INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING TEACHER EXPERIENCES

by

Kelli Jean Crowe

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. The theory guiding this study is Kolb's theory on experiential learning connecting it to coaching as a foundational element when adult learners are focused on improving craft and instructional prowess for the benefit of students. This hermeneutic phenomenological study used a qualitative research design to answer the following research questions: CRQ) What are the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district? SQ1) How do coached teachers describe the experience of coaching? SQ2) How do coached teachers describe the process of reflection? SQ3) How do coached teachers describe the development of new ideas? SQ4) How do coached teachers describe the planning of new experiences? A combination of K-12 teachers from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools in the Applewood school district were identified to participate in this study based on the experience of working with an instructional coach at the school. Individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifact evaluation were used to collect data. The data collected was analyzed using the hermeneutic process. In synthesizing data, overarching themes were identified, including individualization and choice in coaching, a support system for teachers, teacher and coach partnerships, a fresh perspective, frustration leads to learning, reflection leads to insight, supporting students, and the positive experience of collaboration.

Keywords: coaching, instructional coach, professional development, K-12 teachers, elementary school, middle school, high school, experiential learning, reflection, support, individualization, partnership, collaboration, hermeneutic phenomenology

Dedication

To my husband for his constant support, commitment, and love for me. My achievements would be nothing without him.

David, you have devoted yourself to me. You have shown up in so many ways that I will always be thankful and grateful for your dedication and sacrifice. You are my everything. I love you. Forever.

To my children for their understanding and love. My achievements mean nothing without them.

Children, you have shown so much understanding and patience. I only wish to guide you and serve as a role model showing perseverance and strength that you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. You are my hopes and dreams. I love you. Always.

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List of Abbreviations

Applewood School District (ASD)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Professional Development (PD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. Instructional coaches in public schools have been tasked with increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Brunsek et al., 2020). Coaching is individualized and sustained while also considered job-embedded professional development (Kraft et al., 2018). Teachers engage in various instructional coaching techniques during collaborative meetings, such as goal setting, planning, observation, feedback, modeling, data analysis, and reflection (Saclarides, 2022; Schachter et al., 2022). As a system of educational professional development, existing literature often highlights the necessary continued teacher education that instructional coaching can develop. However, the gap in the literature reveals the missing perspectives and insights from the teachers who have been coached. This chapter introduces the proposed hermeneutic phenomenological study, including the background information, problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study. Finally, the central research question and sub-questions are identified with explanations of definitions for significant concepts relating to instructional coaching.

Background

The Applewood school district (ASD) has recently included instructional coaching as a structure for increasing instructional pedagogy with its educators and increasing its students' achievement and growth. Although relatively new for many schools, including schools in the ASD, coaching has been a form of professional development for many years (Kraft et al., 2018). Instructional coaching stems from the research of Joyce and Showers (1980), which has been

identified as foundational to the practice of coaching (Kraft et al., 2018). The section of the chapter explores the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of instructional coaching as the process evolved into embedded professional development practice.

Historical Context

Different structures for implementing teacher professional development were researched by Joyce and Showers (1980), who identified peer coaching as one of the most impactful methods for teachers retaining and implementing new teaching pedagogy. The seminal research from Joyce and Showers (1980) helped shape instructional coaching that has continued to be incorporated into school districts' professional learning models. In the analysis of over 200 studies, Joyce and Showers (1980) found five elements most critical to teacher training success. These included describing the skill or theory, modeling the skill, practicing the process, providing feedback, and applying coaching within the teaching process (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Teachers involved in coaching require educators first to examine the content or subject area while thinking about what students will learn, how it will be taught based on the new instructional practice, and then plan for this based on the teacher's current students and the skills students possess (Joyce & Showers, 1980). These elements can still be seen in instructional coaching today through modeling, practicing, and providing feedback (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Over a decade post the foundational work of instructional coaching, Showers and Joyce (1996) continued to focus on best practices to support student success through teacher growth by revisiting the implementation of teacher professional development and instructional coaching. As a result, teachers' participation in peer coaching was extended, and structures were created to support teachers in peer coaching continuously during the school year (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

As instructional coaching evolved, excellence in student achievement was identified as an

outcome of aligning continuous professional development with strategic school goals while applying learned skills in the classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). This type of professional development was more effective than the typical one-day training system historically utilized by school districts, with teachers' perception of learning over time being revealed to be more productive (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Creating opportunities for intensive continuous learning is explicitly related to coaching with teachers focused on pedagogy and increased student achievement. Furthermore, increased student achievement occurs with the incorporation of essential coaching elements and with the distinction of coaching as a long-term professional development practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Kraft et al., 2018). Coaching also provides the purposeful practice of teachers examining what will be taught and proactively investigating what might be problematic for students when learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). As such, this process connects to the practice of planning and goal setting within a coaching cycle. Today, coaching is implemented as a professional development to aid in increasing teacher skills and pedagogy (Page & Eadie, 2019) while supporting the progression of social integration among K-12 staff.

Social Context

There are social aspects related to coaching, with teachers reaping tremendous benefits from the process when coaching is established in a school. The coaches hired to work with teachers are usually former teachers with expertise in teaching (Saclarides, 2022). However, teachers' engagement in coaching could be missing because of different factors contributing to a lack of commitment to being coached. Some teachers are receptive to coaching, and others are not (Jacobs et al., 2018). Understanding that coaching involves self-reflection, collaboration, and change, some teachers are not open to this process and do not want to involve themselves in

change (Jacobs et al., 2018). Teachers who experience a lack of time for planning may become resentful with the perception that coaching is taking time away from the planning period. Resentment could stem from the individualistic nature of culture in the United States (Edwards et al., 2020; Hofstede, 2001), the definitive history of classrooms, or the isolation teachers experience within the profession (Jacobs et al., 2018).

Alternatively, the individualized nature of instructional coaching benefits teachers (Hnasko, 2020; Kraft et al., 2018; Schachter et al., 2022). Teacher effectiveness is a factor in student success, where all teachers can strive to improve one's craft, with coaching being a form of job-embedded professional development (Blazar & Kraft, 2015). Engaging in coaching can have the teacher identifying personal goals based on a desire to increase instructional efficacy or identifying student goals based on data analysis. The coach can help identify the goals to be accomplished during the coaching cycle while also creating opportunities for reflection (Fontes & Dello Russo, 2021; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Lofthouse, 2019; Schachter et al., 2022; Witherspoon et al., 2021).

Resultantly, coaching benefits students and increases academic growth and achievement (Jacobs et al., 2018). Having students become better readers, writers, mathematicians, and thinkers promotes self-efficacy and the ability to make the most informed choices about one's future. Students benefit when teachers are mindful of pedagogy and the best instructional methods for teaching (Kraft et al., 2018). Furthermore, students also benefit when teachers regard themselves as learners and strive to make learning engaging, rigorous, and inclusive for all. With the implementation of different policies, including the Reading Excellence Act and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), coaching positions aimed explicitly at increasing students' reading skills were funded by federal legislation (Jacobs et al., 2018; Kraft et al., 2018). School

districts also benefit when students are growing in achievement because of teachers' participation and implementation of best practices (Ippolito et al., 2021; Kraft et al., 2018).

Theoretical Context

Theories exploring adult learning and professional development contribute to how coaching is developed, sustained, and implemented as a best practice. Experiential learning theory (ELT) constructs learning from both intellectual and experiential opportunities (Kolb, 1984, 2014) and will be applied to this proposed study. Other studies involving coaching have used ELT because of its focus on practicing new skills through active learning (Bloomberg, 2022; Elek & Page, 2019). Additionally, adult learning theory has frequently been used in coaching studies (Elek & Page, 2019; Gray, 2018; Hnasko, 2020; Hu & Tuten, 2021; Pletcher et al., 2019; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021) with the concept of andragogy pioneered by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles et al., 2015) recognizing the differences in acquiring new knowledge between young people and adults. Constructivism, with an emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge, provides another recurring learning theory in coaching studies (Hnasko, 2020; Page & Eadie, 2019; Pletcher et al., 2019; Witherspoon et al., 2021). Social constructivism, derived from Vygotsky (1978), is learning directed by someone with more knowledge and abilities scaffolded to move through one's zone of proximal development, where the next most beneficial progression of knowledge occurs. Additionally, situated learning theory used in coaching studies (Bloomberg, 2022; Gray, 2018; Hnasko, 2020; Yang et al., 2022) posits that learning is a social construction with learners participating in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of which coaching embodies this dimension of learning.

As a form of professional development best practices, Joyce and Showers' (1980) seminal research paved the way for coaching to be used in schools as a form of professional

development. Coaches have used the structures and practices identified to increase teacher effectiveness and improve one's craft (Joyce & Showers, 1980). This initial coaching concept focused on peer coaching, with teachers coaching each other or having evaluators, consultants, or professors involved in peer coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Early research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) explained the importance of having professional development be continuous and ongoing throughout the year. Also identified is the importance of focusing on teacher needs based on students in the teachers' classes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Relating heavily to the concept of goal setting by teachers during a coaching cycle is the identification of a focus for collaboration. In the cognitive coaching model by Garmston et al. (1993), the research identifies reflection as being one of the most critical aspects of coaching. Reflection focuses on the coach asking questions and paraphrasing the teacher's answers, building on the strengths of the teacher instead of the coach giving advice or solutions (Garmston et al., 1993).

Professional development with teachers attending day-long, school-wide sessions have historically seen little improvement in teaching practices (Kraft & Blazer, 2018). Individualized professional development between a coach and teacher has been gaining popularity in schools and has seen increased outcomes in student achievement (Kraft & Blazer, 2018). Strong instructional leaders who coach teachers in literacy best practices can also be instrumental in guiding school administration to improve literacy instruction with students (Ippolito et al., 2021). Studies have been conducted analyzing coaching structures and, more recently, the effects and outcomes of coaching on teacher practice and student growth (Kraft & Blazer, 2018). Coaching as a form of professional development traditionally and currently continues to occur in-person during the school day while also gaining popularity as a virtual experience in an online setting

(Ippolito et al., 2021; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021).

Problem Statement

The problem is that instructional coaching is an underutilized professional development system to support student achievement. Students in the ASD are often found not to meet grade-level performance standards. High expectations are often set for students based on content standards (Kraft et al., 2018). Many are still not reading at grade level or achieving math proficiency (Song et al., 2022, 2021). In addition, students enter schools with various skills and needs (Kraft et al., 2018). Consequently, teachers continue to develop instructional expertise to effectively teach diverse learners while advancing student achievement toward grade-level standards (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Instructional coaching is also identified in the NCLB policy (Robertson et al., 2020) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as one way to increase teacher effectiveness (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Therefore, coaching is implemented for school improvement to increase students' academic achievement (Kurz et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2022).

The importance of professional development and building teacher capacity cannot be overemphasized. Teacher instruction impacts student achievement (Brunsek et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazer, 2018; Kraft et al., 2018); however, professional development in the form of daylong workshops does not improve teacher instruction. Instead, quality instruction focusing on rigor, engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration between students are practices that should be embedded in students' learning and are found to increase student success (Witherspoon et al., 2021). In addition, teachers' continued learning is critical for the best possible development of students' education, with coaching addressing professional development for continued teacher support. Teachers can be supported to increase teaching abilities while also learning to

incorporate students' personal strengths and assets relating to culture and linguistic skills because of the nuances in a coaching experience (Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. At this stage in the research, instructional coaching or coaching will be generally defined as collaboration between a teacher and a coach to increase student achievement by identifying goals set by the teacher that can be accomplished through multiple strategies, including observation, modeling, co-teaching, data analysis, feedback, and reflection. ELT guides this research to promote the concept of learning from both educational constructs and the practical application of new information and skills in a real-world situation (Kolb, 1984, 2014).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was demonstrated by the benefits of using instructional coaching and its incorporation as job-embedded professional development for increasing student achievement in the ASD school district. In the 2021-2022 school year, ASD implemented instructional coaching positions in all elementary schools, with the 15 elementary schools identified as Title 1 having one or two full-time instructional coaches in buildings. Additionally, half-time instructional coach positions were created in the other 28 elementary schools in the district. In the 2022-23 school year, 13 coaches were serving two elementary schools. The final two elementary schools paired together has its coach position remaining open and unfilled. Progressively, in the 2022-23 school year, ASD created half-time coach positions in all 11 middle schools and 8 high schools, with the Adaptive Programs having one coach and the online 6-12 school having a half-time coach. Each half-time position has one coach serving two

middle schools or two high schools for a total of 11 coaches. The new ASD initiative to implement instructional coaching in all schools creates an opportunity to analyze this specific district and its coaching for the purpose of understanding the teachers' perspectives based on experiences with coaching. The significance of this proposed study is examined from a theoretical, empirical, and practical perspective (see Table 1).

Table 1

Applewood School District Coaching Implementation

Coaching Year	School Type	Position Type	Buildings	Coaches
2021-2022	Title-1 Elementary Schools	Full-Time	15	16
2021-2022	Elementary Schools	Half-Time	28	13
2022-2023	Middle Schools	Half-Time	11	5.5
2022-2023	High Schools	Half-Time	8	4
2022-2023	Adaptive Programs	Full-Time	1	1
2022-23	K-8 Challenge School	Full-Time	1	1
2022-23	6-12 Online School	Half-Time	1	.5
Total				41

Note. Table 1 presents the year each school within the Applewood School District implemented coaching in addition to the coaching position, total school buildings, and the total number of coaches assigned to each school.

The theoretical foundation for this study focuses on ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014). Experiences as being crucial to learning and being foundational to ELT are identified by Kolb (1984, 2014). ELT bases many of its concepts on the work done by John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Kurt Lewin. Learning as a process, rather than having a specific result or outcome, is at the

core of ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014). The ideas a learner has are created based on experiences, and these ideas are not rigid but will change depending on the participation in new or different experiences (Kolb, 1984, 2014). The philosophies of Paulo Freire (Freire et al., 2014) and his examination of the idea of learning as inquiry are also highlighted in ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014). Instead of thinking about students as vessels for teacher instruction to be collected and stored, students should be fully participatory in creating learning (Kolb, 1984, 2014).

The empirical significance stems from the limited research on teacher perspectives and the need to examine how teachers experience involvement in coaching. This study will attempt to discover what experiences teachers had during coaching, how reflection supported teachers' thinking, and what outcomes or decisions were created. These insights could be highlighted for instructional coaches to understand before entering into coaching with teachers. For example, previous studies have researched practices across the disciplines associated with coaching and the translation of building educator instructional skills and student achievement. Improved instructional quality is often developed through coaching structures (Page & Eadie, 2019), where coaching creates positive results by contributing to increased student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018; Kraft & Blazer, 2018). Even further, research focusing on processes that instructional coaches followed and how these coaching strategies contributed to implementing more robust math instruction found that stronger math instruction was produced from techniques developed through instructional coaching (Witherspoon et al., 2021).

From a practical perspective, coaching programs are being implemented in schools across the county, and few studies exist surrounding the teachers' perceptions. Teachers can be reluctant to enter into coaching for multiple reasons, with limited research examining teachers' acceptance or resistance to coaching and the implications for coaching and instructional growth

(Jacobs et al., 2018). Identifying the ASD teacher impressions and perspectives will be beneficial in aiding the ongoing instructional coaching program implementation. Overall, this research study will contribute to the limited knowledge regarding the perceptions of previously coached teachers.

Research Questions

Instructional coaching in education is job-embedded professional development (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Brunsek et al., 2020; Saclarides, 2022). Therefore, this research will contribute to the existing body of research by understanding how improved pedagogy developed from teachers' coaching experiences as job-embedded professional development systems related to the problem of students not meeting grade-level performance standards. Improved student achievement is the goal of increasing educator effectiveness through instructional coaching. ELT, as the theoretical framework, supports this research through the idea that learning relies heavily on personal experiences (Kolb, 1984, 2014). The central research question seeks to understand the experiences of teachers who have participated in coaching. The sub-questions create the opportunity using the four components of ELT to understand how the teacher used a concrete experience to reflect on the experience, create abstract conceptualization, and think about active experimentation that led to new concrete experiences.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district?

Sub-Question One

How do coached teachers describe the experience of coaching?

Sub-Question Two

How do coached teachers describe the process of reflection?

Sub-Question Three

How do coached teachers describe the development of new ideas?

Sub-Question Four

How do coached teachers describe the planning of new experiences?

Definitions

1. *Coaching* - An individualized approach to professional development sustained over time to increase a teacher's instructional skills (Kraft & Blazer, 2018).
2. *Instructional Coach* - An expert or master teacher who works with teachers to improve or implement new teacher pedagogy and instructional skills (Jacobs et al., 2018).
3. *Pedagogy* - "The art and science of teaching children" (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 36).
4. *Professional Development* - A structure to improve teacher pedagogy that can be administered in multiple ways, including day-long sessions or through coaching (Kraft & Blazer, 2018).
5. *Title 1* - A federal program that provides money to schools with this designation that have high percentages of students from low-income families to support its students' academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Summary

The problem is that instructional coaching is an underutilized professional development system to support student achievement. Continued learning is paramount for teachers to advance their instructional capacity to better teach the students in classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Kraft et al., 2018). Accordingly, coaching in education is increasingly becoming a popular

form of professional development (Jacobs et al., 2018; Knight, 2019). Schools are using instructional coaching as the vehicle for professional development when implementing new curricula and increasing teacher effectiveness (Boyle et al., 2021). However, research pertaining to teachers' perceptions of coaching is limited. Resultantly, this proposed hermeneutic phenomenological study highlights the need for this type of research because of the frequency of coaching programs being implemented in school districts while simultaneously filling a gap in the literature. Responsively, the purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. Furthermore, the information garnered from this hermeneutic phenomenological study could be used to understand teachers' coaching experiences and create more engagement and intentional outcomes with coaching, especially when coaching programs at schools are in a fledgling state.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. Incorporating educational coaching in schools is increasingly utilized by K-12 school districts to build teacher capacity and increase student achievement. In this literature review, experiential learning theory will be examined as the theoretical framework to support the concept of coaching in education. Next, the related literature will explore educational aspects, significant factors, and coaching cycle components. Following this exploration is a guided examination of educational coaching benefits as a form of job-embedded professional development, student achievement, and coaching individualization. Finally, the literature review will explore the research gaps, including the lack of information surrounding the experiences of coached educators.

Theoretical Framework

The exploration of teacher coaching experiences will be guided by ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014) for the proposed hermeneutic phenomenology study. ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014) recognizes the importance of experience and reflection as part of learning and is a significant factor within educational coaching. The ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014) approach embodies four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These stages aim to describe the learning and growth process of individuals.

Industrial and technological change often requires individuals to accept the necessity of learning and growing to remain successful within a profession. ELT uses both intellectual and

experience to guide learners (Kolb, 1984, 2014), with the foundation spawning from ideas based on prominent psychologists and theorists, including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget.

Dewey (1938), an early educational theorist, highlighted the critical relationship between the classroom and experiential learning, incorporating the importance of apprenticeship to gain work experience in conjunction with formal education (Kolb, 1984, 2014). Integration of theory and practices was a prominent factor in social psychologist Lewin's (1947) study of group dynamics and action research. Research by Lewin (1947) created the laboratory-training method and the training group or T-group, that had far-reaching educational implications. Similarly, French psychologist Piaget (1952) studied how children experience growth stages as cognitive reasoning skills develop. Such foundational exploration of youth education significantly impacted curriculum development and teaching strategies moving beyond content memorization (Kolb, 1984, 2014). These foundational concepts based upon the work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1947), and Piaget (1952) guided the formation of modern ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014).

Within the modern ELT, learners are described as gaining knowledge from textbooks and classroom situations while also being given opportunities to apply these new ideas and skills in a real-world context (Kolb, 1984, 2014). ELT describes a shift in learning by using classroom and real-world experiences to craft the most effective instruction to guide skill development (Kolb, 1984, 2014). With four distinct stages central to describing the shift in learning using ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014): concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, these ebb and flow together as the learner negotiates experiences and learning. Although experiencing something does not necessarily translate into learning, the different types of knowledge gained from thinking about the experience and moving through the experience creates new knowledge (Kolb, 1984, 2014). Learning is described as a movement through

different stages and ways of thinking involving an affective and behavioral lens that relies on individual perceptions and cognition (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). ELT theory (Kolb, 1984, 2014) can be explicitly used when adapting to a situation or when change is involved (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). Therefore, its components and ways of thinking situate beneficially within educational instructional coaching.

ELT's application to instructional coaching can be used when coaching individuals and teams. The structure of experiential learning provides learning in groups as a more effective and collaborative way to intentionally learn together (Kayes et al., 2005). Its design and framework use concrete experience followed by reflective experiential observation to guide abstract ideas and generate new knowledge (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). Such knowledge guides the learner toward educated decisions and actions (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). The similarities found in coaching can be compared to ELT because the experiences and reflection in coaching are at the heart of learning, thus guiding the proposed study. The experience drives learning through the critical experiential process, which focuses on how the individual knows, what is known, and the determination to think about the experience to create new knowledge (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). The research questions focus on how K-12 teachers describe coaching experience, guiding the study through the theoretical lens of ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014) because of the importance that experiences have when teachers are learning and building instructional capacity. The reflection process teachers engage in while participating in this study to answer questions surrounding the experiences and outcomes is directly informed by ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014) with its focus on reflection and learning based on conceptualization from the experiences. Specifically, what educators identify as important is just as significant as the experience itself. The awareness of

identified choices and recognized decisions that one sees during the process promotes growth in learning (Peterson & Kolb, 2018), directly correlating to instructional coaching.

Related Literature

This hermeneutic phenomenology study aims to describe coaching experiences from teachers' perspectives. Coaching is used in many types of organizations to improve the performance of its employees (Finkelstein, 2019; Fontes & Dello Russo, 2021; Jarosz, 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Saclarides, 2022). For example, educators working with expert teachers through coaching is becoming a popular form of professional development (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Hnasko, 2020; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). In addition, schools are using coaching to improve teacher instructional capacity for increased student learning and academic growth. Unfortunately, teacher perspective throughout the process is limited in the scholarly research. Therefore, an examination of the related literature on coaching will focus on defining coaching, characteristics of coaching, and applications of job-embedded professional development within education.

Defining Coaching

There are different definitions attributed to coaching and the concept of a coach, with coaching being used in many capacities and for different purposes (Hnasko, 2020; Jones et al., 2021; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). For the purpose of this study, coaching will be defined as an individualized approach to professional development sustained over time to increase a teacher's instructional skills (Kraft & Blazer, 2018). Coaching is individualized, driven by identified needs, goal specific, and uses a variety of strategies by the coach to advance the objective set by the teacher (Elek & Page, 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Jones et al., 2021; Schachter et al., 2022). Coaching also includes the idea that it is collaborative in nature, with the coach and

teacher working as equals (Fontes & Dello Russo, 2021; Hu & Tuten, 2021; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Coaches grow teachers' ways of thinking and instructional practices (Lofthouse, 2019; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Page & Eadie, 2019) with the coach acting as a "thought partner" during different phases of the coaching cycle (Jarosz, 2021, p. 5). Andragogy and adult learning theory pioneered by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles et al., 2015) supports the concept of coaching to increase teacher effectiveness resulting in increased student growth with pedagogy specifically refering to how students are taught. Andragogy is how adults are taught and can be intended for all adult learning, including coaching (Knowles et al., 2015). How a coach pivots methods or approaches is tailored to the circumstances and teacher (Kho et al., 2019; Kurz et al., 2017) while also fitting the individual nature of how andragogy supports adult learning (Hnasko, 2020; Knowles et al., 2015).

The coaching process creates a partnership involving the teacher's insights as much as the coach's perceptions which are dependent on the needs of the students (Boyle et al., 2021; Knight, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019). There can also be a transformational aspect of coaching where teacher practice and reflection on beliefs improve student outcomes (Aguilar, 2013, 2020; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017; Reichenberg, 2020). Transformation can occur through a growth mindset contributing to teachers believing in an ability to grow as instructors while believing in student growth and success (Bloomberg, 2022). A growth mindset means accepting and pushing through challenges while also nurturing situations with the help of mentors who can help cultivate knowledge and learning (Dweck, 2016). Focusing on continued growth and learning creates the conditions for developing a growth mindset, where failure or challenges help us grow even more (Dweck, 2016). These concepts coincide with greater resiliency in people when confronting difficult situations (Heyman & Dweck, 1998). A growth mindset can be felt

individually and be embedded within an organization's culture as a result of beliefs, actions, and rewards supporting growth and development for employees to continue professional learning (Canning et al., 2020). In coaching, both the coach and teacher benefit from having a growth mindset in response to the belief in their development as educators. Improvement in instruction and student growth is cultivated when a coach develops influence and shows agency while promoting teacher leadership and agency (Lesley et al., 2021; Reichenberg, 2020).

Educational institutions use coaching as one approach to professional development for the improvement of teacher instructional practices (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; see also Brunsek et al., 2020; Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Davis et al., 2018; Di Domenico et al., 2019; Elek & Page, 2019; Finkelstein, 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Ippolito et al., 2021; Kho et al., 2019; Knight, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Page & Eadie, 2019; Pletcher et al., 2019; Reddy et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2020; Saclarides, 2022; Schachter et al., 2022; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017; Woodward & Thoma, 2021; Yang et al., 2022). Another potential benefit is the development of behavior and classroom management skills through coaching (Fabiano et al., 2018; Kurz et al., 2017; Schachter et al., 2022). A coach can support learning when implementing a program for specific content and support improvement in overall instruction (Hnasko, 2020; Kotze et al., 2019). Additionally, teachers new to the profession can have support with coaching being explicitly implemented (Gray, 2018; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021) to support building instructional practice and teaching efficacy, leading to higher retention rates (Lofthouse, 2019; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). Coaching is also another strategy to develop and improve instructional practices for teachers in English-speaking countries who teach learners that have a different first language other than English (Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Reichenberg, 2020).

Frequently, coaching is described as working with only one teacher at a time (Ippolito et al., 2021; see also Elek & Page, 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Hnasko, 2020; Jones et al., 2021; Lofthouse, 2019; Kraft et al., 2018; Schachter et al., 2022). Conversely, a coach also works with multiple teachers together (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Ippolito et al., 2021; Lofthouse, 2019; Schachter et al., 2022). Coaching teams can even be preferred because of the collective efficacy created within the school (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Ippolito et al., 2021). Regardless, individual or collective coaching sessions can be held at the teacher's school or within alternative locations (Lofthouse et al., 2022). For example, teachers may feel more encouraged to be open and honest with coaches who are independent of the school, which may allow for stronger perceptions of confidentiality (Lofthouse et al., 2022). Alternative locations also provide ample reflection time for coached teachers during the commute to and from the agreed upon coaching site (Lofthouse et al., 2022).

For those pursuing principal or administration roles, universities in partnership with school districts have used coaching to grow the capacity of leadership skills and capabilities of the candidates while increasing the effectiveness of the program (Gray, 2018). Equity and improved teaching practices can also be a focus during coaching (Land, 2018; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Reichenberg, 2020; Wetzel et al., 2021). However, for many coaches, specific job duties remain varied and nebulous (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Kho et al., 2019; Lofthouse, 2019) even though there are many ways that coaches engage in supporting the growth of instruction given by teachers and the increased achievement by students.

Coaching engagement differs from one-time workshops or after-school professional development opportunities. Since coaching is a sustained form of professional development, it is more effective than short trainings or workshops (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Brunsek et al., 2020;

Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Kho et al., 2019; Kotze et al., 2019; Pletcher et al., 2019). Additionally, a coach's role in developing teachers' instructional skills takes time; as such teachers should not be expected to change because of a day-long training that was attended (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Kotze et al., 2019). However, establishing coaching in schools has significant costs associated with it (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Cilliers et al., 2020; Ippolito et al., 2021; Kotze et al., 2019), even though coaching is more cost-effective when compared to other forms of professional development (Cilliers et al., 2020; Kotze et al., 2019).

Coaching in education as a form of individualized professional development is varied in its execution (Hnasko, 2020; Kho et al., 2019; Kraft et al., 2018; Schachter et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022) and involves features such as observation and feedback (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Fabiano et al., 2018; Kho et al., 2019; Kraft et al., 2018; Schachter et al., 2022). The focus on a specific context and skill can be a long-term commitment during coaching, continuing over a semester or throughout a full year (Kraft et al., 2018) as well as a short-term commitment (Fabiano et al., 2018; Jarosz, 2021). Coaching can also be an online experience (Bloomberg, 2022; Ippolito et al., 2021; Kotze et al., 2019; Kurz et al., 2017; Schachter et al., 2022; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021) with teachers engaging with a coach in multimodality settings. Online coaching benefits from the individual nature of coaching, where the coach and participant can focus on building pedagogy specifically for online teaching with goals created and aligned to the participant's needs (Bloomberg, 2022). A coach facilitates reflection and collaborates with the teacher while targeting a specific goal (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Schachter et al., 2022; Witherspoon et al., 2021). When implementing a new instructional program, a virtual coach can further motivate and provide positive reinforcement to teachers rather than observational support since a virtual coach will not be present at the school (Kotze et al., 2019).

The effectiveness of coaching emerges from the job-embedded nature of the work done in collaboration between the teacher and coach over a period of time (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Kho et al., 2019; Pletcher et al., 2019; Schachter et al., 2022).

In education, a coach is not in any supervisory or evaluative position (Boyle et al., 2021; Finkelstein, 2019; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Kho et al., 2019; Saclarides, 2022; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). The coach should be in partnership with the teacher on an equal level, with both participants valuing the contributions the other brings (Hnasko, 2020; Hu & Tuten, 2021; Knight, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). In some instances, the coach may act as an authority or expert and the teacher as passive or in a subordinate position (Hnasko, 2020; Hunt, 2018). Regardless of the agreed-upon role, clearly defining expectations to ensure all stakeholders are in clear understanding benefits both the coach and the teacher (Kotze et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2019; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). Interestingly, the clarity in identifying a coach's job duties and responsibilities has not been systematically defined, with coaches determining them on a case-by-case basis (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Kho et al., 2019; Lesley et al., 2021; Schachter et al., 2022).

There is great importance in having a rigorous selection process when choosing coaches with purposeful training for coaching positions (Hnasko, 2020; Kotze et al., 2019; Witherspoon et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022), and with the expectation that a coach will continue to be in a position where teachers view coaches as learners (Woodward & Thoma, 2021). Many coaches are in the beginning stages of coaching positions, with coaches having considerable years of teaching experience, yet many having less than five years of coaching experience (Schachter et al., 2022). Therefore, coaches should continue to learn and develop professionally (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Hnasko, 2020; Hunt, 2019; Ippolito et al., 2021; Kho et al., 2019; Saclarides,

2022; Schachter et al., 2022; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). This learning could be specifically surrounding matters relating to positional power and possible situations encountered when coaching (Woodward & Thoma, 2021) or concerning students' social-emotional skills and behavior management techniques (Schachter et al., 2022). Learning could also focus on increasing coaching skills when reflecting with a teacher or engaging in reflection on coaching practice (Hunt, 2019). Overall, coaching is professional development to improve student achievement through teacher practices with specific features found in a coaching cycle.

Features of Coaching in Education

Coaching in education has certain features that are beneficial within the coaching cycle, including goal setting, planning, observation, feedback, modeling, and reflection (Elek & Page, 2019; Fabiano et al., 2018; Hunt, 2018; Page & Eadie, 2019; Reddy et al., 2021; Saclarides, 2022; Schachter et al., 2022). Other ways coaches can support teachers is through co-teaching or analysis of student data (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Di Domenico et al., 2019; Kho Elementset al., 2019; Saclarides, 2022; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). The coach and teacher engaging in the analysis of formative assessments and using student data are productive activities (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). These opportunities can be applied to coaching with individuals or with a group (Ippolito et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2020; Saclarides, 2022). Developing leadership, while also creating advocacy and agency in the coach or teachers are elements coaches can employ (Lesley et al., 2021; Lofthouse, 2019; Reichenberg, 2020). Additionally, intentionally making learning hands-on with the coach and teacher involved in collaboration, observation, and then discussion of feedback are elements of adult learning theory that can be applied to coaching (Elek & Page, 2019; Hnasko, 2020; Hu & Tuten, 2021). Specific structures identified in the coaching process highlight how to be more effective (Gibbons &

Cobb, 2017). Some identified potential coaching practices included analyzing student work, examining specific content being taught, working together to plan, teaching or co-teaching, observing, modeling, and providing feedback on lessons (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021).

Many coaches follow a specific structure while in a coaching cycle (Fabiano et al., 2018; Lofthouse, 2019), yet there is no clear consensus or description as to the role and specific work during coaching experiences (Elek & Page, 2019; Hnasko, 2020; Kho et al., 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Yang et al., 2022). A coaching structure can be systematic, with sessions including specific elements happening in four-week increments (Fabiano et al., 2018). For example, session one would include establishing the relationship, discussing observation data, and setting goals (Fabiano et al., 2018). Sessions two and three would have the coach and teacher working together on the identified goals while continuing to examine data (Fabiano et al., 2018). Then in the final session, the coach and teacher would reflect on the identified goals and create a plan for sustaining the work and progress achieved together (Fabiano et al., 2018).

Elements of coaching cycles are found in different educational situations being studied including coaching with general and special education teachers in high-poverty elementary schools in urban settings (Reddy et al., 2021) and with early childhood education (Hnasko, 2020; Schachter et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022). In these different settings, essential features in a coaching cycle that support improvements in teacher practice often include setting goals, observing with feedback, modeling, and reflecting (Elek & Page, 2019; Fabiano et al., 2018; Hunt, 2018; Kurz et al., 2017; Page & Eadie, 2019; Reddy et al., 2021; Saclarides, 2022; Schachter et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022). Resultantly, observation, modeling, and feedback have been identified as best practices in coaching (Hammond & Moore, 2018; Yang et al., 2022), with

coaches prioritizing goal setting, planning, modeling, and feedback processing (Kurz et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2021). However, the development and maintenance of coach and teacher relationships is the cornerstone to beneficial coaching experiences.

Developing Relationships

The development of a partnership between the coach and teacher is a direct result of the developed and maintained relationship. Interdependent relationships develop a system of mutual support for both the coach and educator (Lesley et al., 2021; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017) since the coaching process is collaborative by nature (Bloomberg, 2022; Brunsek et al., 2020; Di Domenico et al., 2019; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Hnasko, 2020; Kho et al., 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Building trust and relationships between the coach and teacher is an essential element for developing personalized and successful interactions (Elek & Page, 2019; see also Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021; Di Domenico et al., 2019; 2017; Finkelstein, 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Hnasko, 2020; Ippolito et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Knight, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Page & Eadie, 2019; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017; Robertson et al., 2020; Saclarides, 2022; Woodward & Thoma, 2021; Yang et al., 2022). A trusting relationship is foundational to coaching effectiveness that aids in the increase of student learning and the development of teacher capacity since teachers and coaches are often in vulnerable situations (De Keijzer et al., 2020; Kho et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020; Saclarides, 2022).

Building relationships between teachers and coaches cannot be understated because the coaching work is grounded in collaboration and conversation between the two, where both listen to ideas with openness and empathy (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021; Lofthouse, 2019). The partnership that ensues because of the relationship establishes the teacher and coach as being on

the same level, positioning each to take responsibility and ownership over learning while involved in coaching (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Hnasko, 2020; Knight, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Furthermore, when a strong relationship is created, ideas put forth by the teacher are discussed without fear of ridicule from the coach (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). The ideas and teaching methods cultivated by teachers when working with the coach and shared during professional development create the opportunity for teachers to be seen as leaders due to the positive relationship (Lesley et al., 2021). The establishment of a strong relationship grows from the idea that the coach and teacher are learning together, with the coach pushing the teacher's thinking during the reflection process from experiences and instruction (Bloomberg, 2022; Robertson et al., 2020).

Three elements are instrumental for coaching to be effective, including a coach's predictability and consistency, the importance of a principal's support, and the development of the relationship resulting in trust between the teacher and coach (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021). Support from the school administration is the key element for coaching implementation (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021; Schachter et al., 2022). It is essential that administrators communicate the relevance of the coaching program as a partnership between coaches and teachers (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017).

Additionally, a coach's empathy, encouragement, and confidence toward a teacher's implementation and improvement of literacy practices strongly correlate with the amount of trust created (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021). The safe space the coach intentionally develops (Jarosz, 2021; Robertson et al., 2020) helps the teacher take risks resulting in more profound and critical personal reflection (De Keijzer et al., 2020; Lofthouse, 2019). A coach presenting an authoritative stance with a limited perception of safety and trust will damage the teacher-coach

relationship (Boyle et al., 2021; Kho et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Responsively, the coach must create a welcoming and open atmosphere, focusing on the language and stance used with teachers while also listening and valuing ideas (Kho et al., 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). The importance of developing the relationship between teacher and coach is fundamental to coaching as it increases engagement and motivation during the coaching cycle (Hnasko, 2020; Reddy et al., 2021) while tapping into both the teacher and coach's instructional expertise (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). When the relationship is developed at the beginning and throughout the coaching cycle, then identifying specific goals and planning in a coaching cycle is more purposeful and meaningful.

Goal Setting and Planning

In the initial stages of the coaching cycle, the coach and teacher come together to discuss the purpose of the work, starting with goal setting (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Saclarides, 2022; Witherspoon et al., 2021). Establishing goals creates a path for coaching (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Fontes & Dello Russo, 2021; Knight, 2019; Kurz et al., 2017). The goal becomes the framework for the coaching cycle to develop and adjust, focusing on the personally identified values of the teacher (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Lofthouse et al., 2022). For example, goals can be clearly defined with "the acronym PEERS: Powerful, Emotionally Compelling, Easy, Reachable, and Student-Focused" as one way to create purposeful goals used in coaching (Knight, 2019, p. 8).) Goals can morph and develop as work continues between the coach and teacher, with the goal during a coaching cycle starting as a vague idea, then becoming more specific as collaboration continues (Di Domenico et al., 2019)

Resultantly, teachers must identify what students know and understand students' thinking to develop high-quality instruction (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Hu & Tuten, 2021; Stoetzel &

Shedrow, 2021). Examining student work can highlight what types of strategies and language students use and can assist in creating common formative assessments (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). Analyzing student work, recording a lesson, student interviews, and collecting data are ways to collect information important for creating goals based upon what is currently happening in the classroom (Knight, 2019) as well as for differentiating student learning (Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). The analyzed student data presents the teacher and the coach with a way to find a goal based on an identified problem to be inquired about during the coaching process (Hu & Tuten, 2021). Student data motivates teachers and coaches to learn more about the specific students in a classroom, so the goals and instruction align (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Knight, 2019). The teacher and coach are in partnership, exploring the possibilities and working in conjunction valuing the insights from the data, so student growth is made based on the goal (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Robertson et al., 2020).

There is a favorable nature to goal setting and its connection to reflection by creating the opportunity to self-select the direction of coaching work that may lead to increased engagement and learning by the teacher (Elek & Page, 2019). After a goal for the coaching cycle is determined, planning together ensues with the collaboration for supporting the goal that has been established (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Kurz et al., 2017; Lofthouse, 2019; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017). The planning phase allows for the opportunity to collaboratively determine what instructional approach would be best based on the learning targets and goals (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). The co-creation and planning between the teacher and coach situate trust at the core (Knight, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). The cooperative generation of ideas stems from the teacher and coach's combined expertise (Knight, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Additionally, a positive aspect of the planning and collaboration between teacher and coach is

how the coach brings knowledge to the coaching experience while valuing the teacher's thoughts and ideas (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Knight, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Coaching leans heavily on the planning work done in collaboration between the teacher and coach, but observation and modeling are also essential elements in a coaching cycle.

Observation and Modeling

Within the classroom and directly working with students, a coach can use observation and modeling as strategic elements during a coaching cycle. Working in the classroom with the teacher positions a coach to be supportive and encouraging while also developing trust, especially when high emotions or stress are associated with increasing instructional skills (Kotze et al., 2019). Observing teachers is an approach frequently used by coaches (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Cilliers et al., 2020; Fabiano et al., 2018; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Kho et al., 2019; Woodard & Thoma, 2021). However, the presence of a coach observing in a classroom can leave a teacher feeling nervous (Hammond & Moore, 2018; Woodward & Thoma, 2021) or make the teacher feel like the observation is an evaluation (Sweeney & Harris, 2017).

Nevertheless, teachers can still find coaching an overall positive experience (Hammond & Moore, 2018; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). In some instances, the teacher performs observations when the coach uses modeling during the coaching cycle (Saclarides, 2022). These observations are intentional and based on the coaching goals identified by the teacher and coach (Saclarides, 2022; Witherspoon et al., 2021). Observations are more effective when the teacher has a form to write down what is noticed during the observation of the modeled lesson for purposeful discussion and reflection after observing (Saclarides, 2022). Another form of observation occurs when studying a specific lesson where multiple teachers work simultaneously

with a coach (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). One teacher leads the lesson while the other teachers and coach observe, leading to analysis and debriefing of the lesson where all involved can discuss what improvements or adjustments could be made based on observations (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017).

A coach's use of modeling in a teacher's classroom can be effective when showing an instructional strategy (Saclarides, 2022; see also Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Cilliers et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2018; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Knight, 2019; Lesley et al., 2021). In the classroom, during professional development, and in professional learning communities, coaches use modeling to demonstrate pedagogy while at the same time increasing teacher efficacy (Lesley et al., 2021). When a coach models, it is with the thinking that during the coaching process, it creates the opportunity to practice a behavior that leads to behavioral changes (Cilliers et al., 2020; Kurz et al., 2017). When teachers observe an instructional strategy in action, a mental model is created, helping to implement the strategy more effectively (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017; Saclarides, 2022) while giving the teacher time to modify instruction and become more experienced (Kotze et al., 2019). In micro-modeling, a coach models only a portion or part of a lesson, ensuring that what is explicitly being modeled is focused on by the teacher (Sweeney & Harris, 2017). A coach modeling an entire lesson can leave a teacher in a passive state, speculating on what should be done (Sweeney & Harris, 2017). Furthermore, it can create an imbalance of power, with the teacher feeling left out and the coach being framed as the expert (Sweeney & Harris, 2017).

Other ways of modeling can include showing the strategy to the teacher without students involved, a teacher watching another teacher demonstrating the strategy, using a video to watch the strategy, or co-teaching the strategy with the teacher and coach teaching together (Knight,

2019). Co-construction of a plan and identifying the purpose for the use of modeling is essential for the coach and teacher to engage in for modeling to be effective (Saclarides, 2022). In a modeled lesson, a coach makes thinking clear and vocalizes decisions or moves made during the actual teaching so the teacher and the coach can reflect on these actions after the lesson takes place (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Saclarides, 2022). The teacher records what is seen during the modeled lesson on the observation form created with the coach to focus attention on the identified items (Saclarides, 2022). When observations and modeling are used during the coaching cycle, these can be informative tools for the coach to use when giving feedback and during reflective conversations.

Feedback and Reflection

Giving teachers specific feedback based on classroom observations is another element essential to coaching (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Cilliers et al., 2020; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Kurz et al., 2017). This feedback is a critical component of coaching, and the coach must be viewed in a non-evaluative manner for feedback to be effective (Woodward & Thoma, 2021). Having teachers reflect on practice is an essential element of coaching and contributes to the teacher's success in maintaining the instructional practices implemented during the coaching cycle (Brunsek et al., 2020; Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017; Saclarides, 2022; Witherspoon et al., 2021). The reflection process within a coaching conversation has the coach paraphrasing the teacher's thinking and posing questions to elicit new and more profound insights (Garmston et al., 1993; Kurz et al., 2017; Pletcher et al., 2019). The reflection done within coaching raises consciousness and allows for changes in action (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Garmston et al., 1993; Jones et al., 2021). A reflective conversation focuses on strengths a teacher has through paraphrasing and questioning eliciting the teacher's ideas to build from

rather than the coach providing personal suggestions (Garmston et al., 1993; Kurz et al., 2017). Reflection also happens in the moment and is described as “reflection in practice” as opposed to “reflection on practice” (Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021, p. 82). Reflection in practice has a coach quickly talking with a teacher while teaching in the classroom together to reflect on what has occurred during teaching and if any modifications to the lesson should happen, being responsive to students in that specific moment (Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021).

A coach’s ability to help teachers transfer the reflections into new teaching methods relies on how well a coach can listen attentively and ask thoughtful questions (De Keijzer et al., 2020). When a coach does not listen deeply and attend to what the teacher is saying, the conversation is not reflective but a space with two people talking at each other (Hunt, 2018). In the absence of true dialogue or reflection, outcomes will not produce beneficial instructional change because of not being seen as meaningful by the teacher (Hunt, 2018). Additionally, a coach should reflect on practice (Robertson et al., 2020) while reflecting on beliefs and values because of the impact these can have during coaching (De Keijzer et al., 2020).

Since the reflecting conversation happens after the teaching event, video can be another way to reflect on teaching (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Land, 2018; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). Instances using video of a teacher’s instruction during the reflective conversation between the coach and teacher is a way to analyze interactions, the language used, and the body language displayed by the teacher and the students (Land, 2018). A coach fosters reflective thinking, allowing the teacher to gain critical insights when watching a video of that teacher’s instruction (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). For effective use of video, the coach sets the stage by asking what the focus should be when watching the video together (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). Literacy coaching has also leaned on video in multiple

ways, including vetting coaches before their work with teachers and in video coaching sessions (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021).

Whether using video or during in-person coaching, a reflective conversation relies on the use of open-ended questions posed to the teacher by the coach (Garmston et al., 1993; Pletcher et al., 2019; Wetzel et al., 2021). Coaches ask different types of questions during the reflection process, trying to elicit deeper thinking and understanding (De Keijzer et al., 2020). Questions can be repetitive in nature, bringing to the surface values, beliefs, and possibly a little discomfort from the teacher (De Keijzer et al., 2020). Reflective conversations also focus on how the work and learning accomplished together will transfer to the classroom (De Keijzer et al., 2020). Additionally, a coach can have teachers reflect on beliefs surrounding students and consider any personal biases that may affect teaching or attitudes toward students (Aguilar, 2020; De Keijzer et al., 2020; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017). Student instruction improves when a coach facilitates reflection surrounding a teacher's values and beliefs because of the growth in pedagogy (Aguilar, 2020; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017; Reichenberg, 2020). However, although reflection is a key component during coaching, many coaches do not formally reflect after modeled lessons due to schedule and time constraints (Saclarides, 2022). Another consideration is for the coach to reflect individually or with other coaches (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). Feedback and reflection during coaching are where change happens, resulting in instructional improvements, and are foundational when using coaching as professional development in education.

Coaching as Job Embedded Professional Development

The purpose of any professional development, including coaching, is to build teacher capacity for the increased engagement, growth, and proficiency of students. Coaching to increase

student achievement by empowering and building the capacity of teachers is a change from other types of professional development. Organizations experience change to maintain and improve effectiveness by introducing new and better business methods (Alolabi et al., 2021). Education is no different, with educational institutions rethinking professional development practices to include instructional coaching (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Hnasko, 2020; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2021). Organizational change theory can be used as another facet for thinking about change and its implications on the individuals and groups within the system being changed. Lewin's (1947) organizational change theory rests on the concept of unfreezing, moving, then freezing in an organization when change is the desired outcome. Educational institutions are complex systems (Huang-Saad et al., 2019, 2020) where multiple factors necessitate examination. Thinking about changes in an organization's culture, environment, and people involved are important considerations since change happens through a process with both individual and organizational needs deserving attention (Huang-Saad et al., 2019, 2020).

Education's dynamic and complex needs require the adoption of different possible changes to its system and are the impetus for professional development. Consequently, the importance of professional learning opportunities to grow a teacher's instructional practices is a focus for schools looking to increase student learning (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017). The limited success of traditional forms of professional development does not contend with the different needs teachers might have or the unique skills needed to be developed because of the diversity of each classroom's student population (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017). For this reason, giving teachers a voice in improving professional practice by listening to what needs are based upon the students in classrooms is gaining popularity (Pianta et al., 2021; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). Coaching as professional development incorporates teacher voice and choice, honoring

what teachers want to focus on (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Kurz et al., 2017; Pletcher et al., 2019). Ultimately, coaching proves to be the most successful in the real-world context and application (Schachter et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022).

Coaching achieves success because of its individualization and focus on the needs of students and teachers by improving teachers' skills in instructional practices. When coaches work with teachers, it is a form of job-embedded professional development over a continuous period where the coach and teacher work together to build capacity in the teacher's instructional practice (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; see also Brunsek et al., 2020; Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021; Davis et al., 2018; Elek & Page, 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Lofthouse, 2019; Lesley et al., 2021; Reddy et al., 2021; Schachter et al., 2022; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). General education teachers, special education teachers, and content-specific teachers, including math and literacy, all benefit from coaching in preschool through high school by increasing instructional skills and practices (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Brunsek et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2018; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Reddy et al., 2021).

The implementation of coaching, the duration of coaching, and the focus of coaching, whether for specific content or universal instruction, are varied and inconsistent (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Schachter et al., 2022). For example, difficulties arose when studying the implementation of a coaching program at the elementary level with the two specific coaches involved (Miller et al., 2019). Other limitations of coaching studies show the need for longitudinal studies, as most studies only looked at data from one school year (Davis et al., 2018). However, coaching was discovered to be effective when identifying specific teacher outcomes, including the effectiveness of instruction, student-teacher interactions, and the environment (Yang et al., 2022). Using the Classroom Strategies Assessment System, a formative assessment tool, in

conjunction with coaching for instruction and behavior management, was found to create high to moderate growth in teacher practices with overall effectiveness (Fabiano et al., 2018). Therefore, education policy has supported coaching as professional development to increase student achievement.

Coaching in Educational Policy

Targeting a school's or district's educational reforms and goals toward academic achievement is supported through coaching (Kho et al., 2019; Kurz et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2020; Schachter et al., 2022). For example, many schools with low test scores defined by mandated state testing have identified coaching to revamp literacy programs to increase students' performance (Lesley et al., 2021). Another complication facing coaches is high teacher attrition and a lack of resources plaguing many underachieving schools that also can have large populations of economically disadvantaged students or multilingual learners (Lesley et al., 2021). When No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed in 2002, one of the suggestions included was to involve coaching as part of teacher mentoring for the ongoing growth of teacher instruction. Then in 2015, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) identified coaching as one method school districts could use funds to increase teacher capacity. ESSA (2015) specifically identifies the inclusion of instructional coaches and literacy coaches for increased instructional excellence while providing funds to implement coaching programs and train coaches. Even further, congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through ESSA in 2015, which states that teachers need professional development for the continued academic growth of students with disabilities. This policy includes the identification of instructional coaches for the support of teachers who work with students with disabilities (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017). Additionally, the Federal government has endorsed

coaching for its early childhood education program, Head Start, as a way for continued teacher development (Hnasko, 2020; Schachter et al., 2022).

States have started creating avenues for endorsements and certification for educational coaching in response to it becoming utilized as a form of professional development (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). In addition, state representatives have asked universities to create programs and curricula to specifically support individuals striving to enter the coaching field (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). Education policy established over the years supports coaching as professional development for teachers so student achievement can increase. In addition, new science and math standards have students learning and acting on key concepts that require teachers to design rigorous learning experiences, and coaching can provide professional development that supports more robust pedagogy for teachers to use in the classroom (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017).

Increasing Student Achievement

Any professional development is administered to increase students' engagement, growth, and proficiency. Effective coaching is no exception, with the overall intent of coaching being for the benefit of students (Ippolito et al., 2021; Woodard & Thoma, 2021) Furthermore, collective efficacy has been shown to correlate highly with increased student outcomes (Donohoo et al., 2020; Lofthouse, 2019) because of the shared beliefs teachers hold in the school and about students. Efficacy can also be imbued in the desired changes that the organization wants to undertake (Alolabi et al., 2021; Kurz et al., 2017). Since people are the ones undertaking any desired change, it is critically essential for employees' values and beliefs to include a willingness and readiness to enact change (Alolabi et al., 2021). Identifying the intended value of the change, its benefits, and its implications (von Treuer et al., 2018) should be determined and highlighted for employees showing its significance and how it relates to current practice (Alolabi et al.,

2021). Leadership can take the helm and clearly define the vision for change and how employees will be supported so employees are prepared to undertake the challenge (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; von Treuer et al., 2018). Such actions lead to increased teacher efficacy, capacity, and student achievement.

Increased student growth and achievement is a goal of coaching, which is attained by developing instructional capacity and increasing teachers' skills (Brunsek et al., 2020; Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Lofthouse, 2019; Miller et al., 2019; Pianta et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2020). Coaching has been found to improve the growth and proficiency of students (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Brunsek et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2018; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Pletcher et al., 2019; Reddy et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022). In general education and in special education, students made gains when teachers worked strategically with a coach (Reddy et al., 2021). Additionally, coaching found increased student outcomes and positive results on standardized tests and student learning (Kraft et al., 2018; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021).

In one example, pre-Kindergarten students improved their skills through teachers who engaged in a coaching program called My Teaching Partner (Pianta et al., 2021). Student skills were enhanced when there was an increase in the teacher's coaching cycles, precisely aligning with the amount of feedback received (Pianta et al., 2021). A different study focusing on substantive feedback during coaching sought to understand if the specific feedback delivered by coaches created improved outcomes for children (Moreno et al., 2019). The precise feedback built upon strengths was more advantageous and allowed teachers to implement the ideas more easily (Moreno et al., 2019). Professional development for teachers of preschool-aged students found that incorporating coaching had positive correlations with increased teacher effectiveness

in instructional strategies and positive student results (Brunsek et al., 2020). The correlation between literacy coaching with high school teachers and its impact on 9th graders who were below grade level in reading saw increased growth in students' reading comprehension when coaching was used as opposed to workshop-only professional development methods (Davis et al., 2018). In addition, early elementary teachers' engagement in literacy coaching has increased instruction, leading to better student literacy outcomes (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021).

Student growth and achievement are coaching goals and can be prioritized based on the individualization of coaching based on the unique student populations in a classroom. However, there is some difficulty in finding a direct correlation between coaching and student gains because of multiple factors influencing student achievement (Robertson et al., 2020; Schachter et al., 2022; Woodward & Thoma, 2021). Factors included the short-term implementation of coaching in school districts and the different curricula or instructional programs being implemented concurrently with coaching (Woodard & Thoma, 2021). When a full-time math coach was present at schools, 4th-grade students performed better in overall composite scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessment than in schools without a full-time math coach (Harbour et al., 2018). Consequently, when coaches are present at schools, students will increase proficiency and achievement in math (Harbour et al., 2018).

Individualization of Coaching

Coaching can emphasize individual needs determining what the coach and the teacher will work through to benefit student growth. Adult learning theory reinforces how coaching can be customized to create high engagement for teachers during the coaching process while also meeting the needs and experience levels of each educator (Elek & Page, 2019; Hu & Tuten,

2021). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978) can also be used to think about the individualization of coaching (Boyle et al., 2021; Di Domenico et al., 2019). Individualization of coaching explains that learning is most impactful when scaffolding is present with the next step in one's knowledge and learning supported by another more skilled person (Bruner, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, a coach can determine where the teacher is in expertise and understanding, tailoring the coaching experience to the teacher's current knowledge and building upon it (Boyle et al., 2021; Di Domenico et al., 2019; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021) directly aligned to the concept of meeting needs and experience level found in adult learning theory. Moreover, the zones of proximal development can be applied to teachers (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Vygotsky, 1978) when thinking about their knowledge and pedagogy. Choosing which domain to focus on can be helpful for the coach, highlighting what learning the teacher should engage in and what coaching moves should be considered (Di Domenico et al., 2019). Since coaching is a collaboration with one person or a small group of people, it is possible for coaching to be personalized to meet the needs of students and teachers (Brunsek et al., 2020; Elek & Page, 2019; Hu & Tuten, 2021; Kho et al., 2019; Kraft et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022). This idea of customization applies to adult learning theory's (Knowles et al., 2015) concept of motivation because adults are more motivated to learn when given opportunities to help decide what the focus will be during learning opportunities (Figland et al., 2019; Hu & Tuten, 2021).

Features of coaching can fluctuate among coaches in different schools, illustrating the personal nature of coaching (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Schachter et al., 2022). However, the time spent developing trust and building relationships helps support the coaching experience, so it is tailored to the knowledge, skills, and needs of the teacher (Elek & Page, 2019; Knight, 2019; Schachter et al., 2022). Resultantly, the feedback from the coach and the reflection by the teacher

becomes personalized, beneficial, and even increase engagement (Elek & Page, 2019). Coaches' support and strategies are effective due to the individualization based on the teacher being coached (Brunsek et al., 2020; Elek & Page, 2019; Kho et al., 2019; Kraft et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022). This collaboration between teachers and the coach increases teacher effectiveness (Elek & Page, 2019; Kho et al., 2019; Page & Eadie, 2019). For example, a teacher with a narrow view of students' strengths and a deficit-minded stance can be revealed during coaching (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021). Then, during the coaching process, through questioning and reflection, a more asset-minded view can be created by the teacher understanding what students can do and developing abilities based on strengths (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021). Overall, the coaching experience is unique to each teacher and coach relationship and can explore the beliefs and values one has in addition to instructional practices.

Exploration of Beliefs and Values

Coaching focuses on increasing a teacher's capacity for instruction in academics and content; however, coaching can also focus on the beliefs and values a teacher has that impact the teaching of individual students. Values and beliefs shape a teacher's behavior and the instructional practices used, therefore a coach should address these during a coaching opportunity (Aguilar, 2020; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Reichenberg, 2020). Accordingly, a valuable aspect of the personalization of coaching resides in how a coach can tailor the coaching experience to focus on equitable teaching practices and perceptions of students' capabilities based on the teacher's views and beliefs (Aguilar, 2020; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Ramkellawan & Bell, 2017).

Teachers work with coaches in many types of schools, including high-poverty schools, urban schools, and charter schools (Blazar & Kraft, 2015; Davis et al., 2018; Reddy et al., 2021) so beliefs and attitudes about students can have profound significance. The diversity of students can be referenced in terms of race, language, and socio-economic status, all with the need to employ culturally responsive education. Teachers need to use culturally responsive teaching to instruct the diversity of students in classrooms better (Haddix, 2017; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021). Addressing instructional practices is especially true in recognizing that the teacher workforce is majority White (Haddix, 2017; Land, 2018; Wetzel et al., 2021). The diverse student population that a teacher works with can be a consideration when working with a coach, and the individualization of coaching can target the different needs for increased academic success.

Coaching can be a vehicle for disrupting racist behaviors or structures in education by using equity as a lens (Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Wetzel et al., 2021). Teachers engaging in learning with equity in mind during coaching results in more equitable teaching practices (Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Reichenberg, 2020; Wetzel et al., 2021). Race impacts educational systems and structures with the need for discourse by educators because of inequitable practices that occur (Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Wetzel et al., 2021). A coach creates the opportunity for teachers to examine and dismantle potentially racist behaviors and stereotypes in teaching practices and language, leading to equitable instruction and changes in the teachers' language and behaviors (Aguilar, 2020; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Wetzel et al., 2021). Reflective conversations can delve into power structures and expected roles students and teachers have (Land, 2018), leading to awareness and increased knowledge of racial literacy

and disruption of racist behaviors, expanding a teacher's anti-racist behaviors and teaching practices (Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021; Wetzel et al., 2021).

Equity and transformative practices are sustained when focusing on reflection as a tool when grappling with challenges leading to action (Land, 2018; Reichenberg, 2020). These reflective conversations led to teachers being more aware of instructional practices regarding equity so students could engage in more student-centered learning experiences that were meaningful, rigorous, and with increased ownership in learning (Land, 2018). Therefore, coaching is responsive and helps teachers explore values and beliefs that support and encourage changes to practice (Aguilar, 2013; De Keijzer et al., 2020; Marshall & Buenrostro, 2021). Navigating one's beliefs and changing instructional practice can be exciting and inspiring, yet others may find it daunting and challenging, with some teachers being resistant to coaching.

Acceptance or Resistance to Coaching

Involvement in coaching can be met with resistance from teachers (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021; Kho et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020; Schachter et al., 2022). Understanding that coaching is a change in professional development (Jacobs et al., 2018), employees can resist change (Schachter et al., 2022) because of unknown factors, negative feelings, or past experiences (Alolabi et al., 2021). Data addressing participants' feelings and attitudes about the coaching experience show that employees were more successful in coaching when personally invested in it and had support from family (Carter et al., 2017). Furthermore, those who stand to gain the most in coaching situations are employees within organizations who were found to exhibit openness, have lower perceptions of self, and avoid being seen as incompetent when measured against others (Jones et al., 2021). Yet, employee improvements did not endure long after coaching ceased (Jones et al., 2021). Conversely, identifying the coach as someone to

collaborate with and share ideas about how instruction will be implemented was found to be beneficial because of the non-evaluative stance (Boyle et al., 2021; Di Domenico et al., 2019; Hu & Tuten, 2021; Robertson et al., 2020). The trust built by the continued collaboration further created feelings in the teacher to be vulnerable, understanding that the coach was only there to support both the teacher and students (Di Domenico et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2020).

Additionally, most teachers were positive about coaching in buildings for instructional development, especially the teachers who worked with coaches the most (Bean et al., 2010). These teachers had more positive views about coaching than those who only minimally worked with coaches (Bean et al., 2010). The most impact from coaching was created when intentionally working side-by-side with teachers to analyze student data, develop a goal, and then implement specific instruction based on the collaboration (Hu & Tuten, 2021). When the coach thought of themselves as part of a team of learners rather than the leader, expert, or resource provider, it was then that coaching became more sustainable and beneficial for teachers because of the ownership felt for professional learning, directly influencing students (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Robertson et al., 2020).

Coaching is a partnership (Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020; Schachter et al., 2022). Factors related to change surface when teachers directly oppose coaching as a form of professional development (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017). However, coaches should be aware of possible positional power or operating as the expert (Hunt, 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). A coach's language when talking about teachers and the language used by a coach during coaching conversations can devalue the ideas and contributions of the teachers being coached (Hunt, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). The beliefs a coach has that view new teachers as more willing to try new ideas or curricula and veteran teachers as being averse to coaching or

only wanting to participate when trying new things (Hunt, 2019) is detrimental to a coaching program and negates the concept of a coach being a thought partner and co-collaborator (Robertson et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers reluctant to engage in coaching are hesitant about changing educational methods (Chaaban & Abu-Tineh, 2017; Kho et al., 2019) or view the coach as someone who is there to judge them (Kho et al., 2019). The organization can resist change because of instilled culture, leadership, and technology (Alolabi et al., 2021) within its systems and structures.

The perception of cultural mismatches between teachers and students (Land, 2018) and between teachers and coaches exists in schools, with these perceptions between a teacher and coach creating resistance to coaching (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021). Developing relationships and building trust are coaching priorities before focusing on instructional practices, with relationships and trust contributing to teachers' positive views on coaching experiences (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2020, 2021). The coach's flexibility and willingness to pivot how teacher interactions occur are based on an understanding of teacher readiness for coaching and help change attitudes from resistance to openness towards coaching (Kho et al., 2019). Since coaching as professional development is a change for many teachers within the institution of education, it can be unclear, intimidating, or even daunting for teachers to want to engage. It is imperative that coaching is clearly defined in how it will support teachers and the students being served while also having support, clarity, and a strong path forward from the administration (Lesley et al., 2021; Ippolito et al., 2021).

Summary

Coaching is used in schools throughout the country as a model for job-embedded professional development. The reviewed literature explains the coaching process and the

elements involved and has shown that coaching improves instructional pedagogy because of its individualistic nature, directly supporting student growth and achievement. However, a gap in the literature shows a lack of information regarding teachers' perspectives. Understanding what coaching is and its benefits for students is essential for teacher acceptance and implementation. Nevertheless, more studies are needed to examine the perceptions of teachers who have been coached to improve participation and buy-in, creating more engagement, effectiveness, and long-term success. Using ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2014) as the theoretical framework for studying the perspectives of teachers will increase knowledge of how coaching is effective with specific individuals and what elements create lasting change in instructional practices. When teachers are not committed to their involvement in coaching and do not have buy-in, the knowledge or even excitement the coach displays will not influence a teacher's pedagogy (Kraft et al., 2018). More consideration is needed surrounding how individuals become invested in coaching, the elements that create the most coaching engagement, and the feelings teachers encapsulate about the involvement in the coaching process.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. The problem is that instructional coaching is an underutilized professional development system to support student achievement. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological study created the opportunity to explore the experiences K-12 teachers had after working with a coach. Chapter three describes the qualitative phenomenological study design, the central research question, and sub-questions previously detailed in chapter one with sections identifying the proposed setting and participants. As a researcher, my positionality contains the interpretive framework, philosophical assumptions, ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, including my role. The procedures include descriptions of the permissions, recruitment plan, and the data collection plan using individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifacts. Next, the data analysis plan and data synthesis are described. The chapter concludes with the trustworthiness section detailing the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The qualitative research method involves observing and exploring an identified phenomenon in its natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A hermeneutic phenomenology presents opportunities to reflect on lived experiences creating insights and assigning meaning (van Manen, 2016). Understanding the experience of working with a coach from a teacher's perspective was most compelling through qualitative research by providing teacher voice. A qualitative study was the best option because examining coaching as a phenomenon invites

participants to reflect on their experiences and discern the essence of what was experienced.

The research design used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as the method because of the focus on discovering teachers' experiences of coaching within ASD as the coaching program is implemented in all schools. Phenomenology explores the meaning of the experience and seeks to understand its essence (van Manen, 2014, 2016; van Manen, 2016). Additionally, phenomenology is preferable when using what and how questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenology exploring teachers' experiences when working with a coach in ASD will specifically think about what and how participants determine the experience of coaching.

Qualitative research and phenomenology can pose challenges because it does not have a specified set of research systems to be followed but invites the researcher to be thoughtful and open to the possible meanings associated with the experience being studied (van Manen, 2014, 2016). Phenomenology can trace its beginnings as far back as 1765, when the term was used in philosophy (Moustakas, 1994). Analysis at the word level describes the term phenomenon from the Greek word *phaenesthai,* meaning "to appear," and the Greek word *phaino*, meaning "bring to light" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Therefore, "Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Edmund Husserl is described as a pioneer of phenomenology and developed a system and approach to conducting phenomenological research in the 1930s (Moustakas, 1994). Martin Heidegger further explored phenomenology with his focus on finding meaning in the experiences without objectification of the vocative but rather an understanding of its being (van Manen, 2014, 2016).

Husserl's concept of ideation creates new insights because of the development of connections made from experiences in the real world and the awareness that exists in one's

consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl also developed the idea of epochè as a core concept foundational for phenomenological studies because of the need to remove one's own bias when exploring the experience of others (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic epochè or reduction relies on bracketing all thoughts from previous knowledge or experience so these do not interfere with any understandings gleaned from the studied experience (van Manen, 2014, 2016).

An exploration of coaching using phenomenology can consider the meaning and the essence of coaching as described by teachers. Using phenomenology is a way to create insight and understanding through questioning in the pre-reflective state (van Manen, 2014, 2016). Then through the process of reading and writing about the text created from the data, phenomenological reflection occurs where the themes and critical understandings are found and documented (van Manen, 2014, 2016). My curiosity and wonder about the experience of coaching through teachers' lived experiences drives this hermeneutic phenomenological study.

Research Questions

Instructional coaching in education is increasingly used for job-embedded professional development (Saclarides, 2022). This research contributess to the existing body of research by identifying how K-12 teachers feel about coaching and examining their perceptions after working with a coach. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as the theoretical framework supports this research because of its central idea that learning is a process relying heavily on personal experiences (Kolb, 1984, 2014).

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district?

Sub-Question One

How do coached teachers describe the experience of coaching?

Sub-Question Two

How do coached teachers describe the process of reflection?

Sub-Question Three

How do coached teachers describe the development of new ideas?

Sub-Question Four

How do coached teachers describe the planning of new experiences?

Setting and Participants

K-12 schools in ASD were the setting for this hermeneutic phenomenological study. Teachers who have worked with a coach at their school were the identified participants. These teachers' perspectives provided insight and understanding of the coaching experience.

Site

A combination of Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools located in ASD were the site for this hermeneutic phenomenological study. ASD has been a school district in Colorado since 1955. Currently, there are 43 elementary schools in ASD. There are 15 elementary schools identified as Title 1 schools and 28 non-Title 1 elementary schools. There are 11 middle schools, eight high schools, one magnet K-8 school, one online school, and one adaptive programs school. Three charter schools are also included in ASD but will not be included as sites for this study because they are not involved in the District's coaching initiative. This large district has its boundaries located across multiple cities and counties. There is a diverse student population, with over 54,000 students attending. In ASD, 11.68% of students are African American, 0.49% are American Indian/Alaska Native, 8.9% are Asian, 21.98% are Hispanic, 0.29% are Native

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 48.13% are White, and 8.52% of students identify as two or more races (Colorado Department of Education, 2023).

There are 3,367.93 full-time equivalent classroom teachers in ASD (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). All elementary schools serve kindergarten through fifth grades, while the gifted and talented magnet school serves kindergarten through eighth grades. All elementary schools had an instructional coach starting in the 2021-22 school year. At all 15 Title 1 schools, there are either one or two full-time instructional coach positions. The remaining non-Title 1 elementary schools have a half-time instructional coach position, with one instructional coach serving two schools. The 2022-23 school year actualized one half-time coach position for all middle and high schools, with one coach serving two middle or two high schools.

This site was chosen because of the recent district initiative that all schools will have at least one half-time coach. District-level administrators and school principals are leading the implementation of instructional coaches at school sites across the district. There is a range of coaching experience, with some schools having the same instructional coach for many years and other schools with coaches in their first year of coaching. This district is a fitting location due to the vast array of coaching experiences among teachers. As such, the educators who have experienced coaching were a significant source of data for identifying the coaching experience from the teachers' perspectives.

Participants

The participants of this study were 13 teachers from multiple K-12 schools within the ASD. Educator experience levels and educational background varied within the school district and were purposively selected. Due to the variety of experience levels, teacher ages ranged from over 18-59 years of age. Finally, educators were selected based on coaching experience, thus the

background and gender identification was collected to provide potential insight into thematic outcomes.

Researcher Positionality

This section addresses the interpretive framework where social constructivism is described detailing how it supports the proposed phenomenological study. Next, the philosophical assumptions, ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions, axiological assumptions, and the researcher's role are explained. I entered into this study with my own background knowledge and experiences; therefore, identifying the ideology that drives the research was paramount for understanding the relevancy of the study and the data gathered. Using a qualitative research method allows for an opportunity to expand knowledge of the phenomenon by investigating and analyzing the experiences of others.

Interpretive Framework

Social constructivism was used as the research paradigm driving this study because it searches for knowledge by exploring the lived world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This theory embeds the social and collaborative nature of acquiring knowledge by understanding how people use interactions when learning. Using this philosophical assumption, I can rely on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the coaching opportunities to drive the understandings and meanings acquired from the data collected. An essential element involves including a wide range of open-ended questions that allow the participant to describe experiences from personal perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The open-ended and general nature of the questions invites the participants' views on the experience to be shared with the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From the participant's interactions with coaches and involvement in coaching cycles, I then analyzed and interpreted the data, identifying overarching themes that

created meaning and understanding of the essence of the coaching experience (van Manen, 2014, 2016; van Manen, 2016).

Philosophical Assumptions

Identifying philosophical assumptions associated with teacher coaching experiences are significant to understanding the depth and significance of the hermeneutic phenomenological study. These philosophical assumptions dictate such concepts as the outcome or results because of what I chose to inquire about and analyze, with my beliefs playing a role in examining the gathered data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Three philosophical assumptions will be discussed, including ontological, epistemological, and axiological.

Ontological Assumption

An explanation of the ontological philosophical assumption is required because this concept focuses on seeking out multiple perspectives that can then be examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ontological assumption is based on how multiple views can be explored to understand current reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Such a view stems from the concept of participants having multiple perspectives that reside in different realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My own personal beliefs reside with subjectivist thinking because of the idea that my experiences shape my reality. As a white woman, my lived experience influences my outlook and perspectives as well as my three years of coaching experience as a profession.

Additionally, my experience with education as a second career pursuing my master's degree in education aligns with my belief for the need to continue learning and growing for the purpose of self-fulfillment and growth. Moreover, my attainment of a culturally and linguistically diverse learners' endorsement and my current doctoral pursuit align with my belief in learning from others who are more knowledgeable. I seek out learning opportunities in my

employment through classes offered or in coaching and mentoring experiences. My current position as an instructional coach further shapes my beliefs on the positive outcomes coaching can create. For my study, I was in the field with participants who might share these beliefs or with others who might believe in a different reality.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumptions are described as how understanding and knowledge are gained from the analysis of the subjective experiences of identified participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is also the notion that qualitative research is possibly subjective. Conducting the research where the experience takes place creates context with what the participant is explaining and is significant with epistemological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the location was determined based on where the participant was most comfortable so they could speak freely about their experience with coaching. There is also a relationship connecting myself to the research because of my employment in ASD and my position as an instructional coach. I will attempt to be unbiased in my study, knowing that my knowledge of the district and coaching will need to be set aside so I can focus on the participants' articulation of experiences.

Additionally, since epistemology seeks to understand how we acquire knowledge, direct quotes from participants are used to elucidate their experience so the essence of the phenomenon can be illuminated. The direct quotes within the findings give voice to teachers in this study and help articulate the knowledge gained from each participant. Consequently, hearing and seeing the information with an attitude of openness was crucial for creating new understandings that was reflected upon (Moustakas, 1994).

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumptions are the researcher's beliefs and values identified explicitly

in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the data collection phase, any possible biases, values, and beliefs are addressed and acknowledged by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For the proposed study, my values sway toward the positive aspects of coaching and its benefits in having a thought partner in creating the best academic experiences for students. My experiences with coaching have been positive, and because of these, I have sought out coaching personally for my growth and a position within ASD. My current position as a coach has allowed me to study the experiences of those who have been coached more in-depth. I hope that by conducting this study, the participants' stories will shed light on their experiences with coaching.

Researcher's Role

My role as a researcher is a consideration because of the human element involved in conducting this phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Applying the epochè method or bracketing allows for assumptions to be set aside so the participants' experiences can be seen and understood as they are expressed (Moustakas, 1994). I have personal experiences related to this phenomenon because of my role as an instructional coach within the school district I studied. Using hermeneutic phenomenology strives to understand the essence of the experience while also considering that I cannot remove all of my background knowledge about the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 2014, 2016). Therefore, memoing was employed because it documents my thinking when examining the data and discovering new insights I created during analysis (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003, 2004). Memoing also provided the opportunity to be reflective on my own thinking when analyzing the data requiring my own knowledge and assumptions about the phenomenon to be documented and questioned (van Manen, 2014, 2016).

I did not conduct any research at the two schools I currently work with because of the possibility that it might influence what the participants say about coaching. I did not have any

authority over any participants, nor did I have any coaching relationship with them. All participants were selected from schools in my current district that have engaged in coaching. This implied that my data collection and analysis used my background knowledge as a coach in this district. The knowledge I possess as an employee in the district can be helpful. However, the triangulation of a robust amount of data ensured that the study is trustworthy and reliable.

Procedures

The procedures for conducting this study are replicable with information about any permissions needed and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. How participants were identified, how data was collected, and how data was analyzed is be described. Three data sources were used, including individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifacts, with all data being triangulated.

Permissions

Before starting this study, permission was sought to conduct the study at ASD through their data and analytics department included in appendix D. Contact was made to each of the teachers recommended to participate, asking for informed consent from each participant. The IRB process was completed through Liberty University with the IRB approval letter included in appendix A.

Recruitment Plan

Participants were recruited based on their work with a coach at their school. Purposeful sampling was the foremost approach to identifying who could participate in this qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling within purposeful sampling was specifically used because participants all had experience with coaching as the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Initial conversations with coaches identied teachers who have

completed coaching, eliciting names of teachers that I contacted for this study. I sent an electronic message to teachers who had been identified and fit the criteria of engaging in coaching at their school. Once contacted, teachers were informed of the purpose of the study, that participation was entirely voluntary, that confidentiality will be honored, and that withdrawal from the study could occur at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I wanted to ensure saturation by gathering data until the data shows that there is nothing new gained from collecting more information (van Manen, 2014, 2016). Saturation is a way to make the data gathered in qualitative studies more valid and credible (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). I started with identifying teacher participants from ASD. After interviewing the participants and analyzing the data, I determined if saturation had occurred because the data found the essence of the experience and did not continue to identify new insights (van Manen, 2014, 2016).

Data Collection Plan

This qualitative study utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological research design to describe teachers' experiences with coaching in ASD. Data collection began once the IRB process was approved and completed. As the human instrument for collecting data, I used three data collection methods: individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifacts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using these three data collection methods supports the triangulation of data.

Individual Interviews

The individual interview is one of the most prominent and vital data collection methods because of the focus on the real-life experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994). I identified specific participants for the study that would elicit helpful information for understanding and answering the identified research questions. Initial contact to instructional coaches determined which teachers had participated in coaching. The qualifying teachers were sent an electronic

message asking for participation in this study. An electronic survey was attached in the electronic message for the purpose of gathering demographic data, gaining consent, and soliciting the best contact information from the participating teacher. Once agreement was given, the identified interview location and time was determined. If an in-person interview was not able to be completed, an interview over an electronic meeting took place. Furthermore, at the interview, any other demographic data was collected along with an audio-recording of the participant's interview. Using individual interviews is appropriate for this study because of the insight and information elucidated from the participants' experience with coaching.

The interviews were semi-structured allowing for follow-up questions to clarify information shared by the participant. Before asking any interview questions, I created an atmosphere of trust with the participant by having a short social conversation (Moustakas, 1994). The opening interview question continued to focus on creating a comfortable atmosphere while gathering background information about the participant. Subsequently, ensuing questions aligned with the ELT framework following the cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984, 2014). Lastly, the final question in the interview had the participant thinking about any relevant information that was not explicitly asked. Having the participant describe the experience in as much detail as possible can happen by first taking time to allow the participant to think about the experience and any important or powerful moments (Moustakas, 1994). This allowed for participants' introspection and reflection in discovering the essential meanings for answering the research questions.

These interviews took place at a neutral place mutually agreed upon. Any possible physical artifacts identified during the interview to give more information or examples about the coaching experience were collected after the interview was completed. Interviews lasted

approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the participants reviewing their answers for validity.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Will you please describe your teaching career through your current position? CRQ
2. What experiences did you have during coaching? SQ1
3. How would you describe your experiences during coaching? SQ1
4. How did you feel during these experiences? SQ1
5. How did the coach facilitate reflection during coaching? SQ2
6. What meaning was discovered through reflection? SQ2
7. What were you feeling during the reflection process? SQ2
8. What was learned from the experience of reflecting with the coach? SQ3
9. What new ideas do you recall being developed during coaching? SQ3
10. What conclusions were drawn from the reflective process? SQ3
11. What did you determine were the next steps for creating new experiences? SQ4
12. What experiences were planned with the coach? SQ4
13. How did you feel during the planning process? SQ4
14. What other information would you like to share with me about your coaching experience? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

Question one had the participant thinking about their teaching career and making them feel comfortable at the beginning stages of the interview. Questions two through four elicited information about the participant's experience of coaching. Questions five through seven guided the interview towards the participant thinking about the reflection process, what new awareness was created, and how they felt during reflection. Questions eight through ten obtained the

participant's thinking about what they learned in reflection and any new meaning or conclusions identified. Questions 11 through 12 sought to discover the participant's thinking about the experiences that were planned with the coach and how they felt planning these. The final question recognized that there might be additional information that the participant wanted to share but had not been specifically asked, allowing the participant to share anything else pertinent to the interview. These questions examined a teacher's experience when working with a coach. Liberty University committee members also looked at the questions for review.

Individual Interview Data Analysis

The data analysis for individual interviews followed the hermeneutic phenomenological method that invites exploration of a phenomenon in pursuit of its meaning and essence (van Manen, 2014, 2016; van Manen, 2016). Each interview was recorded and transcribed, ensuring the accuracy of data. Transcriptions of all interviews immediately followed the interview's end, ensuring the data and information collected are remembered clearly and preserved for content. Participants were also given a copy of the interview transcript, ensuring accuracy. Furthermore, the data analysis followed a process with the interview text being read multiple times to examine the content systematically.

First, the text created from the transcription was analyzed in its entirety, looking for the overall meaning of the interview and noting any major or key ideas (Bryman, 2012). Next, I read the text, finding especially significant passages that highlighted the experience of coaching (van Manen, 2016). This approach looks at the text selectively, asking what phrases or statements might be especially important or meaningful, these were highlighted or noted (van Manen, 2016). Participant phrases or statements were then be coded, identifying a label for the idea being described (Bryman, 2012). These codes identified information that was then categorized to

create themes (Bryman, 2012). The themes and thematic statements were identified and documented, noticing any patterns or recurring themes found in the text (van Manen, 2016). Significant or recurring themes found when analyzing the data were noted, with example text chosen to signify the essence of the theme (van Manen, 2016). Statements created based on these identified themes captured what is significant and meaningful concerning the phenomenon and research questions (van Manen, 2016). Concurrently, I used memoing to notate my thoughts or feelings based on my coaching experiences during text analysis, so they did interfere with understanding how teachers experienced coaching (van Manen, 2014, 2016). I also wrote any new thoughts or ideas in the margins based on reading and reflecting on the text (Bryman, 2012).

Focus Group

A focus group commenced once individual participant interviews were completed. This focus group had 5 teachers selected to participate. A benefit of having participants interact with each other during a focus group is generating quality information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There is a complementary nature when using individual interviews and focus groups during qualitative research and with focus groups eliciting different information from what was said during an individual interview (Patton, 2002). The focus group was also used as a form of data triangulation.

Focus Group Questions

1. Will you please describe your teaching career through your current position? CRQ
2. How do you describe your experiences during the reflection process of coaching? SQ2
3. What awareness was created through the coaching experience? SQ3
4. What conclusions were drawn from the coaching process? SQ3
5. What did you determine were the next steps for creating new experiences? SQ4

6. What information would you like to share with me that we have not yet discussed? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, SQ4

Questions asked during the focus group elicited a deeper understanding of the experience of coaching from the participants. The first question had participants introduce themselves and create a comfortable atmosphere. The second question elicited information from participants describing the experiences they had during reflection. The third and fourth questions had participants reflecting on new ideas and conclusions drawn during coaching. The fifth question sought to discover participants' thinking about what new experiences were created and how these were identified. Any additional information that participants thought would be beneficial to share were addressed in the final question.

Focus Group Data Analysis

The analysis of the focus group data focused on identifying themes to continue seeking understanding about the essence and meaning of teachers' experiences in coaching. The focus group was recorded and transcribed immediately after the completion of the meeting. Examining the focus group data mirrored the individual interview data analysis process. The text from the focus group was analyzed selectively by finding especially relevant information and highlighting this text (van Manen, 2016). The text was read multiple times, asking what was especially important to understanding the experience of coaching that elucidated the essence and meaning of the teachers' coaching experience (van Manen, 2016). Coding the text identified the meaning of the passage as a first step before any themes were created from their categorization (Bryman, 2012). Simultaneously, I memoed any of my own thoughts while reading the text creating new insights (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003, 2004).

First, I read the text in its entirety, gaining insights based on the text as a whole and identifying any major ideas (Bryman, 2012). Next, I read the text identifying passages with codes and any key language used by the participant (Bryman, 2012). Subsequently, I reviewed the codes to combine and categorize those that seemed similar (Bryman, 2012). Finally, I reviewed the codes identifying those that seemed significant and created themes based on their content (Bryman, 2012). During this process, any themes identified and articulated had especially relevant portions of text used as examples to articulate these themes (van Manen, 2016). In this analysis, I notated any of my person thoughts or feelings so these ideas did not interfere with understanding the experiences as told by the participants (van Manen, 2014, 2016). My memoing also created a record of my thinking in identifying new insights (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003, 2004). Including a focus group supported the triangulation of data and created another opportunity for participants to talk about their experiences in support of understanding the phenomenon that is coaching.

Physical Artifacts

There is substantial usefulness in seeing physical or cultural artifacts as part of data collection (Yin, 2018). Any physical artifacts collected showed how the insights from the participant are applied in real life, leading to greater understanding by the researcher (Yin, 2018). The research questions aimed to achieve an understanding by analyzing any physical artifacts the teacher created based on the work done with the coach. These artifacts included items such as planning documents, student work, and student activity pages. After the interview, teachers were be asked to share any artifacts that could help describe or illustrate the experience of working with the coach or were discussed during the interview. Consequently, physical artifacts collected

emerged based on the participants' experiences. Physical artifacts were collected digitally and stored on a password protected computer.

Physical Artifacts Data Analysis

Physical artifacts were collected from interview participant identified as contributing to the experience when working with a coach. Information about the physical artifacts discussed by participants at the interview was transcribed. Each artifact was analyzed based on what it is, and its purpose (Saldaña & Omasta, 2021). The participant described the symbolism and meaning the artifact exposed in conjunction with an analysis of the item's contents (Saldaña & Omasta, 2021) indicating over-arching themes about the artifact. A secondary analysis of the data specifically identified any patterns or recurring and common themes (Yin, 2018) between physical artifacts based on the coaching experience. Any other concepts or thoughts that seemed relevant during the analysis stage were identified.

Data Synthesis

At the conclusion of the data analysis was the synthesis of information. The discovery of themes and meaning derived from data synthesis involved interpretation and insight (van Manen, 2016). Reflecting on the data and synthesizing its findings was not defined by a specific procedure but relied on discovering the essence of meaning through insight and interpretation (van Manen, 2016). Three approaches were identified when conducting hermeneutic phenomenology, including wholistic, selective, and detailed (van Manen, 2016). I used the holistic approach for this hermeneutic phenomenological study, relying upon three data sources: individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifacts, to generate themes to answer the research questions. After the separate analysis of each data source and the identification of individual themes, these themes were analyzed together to create essential understandings that

directly answered the research questions. In reading and writing about the data, in the reflection and outcome of synthesis, attempts were made to describe, make meaning, and interpret the experiences of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). Through the process of data analysis and synthesis, I attempted to develop meanings that directly contributed to understanding the essence of coaching as described by teachers.

Trustworthiness

At its core, trustworthiness relies on the notion that what is presented can be believed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Gathering data from many resources lends the research to be more trustworthy. The conventional researcher can then rely on specific principles, including both internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity when demonstrating trust in their study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Internal validity is "the extent to which variations in an outcome (dependent) variable can be attributed to controlled variation in an independent variable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Measures should be taken to ensure validity within the study's data collection and data analysis controlled by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

External validity pertains to the importance of having insights and understandings from data that can be generalized across the studied population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research must be credible and transferable, where findings can be generalized and applied to similar populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, internal and external validity can sometimes be incompatible with each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, a naturalist view can be used to establish trustworthiness in the proposed study using concepts that focus on credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

A credible study is necessary and one of the significant tenets to be established in qualitative research. There are multiple ways of creating credibility in a study, with prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking as examples (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The idea of prolonged engagement stems from the thought that to understand data and the information one is collecting; one must know the context from which the research is gathered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this hermeneutic phenomenology, my involvement in schools, knowledge of coaching, and scholarly research created a foundational understanding that establishes credibility with prolonged engagement criteria. I also built trust by spending enough time with each participant to create rapport.

Triangulation is one way to ensure that the data collected and analyzed is credible and trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Having multiple data collection methods strengthens the findings or fills in any gaps or holes that may be present in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The validation of themes or insights from identifying these within the multiple data sources corroborates and lends more validity to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, using a focus group helps triangulate the data because the analysis of interview statements led to a comprehensive identification of codes and themes that further elucidating essential understandings about coaching.

Member checking was utilized throughout this phenomenological study to further build credibility. Establishing credibility is best created by using member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This practice gives participants a chance to look at data and respond to it, deciding if it is an accurate representation of the concepts spoken about and if they are correct while also creating the opportunity to add more information that might have been overlooked (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). An example of this process had the researcher providing transcripts of the descriptions created for each of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). In this act of reading the synthesis done by the researcher, participants could agree with the essential understandings and sign off on its accuracy or conclude that revisions were necessary (Moustakas, 1994). Member checking can be used formally and informally throughout the duration of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

The basis for transferability is the notion that ideas or concepts can be applied to different contexts because the descriptions presented in the study are thorough and in-depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Descriptions are essential for the reader to understand any conclusions detailed in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on these findings, similarities or generalizations can be made and possibly used in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure that the research could apply to other contexts, a thorough description was created for this hermeneutic phenomenology. However, there is no way to guarantee transferability because of the unique characteristics of what is being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Nevertheless, by providing enough information about the research and its findings, someone reading the research could reasonably apply concepts to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

If dependability is to occur, the study must be able to be repeated, and any conclusions or insights are consistent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this hermeneutic phenomenological study, the researcher's dissertation committee and Qualitative Research Director performed an inquiry audit through Liberty University. This inquiry audit examined the process of the study and the

data collected during the research phase. The study must describe the data collection methods, procedures for collecting data, and how the data was stored (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

The confirmability of data ensures that any findings identified in the study come from multiple sources of data and not from any bias or personal interests from the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was used in this study to maintain confirmability. Using triangulation presents the opportunity to use multiple data sources, giving any findings discovered by the researcher more credibility and that these new understandings are accurate and can be corroborated between the different sources (Yin, 2018). Using an audit trail was the second method to establish confirmability. Memoing for confirmability and as an audit trail is different from using memos during the research for documentation of the insights and thinking by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The memoing process needs a system for organization that not only identifies the ideas the researcher has about the data but records the progression of these ideas that could be traced, lending more credibility to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The audit trail used a detailed account of the procedures implemented by the researcher to collect data used for this study, identify raw data collected, categorize analyzed data, and then document the findings in the written dissertation. The audit done in research can be compared to a fiscal audit performed in business, where a record of the different transactions is reported (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This account of protocol and data guarantees transparency that others could trace. Using these two methods for confirmability is convincing of the trustworthiness of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

When completing any study, there is the possibility of bias in conducting or evaluating research because of the knowledge the researcher already has about the subject being studied (Yin, 2018). The specific protocols and measures outlined above combated this potential problem because a researcher uses ethical standards and research principles while conducting research (Yin, 2018). I employed high ethical standards by using methods for preventing bias, avoiding plagiarism, never falsifying information or being deceptive, and striving for professionalism (Yin, 2018). Other actions were taken, including obtaining permission from the school district to conduct the research and ensuring that participants and their interviews were kept confidential. Each participant was asked for their consent with information stating the nature of the study and a right to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used for the school district being studied and for each participant. All data collected was stored electronically with password protection. This data will be kept for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Summary

For this hermeneutic phenomenology researching the experiences of teachers who have been coached, one central research question and four sub-questions were used for understanding the essence of coaching and its implications as job-embedded professional development. The qualitative research design focused on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. In ASD, K-12 schools were the site for the study, with participants coming from both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The data collection methods included individual interviews, physical artifacts, and a focus group. These three methods used in conjunction provided the opportunity to create essential meanings and understandings around the research questions eliciting the essence of the experience K-12 teachers had during coaching.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district (ASD). Chapter four begins with an introduction and description of the participants. Followed by the themes and sub-themes discovered through data analysis using the hermeneutic framework described by van Manen (2014). The central research question and sub-questions are discussed with additional information supported by the data. Concluding this chapter is a summary of the findings exploring K-12 teacher experiences.

Participants

Participants were K-12 teachers in ASD. Thirteen participants joined this study, with five teachers participating in the focus group. All teachers were recruited using purposeful within-criterion sampling. The participant recruitment process began after talking to coaches who provided the names of teachers who had experienced coaching at their schools. Next, electronic messages were sent out asking for their participation using the recruitment letter (see Appendix B). Upon gathering participants, I used pseudonyms throughout the study to protect teacher confidentiality. Both male and female teachers aged 18-59 participated in the study. Participating teachers had between one to over 26 years of teaching experience, teaching in elementary, middle, and high schools. The education level of teachers also fluctuated between having received a Bachelor's degree, receiving a Bachelor's degree plus extra educational credit, receiving a Master's degree plus extra educational credit, to receiving a Doctoral degree. Table 2 identifies participant information, followed by a summary of individual participant demographic descriptions.

Table 2

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Age Range	Range of Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Current Grade Level
Meghan	18-29	1-3 years	Bachelor's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Andrew	30-39	4-8 years	Doctoral degree	High School
Amelia	18-29	4-8 years	Bachelor's degree	Elementary School
Daniel	40-49	16-25 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Keandra	40-49	9-15 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Carol	40-49	16-25 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Amber	40-49	16-25 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Jonathan	18-29	1-3 years	Bachelor's degree plus education credit	Middle & High School
Olivia	40-49	9-15 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Middle School
Matthew	50-59	16-25 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Elizabeth	18-29	4-8 years	Bachelor's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Luke	40-49	4-8 years	Master's degree plus education credit	Elementary School
Alice	50-59	26 or more years	Master's degree plus education credit	High School

Meghan

Meghan teaches fifth grade at an elementary school in ASD. She was in her third year of teaching in ASD after starting her career teaching in California. She has completed her Bachelor's degree with additional education credit.

Andrew

Andrew is currently a high school teacher in his fifth year teaching in ASD. Before teaching in ASD, he taught in multiple other schools and school districts. Andrew has earned his Doctoral degree.

Amelia

Amelia started her career in South Carolina, teaching for three years before gaining employment in ASD. She is in her first year teaching in ASD, teaching in the fifth grade at the elementary level. Amelia has earned her Bachelor's degree.

Daniel

Daniel has been teaching since 2002 in multiple districts and grades at the elementary level. He is currently teaching in the third grade. Daniel has earned his Master's degree plus extra education credit.

Keandra

Keandra is currently a second-grade teacher at the elementary level. She has also taught kindergarten, first grade, and intervention. Keandra has her Master's degree plus extra educational credit.

Carol

Carol has taught for 21 years at the elementary level in multiple grade levels and various schools. She is currently teaching fifth grade in ASD. She has earned her Master's degree plus extra education credit.

Amber

Amber teaches intervention at the elementary level. She has taught in multiple grade levels and numerous school districts. Amber has earned her Master's degree plus extra educational credit.

Jonathan

Jonathan is in his second year of middle and high school teaching. He currently teaches social studies. Jonathan has earned his Bachelor's degree plus extra educational credit.

Olivia

Olivia is a middle school science teacher. She has 12 years of teaching experience in multiple schools in ASD in sixth through eighth grades. Olivia has earned her Master's degree plus extra education credit.

Matthew

Matthew was finishing his 22nd year of teaching in ASD. He has been in elementary education his entire career, teaching mainly in the intermediate grades between third and fifth grade. He has earned his Master's degree with additional education credit.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a second-grade teacher at the elementary level. She has taught third grade both in ASD and in another school district. Elizabeth has earned her Bachelor's degree plus education credit.

Luke

Luke has been teaching in ASD for five years. He has taught 4th grade and is currently teaching 5th grade at the elementary level. Luke has earned his Master's degree plus extra education credit.

Alice

Alice has been teaching math at the high school level for 27 years. She has taught high school students in multiple grades and levels of math during her career. Alice has earned her Master's degree plus extra education credit.

Results

The results from the data analysis revealed multiple themes and sub-themes describing the experiences K-12 teachers had when participating in coaching in ASD. The resulting themes were discovered using van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic model following the theoretical framework outlined within this study. Data was collected from individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifacts. The themes and sub-themes are visualized in Table 3.

Table 3

Primary Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	**Sub-Themes**
Individualization and Choice in Coaching	Providing Flexibility and Variety
	One to One Coaching and Group Opportunities
A Support System for Teachers	Collaboration on Building Initiatives
	Non-Evaluative Experience
Teacher and Coach Partnerships	Mentoring New Teachers
	Support for Veteran Teachers
A Fresh Perspective	The Relationship Provides Powerful Feedback
Frustration Leads to Learning	Creating Self-Efficacy
Reflection Leads to Insight	A Discovery of Self
	Confiding in Others

	Reflection in Service to Students
Supporting Students	Increased Interest in Learning Creating Concrete Experiences How Students Feel
The Positive Experience of Collaboration	A Peer Collaborator

Individualization and Choice in Coaching

Coaching provides individualization and choice in professional development. Teachers choosing what they wanted to learn more about created increased interest and action in instructional practice. A coach supported teachers' growth by providing learning opportunities that directly related to the teacher's own goals. Daniel stated, "It's more like self-driven it can be, the more meaningful it is for me too, you know. So, I have the buy-in for it."

Providing Flexibility and Variety

The different ways a coach works with teachers are varied and diverse. The possibilities for support can range from the many academic content areas to student behavior and social-emotional skills. Coaching was described as flexible, with the opportunity to work on different aspects of teaching. Meghan explained her coaching experience:

> I think they're all so varied. I think the experiences that I feel are most fulfilling is when I get to choose to be there because it's something me, as a teacher, that I want to work on. I think there's just like so many different layers to teaching, and there's so many things we can all be working on.

One-to-One Coaching and Group Opportunities

Coached teachers described coaching as being one-to-one with a teacher and coach working in collaboration. Conversely, teachers also described group coaching experiences with various grade-level teachers, with a team of teachers, or during a professional learning community (PLC). Matthew explained that much of the coaching experienced this year was during PLCs, stating, “I know that PLCs, for the most part, which we've done PLCs on a fairly regular basis this year, have been facilitated by the instructional coach.”

A Support System for Teachers

Whether teachers are new to the physical school building or the profession, coaches help navigate the systems and structures and the school's academic and behavioral practices. In addition, having the coach as a mentor benefits the teacher because of the support provided by the coach. Amelia explained:

> She's been really supportive. Not just with the academic part but like any support that I need. She's just been great. So I, I've loved having an instructional coach at the school, and just having her as a mentor has been really awesome.

Collaboration on Building Initiatives

Coaches were also described as collaborating on specific building initiatives teachers feel worthy of introducing school-wide. Specifically, Andrew mentioned, “I think that the other way in which I've leveraged instructional coaches in our building has been really seeing them as co-conspirators around equity-oriented initiatives, especially relating to literacy.”

Non-Evaluative Experience

The non-evaluative role of coaches created sanctuary and safety for teachers to talk about problems of practice and experiment with pedagogy. It is the partnership established during

coaching that created the space for learning. Any evaluative stance or evaluation practice within coaching would erode trust. Olivia explained, “They [coaches] never tried to put me in a situation where it was like, an evaluative situation.”

Teacher and Coach Partnerships

The relationship between teachers and coaches established trust and a safe space to talk openly without judgment. Building the relationship was a cornerstone of coaching. Carol explained, “He [the coach] built a relationship with me first. And he gave me lots of positive feedback. So, I think he did a really good job of building a relationship with me, making me feel safe.”

Mentoring New Teachers

Since a new teacher has a different set of needs than a veteran teacher, having a coach as a mentor provided the new teacher with a non-evaluative person they received support from. Luke asserted, “Being a new teacher, my first year, the pacing and how all that worked really was very new. So, there was a lot of things that I kind of needed support and help with.”

Support for Veteran Teachers

Coaches invested in teachers’ practice by supporting veteran teachers and helping them become reinvigorated with teaching. The acknowledgment that veteran teachers have multiple years of experience and can self-identify what they might want support in or increase their knowledge is recognized by the coach. Daniel explained, “I'm always very open to those relationships too with people, with people that like her who are in wanting to invest in, in my practice.”

A Fresh Perspective

Working with a coach offers the teacher a fresh perspective since teachers usually work alone in their classrooms. In addition, working with a coach provides multiple possibilities for new idea generation when thinking about teaching strategies or looking at data. Alice explained her experience gathering a fresh perspective:

> Last year, I was trying to change some things. I'm like; it can't hurt to have some fresh eyes. So, I've not only done the coaching experience with her where she gets me to think through anything and everything. Even the things that I'm like, I want to do this, but I feel like it might fail, and what can I do, and she's just given me a lot of encouragement to be able to try things that I maybe would not try.

The Relationship Provides Powerful Feedback

Observations and feedback during the coaching processes created opportunities for powerful feedback highlighting what students were doing in the classroom that the teacher would not otherwise know about. In addition, a coach's encouragement and positivity in their feedback created empowerment and confidence. Olivia stated how she left "…feeling very uplifted. Because one of the things that she pointed out for me, for example, was like part of her job is highlighting what I don't highlight for myself."

Frustration Leads to Learning

Coaching encouraged a growth mindset and willingness to be thoughtful about instruction and pedagogy. Teachers described their frustration in certain situations during coaching because of how the coach challenged their thinking. Consequently, when teachers were involved in new learning, idea generation, or reflection, they felt overwhelmed in addition to being excited during these experiences. Meghan explained, "I felt grateful for the opportunity,

but I also felt really overwhelmed. Because they were throwing so much information at me in a really good way, though."

Creating Self-Efficacy

Reflection created self-efficacy in teachers, knowing that when thinking about a problem of practice, receiving feedback, or looking at data, they had the confidence to try new ideas and move forward. Luke shared his experience developing a stronger sense of self-efficacy while working with a coach:

> I mean, having an instructional coach was a big confidence booster for me. To say, oh my gosh, that went really well or to have, sometimes my instructional coach would just pop in. And she would leave me sticky notes of just feedback. I really love how you're using academic language, and your kids are using. And then, she would just leave me a question to help me think about something that I could just tweak and do a little better. So like, it's always that refinement of the practice for me that I love having an instructional coach.

Reflection Leads to Insight

Coaching was an opportunity to reflect on practice and make meaning based on the teachers' thinking and processing. The coach facilitated teacher reflection by asking open-ended questions leading to personal insight by the teacher. Olivia explained how the reflecting conversation guided her perceptions, "[Coaching] helped me realize what I was truly capable of, versus being told what I could or could not do."

A Discovery of Self

Coaching created opportunities for teachers to become more self-aware and reflective in their practice. A coach facilitated reflection with guiding questions, helping to explore thinking

around pedagogy, possibilities for next steps, and their beliefs and values. As a result, teachers felt ownership of the improvements in their craft because reflection revolved around their thinking. When Alice described reflection, she explained:

> …it was still just coaching and asking, you know, like, how I thought it went, and how that went with my values. Or if I thought it didn't feel good, why I didn't think it felt good? And different ways that things that I could explore.

Confiding in Others

A positive and trusting relationship with the coach establishes a place where teachers can talk through the good, rewarding, challenging, and frustrating parts of teaching. Daniel described how a strong relationship was meaningful when having those "…personal moments where you really are breaking down, or maybe having, you know, a moment, so to speak. Because of the stress or because things really didn't go how you wanted it to, and that kind of thing." The connection and personal relationship between the teacher and coach established the coach as someone who listened first and could be confided in without reprisal.

Reflection in Service to Students

Working with the coach encouraged thinking around students as humans with various experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Reflection-supported pedagogy directly relates to how students learn and what they learn in their academic achievement and growth. Carol described how reflection made her a better teacher stating, "For me, whatever comes out, the meaning is always well, like refining what I'm teaching. I always leave feeling like I'm better equipped to serve my students."

Supporting Students

Students were better supported because of the collaboration between the teacher and coach. The thinking, planning, and reflection done together promoted awareness and improved instructional decisions for the diverse learners in classrooms. Andrew explained that his coach "…came down during lunch, and she, you know, talked to me about some of the instructional practices that were happening in my room and thinking about, like, what was I doing to support students."

Increasing Interest in Learning

During coaching, teachers thought about the content and standards students needed to master and how content and standards were being delivered to students. Teacher-coach collaboration on pedagogy ensured high-quality instruction while promoting teamwork and discussion between students and prioritizing student learning. Alice elaborated on how her coaching experience encouraged thinking around "…making it more of a student-centered classroom instead of a teacher-centered classroom."

Creating Concrete Experiences

The teacher and coach experimented with new ideas and planned experiences incorporating more movement and hands-on experiences during instruction. The focus on creating concrete and conceptual experiences supported students' engagement in learning and grappling with information. Carol described:

> We just wanted to make math when I was teaching kindergarten super hands-on. And kind of a little bit more unpredictable than regular math. So, we just brought in all these manipulatives. And we made stations and to see, you know, what, what do we really have

> to do to make engagement for kids and make it feel like play when they're so little, you know, that's when they learned the best.

How Students Feel

Teachers must build relationships with students. Thus working with a coach promoted thinking about how teachers wanted students to feel when in class and during learning experiences. Alice discussed the importance of creating a learning community and how reflection with the coach prompted more reflection with students stating, “So, me reflecting right with my coach has now made me start having my students reflect at the end of class.”

The Positive Experience of Collaboration

Working with a coach was a collaborative experience where teachers discussed new ideas with another expert teacher. The coaching partnership is built on each other’s expertise because of the teacher and coach's different experiences and knowledge. Matthew described:

> Teachers are willing to work with that instructional coach, in terms of collaboration, in terms of working cohesively together, and being willing to try to make that work, that it can be very impactful as far as not only student success but also teacher success.

A Peer Collaborator

The rapport built between the teacher and coach established the coach as someone who only wanted to see the teacher’s success. Therefore, the collaboration that ensued was one of respect and partnership with the teacher and coach working together as equals. The cooperative relationship supports the growth of pedagogy and learning for students. As Andrew described, “I felt like I was seen as a partner. And as a, you know, as a peer.”

Research Question Responses

This research study used one central research question and four sub-questions supported by the theoretical framework. Table 4 outlines the themes and sub-themes and how they align with the research questions. Two themes and four sub-themes align with the central research question. Sub-question one aligns with three themes and four-sub-themes. Sub-question two has one theme and three sub-themes in alignment. Culminating with one theme and three sub-themes aligning with sub-question three and one theme and one sub-theme aligning with sub-question four.

Table 4

Alignment of Primary Themes and Sub-Themes to Research Questions

Themes	**Sub-Themes**	**Research Question**
Individualization and Choice in Coaching	Providing Flexibility and Variety One-to-One Coaching and Group Opportunities	Central Question
A Support System for Teachers	Collaboration on Building Initiatives Non-Evaluative Experience	Central Question
Teacher and Coach Partnerships	Mentoring New Teachers Support for Veteran Teachers	Sub-Question 1
A Fresh Perspective	The Relationship Provides Powerful Feedback	Sub-Question 1
Frustration Leads to Learning	Creating Self-efficacy	Sub-Question 1
Reflection Leads to Insight	A Discovery of Self Confiding in Others Learning in Service to Students	Sub-Question 2
Supporting Students	Increased Interest in Learning Creating Concrete Experiences	Sub-Question 3

	How Students Feel	
The Positive Experience of Collaboration	A Peer Collaborator	Sub-Question 4

Research Question Responses

The research presented in this study consisted of one central research question and four sub-questions aligned with the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework used experiential learning theory as the foundation for questions. These questions created the foundation for the research and are presented with thematic alignment in Table 4.

Central Research Question

The central research question asks, what are the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district? Multiple themes emerged after data analysis, including creating individualization and choice in coaching, the flexibility and variety of coaching opportunities, and the possibility of one-to-one and group coaching experiences. Other themes included coaching as a support system for teachers, coaching as non-evaluative, and collaboration on building initiatives. The ability to choose the focus of coaching directly influenced the theme of creating individualization and choice in coaching. Meghan described the importance of choice, stating, “I think when you have the chance to like pick what it is for yourself in that moment of your teaching career that you want to focus on. You’re so much more bought into the learning experience.” A coach supports teachers’ growth by providing learning opportunities that directly relate to the teacher’s own goals. Meghan further illustrated this when explaining:

> We got to choose if it was something you're interested or not, which I really appreciate as an educator because if it's something I feel like I've already been working on for a different program, or for different training, I've been to like, why do I need to do it again? Also, like something I'm struggling with, like I would love to learn from someone else.

The individualization of coaching gives opportunities for learning in specific content areas like math or literacy or for developing a teacher's craft during whole group instruction, small group instruction, or within differentiation. "Most of the times this year, I've reached out for coaching expertise in literacy just because I feel like last year I got a lot of coaching around math, and I'm feeling a little bit more confident in math," explained Elizabeth. Furthermore, Daniel described the importance of choice for his coaching experiences based on what he felt were his immediate needs to improve instruction:

> I have identified something in my own practice that I really feel like I need to work on. We work on that together in some sort of meeting, and then, you know, then there's some action that we take together.

Teachers choosing what they want to learn more about creates increased interest and action in instructional practice. Elizabeth explained, "Most of the time when we go to coaches, we're asking these really big questions that we're all grappling with." Working with a coach provided the space for thinking and collaboration surrounding these big ideas deemed personally relevant to the teacher.

There was immense flexibility and variety in coaching. This sub-theme revealed varied and diverse ways a coach worked with teachers. The variety of experiences described by teachers included opportunities for data collection and analysis, planning, co-teaching, modeling,

observation, and feedback. Matthew described his experience during coaching of using data to inform instruction, expressing:

> I think that more than anything stands out to me about something that's been extremely helpful within our instructional coach, who has guided us in this way, in terms of being able to better by being able to better look through this data analysis, allows us to be better teachers to our students.

Planning with a coach was evident with teachers. Teachers felt supported in planning for instruction and described a collaborating experience when making instructional decisions. Carol explained her experience by describing:

> You know, we've made groups for small-group instruction. Gosh, rubrics. I brainstormed like other strategies for, like, deprivatizing thinking and really like making visuals of kids thinking and how to do that better. Just a lot of, I mean, you name it, whatever, if it's a worksheet or activity or a way to make it more engaging, or strategies to get kids to work collaboratively. I mean, the whole gamut. We've done so many different things.

Additionally, coaches and teachers engaged in observation and feedback as another option during coaching experiences. To demonstrate, coaches gave feedback to teachers based on what observational data they collected. Jonathan stated, “Feedback definitely helps with direction to a certain extent. And I thought that it's been very positive.” Luke also appreciated receiving feedback and questions that could prompt reflective thinking revealing, “I really value the feedback and helping me be better of like, this is what really went well. This is some of the things to think about.”

The flexibility that coaching provided resulted in more engaged learning from teachers because they chose to grapple with it. As Meghan expressed:

> I think they're all so varied. I think the experiences that I feel are most fulfilling is when I get to choose to be there because it's something me, as a teacher that I, want to work on. I think there's just like so many different layers to teaching, and there's so many things we can all be working on.

Coaching consisted of working one-on-one with an individual teacher, a grade-level team of teachers, and a group of teachers from several different grades. The sub-theme establishing coaching as a way for teachers to work one-to-one with a coach or in a group setting identified the relevancy of both for increasing teacher pedagogy. Amelia described the positive experience she had when working one-to-one with a coach stating:

> I think everybody should have a coach to help them, especially with teaching. I just feel like we have so much on our plates, and sometimes things are really hard. And so just having somebody who, their job is to support you is just been like, so awesome for me. So I just wish everybody had a great instructional coach.

Working as a group of teachers from different grade levels or working with the grade level team was also described as a beneficial experience for teachers in a coaching opportunity. Elizabeth described how beneficial it was to work as a group stating:

> I think that just watching other teachers and attacking like a problem of practice or a question that we all have together has been really powerful for me as well. And just having a coach that kind of like facilitates that and leads that but just gives like that time and opportunity to watch other teachers and like think through it with other people in the profession has been really powerful.

Coaching created learning experiences for one-to-one opportunities and allowed teachers to collaborate. Coaching also provided a cohesiveness in what was being taught and how to

support students, with Matthew asserting, “Working together are more powerful in our results than working individually.”

Coaching as a support system for teachers emerged as a sub-theme, with Luke explaining:

> To have such a support system as well has been very beneficial because, as you know, teaching is a grind. Teaching is hard. And it's really, it's very nice to have the support of a coach to say you're doing a great job. Sometimes we don't get that.

The coach worked side-by-side with teachers as their champion when things felt hard or to work together on a problem of practice.

Coaching as a non-evaluative experience surfaced as an essential sub-theme. Olivia expressed that the coach “…never tried to put me in a situation where it was, like, an evaluative situation.” Likewise, Andrew described how his coaches explained:

> I'm an experienced teacher in this building, who cares about kids, and I care about teachers, and I'm going to do what I can to support you. And this is not an evaluative thing, this is something that is a resource; use it.

However, the relationship and collaboration suffered if teachers felt any judgment or evaluation when working with a coach. Matthew explained that coaches:

> They're there more as a support, as an observer, but not like the observer who's going to actually do an evaluation on you. So, I feel like that role was taken advantage of a little bit as an instructional coach for this particular individual. And as a result, I didn't really enjoy or want to necessarily work with her on a one on one.

Moreover, the evaluative process was described as completely different from coaching, with teachers expressing their desire for the administration to have more of a coaching stance, so

the evaluative process was more informative and beneficial for increasing teacher pedagogy. However, the evaluation process felt exasperating to Alice because it was a task to be done instead of an opportunity for learning, stating:

> I wish actually, administrators worked more as coaches when they were doing the evaluation process because it would be a lot more beneficial to you. Because it like has already been said before, I walk out of an evaluation going. Great. That's over with for the year. Or, okay, I need to do this or whatever to appease them. But they didn't help me become a better teacher in the least. It was just a waste of time. It was a hoop I had to jump through versus coaching and consulting, and working with somebody who has actually invested in you being the best person that you, or the best teacher that you can be, actually has been beneficial and makes me a better teacher.

The final sub-theme included collaboration on building initiatives. Coaches collaborated on specific building initiatives teachers felt were worthy of introducing school-wide. Specifically, Matthew detailed how the partnership with the coach developed ideas for use within his classroom and for ideas that benefited the entire school. Matthew asserted:

> [Coaching created] …whole building ideas. Like, hey, can you see this particular thing happening as it relates to maybe bringing in this social studies curriculum that's brand new and how we could shoot this particular part of it out to the whole staff?

Sub-Question One

How do coached teachers describe the experience of coaching? The themes identified first encompass the partnership between the administration and the coach and how the administration's influence promotes a coaching culture. Secondly, the teacher and coach partnership was essential in mentoring new teachers and supporting veteran teachers.

Additionally, coaching provided a fresh perspective where the relationship developed between the teacher and coach created insight and the opportunity for positive feedback. Lastly, the final themes discovered related to how frustration during coaching led to learning, which supported teacher self-efficacy.

Coaches and teachers developed a relationship with trust as a foundational element. The non-evaluative role of coaches provided teachers with a safe space to talk about problems of practice and experiment with pedagogy. Matthew expressed his feelings, saying, "I just feel like that she's really trying hard to help me to be the best instructor I can be as in terms of the classroom in my teaching." Conversely, when Matthew and a previous coach lacked trust in each other, expressing:

> I felt defensive just because of the way I felt that she treated me and others that I knew. Not that I didn't have respect for her. It was just a matter of I really didn't want to collaborate really with her because of my experiences. I wasn't courageous enough to have the conversation with her on how I felt.

However, when rapport was established, the partnership was helpful and supportive, especially in coaching conversations. Explained Alice, "You're not being judged. I mean, right? It's just your own stuff."

Whether teachers are new to the physical school building or the profession, coaches helped navigate the systems and structures, supported with content and pedagogy and the school's academic and behavioral practices. Having the coach as a mentor benefited the teacher because of their support. Amelia described:

> She's been really supportive. Not just with the academic part but like any support that I need. She's just been great. So I, I've loved having an instructional coach at the school, and just having her as a mentor has been really awesome.

A teacher new to the profession has different needs, and coaches provided assistance and relief in multiple ways. Luke described how overwhelming it was as a beginning teacher revealing how he felt, "Grateful, like super grateful. Relieved too. Like being a teacher and being released, like, like I said earlier, drinking out of two fire hoses." Furthermore, coaches helped new teachers learn how to navigate school systems and structures. As Andrew explained:

> The key takeaway, as I said, was around, you know, the navigation of systems and structures, the power, and the ways in which instructional practices are not necessarily prescribed in certain ways, but they're kind of codedly prescribed…And so it's like, okay, you know, what the coded message was, for a teacher of 25 years is very different than the ones who are new to the building. So, you know, what and how teachers operate is different.

Teaching is complicated, and sometimes teachers feel disillusioned in their practice. Veteran teachers found coaching to be positive and recharging for their teaching craft. Carol explained:

> When I can meet with her, it's like my best time of the week. It kind of recharges me; it gives me things to think about, makes me feel creative. We collaborate, we just like talk, and it feels so great.

Daniel expressed a similar sentiment describing how coaching helped him remember successes from his past teaching experiences, sharing:

> The reground in that is I really feel like, you know, especially when you've been teaching for a while like you can kind of go through these cycles where you're trying new things and then you forget what was working okay, you know, a few years ago. Then oh yeah, I remember that thing.

Veteran teachers benefitted from coaching because of the collaborative and supportive relationship that created insight and growth opportunities. Keandra explained, "So my experience has been amazing with the coaching because it helps me to be a better teacher, based off the different knowledge that they were able to bring experiences to my classrooms." Furthermore, coaching was described as a need for teachers new to the profession or established veteran teachers. "Coaching really should be accessible to all teachers," asserted Olivia.

Teachers spend the majority of their time alone teaching in their classrooms. Working with a coach provided another set of eyes and a new perspective in the classroom. Teaching demands the full attention and investment of the teacher, where teachers miss things that happen when teaching. A coach offered positive observations when reflecting with teachers. Alice explained:

> We were noticing that my students were, she would be able to point this out to me, this helped me in the reflection part, she's like, but do you notice what everybody was doing? Or do you notice what so and so was doing? And I'd be like, What do you mean? I didn't know what she was getting at. And she'd be like, every single person was engaged, every single person was doing something.

Having the coach in the classroom as another expert teacher provided new awareness about students and their learning and was an additional benefit to coaching.

Moreover, teachers felt tackling a problem of practice or looking to modify or change instruction was daunting or even impossible. Daniel shared, “It’s hard when you’re just by yourself, or even with your teammate; it’s nice to have a nice, an outside, an outside set of eyes on the problem.” Coaches championed their teachers and provided encouragement. The teacher-coach relationship that resided with and without students present offered teachers more confidence and a different lens highlighting strengths or nuances during teaching. Teachers felt uplifted and empowered, with Elizabeth sharing, “I just really appreciate having almost like that extra brain in the room.”

Coaches provided timely and supportive feedback to teachers. The relationship provided powerful feedback, as revealed in this sub-theme. When teachers experimented with new ideas, the feedback received inspired confidence, with Daniel expressing, “I’ve also felt a lot of comfort and strength to my, you know, to my own being added to my own practice, because I get feedback that things that I’m trying out…it feels like it’s confidence building for me.” Additionally, the positive feedback coaches provided resulted in Olivia asserting, “Hey, I actually do some things well, and that’s just it feels really good inside because you don’t get told that often enough sometimes. When sometimes when you’re your own worst critic.”

The partnership between the teacher and coach offered opportunities for the coach to join the teacher in their class and work with students. Co-teaching, modeling, or observations in classrooms provided teachers with a second expert to work with during classroom instruction in addition to the planning and reflecting completed outside the classroom. Amber described how beneficial it was “…to have that extra person in the classroom teaching with you, as well as looking at and working with kids.” Additionally, coaches were intuitive with the support they

provided teachers based on their knowledge of teachers' strengths and needs. To demonstrate, Amelia said:

> And even times like, I've had something crazy going on, and I think she could tell that I wasn't in the right headspace and so she was, she was just said okay, I'll take over, and I can do this, and you can just sit and watch and kind of take the backseat.

The strong and trusting relationship provided opportunities for giving and receiving feedback helping teachers grow in their practice and inspiring confidence.

Even though teachers had positive experiences during coaching, feelings of frustration surfaced. Coaching allowed for deep thinking that was challenging or uncomfortable at times. Elizabeth explained her feelings of frustration during coaching:

> So, like that frustration is definitely something that I will name as like a feeling that I felt during coaching sessions, but I don't want it to necessarily be, come off as like negative, right, like frustration is okay to have, just like we say with our kids because it means that you're kind of getting somewhere and so as long as productive struggle, productive frustration.

Teachers grappled with challenging obstacles and big questions. The deep and powerful thinking coaches facilitated had teachers persevering during the productive struggle allowing for the frustration to become awareness and then into feelings of accomplishment. Olivia explained:

> [The] coaching process or cycle is just very grounding me. So not only getting some problem-solving solutions and whatnot and going from frustration to kind of feeling more successful. It's just re-grounding me sometimes that, you know, just helps me say okay, you know, then you realize I can take a step back and then move forward.

Teachers sometimes felt overwhelmed with an overload of information or discouragement when wanting a perfect solution to a problem and knowing there was not one. However, teachers had a growth mindset and pushed through feeling stuck and uncomfortable. Matthew explained, “It's challenging because it's really if you're really reflecting, it involves a lot of thinking. And so, and it's not easy thinking, it's kind of like growth mindset kind of thinking.” Carol echoed, feeling both motivated and frustrated, stating:

> You can feel inspired; sometimes you get a little frustrated because you're being challenged. You know what I mean? Sometimes, you know, you have this strong belief, and then through this, like, conversation, you're realizing that, like, you're not wrong, but there's more to consider.

Coaching developed confidence and self-efficacy in teachers. Daniel explained, “I felt a feeling of confidence, you know, that that I was being supported, and I felt good about it.” As another expert teacher working side-by-side to support teachers, the coach was comforting and empowering. Furthermore, reflecting inspired confidence and validated teachers. Olivia described:

> [Reflection is] liberating or just like excited, excitement because, you know, when I'm in that reflection problem process, I'd now feel more empowered to feel more confident to feel like I can move forward with whatever I was struggling with, or you know, and just feel good about what my next steps are and knowing that now I have some clarity as well as plans.

Teachers built confidence in solving a problem and identifying what next steps should be taken. The confidence felt when thinking and working with the coach was liberating and exciting. “It's just really kind of you and them helping you grow yourself so that you kind of

know what to do and where to go from there," stated Alice. Teachers developed increased confidence and self-efficacy in their pedagogy through the coaching partnership.

Sub-Question Two

How do coached teachers describe the process of reflection? Data showed themes connected to reflection leading to insight, a discovery of self-awareness with the reflective process provided confiding in others, and an opportunity for reflection in service to students. Education and teaching allow for continuous growth in a demanding and constantly changing field. Teachers realized the power of reflection. Coaches provided a space for teachers to be reflective in their practice by asking questions to facilitate thinking. Andrew his experience describing:

> And, you know, because teaching is complex and dynamic and ever-changing, and so, I've never felt shy about being reflective of my practice or changing what I do. If I feel that is going to better serve my students or better serve me as a teacher.

Reflection offered teachers opportunities to think through the next steps in a supported and empowering way. The clarity in direction and decision-making created confidence and personal growth. Alice explained her experience with reflection revealing how a coach "…can just guide you and keep asking you question over question, after question of like, but what's your value? What do you really want your students to know? It really can deepen your thinking."

Moreover, talking through the next steps, approaches, and possibilities excited and inspired teachers in a safe, trusting environment. Olivia stated, "I love the conversation. For me, they're a highlight of my day."

Reflection created the opportunity for self-discovery with teachers by stimulating thinking by identifying values and beliefs. For some, this process felt challenging and scary as

well as necessary and essential for learning. Matthew explained, “I think that if you don't reflect, you don't necessarily know what needs to be improved.” Reflection was a way to find personal meaning. Teachers thought about what was working or what might need to be adapted or changed based on their instructional practices or the diverse students in their classroom. Teachers found the answers themselves, which was more meaningful than the coach or someone else telling them what they should do. “In a reflection process, that's the point. It's like letting you, the individual, work through your challenges with support,” expressed Olivia.

Reflection was also a way to consider their students as humans with different backgrounds, emotions, and assets. Amelia spoke of “…realizing I can still do the things that I love and that the kids love…” after reflecting on a highly engaging literacy experience. Additionally, teachers identified what was working based on what was best for the students in their classes. Amelia further elaborated, “I think it meant more coming from myself, like thinking back on the lesson and talking with her, then someone telling me you could do this better, you could do this better.”

The coach was also someone to confide in when teachers felt excited and discouraged. Coaches offered support for teachers whenever needed, whether during a coaching cycle or as a confidant to talk to. Olivia described, “I just need to vent, and she's just there to listen and provide that support system without necessarily giving me a coaching cycle.” The coach provided an outlet and a safe space to talk, cry, or express frustrations during stressful situations, with Jonathan stating, “I can go to my coach for anything; we talk about a lot of things.” The coach positioned themselves as someone there to listen and support the teacher in a confidential and caring way.

Teacher reflection inspired increased learning about students in addition to learning about themselves. Amber explained:

> The reflection piece was huge in terms of what, well, I noticed this, about this kid, and then it's just like, oh yeah, that's kind of, that's normal for this child. Or, oh wow, that's something I need to go back and, you know, reteach. So, it was really; I learned a lot about myself.

Coaching provided a way to increase student growth and learning in a positive, trust-based atmosphere. The trust between the teacher and coach provided the foundation for a robust and student-focused relationship.

Carol described the growth created in service to students stating, “It means continuous improvement, always trying to do better for my students. That's what the coach helps me do. It's growth, I guess.” Reflection with grade-level teams or in group situations offered thinking about students collaboratively. Matthew described reflection with his team:

> We discovered what it is that we actually needed to be doing in the classroom to be able to bring out the best in our students. So, it was just like a think tank. And by allowing this think tank to occur, it allowed us to then understand what it is that we needed to do moving forward as it related to teaching our students.

Teachers expressed how valuable reflection was as a tool for continued growth. Coaching and the reflective process were a way to learn without finality. Explained Daniel, “It's a continuous cycle. There really isn't an ending. There’s…I’m just looking for the next beginning.”

Sub-Question Three

How do coached teachers describe the development of new ideas? Supporting students was the central theme that emerged from the data. Sub-themes included developing ideas that

created interest in learning, incorporating concrete experiences, and thinking about students' feelings. The diverse population of students residing in each classroom created opportunities to develop new ideas for learning experiences based on students' diverse strengths and needs. Coaching provided teachers with opportunities for reflective thinking, focusing on supporting students so they are prepared for learning. "How am I going to better set up my kids for success? And what kinds of ways am I contributing to an environment where they can be successful?" asked Andrew.

The collaboration between the teacher and coach supported students because of the reflection and thinking that occurred when planning new ideas. Teachers experienced pedagogy development when working with a coach, contributing to increased student learning and engagement. Learning new instructional practices benefited teachers as they could apply and create new experiences with the coach. Carol described, "For me, whatever comes out, the meaning is always well, like refining what I'm teaching. I always leave feeling like I'm better equipped to serve my students."

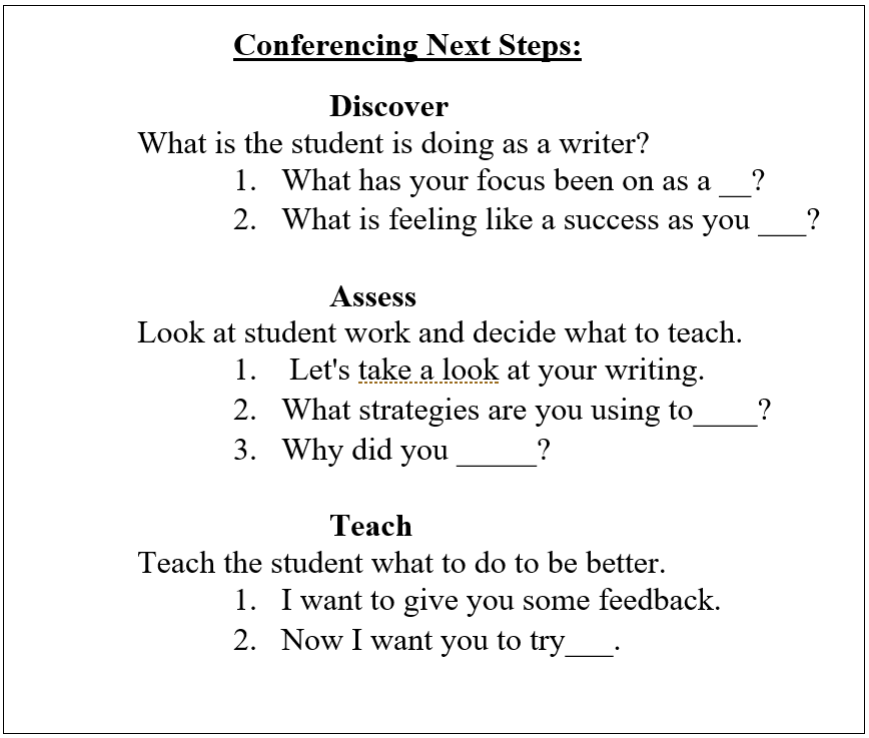
In the process of working with the coach, specific steps were identified for implementation in the classroom. For example, Meghan created a conferring sheet to support her during individual student conferences. The conference sheet outlined the three components that she wanted to focus on with each student (see Figure 1), with Meghan explaining:

> I feel like my learning; I have these three steps. My conferring has to be like I had to walk in and I had to make it a very welcoming place for the student like, what are you working on? What's your next step? Like they had to feel safe and excited to share, and then I had to notice kind of what they were doing. And have conversations with them. So they can explain their thinking no matter what the subject, whether they were reading,

writing, doing math, and then my final step was like leaving them with something to push their thinking.

Figure 1

Conferencing Next Steps



Note. This figure is a reproduction of a conferring sheet created from work with a coach.

Additionally, instead of only new ideas being created, coaching provided an opportunity for refinement of pedagogy and how modifications or adjustments to instructional practice would better serve students. The coach facilitated the thinking on organizing an approach or using a specific strategy. Amber described, “I feel like that was just refinement of teaching. For me, like refining what I'm doing, gaining more skills in writing, teaching writing.”

Increasing interest in learning by students was developed from the coaching experience. Thinking through content standards, in addition to the development of pedagogy, created new experiences and ideas for teaching and learning. Teachers focused on increasing student collaboration and time for students to grapple with content learning. For example, instead of

focusing on the teacher's lecture, the partnership between the teacher and coach found that student work time was most effective for promoting learning. The teacher planned for instruction by immediately teaching the learning target in a short lesson so students had time to focus on practicing the skill. The teacher helped facilitate thinking and could support students who might be confused. Alice explained how her practice has changed:

> What I've kind of really turned around through the coaching experience in my own class is changing it so that we value every single minute in the classroom. So my kids come in, we don't go over problems anymore. I'm there to answer questions. But what we're trying to do is get through the lesson, jump right into the lesson. Teach it and have the kids start working right then so that they're, while they're confused, they would call it homework. I don't take that anymore. Have students be like this homework? Nope. It's called practice.

Creating new learning experiences developed opportunities for students to have self-efficacy, ownership, and engagement during class. Coaching created a more student-centered classroom instead of a teacher-focused classroom identifying "…how to give kids agency, how to give kids independence within the classroom, how to give them, how to honor their identities, how to connect with their identity," explained Elizabeth.

Teachers used data to drive instructional decisions and planning for new experiences. The observations made by the teacher and coach about student learning also supported planning experiences for re-teaching of content or extension of student thinking. To illustrate, Amelia described how:

> [My coach] was really helpful to me, and just like analyzing data and noticing things that I wasn't able to notice in my kids and so just being able to use both of our observations to kind of create things that we thought our kids would need going forward.

Increasing the use of math manipulatives was an example of one-way pedagogy was developed. Amelia described how her coach modeled how important it was for 5th-grade students to use manipulatives in math. At first, Amelia was incredulous at the prospect stating, “I didn't really use manipulatives because I thought my kids would go crazy and, you know, ruin stuff and throw them and not learn; it would be crazy.” However, based on the coaching and reflection, Amelia found experimentation with pedagogy and thinking about her students created opportunities to grow in her practice. Amelia explained her growth in pedagogy, describing:

> So, I think that was something that I learned of just how to let them experiment and use manipulatives, and she (the coach) was just very much, not just pencil on paper writing problems and doing things again and again. It was more letting the kids figure it out for themselves.

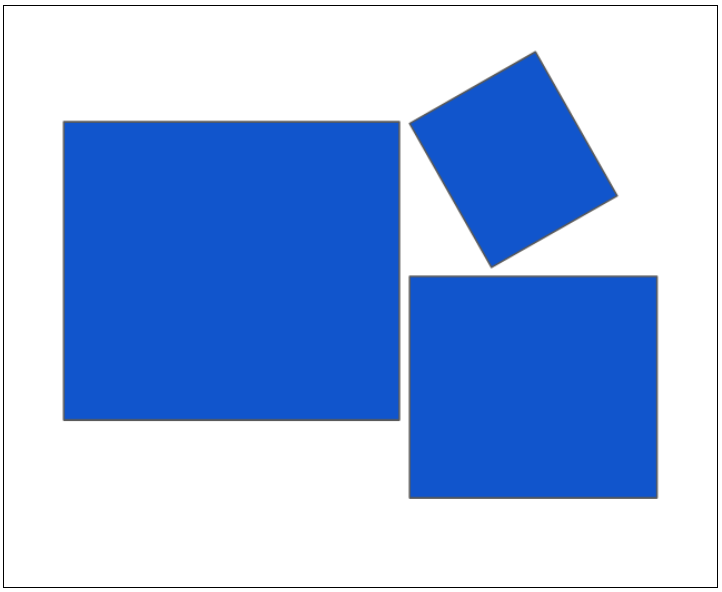
Alice also described the coach’s influence in her development of using manipulatives and hands-on learning with high-school students. Alice expressed how planning with the coach created more opportunities for students to explore ideas instead of only being shown instruction (see Figure 2). Alice explained how in collaboration with the coach, they created more opportunities for concrete experiences stating:

> I cut out five-by-five, four-by-four, and three-by-three squares before teaching the Pythagorean theorem. And I had, I've had a video linked to my smartboard lesson before, but we decided, hey, why don't we give them these, put them in groups, and let them play with the squares and then start giving them the rules of can you make a triangle out of these three squares? And that's all we said. And then they'd start asking, Well, can I use scissors? No. Can I, can I throw one of them away? No. Can I fold it? No. So a lot more

of allowing them to discover, discover stuff and then kind of understand and put things together.

Figure 2

Discovering the Pythagorean Theorem



Note. This figure is a reproduction of the squares used for students to discover the rules of the Pythagorean theorem.

Working with the coach developed thinking around students as humans with different academic assets and a range of thoughts and emotions. Teachers reflected on how students felt in class. Through reflection, Jonathan discovered how to have "patience with students, patience and listening." Additionally, the reflective process prompted Alice to change her instruction by creating time for daily student reflection as part of her class routine and providing opportunities for students to describe how they felt about the learning (see Figure 3). Increased student learning was identified by developing a community of learners who supported each other. Alice expressed, "They're finally learning. You know, through us talking about our values in class of, why am I doing this work?" Teachers became more aware of how they could support the diverse

learners during instruction by taking opportunities to think about how students might feel and developing a class community

Figure 3

How Am I Feeling About The Learning?

Circle one of the numbers below.
Place this sheet in the matching numbered basket when finished.

When thinking about today's math lesson, I feel like…

1. I'm just learning.
2. I'm almost there, but I need more practice.
3. I understand. I've got this under control.
4. I'm an expert! I can teach it.

One question I have is…

Note. This figure is a reproduction of the reflecting sheet discovering how students felt about their learning of the math content.

Matthew described planning as essential because of the numerous roles, obligations, and tasks teachers are required to do. Matthew expressed how positive planning for instruction was, stating, "I feel prepared. I mean, planning is preparation. So it made me feel good because it can be overwhelming. Sometimes in terms of all of the balls we're juggling, so to speak, in the job." Coaching supported the development of new ideas during reflection and then planning with teachers.

Sub-Question Four

How do coached teachers describe the planning of new experiences? Data analysis showed that planning provided a positive collaboration experience with the coach, establishing themselves as a peer collaborator. The coach was a collaborator and thought partner for teachers when planning new experiences. As an educational expert, the coach provided resources, collaborated in planning, and identified thought-provoking questions for reflection. “My experience has been very beneficial because I was able to bounce my ideas and my experiences in my classroom with someone else who was knowledgeable in the subject,” explained Keandra.

For some teachers, planning felt daunting at first because of feeling overwhelmed or hesitant at the prospect of planning new experiences with the coach. These feelings occurred because of the teacher and coach navigating the new relationship together. In the beginning stages, some teachers described planning as being very formal. However, the more developed the relationship became, and with the frequency of planning, efficiency, and naturalness resulted. When Amelia described how she felt about starting the planning process, she stated:

> I think a little overwhelmed at the beginning just because, you know, she (the coach) was suggesting trying new things. I was like, I don't know how I feel about that. But as it went on, we just got to a good groove, and it felt more natural and easy.

Collaboration was described as a positive experience built on both the teacher’s and coach’s expertise. It invigorated and energized teachers, with Luke explaining, “I was excited to just try something new. I wasn't nervous. Pumped, really, like just really excited to try something new. And yeah, energetic.”

Teachers collaborated in various ways with the coach, including planning for instruction, identifying resources, and creating assessments. Multiple benefits emerged when thinking

through a lesson and designing new experiences in collaboration with the coach. As a peer collaborator, the coach revealed how their combined knowledge created excitement and inspiration during the planning process. In addition, having a thought partner for idea generation supported teachers, especially when taking risks or trying something new. “I think they're also really great for just like ideas. And as far as me bouncing ideas off of that individual for like ideas I have in my classroom that I want to want to implement,” described Matthew.

The rapport developed between the teacher and coach allowed the teacher to be comfortable knowing that it would be okay if something did not work out that they had planned together. The collaboration would continue, and they would reflect on the experience and try again. It was a way teachers continued moving forward instead of reverting to old teaching methods. Conversely, the teacher-coach partnership also celebrated successes together. Olivia explained her feelings when trying new ideas:

> Taking those risks and feeling comfortable with knowing that it's okay if it doesn't work out as well as I'd hoped or celebrating even the small successes that did come from it and be okay with that. To continue pushing myself forward instead of always reverting back to same old same old.

The collaboration created the opportunity to think about students and how to be responsive to their needs while also setting students up for success. The positive experience of planning together with a coach achieved benefits in creating mutual respect and development of pedagogy.

Summary

The themes and sub-themes discussed above illustrated the benefits of coaching for teachers in service to their students. Teachers participated in coaching in multiple ways, either as

a one-to-one or group experience providing collaboration in support of planning, during co-teaching opportunities, or in data analysis. The coaching experience was described as exciting and positive, focusing on developing teachers' craft by empowering them to discover the answers themselves through reflection. The reflective process provided clarity for teachers in discovering the next steps for students or how to solve problems of practice. Deep thinking challenged and empowered teachers resulting in the development of new ideas and the planning of new experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. Chapter five describes the interpretations from this study based on the findings from chapter four and provides implications for practice. Furthermore, the empirical and theoretical implications, as well as limitations and delimitations, are discussed. Concluding this chapter are recommendations for further research and the conclusion.

Discussion

The following section describes this study's findings identified from the themes discovered from the hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis. The interpretation of findings integrates data and is supported by the empirical and theoretical sources gathered. This section summarizes discovered themes and sub-themes, the interpretation of findings, implications for practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

This section begins with a summary of themes discovered from the hermeneutic phenomenological framework advanced by van Manen (2014). Kolb's (1984, 2014) experiential learning theory was the theoretical framework to guide this study. Data were gathered through individual interviews, a focus group, and physical artifacts. Thirteen teachers participated in this study, with five teachers joining the focus group. Analysis and coding of the data produced themes and sub-themes from teachers' experiences when working with a coach creating significant interpretations.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The multiple themes and sub-themes describing the experiences K-12 teachers had when participating in coaching in the Applewood school district were discovered based on research questions and sub-questions using experiential learning theory posited by Kolb (1984, 2014). The central research question explored what the experiences of K-12 teachers were when participating in coaching in the Applewood school district. The first theme discovered the importance of individualization and choice in coaching with the sub-themes of flexibility and variety, in addition to one-to-one coaching and group opportunities. The second theme was coaching as a support system for teachers, with sub-themes describing collaboration on building initiatives and coaching as a non-evaluative experience.

Sub-question one investigated how coached teachers described coaching experiences. Thematically, sub-question one produced the theme of teacher and coach partnerships with mentoring new teachers and support for veteran teachers as sub-themes. The second main theme described a fresh perspective resulting in how the relationship provides powerful feedback as the sub-theme. The third and final theme identified for sub-question one maintained that frustration leads to learning, with creating self-efficacy as the sub-theme.

The second sub-question explored how coached teachers described the process of reflection. The first theme found that reflection leads to insight. The resulting sub-themes identified a discovery of self, confiding in others, and reflection in service to students as principle components during reflection.

Sub-question three asked how coached teachers described the development of new ideas. Supporting students was the main theme developed from the third sub-question. The sub-themes

discovered were increased interest in learning, creating concrete experiences, and how students feel.

Sub-question four explored how coached teachers described the planning of new experiences. Resultingly, the positive experience of collaboration was identified as the final theme, with the sub-theme of coaches being peer collaborators. The themes and sub-themes identified from the data analysis informed the discovery of the following interpretations.

Being Coached is a Learned Skill. Coached teachers learned how to engage in coaching and embrace the essence of the coaching process. Coaching is a path of professional development that requires vulnerability, risk-taking, and personal reflection (De Keijzer et al., 2020; Lofthouse, 2019) by the teacher. These traits needed to be present and leaned on by the teacher to have the best experience with coaching, which have not necessarily been cultivated by schools or in education. Alice explained how she felt during her first experiences coaching, stating, “So starting I was, I won't say uncomfortable, but it was weird.” The experience was not as expected. Teachers might have had only evaluative experiences, with administrators’ feedback being more directive than reflective. Additionally, some teachers may have experienced feedback or partnership only when starting as new teachers. Furthermore, some new teacher mentorships are consultant based, with the new teacher seeking answers for guidance and support, and some new teacher mentorships are coaching-based. Daniel remembered his first experiences with coaching asserting, “…I hated it.” He was hoping for answers and consulting and felt frustrated with the open-ended nature of the questions and reflection coaching presented. Since coaching relies heavily on being reflective with teachers thinking about their practice through guiding questions, it may take time for coached teachers to understand the process and be open to its possibilities. Alice went on to explain:

> [I learned] that coaching is, oh, we'll let you talk about you. And they don't really; I don't know how to say this right. But they don't really have any buy-in to it like they're free of it when they're done right. They ask you these guiding questions. As long as you're happy with what you're doing and it's really about you reflected in you going through the plan.

Historically, teachers may have only been required to work with a coach if they are new to the profession. There also may be a stigma attached to coaching that only new teachers without experience or ineffective teachers should be coached.

Many professional development opportunities experienced by teachers are one-time trainings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) held after school or during the day, with some trainings being required and others optional. In these cases, the onus is on the teacher to take the learning and apply it as an individual to their teaching craft. Teachers also may seek out growth opportunities through their commitment to taking classes or completing a degree. These professional development situations are very different for teachers than in coaching. Whereas with coaching, partnership and collaboration increased pedagogical growth and learning.

The focus on open-ended and reflective questions during coaching (Pletcher et al., 2019; Wetzel et al., 2021) may disrupt the pride teachers feel in their practice because it requires teachers to think about values, beliefs (De Keijzer et al., 2020), and possibly dismantle some long-standing instructional practices. Carol described her first experience learning about coaching:

> The first experience I had to have was learning to be coachable, to be honest. Because I don't think we always have that culture in every building that everyone should be coached. And I think a lot of people are protective of their practice and feel sort of insulted.

Teachers engaging in coaching learned what it meant to experience coaching and the benefits of collaborating with another expert teacher. A growth mindset is beneficial when coaching (Bloomberg, 2022) and contributes to teachers' coaching success. Carol explained how her experience changed when her attitude shifted, and she knew what to expect during the coaching process, stating:

> I think I had to learn to be coached and what that meant, and how that has to change your mindset a little bit to be open to doing different things and changing. And then once I learned, once I learned to be coachable, then it's just been amazing because it's just like having this great thought partner, who you know, helps you think outside of your own point of view, consider other, you know, broadens your vision, because they bring in other information and other ideas. And then it's just like it to me, it's felt like really collaborative creation of great things.

Coaching Removes the Silos of Teaching. Schools are individualistic (Jacobs et al., 2018), with teachers educating alone in self-contained classrooms. Therefore, teachers may be very protective of their practice, with evaluation systems focusing on individual performance and award structures such as Teacher of the Year, further creating isolation. When teachers engaged in coaching, opportunities were made to break down teaching silos and de-privatize practice. Coaching removes and breaks down the individualization of practice by opening it up for partnerships or groups to work together (Jacobs et al., 2018; Kraft et al., 2018). Furthermore, coaching facilitated the opportunity to watch other teachers teach and observe in different classrooms. Teachers appreciated going into other classrooms with a coach creating opportunities for learning from other teachers. Meghan shared that her coach said, "…we can get you in some classrooms to learn from other teachers." Meghan expressed her interest and

positive experience when observing these other classrooms explaining how it "…is my favorite way of learning; I think it's most helpful."

The ownership in practice teachers felt was disrupted during coaching because of the collaboration and learning done together. Change can be hard. Teachers promote a growth mindset with students, yet following this practice takes commitment and openness to possibilities which could leave teachers feeling exposed. Teachers are meant to question pedagogy and instructional practices during coaching, which may feel scary or unsettling. Furthermore, having other teachers in one's classroom may create the possibility for feelings of judgment or evaluation. Many teachers may have only had administrative leadership in their classrooms for evaluative purposes, which are entirely different from their intention. However, if any situations were negative, teachers may want to keep their doors shut to coaching because opening them up to coaching allows the possibility of undergoing another negative experience. If teachers do not allow for the experience to happen, nothing negative can come from it, which may be a self-preservation tactic.

Regardless, teachers felt less isolated in their teaching practice (Bloomberg, 2022) because they had someone to share what was happening in the classroom, receive an acknowledgment, attain other perspectives, and create new ideas. Additionally, when teachers face a difficult situation, coaching creates the space for conversations about these challenges, making teachers aware that they are not alone. "It was eye-opening," explained Keandra. "Because during those experiences, I realized I wasn't the only teacher who was facing different difficulties with our students." When teachers see other teachers teaching or have opportunities to collaborate, they can get ideas and may find themselves not feeling so isolated when faced with challenges. Moreover, when teachers were allowed to work with a coach, it was rewarding

because of the chance to have another set of eyes in the classroom. “I just really appreciate having almost like that extra brain in the room,” expressed Elizabeth. Having two minds thinking and working in collaboration to support learning and growth benefited teachers and students (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Pletcher et al., 2019).

Individualization of Coaching Creates Investment in Learning. Teachers choosing what they want to focus on based on their needs or students in their classroom is a powerful way to support teacher learning (Hu & Tuten, 2021; Kurz et al., 2017; Pletcher et al., 2019). Self-identification of ways teachers want to grow and improve their instruction can be supported by coaching. Daniel describes how he approaches his coach:

> I often will identify my own needs, or via a conversation, like in our data conversation as a team, that might be another place where I'll go, gosh, that's, that is something I'm definitely not feeling confident about doing, executing on my own, or I don't have the resource that I need for that, or I'm not quite sure what strategy or approach I would use for that, to address that problem.

Coaching that pushes an agenda not identified by teachers may not be as successful in its implementation. The investment teachers feel when self-selecting learning is a more powerful and positive experience, especially with veteran teachers, explained Daniel, “It also is a positive, because I'm the person that's identifying the things that I want to work on.”

Teachers have different experiences leading to varying avenues of expertise. These diverse experiences also mean teachers may have additional needs or questions for their practice. Each year teachers have new students who also have different assets. Questions arise on how to best teach students because of their diversity of skills and backgrounds. The individualization and flexibility of coaching allow teachers to think about the students in front of them and how to

give them the best educational experience possible. Having choice during professional development was appreciated, with Meghan explaining, “I think when you have the chance to like pick what it is for yourself in that moment of your teaching career that you want to focus on. You so much more bought into the learning experience.”

New teachers and veteran teachers are learners. However, what they want to learn about and their teaching skills are varied. Coaching provides options to individualize the learning experience tailoring it to precisely what the teacher wants and needs at that moment. In addition, coaching evolves. What a teacher wants to focus on one year and with one class of students can be remarkably different in the next year with a different group of learners. Working with other coaches also provides various opportunities because of each coach’s diverse skills.

The Reflective Process Continues Post-Coaching. Reflecting is one of the most critical aspects of coaching. The reflection done through coaching elicits deep thinking and processing of new revelations. This identification of ideas happens through questioning done with the coach during the coaching experience (Garmston et al., 1993; Kurz et al., 2017; Pletcher et al., 2019). Reflection with the coach also sets the stage for the teacher to continue being reflective when alone, giving the teacher ways of thinking and processing as an individual. Amelia shared her personal growth with reflection revealing:

> I would say that the reflection process for me this year, especially with her, has been really comfortable. And it's gotten to a place where I feel like even if I'm doing it independently, I’m maybe not so hard on myself, and you know, I'm able to think about things more effectively.

The reflective thinking a teacher embarks on when working with a coach transfers to ways they think about their pedagogy when alone. Teachers become more reflective individually.

Olivia described how she continues to think about her practice and has learned to be more reflective outside of coaching, describing:

> That reflection is such a powerful tool that even if you do it in a moment. Say wow, like, even if it's on your own, it teaches you, like, within a coaching processes and teaches you how to ask yourself those hard questions sometimes. And be honest with yourself. And even like, Okay, now that the coach is out of the room, you can still have that same reflective process happen, one on one in your internal monologue.

The teacher has a multitude of things they must attend to during the actual event of teaching students. Teachers might not have the opportunity to think or reflect on their practice when teaching. Elizabeth explained that she could not reflect on her lessons in the moment because so many other things were happening during teaching. She explained, "I just don't always have time or space in my brain as I'm teaching, as I'm in the middle of it." Reflection provides the time to think about the teaching event after it happened. Reflective thinking facilitated by a coach may provide ways of thinking reflectively as an individual. Elizabeth explained further, "…something that our coach has been really good at is like kind of guiding me in the what next steps so that way I can eventually like kind of have those thoughts and conversations in my own head like on my own." It allows a teacher to have the skills for a similar process alone. Being reflective is a habit of mind that may be developed when participating in reflection guided by a coach.

The reflection done with a coach around values and beliefs are transferred to their practice and becomes a way of thinking and working. Teachers hone skills in reflective thinking. Consequently, what is discussed and reflected on continues to be considered even after the

coaching event. The ideas generated or questions asked stay in teachers' minds and continue to be thought about.

Implications for Practice

Recommendations provide coaches, administration, and school districts with ways to create a culture of coaching. The following section describes the implications for practice based on the results of this study. Additionally, implementing suggestions based on the study's findings may foster greater interest and positive experiences for teachers when engaged in coaching opportunities.

Implications for Practice

The findings based on the experiences of K-12 teachers involved in coaching provide implications to support coaching practitioners in making coaching a more successful and positive experience. The implications may provide insight into how coaching can be fostered in schools as an expected professional development practice utilized by teachers. What coaching is and how to engage in coaching may be better suited to discovering the ways of thinking and being during coaching experiences. The implications for making better and more accessible coaching experiences revolve around opportunities for listening, reflecting, collaboration, vulnerability, and individualization.

Coaching is listening and reflecting. Coaches teaching educators skills in active listening and reflecting may create a state of being in the school. Coaches can create opportunities for teachers to reflect personally and with others. Moreover, coaches may teach educators how to be active listeners giving the speaker their full attention. Listening is a skill, and providing time and opportunity to practice evolves how people talk to each other. Being truly heard is valued and creates understanding while increasing the depth of a relationship. Coaches could continue

creating opportunities for teachers to practice active listening and then teach paraphrasing back what the speaker said. A powerful paraphrase increases reflection by letting the speaker know what was heard and understood, creating deeper thinking. Moreover, listening opens the door to other experiences and knowledge. Listening builds trust and promotes relationships deeply, leading to increased vulnerability. The findings show that teachers appreciated how reflection and being listened to created personal insight and may also benefit ways in creating a culture of coaching through providing opportunities to be reflective and teaching active listening.

Coaching is being collaborative and vulnerable. If coaches provide experiences to be vulnerable and create a culture of sharing, this becomes a normalized practice creating a culture of collaboration. Coaches can establish opportunities for teachers to be vulnerable in a safe space. For example, talking about success and even failure could be one way to create vulnerability among the staff. Coaching is personal reflection and thinking. Therefore, if coaches provide time to reflect and give space to talk about their successes, it may create a collaborative atmosphere that breaks down the silos and individualism in teaching. Furthermore, reflecting on successes and talking about these creates opportunities for collaboration because when teachers hear what has worked with students, they might feel compelled to learn more and further collaborate with that teacher or team. Additionally, providing space and making a normalized practice of sharing things that have failed or were challenging may create vulnerability between staff. When we share challenges, it opens up the space to reflect on problems of practice while also presenting opportunities for collaboration. The findings show that teachers needed to build trust and feel safe before they would be vulnerable and collaborate. Creating options to share with others and collaborate in multiple ways may help develop a coaching stance.

Coaches can create opportunities for continuous collaboration by talking about our teaching practice. The individualistic nature of teaching creates silos of practice. However, creating a culture of shared expertise may also help in establishing coaching in schools. Give teachers the space to personally reflect on teaching, pedagogical outcomes, and student outcomes. Have teachers reflect on how did students react or how did they feel when learning. Make our teaching practice visible by removing the barriers of individualism and competition between teachers.

Teaching is constantly changing. Embracing change and trying new and different pedagogy is actualized in coaching. Teachers learn the positives of adapting, learning, and growing together through collaboration by hearing and creating new ideas. A growth mindset is something we advocate for our students to be; creating collaborative opportunities could be a way to promote this in teachers. For example, professional learning communities (PLCs) are a way to collaborate with a team of people to improve student achievement and growth. However, if PLCs are the only time teachers collaborate, it limits the scope of collaboration to only that team. This study showed that collaboration between teachers and the coach was highly beneficial for improving pedagogy and student outcomes. In addition, providing different ways of working with various teachers could promote vulnerability and collaboration as a school-wide approach and state of mind.

Coaching is individualized. If coaches create ways for teachers to think about their practice and what they want to explore, it could lead to increased investment. Teachers may be more interested in participating in coaching because the ideas come from what they want to learn more about as opposed to what the administration or a coach thinks is best. Additionally, a personalized approach to coaching could provide a variety of coaching options for either one-to-

one or group coaching experiences. By creating opportunities for both, teachers could choose what is most comfortable for them and where they want to enter into coaching.

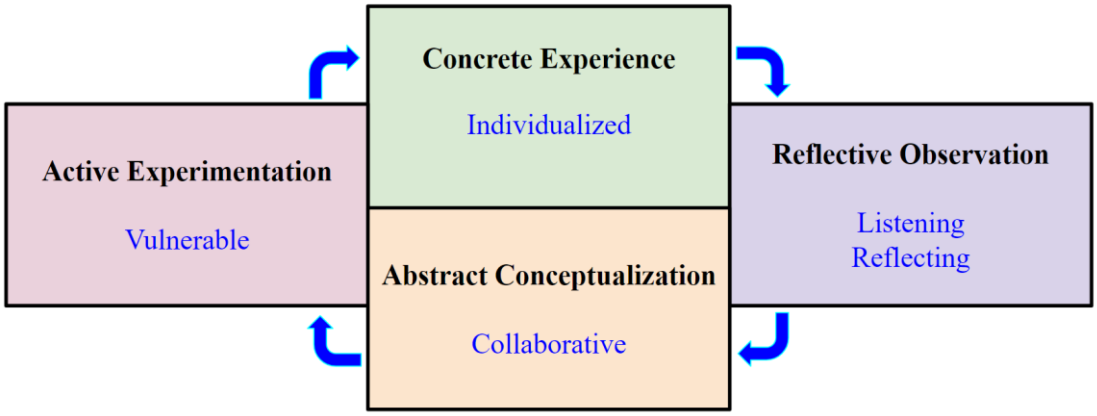
Additionally, continuous learning opportunities for coaches may also help develop coaches' practice and their ability to be better coaches. Coaches could be provided professional development opportunities to cultivate knowledge in coaching structures and ways of working with adults as well as skills in listening and questioning. Overall, cultivating a culture of coaching and how to best work with the administration in a school are other sources of training that would benefit coaches.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The implications of this study's data corroborate and extend the previous research on coaching. Experiential learning theory (ELT) relies on the concept that learning is a continuous process described in the four stages of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984, 2014). The implications discovered from the findings elucidate the importance of listening and reflecting, being collaborative and vulnerable, and coaching as individualized. These implications align with ELT and its four stages, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Alignment of Implications to Theoretical Applications in ELT



Individualized

Coaching opportunities engage in the participation of concrete experiences as foundational elements of coaching. In ELT, concrete experiences are a crucial step toward learning and growth. The individualized nature of concrete experiences and the individualization of coaching increased interest and investment in coaching. Education is an institution faced with many changes, and ELT supports change because it relies on the individual's perceptions and the importance of individual choice (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). Coaching as an individualized form of professional development has previously been identified as benefiting teachers (Hnasko, 2020; Kraft et al., 2018; Schachter et al., 2022). The findings from this study corroborate previous research and demonstrate how vital the individualized nature of coaching is for developing pedagogy and interest in participation. The personalization of coaching directly influences teacher engagement.

Listening and Reflecting

Reflection is deeply embedded in the practice of coaching, with active listening by the coach a critical element in the ability to ask thought-provoking questions. ELT and its focus on reflective observation help develop meaning-making from the concrete experience (Kolb, 1984, 2014). Findings also discovered the personal nature of reflection. Coaching builds on teacher strengths instead of providing consulting (Garmston et al.,1993) and encourages teacher thinking (Bloomberg, 2022; Robertson et al., 2020). Concurrently, listening created a welcoming and trusting atmosphere because valuing the teacher's ideas was found in this study and previous research (Kho et al., 2019; Lofthouse, 2019; Robertson et al., 2020). Reflection and listening are essential to coaching. More opportunities and teaching around reflection and listening could create the potential for increased understanding and participation in coaching. Furthermore, the

coaching experience was discovered to be extremely meaningful when the teacher was asked questions guiding the exploration of personal reflection and meaning.

Collaborative

The collaborative nature of coaching materialized itself in ELT within the abstract conceptualization phase. When the coach and teacher collaborate based on the reflection, new ideas and ways of thinking are discovered. ELT identifies the importance of learning and applying it to authentic situations (Kolb, 1984, 2014). The cohesiveness developed from teacher-coach collaboration increased awareness during abstract conceptualization. The findings recognized that collaboration was helpful for teachers to grow in their instructional practices and support students in their achievement and growth. Results in this study identified teachers and coaches intentionally working side-by-side as an effective strategy that added to the positive and practical coaching experience (Hu & Tuten, 2021). The implications of developing a more collaborative nature in schools may positively benefit coaching experiences.

Vulnerable

In the creation and planning of new experiences, teachers are highly vulnerable. The active experimentation phase in ELT is where teachers can try out new pedagogy or plan for new ways of student learning. In this study, teachers found that when they felt safe and in a trusting relationship, they could be vulnerable when planning for and experimenting with new instructional practices. The implications of being vulnerable and how a coach can provide time and opportunity to develop vulnerability with teachers in a school are potential ways that coaching will increasingly be utilized as professional development and success for participating teachers.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of this study involved the selection of participants. All participants were K-12 teachers who taught in the Applewood school district. They were selected to participate because of their experiences working with a coach at their school. However, not all coaches provided candidates for participation choosing to disregard the request for teacher participants. Additionally, some referred teachers who were contacted for participation in this study ignored requests for involvement resulting in the possibility of missed perspectives about coaching.

Delimitations chosen included the purposeful decision to pursue this study as a hermeneutic phenomenology because of my experiences working in the Applewood school district as a coach. I specifically only chose K-12 teachers in the Applewood school district. Choosing to only focus on the experiences of coached teachers helped fill the gap in the literature. Furthermore, I focused this study only on including teachers and excluded coaches or administration, even if they experienced coaching themselves.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings demonstrate the need for continued research relating to coaching. This study could be used for future studies but with teachers in different school districts. The delimitation of only allowing participants from the Applewood school district allowed only these teachers' voices to be heard. Using this framework as a study in other districts could allow for more insight into teachers' experiences when participating in coaching. Future studies could examine teachers' reasons for not engaging in coaching. Many teachers in the Applewood school district have not participated in coaching experiences. Discovering what barriers exist and why they do not work with a coach could lead to increased insight into making coaching more accessible for all teachers.

Additionally, studies could include how coaching could help retain new teachers and teachers of color. Many demands are associated with teaching, which is only known to teachers once they begin in the profession. Feelings of isolation and a lack of support may exist. Future studies could help discover how coaching may be a way to help support new teachers and teachers of color so more teachers remain in education. Finally, certification programs for coaching are options that teachers who want to be coaches or current coaches with positions in schools can enroll in. Future studies could also include the differences in coaching experiences between coaches with and without certification.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in instructional coaching in the Applewood school district. This study used a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology with Kolb's experiential learning theory as the framework for discovering relevant findings. The participation of thirteen teachers resulted in eight themes and fifteen sub-themes being described through data analysis. The implications identified that being coached is a learned skill and how coaching removes the silos of teaching. Additional implications included how the individualization of coaching creates investment in learning and the reflective process continues post-coaching. Findings from this study discovered the importance of highlighting the individualization coaching presents and the development of listening, reflecting, collaborating, and vulnerability. This study contributes to coaching research by presenting data through lived experiences of teachers who have participated in coaching. Consequently, one of the most critical findings considers how much vulnerability is relied upon in coaching. Being open and willing to work closely with another peer on pedagogy and instructional practices takes time. The safety and trust needed to feel open

when working closely with the coach are crucial to the success of the coaching experience. Furthermore, the willingness to engage in personal reflection influenced how to get the most out of a coaching experience and was a learned skill that can be cultivated.

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Appendix A

Liberty University IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 11, 2023

Kelli Crowe
Heather Strafaccia

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1107 INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING TEACHER EXPERIENCES

Dear Kelli Crowe, Heather Strafaccia,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be licensed K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the Applewood school district. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take part in a one-on-one, audio-recorded, in-person interview and, if selected, take part in an audio-recorded focus group. Participants will be asked to provide any physical artifacts that could help describe or illustrate the experience of working with the coach during the interview. It should take approximately one hour to complete each of the procedures listed. Within a week after the interview has taken place, participants will be given a copy of the interview transcript for review to check for accuracy. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential (participant identities will not be disclosed).

To participate, please click here to complete a demographic survey.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign and return the consent form to me prior to the time of your interview.

Sincerely,

Kelli Crowe
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Teacher Consent

Title of the Project: Instructional Coaching in Schools: A Qualitative Study Exploring Teacher Experiences
Principal Investigator: Kelli Crowe, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a licensed K-12 teacher who has participated in coaching in the [redacted] school district. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of K-12 teachers who have participated in coaching in the [redacted] school district.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Individual Interview. Participate in an in-person, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. This interview will be transcribed.
2. Focus Group Interview. Five to eight individual interview participants will be asked to participate in a 1-hour focus group discussion. Focus group participants will be selected following the interview. The focus group discussion will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
3. Physical Artifacts. Participants will be asked to identify any physical artifacts that they feel contributed to the experience when working with a coach. Information about the physical artifact will be transcribed. A picture or digital copy of the physical artifact will be collected.
4. Member Checking. Within a week after the interview has taken place, participants will be given a copy of the interview transcript for review to check for accuracy.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, if the findings of this study prompt change in the [redacted] school district, participants may experience a positive change in coaching experiences.

Benefits to society include an increased understanding of the experiences of coached teachers in the [redacted] school district. The study can assist other coaches or coaching programs in their understanding of the coaching experiences of teachers.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic data will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kelli Crowe. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at phone number [redacted] or via email at [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Heather Strafaccia, via email at [redacted]

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix D

Applewood School District Approval

[redacted]

[redacted]
Office of Assessment and Performance Analytics

April 11, 2023

Dear Kelli Crowe,

Your research project, INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IN SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING TEACHER EXPERIENCES, has been reviewed and approved by the [redacted] School District Research Review Committee for implementation based upon the following conditions:

1. The voluntary nature of the study is made clear to all potential participants including pupils, teachers, and administrators. *Final approval for the study is contingent on the staff, principals, students, and parents' agreement to participate.*
2. The researchers agree to maintain the anonymity of the research participants as outlined in your proposal.
3. All rules in the district's research procedures are followed including maintaining the anonymity of the district, the schools, and the study participants.
4. If your request involves the release of data you agree to limit the use of said data to the terms specified in your application. The data will not be released to any third party and you agree not to copy, reproduce, disseminate transmit, license, sublicense, assign, lease, or release the data to any other party. All data should be maintained in a secure fashion with access being restricted to the persons identified in the research application to prevent unauthorized use of the data. Following the use of the data for the prescribed reasons the data should be destroyed.
5. This letter does not reflect a commitment on behalf of [redacted] School District towards the requestor. At any point, the approval status involving the release of data or access to students/staff for research may be withdrawn. A violation of any of the conditions within this letter and/or deceptive practices by the researcher will lead to immediate termination of all research privileges. Furthermore, the release of future data and/or research privileges may be indefinitely terminated.
6. A report of the findings is made available to the Office of Assessment and Performance Analytics at the conclusion of the study.
7. This letter is returned by email to assessment@[redacted].org prior to initiating your study with the requestor acknowledging agreement with the terms described above by signature.

Please contact the Office of Assessment and Performance Analytics at [redacted] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Office of Assessment and Performance Analytics

Please return this letter with the following statement verified by signature:

I, Kelli Crowe, agree to abide by the conditions described in this document and will carry out my research practices in accordance with those conditions. I assume complete responsibility for the described study and will work according to best-practices when working with [redacted] School District data and/or conducting scientific inquiry within [redacted] School District.

[redacted]
Signature of Requestor