Instructional Sequence) are not

necessarily that. And that's what we're scored on this year, so that's where my focus has

to be.

Although she believed these instructional sequences may help students grapple with challenging

text in a way which connects writing to reading, it was not something to which Tabitha could

allot her time. They did not have the time to step beyond 8th grade language arts classrooms until

after the state writing assessment. When questioned, Tabitha explained:

[A]s far as going into 6th and 7th grade classrooms and doing conferencing with them, no.

I'm told to focus mainly on 8th grade because they're the only ones that take the [state

writing] test, and that's what counts against our school grade.

Administrative duties consumed a large portion of writing coaches' time. Celeste

explained, "[S]ome of the things that still count against us is data analysis…but certainly that is a

hefty part of our job…to…look where there is effectiveness and where there's not effectiveness."

When she said "count against us," she was referring to the district coaching logs. Time spent in

site meetings and district meetings did not detract from coaches' ability to spend 80% of their

time in classrooms teaching students; however, site-based administrative duties like data

analysis, duty, and class coverage detracted from their ability to meet this goal. Writing coaches

were expected to collect, analyze, and disseminate information regarding assessment data.

Furthermore, administration could dictate professional development efforts. Beatrice explained:

For instance there is a lot of here at my school emphasis on writing across the curriculum

which is kind of good, but I feel like before you can focus on writing across the

curriculum we need to make sure that teachers are strong in their own content areas first.

And I do know that is where we are going as a nation, but that's not where we are right

now. So I would prefer as far as my professional development activities to focus more on

just language arts and reading rather than the whole school, and a lot of what I've done at

my school site is whole school.

Administrators expected coaches to structure their time to perform their administrative

responsibilities in addition to teaching 80% of the time. Celeste reminded me: "[T]here's no one-

size-fits-all approach, and every teacher needs something different and our students need

something different, and that data analysis part is huge as an ongoing piece, but there's not time

allotted for that in this job either." Time did not seem to be on the coaches' sides.

The size of the coach's site also influenced how they balanced their time. Celeste stated,

"[T]ime is a thing that we don't have as a luxury in this job," and her site had the fewest

students. Tabitha bemoaned the size of her school, " [W]e have over fifteen hundred students,

almost five hundred 8th graders…It's a lot easier to see…two hundred students on a regular basis

than me seeing more than twice that…" She complained coaches at smaller sites had a much

better chance of allocating their time to multiple roles when there were fewer students and

teachers who require assistance. Tabitha added:

> [W]hen I talk to our other academic coaches—reading, science, and math—it's their
>
> number one challenge as well…My science coach and I have this conversation all the
>
> time. He's like okay School D (pseudonym) has a full time science coach, and they have
>
> three science teachers. Three. How am I going to be as effective as that person when I
>
> have eight or nine or ten teachers teaching that grade level?...As far as other content
>
> areas, I have not been able to do that here…again size.

As the coaches in my study had no control over student population or staff size, they

believed the larger a school became, the more difficult it was to perform their responsibilities as

a coach and teacher with administrative duties piled on top. 8th grade language arts classrooms

required the majority of their coaching and teaching time, so the larger a school site became, the more difficult it was to assist in the classrooms of 6th and 7th grade language arts teachers and all content area teachers.

The diversity of the student body also influenced coaches' perceived effectiveness and locus of control. Celeste stated:

[W]e are very diverse with our student population here. That is a blessing, and it is a coaching nightmare, and what I mean by that is because a great deal of our kids uh speak another language at home, or they speak non-standard English at home, I'm really looking at students' scores in almost a microcosmic way to see if what we have done is effecting one group of students and not effecting another…[W]e have sixty kids who…count for our student scores in ESOL, so it's not like I can just ignore them. That's a huge portion of our kids that would end up really impacting our scores.

With diversity came additional needs for flexibility, and when coaches were on a tight schedule to meet with every 8th grade student at least once, it became more difficult to meet with the students who needed additional remediation. Tabitha explored other means of scheduling time with students through their other classes; however, she found:

[T]he kids who need the extra help with writing also need the extra help in most of their other classes. And it's tricky when you start to try to pull them out of other classes because everybody has a goal including PE and the electives because they have exams now too.

All teachers and students expressed the pressure of performance on state tests and End-of-Course (EOC) exams, combined with school size and diversity within the school limited the time they

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had to meet with students and 8th grade language arts teachers much less individualize instruction for students, coach 8th grade teachers, or impact teachers outside of 8th grade language arts.

Challenge 3: Micromanagement

Micromanagement became a challenge for writing coaches. The more a coach was micromanaged, the more she perceived herself unable to control her situation. As Wilson (2011) found, since coaches operate within the parameters set by administration, the attitude and support from principals and district leaders can greatly impact the roles, responsibilities, and possible achievements of coaches. Tabitha voiced none of the concerns expressed by Beatrice or Celeste, but her administration gave her greater leeway to make instructional decisions regarding the department and more time to teach and coach 8th grade language arts teachers. Furthermore, she had spent a longer time as a teacher since the site opened forging relationships with teachers and enjoying greater tenure than her administration. However, she did validate what Beatrice and Celeste shared:

> Every part of the job is dependent on administration. How your school views you and your relationships with teachers…I would be scared to death to go into a new school. You have to prove yourself because such a huge part is my relationship with teachers. I think it would be challenging and scary and in five months do all that and get scores up to where they need.

To further explain how others consistently interfere with her decision-making, Beatrice outlined the people who have the authority to override decisions she makes:

> [Y]ou know, there's so many people who think that they're your boss. That's another big, huge issue. You know your principal is the one who hires you from Title I funds, but then because it's Title I, Title I think they have a say, so it's not uncommon to have to fill out

reports then to fulfill Title I requirements. Uh we also have a second layer of

management which is our on-the-ground academic coach….Then we have APs (assistant

principals) in charge of curriculum…Then we have our language arts supervisor…it's not

uncommon to have people who want—at any given moment—… to come in and just

change up the plan…[T]o have that plan always be under a microscope for constant

revision and constant change because somebody has seen something somewhere that they

think should be either added to the plate or changed altogether is um is a difficult position

to be put in as the writing coach.

Past state writing assessment scores may be a factor in determining the level of involvement

administrators want to have in the day-to-day responsibilities of writing coaches. Table 8

presents a summary of state writing assessment scores by site from 2009-2012. It is important to

note that in 2012 the state changed the rubric to more stringently assess student writing with

regard to Standard English grammar, yet this factor still influenced school grades. At the same

time, the state raised the passing score from a 3.0 to a 3.5 on a 0 to 6 point scale. These changes

had an impact on the overall writing scores of each site involved in the study. Scores dipped

between 2009 and 2010, increased between 2010 and 2011, and fell again steeply between 2011

and 2012. When the state changed the rubric and increased expectations between 2011 and 2012,

all sites experienced a one point drop in average student essay scores, Site A from 4.4 in 2011 to

3.3 in 2012, Site B from 4.2 to 3.2, and Site C from 4.0 to 3.0. In 2011, all sites' average test

scores were above 4.0, one point higher than the minimum passing score, reflecting mastery in

over 95% of students. Whereas in 2012 when the state revised the rubric and set mastery at 3.5,

they experienced over a 40% drop in overall student proficiency. As overall student proficiency

in writing factors into calculation of school grades, the dip in writing scores between 2011 and

2012 was a factor in Site A remaining a "D" between the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years as well as both Sites B and C dipping from a "C" to a "D."

Table 8: State Writing Test Scores by Site 2009-2012

Site	2012				2011			2010			2009		
	Mean Score	4.0 or higher	3.5 or higher	3.0 or higher	Mean Score	4.0 or higher	3.0 or higher	Mean Score	4.0 or higher	3.0 or higher	Mean Score	4.0 or higher	3.0 or higher
Site A (Tabitha)	3.3	32%	51%	77%	4.4	82%	97%	4.0	74%	95%	4.1	76%	86%
Site B (Celeste)	3.2	28%	53%	75%	4.2	90%	97%	4.0	76%	94%	4.4	79%	87%
Site C (Beatrice)	3.0	22%	42%	66%	4.0	83%	96%	3.9	72%	97%	4.3	76%	89%

When school grades fall below a "C," school districts and the state place greater sanctions on administrative staff and teachers. Sites must extensively document and monitor the plans for increasing student learning as measured by state assessments, which can result in cumbersome paperwork in addition to the daily responsibilities of faculty at Title I school sites. The pressure of increasing school scores can teeter on the percentage of students proficient in writing; the proportion of students who are proficient in writing make for additional points when calculating a school's state issued grade. Beatrice candidly shared her reasoning regarding administration's influence in her practice:

> They know what the goals need to be, and to be honest with you I think that if I were to stay at this school next year, and we had great growth this year, I think they'd back up, possibly just a little bit. But I don't know because my administration is crazy. But I think that you would have proven yourself a little bit where they'd be like, "[T]hey didn't do everything I wanted them to do, but these kids did rock out." …At most of the schools

where…the coaches rocked out, their admin. kind of leaves them alone…and I think that district kind of leaves them alone too. And um I think there's more of a presence when you have an administration that wants to be on top of everything in a sense.

The state charges administrators at these sites with the insurance of progress, which may lead to micromanagement of staff, but Beatrice as she stated above and the other writing coaches in the inquiry perceived too much administrative intervention as detrimental. In the follow-up focus group interview, all coaches wanted to have the final say on the writing plan without perceived undue interference from administration. For example, each coach writes an action plan with the overall goal of 100% student proficiency on the state writing test. Over the course of the year, they monitor and make adjustments to the plan based off of formative assessment data. The writing coaches believed this system works best when they have the final say in the creation and monitoring of the plan. Tabitha enjoyed little interference from administration or the district because although her scores dropped, her school, Site A, showed greater proficiency than other Title I middle schools in the district. It is uncertain whether the lack of administrative interference was a factor in her site's scores being higher than the other Title I sites. However, Celeste and Beatrice had to negotiate considerable interference from the district level writing resource teacher and their administrative staff, respectively. Celeste finally stood up for her beliefs and refused to make adjustments as she shared a moment of exasperation: "I had a conflict with um my on-the-ground coach…So I am I think one of three…writing coaches who have in essence rejected the extra help the district could provide to us because we're not finding it helpful." She fears she will not be hired back into this position unless the scores at her site increase since she has refused to adjust the action plan based on the district's recommendations opting rather to go with her own knowledge and expertise.

Beatrice added the idea this problem extends beyond the school-wide action plan to the micromanagement of other responsibilities:

Like, um I remember at one of our writing coach meetings, well last year there were a lot of writing coach meetings where we cried and were upset and walked out and came back in. It… was just the pressure of micromanaging how we put data in forms. And it was just bizarre. We were like, "Are we supposed to teach, or are we supposed to create tables?" We freaked out, and I think everybody but the one man that was there cried at one point in one of our meetings. Um, so that and then you're micromanaged. Like this whole like calendar crap. I know coaches who put whatever they want on it. I know coaches who don't even turn this in. So what is it really for? And I put the good honest truth on mine. And sometimes people aren't happy about it. Like my admin. And I'm like it's what needed to be done.

Coaches logged the actual writing of coaching logs or calendars as planning time which took 14% of the time I spent observing them. In an eight-hour work day, this meant they typically spent a little over an hour simply planning their schedules or logging how they spent their time in the coaching logs. Celeste told me these calendars originally arose as a way to evaluate how they spent their time, and they were mandatory. District representatives and administrators dictated coaches needed to log and categorize how they spent their time, yet became unhappy if they disagreed with what is logged in the calendar. Beatrice believed administration wanted the data to show their initiatives were successful even when it is not true:

I think they want data to show that it stands. And we're supposed to be giving them data, but I haven't really had the time to get the data. Cus it takes so long, which students have been tutored? What was their score for baseline? What was their score for midyear? And

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who's to say that the tutoring is what made their scores move when I'm also in the

classroom conferencing with them in a whole group setting?

She questioned whether one can infer causality and still had to log her efforts on paper. Beatrice

and the other coaches in the study believed they already spent too much time on paperwork and

duties unrelated to classroom instruction. Coaches reported frustration and anger over the

micromanagement and criticism of how they logged and reflected upon their time. Beatrice

continued to explain a specific situation in which she believed a time-consuming administrative

initiative would have little to no positive impact on school writing scores:

So, let's say you teach technology and you have two or three extra periods because they

[administration] wanted you to be ISS teacher that we had to find instead of having a full

time ISS teacher. So they say to you, "Hey maybe you should be a tutor. What areas do

you feel most competent in tutoring in?" And you say, "You know what? Give me math.

Or you know what? Give me reading." Okay fine, we just got random teachers who are

off, and then, they want us to trust them to tutor kids one-on-one or no more than two to

one. But then they want us to make sure that the instruction is quality. I can't guarantee

quality instruction with people who have a bachelor's in English, but you want me to

guarantee quality instruction with a PE teacher working one-on-one?...So we've spent a

lot of time trying to work with these teachers to get them to tutor, and tutor well, and

monitor who they are tutoring, and monitoring the growth the students have had in the

program. When I've argued, instead of all that crap, I'll just pull the kids myself…and I

can guarantee it's quality because they're hearing it from me. It's not interpreted by

anybody else. And if I'm wrong, I'm reflective… I'll change it next time. That's not how

they want my time spent. They'd rather I work with those three non-language arts

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teachers, so they can work with two kids throughout the month than me just pull the kids

and work with them myself.

Beatrice came back to locus of control. She wanted to shift toward a situation which she can

control, but administration pushed a different brainchild:

Like I would rather someone say, "Hey, I trust your expertise. This is where we want our

kids to be. I'm giving you the whole year to make it happen, and I'm gonna check in with

you at the end of every quarter to see what progress you made toward meeting this

overall goal. But I trust you. Make it happen. Now, I'll step in if you're not making it

happen, but I'm going to give you some time to figure out what you're gonna do. Instead

from day one we're given, I feel like we're given a list of included behaviors that we

have to adhere to. Um a list of included school-wide strategies, one of which we have to

choose. Lord knows you can't create your own if it's not on this list.

Beatrice was left feeling dissatisfaction, anger, and frustration, and since, in her opinion, this

practice will not impact state writing assessment scores, she is more likely to perceive a reduced

amount of effectiveness.

Both Celeste and Beatrice faced the reality of micromanagement in their workplaces,

while Tabitha enjoyed considerable latitude to implement her writing action plan as the trusted

expert. She perceived greater job satisfaction and her site's scores were higher. Furthermore,

having previously been a teacher at the school since it opened, she knew the teaching staff longer

than Celeste or Beatrice worked at their respective sites. No doubt relationships may play into

the level of micromanagement coaches perceive; however, regardless of the cause, Celeste and

Beatrice believed micromanagement to be detrimental to their performance. In a focus group

interview, Tabitha disclosed she would feel uncomfortable if another individual attempted to

make decisions for her without her say. The level to which district and site administrators micromanage writing coaches may play an important factor in the coaches' perceived and actual effectiveness.

Challenge 4: Teaching to the Test

Writing coaches were passionate about writing and teaching, but their role centered around preparing students to test well. Celeste noted:

> …[H]ow do you get students to really come to terms with themselves as writers?...I think that there is a certain amount of artistry that goes into teaching students about using language as power, language as um artistry themselves, language as communication. Um, and there's no one right way.

Yet, the coaches ended up teaching one "right" way, although organizations like the NWP continually advocate there is no such thing as one "right" way to teach writing (2007). The right way involves four paragraphs, a specific structure to each paragraph, and little wiggle room. They struggle with whether they are putting a Band-Aid on a much larger problem. They do not have control over the state-run assessments, and this external conflict became an internal conflict when beliefs and reality did not match. Coaches' views on writing stemmed from their experiences writing, teaching, and coaching. Their pasts included strong beliefs about what constitutes beneficial writing instruction, but they often were stifled in teaching one very specific way to write for fear of low evaluation scores. Celeste summarized what coaches feel teaching to the test:

> Part of me feels like we've gotten in this kind of frenzy where we take this formula and we want it to be just kind of plug and play. What we've noticed about the highest papers is that they are kind of messy, and students don't actually think like that.

Beatrice further explained:

> I think that the concern is that sometimes some of the directives don't align with what
> you think your job is supposed to be doing because they really don't. And they may not
> always align with your own idea of what the best practice should be in that area. But
> that's a conflict.

However, coaches were committed to performing their jobs to the best of their abilities. So
Tabitha also hedged sentiments like these stating:

> Um, if administration wants to do something that I know is not good for my department,
> then I'm definitely going to support my department. And it goes the other way around. If
> my administration wants to do something that I know is best for this school, and I have
> teachers in my department that are kind of griping about it, then I also have learned how
> to be that person where I can pump it up…Eh, there's a balance there.

Coaches wanted to accomplish the goals they set for students and teachers, but they also wanted
to meet school and district goals. Celeste further explained her frustration teaching formulaic
writing:

> We want them to start to think deeply about things and see writing that is not just a
> formula. In the past, our highest years of scoring, we didn't do a whole lot of this
> bullshit…our priority has to be they have to have the container to kind of fit it in.

She would be happy with helping students have a "container" or a structure for writing, but not
mandating students need to mold these containers in the same fashion once they demonstrate
consistent proficiency. Yet, she still questioned whether or not she would be more highly rated if
she gave up her belief in teaching "artistry" in writing:

> [D]o I lean the other way on the pendulum and only worry about our school grade scores? And it doesn't really mean that…our students are achieving, it means that we have created all the right lessons and done all the things together to make them successful on one test…and students never really learn what they need to be effective learners, but do very well on that test?

Coaches continually find themselves asking whether or not their efforts truly create writers. The pressure of succeeding on the state writing assessment forced coaches to take a formulaic approach to teaching writing; however, they view this approach as artificial instruction. Celeste added, "It's hard to be told that we're not making gains fast enough, we're not moving fast enough, and to know that I can mask that with a few simple um tricks."

Celeste and the other coaches implied it is easier to teach students to write formulaically rather than adjust how they write to suit purpose and audience. Beatrice attributed it to the construction of a test designed to measure both students and schools with a decontextualized, simulated prompt:

> But because we're in this era of accountability, there are always additional measures that are in place to check whether or not teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing. And in the process of any good test, there are ways to cheat it, there are ways to study for it, and does that really mean that you understood and mastered the material on that test? Absolutely not.

Additionally, writing coaches struggled with focusing a majority of their attention on 8th graders. Celeste regretted the reality of the situation:

> I think that we got sold this idea that we were gonna impact students and teachers and learning across the campus, but then once we got in the position, it was… Don't ever go

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into a 6th or 7th grade classroom because that's not your focus. Stay out of content area

classes because they won't really impact your school writing scores. You just focus on 8th

grade language arts.

Beatrice agreed:

I think because the district administrators want—they want improvement now—that

writing coaches are actually, to me, more of a Band-Aid to the problem because we're

instructed to really spend all of our time with 8th grade which gives the illusion that

instruction in 6th and 7th grade doesn't matter.

Other grade levels and content areas are important to writing coaches in trying to develop writers

who can craft writing outside of a state writing assessment simulation, yet they were limited to

when they can lend their attention. Tabitha stated:

[T]he first month of school I actually did spend my time in 6th and 7th grade classrooms,

mainly with brand new teachers…and I went in and modeled and co-taught and observed

with them…And then, what I'll do after [the state writing assessment] is I will go back

into the 6th and 7th grade classrooms and start honing their writing skills…

At her school, she had an 8th grade faculty whom she perceives as strong, veteran teachers, and

she was able to devote a few weeks at the beginning of the school year with novice teachers. Yet,

she too had to begin scheduling herself into 8th grade classrooms in order to meet with every 8th

grade student before the first major formative assessment. Upon accepting their positions,

coaches believed they would be able to impact students school-wide in grades six through eight;

however, in practice, coaches must devote their attention to 8th graders in order to ensure the

largest percentage possible pass the state test.

Challenge 5: Perceived Inability to Impact Teacher Practice

Writing coaches must eventually impact student performance positively. In order to do this, they were expected to coach teachers toward being better teachers of writing; however, their ability to impact teachers' beliefs and practices was limited by factors beyond their control. Teachers may be hesitant to collaborate with coaches (Snow, Ippolito, & Schwartz, 2006). In past studies, teacher perception of gains in their own knowledge of content and pedagogy positively correlated with greater coach education and length of time coaches spent in their coaching positions, factors which only comes with time (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Dugan, 2010; Marsh, Sloan McCombs, and Martorell, 2010).

In our individual interviews as well as the focus group interview, coaches continually mentioned the importance of maintaining relationships with teachers in order to coach and work in classrooms with students. Lilly (2012) found the level of trust between the coach and the coachee was paramount to lead to change in teacher practices, and the coaches in my inquiry concurred. Belcastro (2009) also highlighted the prominence of establishing relationships between the coach and teachers and the importance of teachers' willingness to be coached. She also found coaches' education to be important to perceived success. Spending more time as a coach at the site may allow coaches to develop positive relationships with teachers (Matsumura et al., 2009).

With some teachers, this becomes difficult because of time constraints. Beatrice reminded me:

> All that matters is writing instruction in 8th grade, so if I have a weak 6th grade teacher or a weak 7th grade teacher, I don't even really touch them until after [the state] writing assessment. That's the expectation of the district.

External factors limited the time Beatrice could spend with the teachers at her school site.

Beatrice continued in another explanation of the time constraints she faced when trying to plan

professional development at her site: "And whatever mini PDs I do offer my teachers, it's during

the school day during our PLC time, which isn't the best time to offer a formal like workshop…"

PLC time takes place during teacher planning time when they have additional responsibilities

such as grading, planning, and parent contact. Teachers may be unavailable or unwilling to give

up this time to work with writing coaches. Lastly, she complained she is only "able to tap into

certain components of the coaching cycle, but not engage in a full coaching cycle," which makes

sustaining change in teacher behavior or beliefs difficult in her eyes.

Also, coaches had little control over the willingness of a teacher to change his/her beliefs,

attitude, or practice. After an observation in which Celeste worked in an ESOL teacher's

classroom, she complained, "I can't control the culture or the lack of expectations for kids…I

want her to be the teacher in the room…the kids see everyone else as an outsider…" Celeste

wanted the teacher, "…who doesn't think she needs to teach writing," to have higher

expectations for her students, greater classroom management skills, and a more welcoming

attitude toward classroom visitors. Coaches would say there were many "fires" to put out in this

situation. However, it is difficult to bring about change when "[W]e're making up for the deficits

of either teachers who don't have the skills yet or never acquired the skills and don't want to."

Coaches continually realized they will be evaluated based off of student test scores, and their

frustrations working with teachers led to a greater external sense of locus of control. Celeste

explained:

> But here's the problem or here's the dichotomy, I should say. We're expected to yield
>
> massive results. And I'm arm's length from students. And so, sometimes, some of these

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problems just take time…The truth is how do you measure new growth or no foundations where a teacher ends up at the end of the year, and how does that impact students? You know, I think it's uh, it's a difficult place to put somebody in who doesn't have control over what happens every single day in that classroom.

Likewise, Tabitha explained how the burden of student learning mainly falls on classroom teachers:

The teacher needs to know what the state is looking for. Um, and the teacher themselves needs to be able to create something like that. Um, I think it's very scary when a teacher doesn't know how to correctly form sentences or write an essay up on the Elmo in front of their students without freaking out. Um, we can't always help that because sometimes that is the case.

Unfortunately, it was often the case teachers do not want the help of a writing coach to improve instructional practice. Beatrice did not "want to just come in and say, 'I'm teaching your class anyway,' and have that conflict with the teacher in front of students. I would rather have them just do their own thing and pull kids elsewhere…" Celeste had an intensive reading teacher with less than thirty struggling students whose scores will impact her evaluation, as well as the school's eventual evaluation. This teacher refuses to work with her:

[S]o without teacher support…I've just cut my losses because of numbers. Ethically, it makes the biggest problem for me as a writing coach. It makes me sick. I feel guilty about letting those kids just fend for themselves and knowing that I've just relegated them all to fail on the [the state writing assessment] because I just don't have the time or the resources to move them.

Because student performance will eventually impact her evaluation, Celeste continually came into teachers' classrooms and overrides what she considers poor instruction. She found herself planning, delivering, assessing, and using that information to drive future instruction. She stated:

> Now why do I do that and why doesn't the teacher do that? Well, again if my teachers could do that, they wouldn't need me as a coach…but I have an entire staff of um teachers who um are struggling for one reason or the other.

She categorized her teachers as either " brand new to teaching meaning they have taught less than two years…so they're making new teacher mistakes all over the place, as they should" or those teachers "who are highly ineffective" because one "doesn't quite have the skillset, not that she will always be ineffective" and "two veteran teachers who are angry and jaded." Unfortunately, Celeste has had to cut her losses with the teachers unwilling to reflect on their own practice and accept help. She believed the one teacher who lacked the skillset "is really not going to let go of anything in that room that would destroy the very, very controlled classroom that's there."

> Conversely, Tabitha did not experience the same frustrations as the staff at her site has more experience:

> [T]he majority of my 8th grade teachers know exactly what to say, which I'm fortunate. But last year, for instance, I actually did have a teacher that was giving students the wrong information during conferencing, and we kind of had to pull her out of the conferencing situation and just let her observe because she was new to the profession and new to everything and…just didn't have the knowledge that she needed as far as grammar and things like that.

Tabitha had an easier task with one teacher who needed assistance and was willing to accept the support system. This teacher worked with Tabitha over time to increase her curricular knowledge. However, Celeste and Beatrice had greater staff need and must spread their time amongst more teachers. Celeste explained her challenges regarding modeling for teachers in her department:

> And sometimes they have a really good handle on what's happening because they're not teaching, and they can see it. Um, other times, it's like no clue…but I have two teachers in my department who when I say "Well, what did you see?" and they can't see it because they are ineffective teachers. Um, me trying to coach them through the process is sometimes a futile exercise for me…there are some teachers that I just cut my losses with. I go in, I push in, I teach the lesson, and I pray that's enough to get us um the scores we need, because they are not open and willing to be able to make change in their own practice.

Beatrice also mentioned her qualms with the emphasis on the state writing assessment:

> Because technically a coaching cycle, a teacher-coach coaching cycle, is supposed to be teacher-driven. They're supposed to select the area that they want to be coached in…and that may not necessarily be a writing skill…but if they're not working on writing skills…then how does that impact the writing scores?

Rather than teacher-driven cycles, Beatrice must prioritize what teachers need based off of formative student state writing assessment data. She questioned the effectiveness of these cycles when the impetus for change does not come from the teacher.

When teachers were unwilling to change, coaches still were responsible for student performance, yet they lacked any control in that classroom apart from the days they go in and

assume instructional control. Coaches moved from positions teaching in which they experienced a high internal locus of control to coaching where the control becomes more externalized. Celeste explained:

> I had made the assumption that I could move from the classroom into this job very seamlessly and maybe this was the job that was made for me. It didn't happen that way. Um, my experience right now working in the cadre of coaches that I have for our district uh is that we are the star players that were in the classroom who got big, high achieving scores, and that should feel like it translates really well…[I]t feels like is should be just a very natural transition to be able to take all the things that I've learned in the classroom…and help to superimpose them with teachers…[S]o we know what success tastes like…we can somehow make that translation from what we did every single day with a smaller group of students into an entire population of teachers and students that already have great need. That's not the case.

In Celeste's experience, successful teaching will not easily translate to successful coaching. Beatrice and Tabitha also experienced similar sentiments when they explained how the role from colleague to mock-supervisor plays out. Teachers fear writing coaches' evaluative role, whether they intend to be evaluative or not. Although writing coaches did not directly impact teachers' evaluations, they collect walkthrough data that may influence administrative decisions. Tabitha believed she has handled this at her site:

> And honestly, I have a really good relationship with my teachers because I'm also their SAL.…[T]hey're not worried anymore. If I walk in their classroom, they're not scared of me; they don't think that I'm going to go tell on them, and that's important to have that relationship.

However, Beatrice experienced a setback at her site regarding teacher trust:

> I realized a couple weeks ago that I'd have to stand on principles that are important to me even if it makes my role here, my job here more difficult because I want to be able to sleep at night…[W]e're seen more as evaluators in an evaluative capacity, um our principal announced to our teachers—us coaches, we do walkthroughs—and you know we were told it was supposed to be walkthrough trend data… We're at one of our PLCs or at one of our faculty meetings, he presents this data broken up individually by teacher and gives it to each teacher and lets them know these are areas they might want to focus on and that when he does his formal evaluations, and if he sees that you know the walkthrough data was more positive in areas that he was marking them down on in their evaluation that he will gladly let this substitute in that area. But he also implied that if they were low, that he would include this in their evaluation as well.

Beatrice's principal used the walkthrough trend data in a way in which she believed detrimental to teachers. She went on to explain the frustration and panic that set in as she and the other coaches at her site went into damage control regarding their relationships with teachers:

> And instantly, the coaches that were here freaked out. Like we had a power meeting with ourselves afterwards. We were like, what in the world? This is like information that he gets from coaches. How…would you take that and why would you take that and turn it and use it in a capacity that you are saving that for evaluative purposes when you know it came from us, and we're not supposed to be used in that capacity? So, of course my teachers were hurt and they were upset and I had to go into damage control and let them know that this is not how I thought the data was supposed to be used. I thought it was for department trend data. If he is going to be using it in this capacity, I won't give you five

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minute walkthroughs, I will stay for a longer period of time; but there is this expectation, which is now what you see I go into a classroom and that teacher brings me her lesson plans right away because she thinks I'm doing my walkthrough.

Regardless of Beatrice's efforts, the teachers at her site remained on the defensive when she entered their rooms. Much of the trust she built with teachers was lost in a moment over which she had no control. Now, her ability to impact her teachers has diminished in her eyes, as they plan for her to evaluate rather than observe and provide constructive feedback:

Because I can fake the funk on paper. On that paper that teacher presented me, it had everything I needed. It said that it wrote her objective, it had the HOT questions she planned on asking, what lesson she was focusing on, I could look on there and see that the kids were going to be working cooperatively and they were assigned different roles in those collaborative structures. She had a section for checks for understanding, so she knew how she was going to informally check. Her plan for differentiation, and technically if I was doing this walkthrough, she would have got a "yes" in every single one of those categories whether I was in there for five minutes or whether I was in there for ten minutes. But the reality is did we see any of those elements that I put yes on that I would have had to put yes for? No. So now I have teachers that are faking the funk possibly for this walkthrough data that's done in house when the reality is it was supposed to be done for trend data just to get a feel for what's going on in the classroom. And everyone was supposed to be doing it.

The writing coaches in this inquiry worked hard to build relationships with teachers, but they still experienced scenarios in which their locus of control shifts toward being external. Time constraints, administrative interference, and willingness of teachers to work with coaches all

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influenced coaches' perceived effectiveness when it comes to helping teachers improve knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy.

Summary of Discoveries

In chapter 4, I briefly described the methodology for this study as well as the guiding research questions. Following this, I presented each query with discoveries supported by the data collected from interviews, observations, survey responses, and examination of archival data.

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore an embedded form of professional development, writing coaches, which may aid teachers in developing the pedagogical skills and knowledge to develop student writers. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing instruction. This project presented an initial understanding of the many professional functions of writing coaches. I found writing coaches exhibit many roles and responsibilities at their respective sites as teachers, administrators, and coaches. The qualitative nature of this project also delineated a core problem faced by writing coaches when their perceptions of these roles do not always meet the reality of their daily tasks.

Furthermore, I reported descriptive statistics of a teacher survey and found teachers at sites employing a writing coach perceived writing coaches were an important on-site form of professional development whom they would seek out for assistance teaching writing regardless of subject taught, years teaching experience, or highest degree earned. However, language arts teachers had the greatest chance of actually conferencing with coaches on a consistent basis. Although they did not report conferencing with a coach influenced them as teachers in response to the open-ended survey item, they believed coaches supported their instruction and student learning school-wide.

This study left me with more questions than answers. Teachers seemed grateful for writing coaches, but they did not explicitly mention in what ways the writing coaches influenced their writing beliefs or pedagogy. Although I gained an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches, they spent the least amount of their time coaching. Consequently, what I thought was a study of the roles, responsibilities, and perceived effectiveness of writing coaches became overshadowed by the external challenges they faced as they attempted to perform multiple responsibilities. The data collected in this inquiry has important implications for practice, pedagogy, and future research. Chapter 5 will summarize the findings of this study and note the implications.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Background of the Study

Although writing ability is critical to success both in school and 21st century careers, the NAEP (2011) reported over 70% of students at the 8th and 12th grade levels achieved basic or below basic proficiency in writing while colleges and universities spent upwards of two billion dollars a year on writing remediation for students (Jaschik, 2008). Furthermore, corporate employers spent an estimated $3.1 billion on remedial composition courses because their employees could not write effectively (The College Board, 2004). Ultimately, politicians and the public blame K-12 educators, and this pressure forces districts and teachers to reflect on instructional decision-making to seek out ways to ensure students graduate from high school with the writing skills they need to attend institutions of higher learning and be career-ready.

Reform efforts ultimately fall on the shoulders of teachers on whom fall the burden of student success (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Spillane, 2000). Where can teachers turn for greater support to become better teachers of writing? Many teachers turn to district-created PD opportunities as a major way to keep abreast of current research and developments due to convenience; however, PD is undergoing reform efforts. There is a shift from traditional in-service workshops delivered through a banking model where outside experts impart their knowledge to a passive group of participants to an aspirational model of teacher inquiry where collaboration between teachers is valued (Day & Sachs, 2004; Fichtman & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Little, 1993; Flint, Zisook, & Fisher 2011). At some sites,

teachers may turn to an instructional coach, a form of teacher leader (Taylor, 2008), who exists to facilitate collaborative models of teacher inquiry to increase teachers' knowledge of teaching pedagogy and content area skills and knowledge (Ippolito, 2010).

Research into literacy coaching places a larger emphasis on coaching reading, rather than a combination of reading and writing, which make up literacy (Applebee & Langer 2009). Subsequently, academic reading coaches exist in many school districts as a fiscally prudent means of extended PD charged with implementing scientifically based reading research strategies within instruction (Al Otaiba, Hosp, & Dole, 2008; Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; International Reading Association, 2004; Sailors & Shanklin, 2010; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010). In the district in which this inquiry took place, rather than charge existing reading coaches with coaching both facets of literacy, district leaders created writing coaches.

As reading and writing are inextricably intertwined, writing coaches merit the same empirical investigation as their reading counterparts, particularly in the secondary setting with regard to their roles, beliefs, and perceived impact on teacher beliefs (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Before this exploratory study, no analyses centering on writing coaches were found, and this inquiry sought to fill that void.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore writing coaches, an embedded form of professional development, which may aid teachers in developing the pedagogical skills and knowledge to develop student writers. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing instruction. Data from observations, interviews, and documents informed the inquiry.

Non-experimental quantitative survey data also informed the analysis and contributed to the generation of theory.

Research Questions

The following questions guided but did not limit the inquiry:

1. In what ways do three middle school writing coaches perceive their professional roles and responsibilities?

2. What professional roles and responsibilities do three middle school writing coaches exhibit while working in their respective middle schools?

3. In what ways do the three writing coaches perceive their effectiveness as mentors and advisors to classroom teachers?

4. In what ways do middle school teachers (n = 47) perceive writing coaches impact their writing beliefs and pedagogy?

Summary of Discoveries

This chapter discusses the findings of each question, posits a hypothesis for future testing, addresses the limitations of the research, discusses the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for future research on the study of coaching as a form of embedded professional development.

Research Questions 1 & 2: Coaches' Roles and Responsibilities

Through analysis of transcribed individual and focus group interviews, field notes from my observations, and archival documents such as coaching logs and school improvement plans, I was able to answer the first and second research questions. Coaches fulfill multiple roles at their school sites often shifting between these roles throughout their day. At times they are teachers who plan and deliver lessons in the classroom, hold metacognitive conferences with students

while they are writing, and assess student progress to drive instruction forward. Other times, they act like administrators who perform walkthroughs to look for evidence of specific teacher behaviors, attend on- and off-site meetings, pull out struggling or disruptive students, and make instructional decisions that impact writing at their respective sites. Finally, a much smaller role than I assumed, writing coaches are instructional coaches who plan and deliver PD opportunities and resources, conference one-on-one with teachers to discuss content and pedagogy, and model in teachers' classrooms. All of these roles seek the end goal to ensure school-wide student proficiency on the state writing assessment exam.

The findings of this study suggest the evolution of writing coaches may be similar to that of reading and literacy coaches. In previous qualitative inquiries (Cassidy, Garrett, Maxfield, & Patchett, 2010; Dole, 2004; Smith, 2007; Symonds, 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2003), researchers found that in addition to reading specialists' primary work, intervening directly with struggling readers, they could work with teachers through peer and cognitive coaching to guide teachers to be self-reflective. Writing coaches seem to primarily work with students, but the expectation they coach teachers is present. This inquiry found writing coaches had the opportunity to cognitively coach teachers, but did not consistently engage in the practice. Similarly, this inquiry echoed the idea, like reading coaches, others may consider writing coaches to be clinical supervisors who encourage development rather than evaluations (Vogt and Shearer, 2003). When in an evaluative role, writing coaches wish to be a form of constructive criticism and a springboard for improvement rather than impact teachers' evaluations. However, this study confirmed teachers can view coaches in an informally evaluative role when asked to provide feedback from observations (Poglinco et al., 2003).

Research Question 3: Writing Coaches' Perceptions of Effectiveness

In regard to research question three, the overarching force coaches perceive impacts their effectiveness is student test scores. This is an ever-present external factor for which they try to control through working with students and teachers. However, coaches face other challenges which force them to relinquish internal control. When their job roles and responsibilities blurred or became difficult to balance, coaches became frustrated and thought their locus of control shifted toward being external.

Having succinct, clear roles is important to coaches as they do not want to bounce between teacher, administrator, and coach. When they are responsible for too much, they feel they cannot perform their job to the best of their abilities. Conversely, the more administration and district personnel attempt to micromanage their decision-making process, the more they believe they cannot control their own effectiveness. Coaches want defined roles and responsibilities and freedom to achieve their responsibilities in a manner in which they design. Coaches also struggled with their ability to impact teacher practice. Teachers' willingness to collaborate remains an external factor despite coaches' attempts to foster relationships and budget time for PLCs and one-on-one sessions. Lastly, coaches struggled with the external factor of the end-product. They need to prepare students to take the state writing assessment; however, in preparing students for the test, they question whether or not they are truly creating proficient writers.

Research Question 4: Teachers' Perceptions of Writing Coaches

Regarding research question four, the findings of the non-experimental survey mirrored Rainville and Jones (2008) findings which suggest relationships between literacy coaches and teachers are important. Regardless of whether or not teachers conferenced with coaches regularly

or believed they had a positive relationship with the writing coach at their site, over 90% of teachers who responded agreed or strongly agreed a writing coach was a valuable source of on-site professional development and would go to a writing coach for support when teaching writing. Teachers thought this way irrespective of subject taught, years teaching experience, or highest degree earned.

Results of the open-ended survey item reflect Hoffman (2009) who found teachers value a literacy coach as an individual who is knowledgeable, supportive, and available to help when needed. I discovered teachers believed writing coaches existed to support student learning as a model of good teaching and a resource for teachers. They also believe the writing coaches were a positive force school-wide whom they could go to for assistance at a moment's notice. No teachers mentioned the benefits of a coaching cycle in which a coach personally worked with him/her to reflect on pedagogy.

Emergent Discoveries and Future Research

Challenges appeared as I analyzed the difference between coaches' observed roles and their perceptions when their view of what their roles could or should be did not meet the reality of their situations. In comparison to the literature on literacy coaches, this inquiry confirmed writing coaches face some of the challenges literacy coaches experienced. A lack of clear roles (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Poglinco et al., 2003), problems in relationships with administration (Smith, 2007; Wilson, 2011), ability to balance roles and responsibilities (Bean and Zigmond, 2006; Boulware, 2007; Smith, 2007), and capacity to impact teacher practice (Belcastro, 2009; Boulware, 2007; Burkins and Ritchie; 2007; Lilly, 2012; Snow, Ippolitto, and Schwartz, 2006) seem to have a negative impact on coaches' perceived effectiveness. I posit there is a relationship between these categories and coaches' loci of control

for the coaches in this inquiry. The chart I generated from the data suggested as coaches'

perceptions of loci of control shifts toward becoming more external, they perceive their

effectiveness as lower and their job satisfaction drops. Although this chart cannot be considered

a finding of the study, the coaches agreed the diagram I created encompasses the ways in which

the challenges they face impact their loci of control, perceived effectiveness, and job satisfaction.

  Framework for Externalization of Locus of Control. It became clear coaches'

perceived challenges may have the ability to diminish coaches' loci of control and overall job

satisfaction in this inquiry. I believe the participants wanted to be recognized for the hard work

they put into their jobs trying to help teachers and students through their knowledge of

instruction in writing. However, the coaches in this study believed unclear roles and

responsibilities, not enough time to balance responsibilities, micromanagement, and inability to

impact teacher practice are extrinsic factors over which they have little control. To complicate

matters, the state writing assessment, the major tenant on which their evaluations hang, was an

external force. This section posits a hypothesis for how the challenges the participants faced may

ultimately serve to externalize their loci of control. Future research will be necessary to

determine if these categories impact loci of control for other academic writing coaches, but I

wanted to outline a guide for future research. Through data analysis and feedback from the

writing coaches in a focus group, I believe the following challenges externalize the participants'

loci of control: not enough time to balance responsibilities, micromanagement, unclear roles and

responsibilities, and perceived inability to impact teacher practice with high-stakes testing at the

top of this chart. In turn, an externalized locus of control may negatively impact coaches'

perceived effectiveness and job satisfaction. The section begins with a diagram that may explain

how these challenges externalize the participants' loci of control and ultimately lower job

satisfaction and perceived effectiveness, and it follows with a discussion of each challenge incorporated into the figure.

Figure 13 outlines a diagram of how challenges coaches face may impact coaches' loci of control, perceived effectiveness, and perceived job satisfaction that require future testing. The following section describes in what ways each challenge may serve to externalize the writing coaches' loci of control.
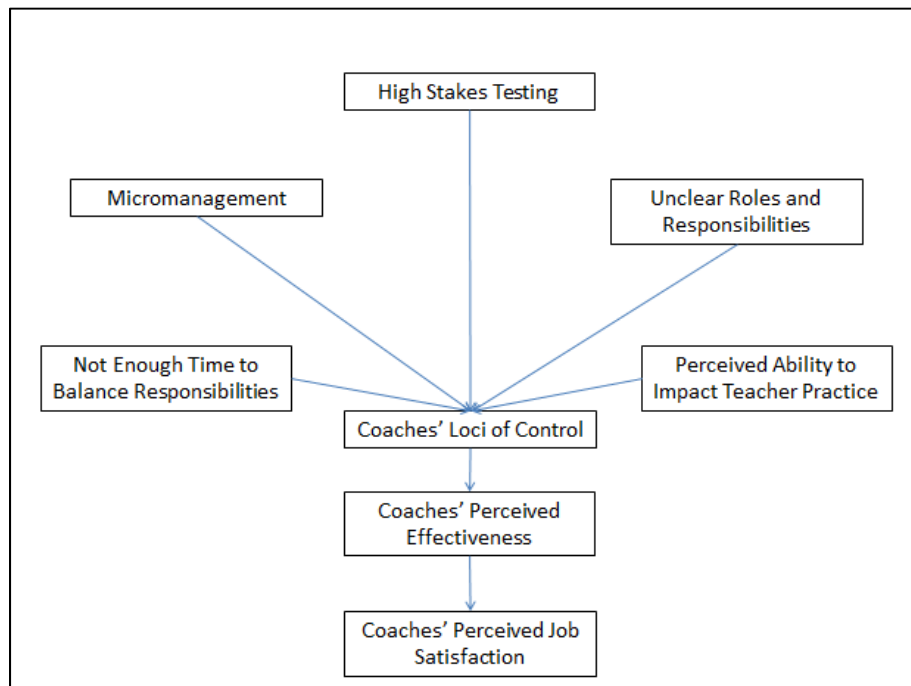
Figure 13: Categories that may impact coaches' locus of control, perceived effectiveness, and perceived job satisfaction

Category 1: Micromanagement. In our second individual interview Tabitha stated, "[T]he only way that I know I'm being evaluated is through our writing scores," and similarly, principals/schools are evaluated through primarily state test scores. Previous state writing assessment scores may impact the extent to which administrative and district personnel micromanage coaches and how coaches partition their time. Understandably, administrators at schools with low school grades may want to exhibit as much control over their own evaluations

as possible. No site in the inquiry had more than 53% of students score a 3.5-6.0, the passing

score range. Furthermore, all sites in the study earned a school grade of "D" in 2012-2013 school

year. This may have led to greater administrative micromanagement in the affairs of academic

coaches and classroom teachers. According to the data, administrative interference in writing

coaches' interventions with students and teachers may have been an externalizing factor for

coaches' loci of control as well as student test scores. Coaches did not have direct control over

the amount of administrative interference or student achievement although mediating factors

may allow coaches to influence both. More research is needed to understand whether or not

administrators are more inclined to micromanage academic coaches when the school grade or

percentage of students who are proficient on the state writing assessment subtests (reading, math,

science, and writing) is low.

In focus group interviews, Tabitha reported the least micromanagement and a greater

sense of internal locus of control, but her site had the highest percentage of students at or above

proficient of any "D" rated middle school in the county in 2012. Beatrice reported the most

severe micromanagement while her site simultaneously held the lowest percentage of students

who exhibited proficiency on the state writing assessment in the previous school year of any "D"

rated middle school. Administrative micromanagement of the writing coaches may have a

negative correlation with writing scores, as well as coaches' perceived effectiveness and job

satisfaction.

Categories 2 and 3: The Balance of Unclear Roles & Responsibilities. Despite the myriad

of roles and responsibilities writing coaches take on, at the end of the day, it is the student test

scores that were the coaches' primary means of evaluation. The insurance of proficient test

scores may be a reason why coaches are tasked with balancing multiple roles and responsibilities

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in their search to do anything possible to raise scores. Inability to directly impact student test scores through any of their roles may externalize their loci of control.

This was frustrating to coaches because no matter how one looks at the situation, writing coaches are always one step removed from influencing students. Although coaches most often performed the responsibilities of a classroom teacher, they did not spend near the amount of time the teacher of record can spend with a student. On average, each site had 24 distinct 8th grade classes. To spend one full three day coaching cycle with 24 classes takes 72 days not counting days where coaches are pulled for on or off-campus meetings or non-teaching duties. If coaches are able to conduct three full coaching cycles with each 8th grade teachers' class between August and February and no students are absent, they will spend a total time of nine hours with each student before the state writing assessment. Even so, coaches did not believe whole school standardized test scores, whether in writing or reading, accurately captured a synopsis of their work. Beatrice added:

> I've watched my teachers grow—grow in a short period of time. And they're always like, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you. You know you came in, you worked with me. I'm so appreciative.' But none of that stuff shows up on paper. None of it. Because if the writing scores don't move enough, then you're not effective.

Failure to evaluate writing coaches for the impact they may make on teacher pedagogy and practice diminishes the need for them to focus on teacher practice and makes writing coaches question the validity of having multiple roles and responsibilities if nothing positive will appear in their evaluations as a result of their efforts. Beatrice inserted, "The teacher may end up being a strong teacher or a stronger teacher, but if it doesn't correlate to higher writing scores, then the

district says that you weren't effective for that year." The frustration coaches associate with

evaluation stems from their lack of complete control. Tabitha expounded:

[T]hat is on a large part, the classroom teacher. It also falls back on me because I'm

typically the one who has created the calendar for them or helped them create the

calendar as far as when they are going to do writing instruction and when we're gonna do

the practice prompts.

Whether coaches acted as teachers, administrators, or coaches, they attempted to perform duties

to create the conditions under which students could thrive as writers with the caveat they will

demonstrate their ability through the state writing test.

Coaches balanced many hats throughout the day and while teachers and administrators

have defined rubrics for evaluation, coaches lacked a formal evaluation tool that captures the

many responsibilities they exhibit. Furthermore, the way in which coaches perceived they would

be evaluated has changed over time. Originally, coaches believed their evaluations would be

based on how they spent their time as they reported to their principal and district supervisor.

Celeste explained:

[S]o we have these coaching logs that came up, and…we were supposed to be in

classrooms 80% of the time. Which, you know uh…classroom teachers are with students

62.5% of the time…You know, I thought I was a teacher, as a resource teacher, what are

the expectations in the contract?...[T]hey (union representatives) laughed and said,

"Um…you can't hold them to anything different than what's in their contract just

because they have a slightly different title."…Um you can get really creative accounting,

like if I sit in the back of a classroom making posters while a teacher is teaching, and I

kind of scan the room and we have a conversation about what I saw afterwards, instead of

it being creating resources, which counts against our log, I can count it as observation

time. So I know that across the district…people are still afraid even though they say that

they can't hold us to 80%, they're still holding us to 80%...

The coaching logs they shared with me were self-reported logs of time spent. This statement

corroborated by Tabitha and Beatrice suggested the time coaches spent coaching teachers and

co-teaching may be artificially inflated in some cases because coaches did not know how this

information they report may be used in evaluating their performance. They explained in a focus

group that they are "hedging their bets" to make sure that if these coaching logs will become

evaluative tools, they could control what their evaluators will see. Since they believed their

evaluators want them to spend the majority of their time working directly with students, they

tried to make sure they hit high percentages in that category.

The focus on the state writing assessment scores was a considerable stress to writing

coaches, especially Celeste and Beatrice. Celeste shared the results of a personality clash with

her district support personnel: "The bad thing is if my scores don't go up, I know that they won't

hire me back into this position because I've rejected district help…it's really those numbers at

the end of the day." Beatrice described the moment in which the coaches found out their

evaluation scores from the previous year:

This year, we were at a meeting when we got our ratings for our efforts last year, and of

all the coaches that were in there only two [pause] two maybe three were considered

highly effective and everyone else was effective. Mind you, all of us were considered

highly effective in the classroom, or they would have never allowed us to serve in a

capacity like this. But we've worked so hard and have to deal with so much stress, and

you know you can teach until the cows come home in a classroom for two days, but you

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can't control the instruction that takes place when you're not there, but all of that gets

factored into our overall rating.

The coaches in the inquiry did not share their evaluation scores with me; however, it seemed Tabitha was one of the few coaches who were rated "highly effective" whereas Beatrice and Celeste were not included. Beatrice and Celeste focused on what they perceived to be an unfair method of evaluation:

[A]ll of us were deemed three's which is average—effective is what it's called—except for two people. And it was based solely on scores, but we've realized the scores were all in comparison to one another. So we realized really quickly that in order for us to be able to get those upper tiers of pay, we're all in competition with each other now.

They explained the Evaluating Effective Teachers (EET) grant and the evaluation system the district constructed to evaluate teacher performance separates faculty into categories for the evaluation. For example, all language arts teachers would fall in a category with other language arts teachers, whereas writing coaches fall in a category with other writing coaches. The district used hierarchical linear modeling and a value-added formula to analyze evaluation scores and standardized test scores for teachers. The teachers were then ranked from highest value added score to lowest. All teachers above a certain percentage were coded as highly effective. However in regard to writing coaches, Celeste explained:

They [the district] have drug their heels…Every other teacher is on their EET (Evaluating Effective Teachers) evaluation system. Um, guidance counselors, librarians, even our tech guys are on a rubric. Writing coaches are not…We're still on the old [state evaluation] system…It is solely based on what does my principal think of me?...The work that I've done, and how did our students achieve?

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All the same, the coaches were then ranked from highest score to lowest score, much like teachers. The problem involved the pay linked with being highly effective and the extremely small pool of comparison. Thousands of teachers in the district were highly effective because there were thousands of language arts teachers in the pool. Only two coaches were highly effective because there were less than twenty writing coaches. This had a demoralizing, negative impact on the writing coach cadre. Beatrice expressed her frustration and anger:

> And then to make…matters even worse, and another coach brought this up, she goes your rating, you become highly effective if you're like in the top 5% of that group. Well, there's only like sixteen of us, so we're competing against each other for a highly effective ranking. There isn't just a standard range that if you make this amount of growth, you're going to be highly effective, we're competing against others. So even if we have a freakin'—I think one of the coaches when I say it, you'll probably know who said it—she was like, even if you have a bomb ass year, and um everyone else has bomb ass years, if you're not in the top 5% of the coaches who had bomb ass years, then you're effective. And that's freakin' absurd because that's not what's supposed to happen here.

She questioned the validity of a system that pits coaches in competition with one another. She went on to say:

> [O]ne coach was like you know if we were really nasty, we wouldn't want to share our ideas with each other because if I share you share my idea with you and then you end up becoming better than me then I just helped you get your highly effective mark, and more pay more whatever, and I'm still in this effective category.

Tabitha echoed their frustration: "It's unfair. There should be a level that everyone can reach, so everyone can be highly effective if they put in the work."

Celeste volunteered a similar sentiment:

> I'm finding that people are less eager to share their best material that's making massive impact now because I know that if I give you my material and you can make it work at your school, then that might mean that I'm not going to get my two thousand dollar bonus, and that's a lot of money.

Overall, coaches were demoralized having to compete with one another to be deemed highly effective. In the classroom, they had more control over their end evaluation. In these new roles, they struggled to balance the responsibilities they were given and perceived the current evaluation tool to be unfair. Beatrice summarized their complaint:

> So, when there's so much pressure, so much energy, so much clout in a sense placed on these ratings, when there's so many things in our job that are outside of our control, what's the proper um evaluative tool for us? How do we gauge whether we're effective in our position? It's really how well these students do on their test. What other marker do we have?

I asked the coaches to speculate on what they knew about future evaluation tools. Celeste shared:

> Next year we are told that we will be on a rubric that they have one that they have finally been able to piecemeal together, and it will be a one-size-fits-all approach to every coach. So a reading coach, and a writing coach and a math coach and a science coach and a lead teacher resource teacher will all look the same as far as the rubric goes…but…they haven't included any writing resource teachers in the construction of that rubric.

However, this may be too little, too late for some coaches. Coaches may not be willing to wait for a rubric they perceive to be fair. Beatrice explained:

But when you have all those pockets of things going on, it's hard to come to an answer.

But in the process you lose a lot of good people because when there are people that I look

at as like rock stars in writing saying they are going back into the classroom, because

they are so stressed, there is so much going on, this isn't what they expected, and on top

of it they lost money. Like you want us to deal with more and we're losing money? It's

like you got to be kidding me.

Rather than continue to feel less than effective, Beatrice contemplated returning to the classroom

where she is confident she can positively impact student test scores and in turn earn not only a

highly effective rating, but more money. Over time, if evaluations do not reflect the level of

effort coaches perceive they exert with students and teachers, they will leave. Celeste revealed,

"The stress of trying to carry the burden for a department that doesn't have all the skills they

need to be successful, is um, is probably not where I'll stay."

Category 4: Perceived Inability to Impact Teacher Practice. As the end goal was to

increase student test scores, and coaches did not see students on a daily basis, they sought to

influence the practices of classroom teachers. Tabitha described how classroom teachers have a

more direct influence on student performance because of the time they have to spend working

with students: "[T]hat (student learning) is on the large part, the classroom teacher." Yet, she

internalized some of the responsibility as the instructional leader in writing: "It (student learning)

also falls back on me because I'm typically the one who has created the calendar for them…as

far as when they are going to do writing instruction and when we're gonna do practice prompts."

Celeste was quicker to say, "I'm being graded whole-school for factors that I can't actually

control…" Tabitha was able to place the onus of responsibility on herself mentioning the

calendar she created; however, Beatrice and Celeste had externalized loci of control. Tabitha

may be able to place more merit on the calendar she created because she expressed a greater sense of trust in the teachers at her site; whereas, Beatrice and Celeste believed they continually made up for the "deficiencies" their teachers possessed due to lack of experience, pedagogy, or positive attitude. Tabitha could create a calendar and her teachers followed it with little intervention. When they needed assistance, they promptly reached out to her for help. Conversely, Beatrice and Celeste expressed they had to ensure and even enforce compliance with their writing plans either because teachers refused to put the plan in place or they perceived them as incapable of doing so without assistance.

Ability to impact teacher practice and in turn impact student performance is important to the end goal to have all students demonstrate proficiency on the state writing test; however, not all coaches believe they can impact teacher practice easily. Celeste relayed considerable frustration with the lack of control over her own evaluation:

My projection this year is we should be about 60% pass. That's still 30% lower than my own effectiveness as a teacher in the classroom. So it's a hard, bitter pill to swallow that really by being in the classroom, it looked like on paper that our students…had more achievement than me not being in the classroom.

Previously, as an 8th grade teacher at her site, Celeste carried the majority of the students toward proficiency. However, as the coach, one step removed from students, she found it more difficult to impact both student performance and teacher practice. She implied her superiors expect coaches to continually carry the burden of success despite an external locus of control. Beatrice agreed:

…I'm under a lot of pressure in my own mind because I was third from the bottom based on our scores from last year in terms of STAR schools, and um I'm like that in no way

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matched with what type of work I had to do, and I really contemplated not coming back. But I was like I had built up rapport with my teachers, and I didn't want to be a quitter; Lord knows I don't want to be a quitter. And um, I was like I owe it to myself. All the research says it takes three years for you to really see basically the fruits of your labor, any new initiative, any change in your instructional practice it takes three years. And I was like how dare I give up in a year, when I know research says it takes three. But I did tell myself that if I could show growth um in this one school year, I'd be thrilled with that because I know I worked my behind off. But um what I'm looking at in charting my own personal growth, is I've accepted that I don't care what the paper says. The paper can say that I was effective, and um that's fine. Because I know what I do here.

The difference in coaches' locus of control depended on the perceived ability levels of the teachers at the school sites as well as the relationships the coaches have with teachers and the individual teachers' willingness to reflect and hone their crafts. Celeste and Beatrice perceived the teaching staff at their sites to be mostly novice or struggling teachers whereas Tabitha believed the teachers at her site were capable of teaching writing well. Celeste and Beatrice expressed the need to "override poor teaching practice" more than just create a calendar for teachers to follow. They possessed significantly lower internal loci of control over their situations.

Category 5: High Stakes Testing. With the challenges the participants faced, they were left asking themselves whether what they were doing truly mattered. All coaches in this inquiry wanted to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities, but the end goal of the job did not always coincide with what they believed were best practices to develop student writers and work with teachers to be better writing instructors. As Tabitha stated: "[T]here are several ways to

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know when you're being effective. Number one, you're seeing the scores increase." Whatever a coach is doing at his/her site, the determining factor in his/her evaluation comes back to the state writing test scores. In this inquiry I thought I would see more coaching, but the status quo dictated it is only important if in the process of coaching teachers, student scores increase. Tabitha echoed this sentiment: "[I]f you're building teachers…great. And often times we do because the teachers kind of get it (what Tabitha describes as the ability to plan and deliver effective writing instruction) on their own." However, she acknowledged again that the major function of their job was to ensure the state writing test scores increase. Their frustration is palpable as Beatrice expressed:

> I do know that the way we're evaluated, the type of pressure that's placed on us, the lack of pay associated to our position, and um [pause] me feeling like on some days I hate my job [pause] which I've never felt in the past; I've never felt like I hated my job. I just always wanted to do more. I wanted to reach more kids and reach more teachers. And I was like that's what I want, you know. When you're like this little firecracker on the inside, you want to be able to share that with other people in a nonthreatening way. And that's one of the reasons why I came into this position. I was like let me come in, let me help these students, let me help these teachers. And I don't know if I'm doing a good enough job and I don't know if—I don't feel like I have the will to do what I think is important.

Beatrice described her frustration with not being able to "do what [she] think[s] is important." When faced with the pressure of the state writing assessment, teaching to the test surpassed Beatrice's beliefs about writing instruction. Similarly, I observed Tabitha relegate her instruction to teaching a formulaic essay in order to make sure the students did well on one day of the test.

To the first student with whom she conferenced: "I'm gonna have you finish your introduction, but what starts your body paragraphs? Right, transition and topic sentence. Do you have your list of transitions?" She then turned to the next student: "Good, so you followed every part of that formula." Finally, another student approached her table: "You need to start the conclusion. So you know what goes in there? Restate thesis. End with some form of commentary." At the end of the day, her scores were some of the highest in the district among schools with comparable demographics, so despite what she may believe about writing instruction, she continued to perform her job using the strategies she believed will make scores increase.

Essentially, the work writing coaches feel they put into their positions goes unrecognized on their evaluations unless student writing scores concurrently go up. The pressure of external forces on their ability to control their job performance was demoralizing and left coaches searching for validation. They also questioned the validity of this system when it came to the causal cascade of coach and teacher interventions impacting student standardized test scores. Beatrice summarized:

[U]nless there was like a pretest the kids were given, a pre-assessment of some sort…you still have to control for all the other variables, which we can't. And I know that that is a problem…Like you may mentor a student and then oh they passed all their classes. Well do you know if they passed their classes because of the mentoring or was it because they had really strong teachers that year who cared about them? Or maybe at home their parents were more involved? Or they had tutoring or they willed themselves to do better this year and they just met with the mentor because it was the right thing to do. Not because the mentor really changed anything about their decisions or practices. Who's to say? … And I expect the fact that at the end of the day, it doesn't matter what they put on

paper. What matters is my test scores, so as long as the test scores show that the students

have moved…

Therefore, coaches continually questioned the end goals of their position. In this process of

teaching to the test: Am I building teachers? Am I teaching students? Do higher test scores

actually equate to literate students? Am I truly improving writing instruction school-wide? How

can I fulfill all of these duties when I do not have the time? Celeste stated:

I know that um while I do love this job, and I think that this job is everything I would

want it to be in what they told me it would be, the practice of this position…they're not

one in the same.

She attempted to reconcile her beliefs about what the job could be with what it really is: a

security blanket to ensure student proficiency on state assessments. Beatrice can relate:

I think my job is to make sure there's growth by any means necessary. Even if that means

that we stop instruction, or um I teach the class or I pull out students. It's just at the end

of the day as long as the writing scores move…

As long as the test scores move—I perceive writing coaches are willing to suspend their notions

of what constitute "good" instruction in writing—as long as the test scores move.

Future studies with experimental designs and randomization are necessary to test this

framework, but the qualitative research allowed for categories to emerge. Research into the

causal cascade, which seeks to study how coaching practices may impact teacher knowledge and

behaviors and ultimately student learning, needs to take into account the many factors that may

impact coaches in the first step. Qualitative research can be important to identify these categories

followed by future quantitative research to test any framework generated. Attebury and Bryk

(2011) posited "a coach must establish relationships with her school-based colleagues and

initiate work routines organized around her new role as a school-based professional developer"
(p. 358). Variables that detract from a coach's ability to form relationships and initiate work
routines may prevent the ability of teachers to regularly participate in PD coaches initiate, block
desired changes in teacher behavior, and thwart significant improvements in student learning
(Attebury & Bryk, 2011). This framework should be tested through inquiries with experimental
designs in different settings with other academic coaches.

Limitations of the Study

The discoveries of this intrinsic case study, as well as the hypothesis I created to explain
how challenges may impact coaches' loci of control, effectiveness, and satisfaction, apply to the
participants and may not generalize to other writing. Qualitative data analysis relies heavily on
hermeneutics, "the continual interpretation and reinterpretation of texts" (Bernard & Ryan, 2010,
p. 255). I filtered the information from multiple data sources through my personal lens;
however, I took great care to ground all themes in the data and utilize member checks. I
moderated a focus group interview with all participants to discuss the resultant themes and
minimize any misconceptions in data analysis.

Furthermore, the participants were my colleagues who may have been telling me what I
wanted to hear; however, in another interpretation, my previous work relationship with the
participants could lead them to be comfortable with me and offer more candid responses.
Additionally, any self-reported data may be ambiguous or biased. The small sample size is not a
limitation of this study as the intrinsic case study is not meant to generalize to other individuals;
however, survey response was low and possibly does not represent what teachers at the coaches'
respective school sites believe. The survey data are non-experimental, so the low response rate
does not impact the verisimilitude of the inquiry.

Implications

This intrinsic case study was an exploratory study which intended to describe the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of writing coaches. It further described the perceptions of teachers who had the opportunity to interact with writing coaches. The discoveries are not generalizable to other populations; however, the inquiry added to the extant literature and generated ideas which must be tested in future experimental studies. The following section discusses the ways in which the findings of this inquiry may impact the body of extant literature, future research, and practice in the secondary setting.

No Previous Description of Writing Coaches. Before this inquiry, no previous studies described the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches. The most notable findings of this study delineate the varied functions writing coaches perform at their school sites and contribute to the larger body of literature on job-embedded coaching. Furthermore, only one study on literacy coaching pertinent to the inquiry took place in a middle school setting (Smith, 2006). Unlike the previous quantitative and qualitative inquires, this study utilized the tenets of grounded theory to enable the data to truly guide the inquiry and explore the facets of a previously unstudied portion of the profession, the evolution of which may mirror literacy coaches (Cassidy, Garrett, Maxfield, & Patchett, 2010; Dole, 2004; Smith, 2007; Symonds, 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). This study illuminated the roles and responsibilities of three writing coaches as well as the perceptions of teachers at their respective school sites.

Recommendations for Research. Although the study contributes to the larger body of knowledge on job-embedded coaching and hypothesizes a framework for future testing, the discoveries of this study may not generalize to other populations and one cannot infer causality based on study design. In what ways do other writing coaches exhibit similar or different roles

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and responsibilities from what I found in my study? What factors truly impact writing coaches' loci of control? How does loci of control impact coaches' perceived effectiveness? This inquiry raises questions the design of this study could not answer. Therefore, I will discuss the remainder of the implications of this study in terms of future research.

Future Complementary Qualitative and Quantitative Research. Presently, federal policies put in place by NCLB (2001) place a greater emphasis on studies grounded in experimental or semi-experimental methodology. The American Educational Research Association (2008) defines "Scientifically Based Research" (SBR) as "the use of rigorous, systematic, and objective methodologies." To qualify for federal funding or impact broad educational policy, the government considers only research resulting in "generalizable findings" appropriate which eliminates many forms of qualitative inquiries. Alternately, I recommend qualitative and quantitative designs be used to complement one another in order to more fully understand educational phenomena which link personal, social, behavioral, and cognitive factors. Qualitative inquiries such as this study can provide the needed background to discover future research questions and design future studies both qualitative and quantitative. For example, the framework I generated to describe the participants' perceptions of locus of control must be tested with an experimental quantitative study.

Future Study of Writing Coaches' Roles, Responsibilities, and Loci of Control. This inquiry sought to explore and describe the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches as well as their perceived effectiveness. In doing so, it delineated the experiences and views of three writing coaches through observations and interviews. Although studies investigate the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches (Boulware, 2007; Deussen et al., 2007; Lilly, 2012; Marsh et al., 2010; Poglinco et al., 2003; Smith, 2007; Zigmond, 2006) and teachers' efficacy after

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interactions with literacy coaches (Cantrell & Calloway, 2008; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008;

Shidler, 2009), few studies investigate literacy coaches' loci of control, efficacy, or perceptions

of effectiveness (Clary, 2008; Reed, 2009; Sherman, 2008). No previous studies explored writing

coaches in any capacity. Further qualitative and quantitative research with a wider sample of

participants is needed to fully understand the roles and responsibilities of writing coaches.

Similarly, more inquiries, both qualitative and quantitative, are necessary to understand the

challenges literacy and writing coaches face. To fully explore efficacy and loci of control as it

relates to literacy and writing coaching, experimental quantitative studies are necessary.

    Future Study of Writing Coaches' Impact on Teachers. Furthermore, this study sought to

understand how writing coaches may impact teacher beliefs regarding writing and pedagogy.

Research into the impact of literacy coaches on teachers exists (Attebury & Bryk, 2011;

Belcastro, 2009; Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Dugan, 2010;

Elder & Padover, 2011; Galluci et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2009; Johnston & Wilder, 1992;

Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, & Grogan, 2006; Matsumura et al., 2009; Peterston et al., 2009;

Rainville & Jones, 2008; Sailors & Price, 2010; Steckel, 2009). However, as no extant literature

on writing coaches is part of the body of knowledge, further research is necessary. This study

was qualitative and may not generalize to other participants; therefore, studies employing an

experimental design are necessary to understand how writing coaches may impact teacher

behavior and beliefs.

    The teachers who responded to the survey reported overwhelmingly positive feedback

regarding their perceptions of writing coaches. Most reported a positive relationship with the

coach and would seek out her feedback in regard to writing instruction. However, they did not

specify how writing coaches influenced their writing beliefs or pedagogy. Instead, they

appreciated writing coaches as a resource and a model of good teaching overall. Future studies must explore the relationships between writing coaches and teachers and the perceived/actual impact of writing coaches on teacher beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogy.

Future Study of Academic Coaches' Loci of Control & Framework Testing. The diagram I generated from the data in this study suggested there are many factors that may directly and indirectly impact writing coaches' loci of control and perceived effectiveness. Although studies explore the challenges faced by literacy coaches, it was previously unknown whether or not these challenges are also faced by writing coaches (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007; Gibson, 2006; Snow, Ippolitto, and Schwartz, 2006). The chart in this study posits how direct and indirect factors may influence the participants' perceived effectiveness. A wider sample is needed to fully test this hypothesis to determine if it may generalize to other academic coaches, so I recommend future experimental studies incorporating a variety of academic coaches across all subject areas.

The purpose of this study was to explore the roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of writing coaches. Furthermore, I sought to discover the perceptions of teachers with regard to in what ways writing coaches may impact their beliefs and pedagogy on writing instruction. The data led to a framework to describe how challenges may have influenced the coaches in this inquiry, yet more research is necessary to see if the figure generalizes to other writing coaches and possibly other academic coaches. Further research, both qualitative and quantitative, can eventually lead to a model of causality for how to help create the parameters for academic coaches to be more efficacious and find greater job satisfaction.

Recommendations for Practice. I perceive the writing coaches in this study are hard-working, passionate educators who want to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. However, their perception of what the job is and what it should or could entail is often different.

Although this study sought to explore the roles, perceptions, and perceived impact of writing coaches, it truly became a study of the challenges perceived by writing coaches and the factors which may contribute to job dissatisfaction and perceived ineffectiveness. Therefore based on conversations with the participants in this inquiry and my own opinions, I outline recommendations for future practice to support writing coaches in their attempts to perform their jobs excellently.

*Delineate Specific, Manageable Roles and Responsibilities***.** In order to perform well, writing coaches require specific roles and responsibilities. This is evidenced by the many challenges the coaches communicated in individual and focus group interviews. When administrators ask writing coaches to behave as teachers, administrators, and coaches, they relegate writing coaches to struggle with time management. Coaches do not know where to focus their attention at times. When modeling in a teacher's room, is their primary function to help students or to model for the teacher? How can they be expected to hold coaching conversations with teachers when they are required to do school-wide data analysis or lunch duty? Why are they called a writing coach in one circle and a writing resource teacher in another? The ambiguity of the job title will force coaches to spend a large portion of their time first deciding what their roles and responsibilities should be before they have an opportunity to work with students or teachers. Administrators first need to work with coaches to define specific roles and responsibilities.

Once writing coaches know their specific roles and responsibilities, administrators must conference with coaches to work out a manageable time frame to perform their roles. I recommend writing coaches not have any regularly scheduled duty. If administrators require coaches to provide student supervision on a regular basic, they block off that time frame and

prevent coaches from being able to interact with students and teachers. For example, if coaches complete a lunch duty for the same one hour period each day, they are unable to work with the teachers and students who have language arts classes during that time period. Coaches need a flexible schedule every day because the needs of faculty and students will change throughout the year.

Lastly, if coaches are meant to coach teachers, allow them time to work with teachers on subjects of teachers' choosing. Successful PD is focused on the contextual needs of the participants (Guskey, 1994). Conferencing and cognitive coaching work best when driven by the individual rather than state or district imposed mandates (Darling Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Coaches and teachers require the latitude to work together toward mutual goals they set for themselves, and they require time in order to accomplish this. Results from the survey indicated teachers appreciated coaches as a form of professional development and assistance, yet no teachers specifically mention in what ways coaches influenced their writing beliefs and pedagogy. This could be because the coaches' time is limited to test preparation for the state mandated assessment. This position can be more than what it currently entails, and survey response indicated teachers are willing and ready to work with writing coaches to improve their knowledge bases and skill sets.

Writing Coaches as True Instructional Leaders. Another recommendation for practice is to allow the writing coach to be the instructional leader in writing. This will go far to foster a positive relationship between writing coaches and administrators. Coaches were undermined by principals and district personnel who wanted to micromanage their initiatives. Let writing coaches be the expert in the room who have control over their situations. I recommend writing coaches work within an overall school vision and mission to plan, enact, and evaluate their own

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enterprises. Writing coaches believe they should be accountable, but allow them the opportunity to create and test programs of instruction or professional development with students and teachers. Also, writing coaches need to be involved with decisions that will impact school-wide writing. I liken them to a cabinet member for the president. They need to weigh in on matters of importance like hiring new language arts faculty, assigning classes to teachers, scheduling students, and creating a master schedule that will allow for remediation and enrichment.

Create Fair Evaluation Systems. Overall, the effectiveness of writing coaches is tied to the state writing test scores. These scores reflect first on the student, then to the classroom teacher, followed by coaches. The coach is at least two steps removed from the state writing test scores, yet they are the overarching factor to determine their effectiveness. Therefore, I want to make recommendations to evaluate the effectiveness of coaches.

I recommend a combination of a portfolio system where there are certain observable competencies effective coaches should exhibit in conjunction with standardized test scores. Although test scores will remain a portion of coaches' evaluations, they must be compared appropriately to look for progress. Currently, only 8th grade students take the state writing assessment. If coaches are to be evaluated based on test scores, it does not make sense to have a new group of 8th grade students take the test each year and use their scores to measure the progress of a coach or teacher. Rather, students should test each year, grades six through eight, and the test scores should be compared as 7th graders are compared to how they did in the 6th grade, and 8th graders are compared to how they did in the 7th grade. I submit this is a more reliable way to attest to student growth and coaches' effectiveness.

Related to evaluations is the idea of merit pay. Currently, coaches can only receive merit pay if they perform in the top 10% of their instructional group; however, unlike other instructors

in their district who have thousands of teachers in their instructional groups, the coaching cadre has sixteen individuals. Therefore, it is only possible for two writing coaches to earn merit pay through the current evaluation system. This created an unnecessary air of competition and a breakdown of morale. Coaches are not as willing to share practices that improve student performance and teacher knowledge or pedagogy for fear they will give someone else the upper hand when it comes to a bonus. Figure 14 delineates categories coaches recommended in a focus group interview that would be appropriate areas to evaluate them.

Professional Development for Coaches. Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, and Boatright (2010) found problems in the learning trajectories of literacy coaches and noted coaches were learners too. They questioned who will coach the coach? For this reason, I recommend coaches continue to take part in professional development in which they have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from other school sites. These professional development opportunities should incorporate topics generated by the coaches and allow time for the coaches to implement and reflect on the strategies they learn.

Furthermore, all coaches in the inquiry mentioned they understood Costa and Garmston's theory of cognitive coaching, but they did not utilize this with teachers. The one situation in which I saw cognitive coaching take place involved Beatrice's district representative coaching Beatrice to reflect on the results of walkthrough information. District supervisors and representatives should continue to model the use of this practice with coaches and encourage them to work with teachers to help them reflect. I recommend writing coaches practice utilizing this theory with one another in mock situations, so they can take these tenets back to the teachers at their sites to probe teachers to deeply reflect on their practices.

Encourage Coaching of Teachers. Writing coaches in this inquiry had little time to focus on teachers to improve practice. There was so much pressure to directly impact student test scores even though coaches spent at the most nine hours with each student. A long-term solution to this issue would be to help teachers acquire the skills and knowledge they need to be better instructors of writing. Teachers need time to talk with coaches to reflect on practice. The coaches in the inquiry were aware of cognitive coaching, but had little time to complete coaching cycles where they could model for teachers and debrief afterward or observe teachers without informal or formal evaluation tools and lead a reflective discussion. Graham and Perin (2007) found curricula which taught students strategies to plan, revise, and edit their own work as well as provided professional development for teachers in the process approach to teach writing positively influenced student test scores on state tests.

Recommended Observable Categories for Evaluation of Writing Coaches

- Does the coach aggregate and disseminate data to track student writing progress?
- Does the coach offer extended-day opportunities outside of normal school hours for tutoring or professional development?
- Does the coach facilitate and promote professional learning communities for teachers?
- Does the coach engage in personal knowledge building through professional development?
- Does the coach offer mentoring and coaching sessions for teachers?
- Does the coach facilitate parental involvement in the writing curriculum?
- Does the coach develop and facilitate professional development opportunities for teachers?
- Does the coach hold tutorials and small group instruction during school hours for struggling students?

Figure 14: Recommended Observable Categories for Evaluation of Writing Coaches

Revise State and National Writing Assessments. Writing is a process, yet current writing assessments test students as if writing is something to be completed in a 45 to 60 minute vacuum. The NWP and NCTE prefer the process-approach to teaching writing where students

move between pre-writing, drafting, revision, and editing sometimes in cyclical rather than linear patterns. Applebee and Langer (2009) believe the current standardized tests are: "out of alignment with curriculum and instruction that emphasizes an extended process of writing and revision" (p.26). If experts and professional organizations 1.) agree the writing process should be varied for authentic purposes and audiences and 2.) consider a process-approach to writing instruction a strong teaching practice, why is writing assessed as if students should not have access to all the tools they would need to effectively navigate this process? In real-world writing situations, students can collaborate with one another and access resources in order to pre-write, draft, revise, and edit their work. I have never been accosted on the street or at my job to write to a decontextualized prompt in under an hour. This sort of situation does not exist in the real world.

Writing assessments need to test the process of writing rather than the final product. Students should have multiple days to complete a real-world writing task or performance assessment. They need to have access to resources like the Internet, dictionaries, thesauri, peers, and even teachers depending on the specific nature of the writing assessment. They need to be prepared to determine how they write dependent upon purpose and audience rather than adhere to a formula we know will work. I believe test-makers need to keep in mind the content they place on the tests can inadvertently narrow the curriculum (Au, 2007). The state writing assessment created an on-demand writing environment in which 8th grade students needed to respond to an expository or argumentative prompt. However, real-world writing purposes are substantially more varied. Students may need or choose to write narratives, poetry, screenplays, business letters, or literary analyses to name only a few genres of writing. Standardized testing which focuses on only two genres for a narrow audience bastardizes the true nature of writing

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instruction which is to prepare students to change structure, content, tone, and word choice depending upon the purpose and audience.

Summary

Chapter 5 reviewed the purpose, research questions, methodology, and discoveries from data analysis. It then presented implications and recommendations for research and practice. The roles and responsibilities of writing coaches make them a sort of jack-of-all-trades at their school sites. Currently, the focus on student instruction classifies them as a writing resource teacher, yet their administrative and coaching duties take them beyond the obligations of a classroom instructor. Writing coaches appear to be in the midst of evolution. Like literacy coaches who were reading specialists then reading coaches, writing coaches perceive and perform duties beyond a normal classroom teacher and transcend the role of a resource teacher. However, the ambiguity where their roles and responsibilities blur from teacher to administrator to coach creates conflicts. Further study with more participants is necessary to fully gauge how writing coaches are similar to their literacy and reading counterparts.

The challenges faced by writing coaches centered around their loci of control. The data suggested the more control one had over the factors that may impact her evaluation, the higher a coaches' perceived effectiveness and job satisfaction may be. Figure 13 offered a framework for how external factors may impact the participants' locus of control, perceived effectiveness, and perceived job satisfaction. Experimental research with additional participants is necessary to test this diagram.

The coaches in this study are my colleagues whose passion for writing, teaching, and student learning, I hoped to capture. In my professional opinion, they took these positions because they were fervent about helping faculty and students, but at times they wished their

perceptions aligned more with reality. If anything, this study indicated coaches can be more than

they currently are, but change in policy is necessary to realize the true potential of coaches,

teachers, and students.

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Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions

(National Writing Project, 2007; Seidman, 1991; Steckel, 2009)

Sample Interview 1 Questions: the goal is to understand the past experiences of participants surrounding the main research questions in order to inform how and why the participants' present opinions formed. These questions were used as a framework for the interview; however, the interview was not limited to these questions.

Script: In this interview, I want you to think about your experiences in the past. For these first few questions, I want you to think back to your experiences as a student in elementary, middle, and high school.

1. Describe your experiences learning to write in school.

2. How did your teachers grade your writing?

For these next questions, I want you to think about your previous experiences as a teacher.

3. When you were a classroom teacher, how did you approach the teaching of writing?

4. Describe your experiences with assessing student writing.

5. Can you describe your past experiences working with a coach or mentor as a form of PD

6. Before there were writing coaches in the district, reading coaches existed. Can you tell me about what you believe about the role of a reading coach?

Appendix A (Continued)

<u>Script</u>: Now I would like for you to think about your present situation.

1. Can you tell me about your educational background?

2. Tell me about your roles and responsibilities as the writing coach.

3. What do you feel are the qualities of an effective coach or mentor?

4. How do you approach coaching teachers in writing?

5. What do you believe to be nonnegotiable when teaching writing?

6. What do you believe to be nonnegotiable when assessing writing?

Appendix B: Focus Group Interview Questions

(National Writing Project, 2007; Steckel, 2009)

These questions were dependent upon the responses of the writing coaches selected for in-depth interviews.

1. The coaches in my study stated they felt their roles and responsibilities consisted of _____. Can you tell me about your roles and responsibilities as the writing coach?

2. The coaches in my study stated they felt _____ were the qualities of an effective coach or mentor. What do you feel are the qualities of an effective coach or mentor?

3. Do you believe _____ approaches to the teaching of writing will be beneficial to students? Teachers? How do you approach coaching teachers in writing?

4. What do you believe to be nonnegotiable when teaching writing?

5. What do you believe to be nonnegotiable when assessing writing?

Appendix C: Teacher Survey Items

(National Writing Project, 2007; Steckel, 2009)

Section 1: Demographic Information

Name (needed for raffle entry): _____

Subject(s) Taught: _____

Years Teaching Experience: _____

Highest Degree Earned: (B.A., B.S., M.Ed. MA., Ph.D.): _____

Section 2: Perceptions Regarding Writing Coaches

Directions: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by

selecting the number that corresponds to your beliefs.

1. I conference with the writing coach at least once a month.

1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Neutral 4-Agree   5-Strongly Agree   6-Don't Know

2. I have a positive relationship with the writing coach.

1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Neutral 4-Agree   5-Strongly Agree   6-Don't Know

3. I will seek out the advice of the writing coach when I need help teaching writing.

1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Neutral 4-Agree   5-Strongly Agree   6-Don't Know

4. The writing coach is a valuable source of PD.

1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Neutral 4-Agree   5-Strongly Agree   6-Don't Know

Please include any clarifications or opinions you would like to express below:

Section 3: Open-Ended Item

1. In what ways has the writing coach influenced you as a teacher, specifically with regard

   to your writing beliefs and pedagogy?

Appendix D: Sample Researcher Response Log

Beatrice takes calls from teachers on cell phone. "I'm angry at myself for working on the weekend, but I had to be done by Monday."	
1st period—S. goes to a teacher's classroom—new teacher, 6th grade (walks outside to student who yelled out: "Who stole my stuff? I'm gonna take your glasses and break them!"; comes back in after 5 minutes and kid now has a pencil box)	Helping as teacher seems to be struggling with classroom management; explained this teacher took over for a long-term sub
(walks over to kid with glasses and whispers to him)	
(stands in back while teacher reviews rules, policies, and role)	
(private conversation with teacher about Monday's enrichment schedule—new teacher will not do a lesson today—"Just text me and tell me when you're gonna do it. Makes us look good when SpringBoard comes." Checks teacher's goal)	
(leave her classroom to go to another teacher's room) Come upon a teacher crying in the hallway. Steps into that teacher's room to relieve her. "Can somebody explain to me what you are supposed to be doing?"	This is a science teacher from the looks of her classroom
"I want everyone to write it, then we'll discuss it" (to individual student) "So which picket of air would heat up quicker? So why do you think the land air would heat faster?" "And why? And why? Can you expound a little more on your	Walking around helping individuals, but consistently asks them to provide support for their answers—this is important in response to text as well
"The section where it says 'analyze'...you're using the table to answer those questions." (teacher returns) (privately to teacher) "You need me to stay here?" (Takes over class for teacher who leaves—privately talks to students who begin yelling at one another)	It must be difficult to interrupt your schedule, but she did not hesitate to help another teacher in another subject
(eventually a sub is provided and relieves S.)	Whether or not they agree, this places them in an evaluation role
(S. goes into a private meeting where district personnel representing SpringBoard are at the school for a walkthrough)	The people in the meeting include S.'s principal, the math coach, Alice Wukovich (ELA SB), Martha (SB person), and math SB woman (forget her name at the moment)
I waited in the front office until they emerged. Beatrice begins walkthroughs. She is paired with Alice W.(all split into teams to cover all grade levels/ELA and math)—S. will go through the 7th	

Appendix E: Example Reduction of Open Codes

To reduce the open codes to more manageable codes, I tried to combine words I perceived as synonyms or categories and eliminate codes loosely tied to the research questions. I also shared these thoughts with the participants after observation at a district meeting See below for an example of how I numbered the codes I perceived to be synonymous or related:

Academic vocabulary 1	Control 9	Helping students 6	Perfection 13	Reflection 13
Administrative task 2	Conversation 18	Helping teachers 14	Perseverance 8	Relationships 18
Art vs. formula 8	Data 10	Helping whole school 15	Personal ability 13	Self-reflection 13
Balance 3	Decision 11	Impact 15	Personal experience 8	Standardized testing 23
Beliefs 8	~~Dependable~~	Improvement 16	Positive outlook 8	Stress 24
Buy-in 8	Difficulties 8	Knowledge base	Pragmatism 8	Success 15
Challenge 8	Drive instruction 12	Leadership 17	Pressure 20	~~Supportive~~
Classroom management 4	Evaluation 13	Mentoring 18	Professional development 21	Teaching is hard 25
Coaching 5	~~Family~~	Micromanagement 19	Professional relationships 18	Teaching writing 25
Conferencing 7	Feedback 13	Models 18	Quitting 8	Time 26
~~Confidence~~	Flexibility 8	Organization 8	Rapport 18	Unclear role 27
Conflicting belief 8	Frustration 8	~~Passion~~	Reality vs. perception 22	Validation 28

For example, "Academic Vocabulary" did not have any direct synonyms, so it received the number "1," marking it as the first of the sixty open codes to remain in the reduced list of codes. I was able to combine codes as well. For example, "Impact" and "Helping Whole School" became "Impact Whole School" in the reduced list. Similarly, "Relationships," "Rapport," "Models," and "Conversation," all were elements of "Mentoring."

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Appendix F: Timeline of Data Collection and Analysis

Week 1 Electronically obtained a copy of each site's School Improvement Plan (Step 1) Initial Observations and Interviews with Tabitha and Celeste Recorded and transcribed observation notes and interviews (Step 1) Sent transcriptions to Tabitha and Celeste for approval (Member Check)
Week 2 Initial Observation and Interview with Beatrice Recorded and transcribed observation notes and interview (Step 1) Conducted microanalysis of data from Week 1 (Step 2) Sent transcripts of Week 2 data to Beatrice for approval (Member Check)
Week 3 Second Observations with Tabitha and Celeste Recorded and transcribed observation notes (Step 1) Conducted microanalysis of data from Week 2 (Step 2) Condensed 60 original open codes to 28 codes Sent transcriptions of Week 3 to Tabitha and Celeste for approval (Member Check)
Week 4 Second Observation with Beatrice Recorded and transcribed observation notes (Step 1) Conducted microanalysis of data from Week 3 with 28 open codes in mind (Step 3) Sent transcriptions of Week 4 to Beatrice for approval (Member Check)
Week 5 Third Observations and Second Interviews with Tabitha and Celeste Recorded and transcribed observation notes and interviews (Step 1) Sent electronic survey to staff at all sites Conducted microanalysis of data from Week 4 with 28 open codes in mind (Step 3) Reduced 28 open codes to 5 repetitive categories Sent transcriptions of Week 5 to Tabitha and Celeste for approval (Member Check)
Week 6 Third Observations and Second Interview with Beatrice Recorded and transcribed observation notes and interview (Step 1) Utilized 5 repetitive categories to code Week 5 data (Step 4) Sent transcriptions of Week 6 to Beatrice for approval (Member Check)
Week 7 Utilized 5 repetitive categories to code Week 6 data (Step 4) Went back through data from Week 1-7 utilizing constant comparative method (Step 5) Sent reminder of electronic survey to staff at all sites Met with coaches for focus group interview to verify data analysis (Member Check)

Week 8

Tabulated survey results and reported descriptive statistics

Looked across cases to for emergent themes, patterns, and ideas relevant to the research questions. (Step 6)

Communicated the relevant themes, patterns, and ideas in detail with direct quotes to support their integration into this dissertation (Step 7)

Appendix G: State Writing Assessment Essay Scoring Guide

Score Points in Rubric

The rubric further interprets the four major areas of consideration into levels of achievement.

6 Points. The writing is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. The support is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. The paper demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject, clarity in presentation of ideas, and may use creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. Few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, and punctuation.

5 Points. The writing focuses on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. The paper conveys a sense of completeness or wholeness. The support is ample. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. There is variation in sentence structure, and, with rare exceptions, sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

4 Points. The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern is apparent, although some lapses may occur. The paper exhibits some sense of completeness or wholeness. The support, including word choice, is adequate, although development may be uneven. There is little variation in sentence structure, and most sentences are complete. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

3 Points. The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern has been attempted, but the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Some support is included, but development is erratic. Word choice is adequate but may be limited, predictable, or occasionally vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure. Knowledge of the conventions of mechanics and usage is usually demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

2 Points. The writing is related to the topic but includes extraneous or loosely related material. Little evidence of an organizational pattern may be demonstrated, and the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Development of support is inadequate or illogical. Word choice is limited, inappropriate, or vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure, and gross errors in sentence structure may occur.

Appendix G (Continued)

Errors in basic conventions of mechanics and usage may occur, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

1 Point. The writing may only minimally address the topic. The paper is a fragmentary or incoherent listing of related ideas or sentences or both. Little, if any, development of support or an organizational pattern or both is apparent. Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning. Gross errors in sentence structure and usage may impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors may occur in the basic conventions of mechanics and usage, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

Unscorable. The paper is unscorable because

- the response is not related to what the prompt requested the student to do,
- the response is simply a rewording of the prompt,
- the response is a copy of a published work,
- the student refused to write,
- the response is written in a foreign language,
- the response is illegible,
- the response is incomprehensible (words are arranged in such a way that no meaning is conveyed),
- the response contains an insufficient amount of writing to determine if the student was attempting to address the prompt, or the writing folder is blank.

Appendix H: MTSS/RTI Leadership Team Responsibilities from SIP

• Oversee multi-layered model of instructional delivery (Tier 1/Core, Tier 2/Supplemental and Tier 3/Intensive)
• Create, manage and update the school resource map
• Ensure the master schedule incorporates allocated time for intervention support at all grade levels.
• Determine scheduling needs, and assist teacher teams in identifying research-based instructional materials and intervention resources at Tiers2/3
• Facilitate the implementation of specific programs (e.g., Extended Learning Programs during and after school; Saturday Academies) that provide intervention support to students identified through data sorts/chats conducted by the PLCs.
• Determine the school-wide professional development needs of faculty and staff and arrange trainings aligned with the SIP goals
• Organize and support systematic data collection (e.g., district and state assessments; during-the-grading period school assessments/checks for understanding; in-school surveys)
• Assist and monitor teacher use of SMART goals per unit of instruction. (data will be collected and analyzed by PLCs and reported to the Leadership Team/PSLT)
• Strengthen the Tier 1 (core curriculum) instruction through the:
    o Implementation and support of PLCs
    o Review of teacher/PLC core curriculum assessments/chapters tests/checks for understanding (data will be collected and analyzed by PLCs and reported to the Leadership Team/PSLT)
    o Use of Common Core Assessments by teachers teaching the same grade/subject area/course (data will be collected and analyzed by PLCs and reported to the Leadership Team/PSLT)
    o Implementation of research-based scientifically validated instructional strategies and/or interventions. (as outlined in our SIP)
    o Communication with major stakeholders (e.g., parents, business partners, etc.) regarding student outcomes through data summaries and conferences.
• On a monthly basis, assist in the evaluation of teacher fidelity data and student achievement data collected during the month.
• Support the planning, implementing, and evaluating the outcomes of supplemental and intensive interventions in conjunction with PLCs and Specialty PSLT.
• Work collaboratively with the PLCs in the implementation of the C-CIM (Core Continuous Improvement Model) on core curriculum material.
• Coordinate/collaborate/integrate with other working committees, such as the Literacy Leadership Team (which is charged with developing a plan for embedding/integrating reading and writing strategies across all other content areas).

Appendix I: Writing Coaches' Walkthrough Data Collection Form

Focus: Rigor

School:	
Course/Date:	
Team Member:	
Number of Students:	
Class Structure: ☐ Whole Class ☐ Groups	

Objectives:

1. Observe the rigor of student/teacher interactions in the classroom.
2. Analyze the alignment of daily learning objectives with the rigor of student/teacher interactions.

Learning Objectives	Completely	Emerging	No	None
Learning objectives were aligned to the level of interactions observed. (3A, 3C, 3D)				

Evidence: ☐ Focus ☐ Action ☐ Content ☐ Condition

Comments: _____

_____

Student Interactions	Tallies	Total
Number of teacher questions at the knowledge and comprehension level. (3B)		
Number of teacher questions reflects the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy/Costa's Levels of Questioning. (3B)		
Number of student responses demonstrating use of vocabulary and evidence of understanding of higher levels of learning. (2A, 3C)		
Number of student-initiated questions to clarify their understanding of assigned reading, teacher's lecture, or assessments. (2A, 3C)		
Number of student-initiated questions to reflect the higher levels of Bloom's/ Costa's. (2A,3C)		
Number of different students involved in interactions.(Unduplicated) (2A, 3C)		
Number of different students involved in interactions beyond the knowledge level of learning. (Unduplicated) (2A, 3C)		

Appendix I (Continued)

SpringBoard: (SB text used today: Yes ☐ No ☐)	**Yes**	**No**
Students understand the purpose of the lesson (Learning Objectives) and its connections to the posted and unpacked EA. (3A, 3C)		
Exemplars of student work are displayed and frequently rotated. (2B)		
SB consumable texts show evidence of consistent use such as marked text, annotated passages, written responses, notes. (3C, 3D)		
Student collaboration occurs within structured processes to ensure individual accountability and equal participation by all. (2A)		

Comments:_____
_____

Appendix J: Sample Non-Classroom Evaluation Form

————————————————————

Please check (√) the appropriate rating in each area.

O = Outstanding S = Satisfactory NI = Needs Improvement U = Unsatisfactory

	SELF				ADMINISTRATOR			
I. INSTRUCTIONAL IMPACT (Point values: O = 10; S = 6; NI = 4.5; U = 0)	**O**	**S**	**NI**	**U**	**O**	**S**	**NI**	**U**
a. Plans activities consistent with state board rules, statutes, district policies, procedures, program standards and district and school improvement plans that promote increased student achievement.	10	6	4.5	0	10	6	4.5	0

ENTER SECTION TOTAL PTS (MAX 10)

	SELF				ADMINISTRATOR			
II. PLANNING AND PREPARATION (Point values: O = 4; S = 2; NI = 1.5; U = 0)	**O**	**S**	**NI**	**U**	**O**	**S**	**NI**	**U**
a. Uses time efficiently..		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
b. Helps plan and provide training activities and workshops for other professionals and parents/caretakers...	4	2	1.5	0	4	2	1.5	0
c. Demonstrates punctuality.		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
d. Performs responsibilities with a minimum of supervision.............................		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
e. Completes records and reports accurately and in a timely manner..............		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
f. Dresses appropriately and is well groomed.		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0

ENTER SECTION TOTAL PTS (MAX 14)

	SELF				ADMINISTRATOR			
III. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS (Point values: O = 4; S = 2; NI = 1.5; U = 0)	**O**	**S**	**NI**	**U**	**O**	**S**	**NI**	**U**
a. Evaluates own professional growth on a regular basis and pursues appropriate professional development activities to maintain or improve effectiveness.	4	2	1.5	0	4	2	1.5	0
b. Follows standards of ethical conduct and best practices as put forth by national and state professional associations and/or the Nurse Practice Act............................		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
c. Establishes and follows through on appropriate priorities............................		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
d. Assembles and utilizes information, materials, equipment and technology for maximum effectiveness..		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
e. Seeks and uses collaborative consultation with colleagues and administrators.	4	2	1.5	0	4	2	1.5	0
f. Selects and uses appropriate intervention resources, assessment, materials and activities that demonstrate sensitivity to individual, ethnic and cultural differences and are consistent with professional competencies..............................	4	2	1.5	0	4	2	1.5	0
g. Accurately interprets the results of student assessments to appropriate school personnel	4	2	1.5	0	4	2	1.5	0
h. Advocates for the needs of students.		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
i. Maintains confidentiality with respect to records and to oral and written communication.		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0
j. Participates in committees/activities within the district and community which contribute to student success...	4	2	1.5	0	4	2	1.5	0
k. Prepares and submits appropriate comprehensive written reports that include interpretation and synthesis of assessment data.		2	1.5	0		2	1.5	0

ENTER SECTION TOTAL PTS (MAX 32)

IV. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS (Point values: O = 6; S = 3; NI = 2.5; U = 0)	O	S	NI	U	O	S	NI	U
a. Collaborates with school personnel, parents, and other professional and agency representatives, demonstrating respect for different points of view.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
b. Maintains flexibility in performance of responsibilities.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
c. Operates as a team member and/or assumes a leadership role as appropriate.	6	3	2.5	0	6	3	2.5	0
d. Consults with administrative staff on a regular basis.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
e. Responds to students, parents/caretakers and staff in an appropriate and timely manner.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
f. Keeps self and colleagues informed about new developments and issues affecting their profession, including up-to-date research.	6	3	2.5	0	6	3	2.5	0

IV PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS (Point values: O = 6; S = 3; NI = 2.5; U = 0) Continued	O	S	NI	U	O	S	NI	U
g. Works with a minimum amount of supervision within job description.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
h. Demonstrates skill in handling specific assignments.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
ENTER SECTION TOTAL PTS (MAX 30)								

V. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (Point values: O = 6; S = 3; NI = 2.5; U = 0)	O	S	NI	U	O	S	NI	U
a. Administers, scores and/or utilizes screening, assessment, testing and evaluation instruments accurately		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
b. Conducts comprehensive unbiased individual evaluations.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
c. Demonstrates knowledge of theories, best practices and techniques appropriate to the profession.	6	3	2.5	0	6	3	2.5	0
d. Demonstrates skills in mental health counseling, crisis intervention, application of suicide prevention techniques, problem solving, enhancing self-esteem, goal setting and application of clinical techniques, where appropriate.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
e. Demonstrates knowledge and proficiency in the use of statistical measures.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
f. Uses appropriate clinical interviewing techniques and/or multiple sources of information regarding students.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
g. Uses state eligibility criteria and supportive data to arrive at educational recommendations and/or mental health planning.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
h. Adheres to appropriate clinical standards when engaged in mental health counseling and/or consultation.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
ENTER SECTION TOTAL PTS (MAX 27)								

VI. COMMUNICATION (Point values: O = 6; S = 3; NI = 2.5; U = 0)	O	S	NI	U	O	S	NI	U
a. Speaks positively and constructively when discussing students with parents and school personnel.	6	3	2.5	0	6	3	2.5	0
b. Adheres to professional standards of confidentiality.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
c. Communicates general and technical information in a clear, informative manner that assists other professionals in planning and implementing strategies for students.	6	3	2.5	0	6	3	2.5	0
d. Assists others in understanding and utilizing his/her professional services.	6	3	2.5	0	6	3	2.5	0
e. Uses effective techniques when making presentations to groups and other professionals.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
f. Establishes and maintains rapport with school/community.		3	2.5	0		3	2.5	0
ENTER SECTION TOTAL PTS (MAX 27)								

DATE OF SELF-EVALUATION:
_____

SIGNATURE OF EDUCATOR: _____

Appendix J (Continued)

Personnel are expected to meet or exceed satisfactory standards in every aspect of their performance and to strive to achieve outstanding ratings in all appropriate competencies. The score of achieving all "S" ratings is 106 and is the minimum expected standard.

EVALUATION RATING
OVERALL "O" ≥ 133.0
OVERALL "S" = 95.5 – 132.5
OVERALL "NI" = 85.5 – 95.0
OVERALL "U" ≤ 85.0

GRAND TOTAL [ ]

(CIRCLE ONE RATING)

O   S   NI   U

VII. EVALUATOR'S COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS: (additional pages allowed)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

IX. EDUCATOR'S COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS: (additional pages allowed)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature of Evaluator: _____   **Date:** _____

Signature of Educator: _____   **Date:** _____