

THE IMPACT OF A MULTI-LAYERED APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ON EARLY READING ACQUISITION

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study investigated the impact of a multilayered approach to coaching that combined on-going coaching with a six hour staff development session. It examined the effects of coaching on the reading progress of students whose teachers received only staff development to teachers who received staff development and coaching. Reading progress was measured by 1st-3rd grade students' Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) scores and running records.

The qualitative component entailed an examination of teachers' running records as well as observations of guided reading lessons in both experimental and control groups to determine whether coaching teachers after staff development increased teachers' use of reading prompts as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching. Teacher surveys and interviews of the coach and campus principal were also conducted. A one-way analysis of covariance was used to determine the effects of coaching on students reading scores.

Results provided evidence to suggest that teachers better retain what is learned during training when they receive follow-up coaching cycles. This is based on the observed decline in the use of language in teacher running records associated with the training session when teachers did not receive follow up coaching support. In contrast, when teachers received follow up coaching cycles, language used in the workshop increased in three out of five teachers' running records.

Additionally, coaching significantly impacted student reading scores in reading when teachers experienced both professional development and coaching sessions with a focus on prompting as compared to teachers who experienced professional development with no follow up coaching sessions. The test was not significant for students identified as as at-risk.

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mom meet this challenge inspires you to dream big. You are Evan Phillips, the greatest and the best.

NOMENCLATURE

ARA	After Reading A
ARB	After Reading B
BAS	Benchmark Assessment System
BISD	Bayside Independent School District
DR	During Reading
JEPD	Job-Embedded Professional Development
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
PLC	Professional Learning Community
TIA	Text Introduction A
TIB	Text Introduction B
TS	Text Selection

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The quality of public education has been at the forefront of political debate for decades. The National Commission on Excellence in Education sparked heated controversy with its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. In this report, Secretary Terrel Bell stated,

We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (p. 5)

This highly publicized report served as a catalyst for a movement toward educational reform and a focus on increased academic standards (Guttek, 2013).

The quest for educational reform gained more momentum when the “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB) was signed into law in 2002. The law mandated increased accountability for student achievement with a focus on reading and math. States, school districts, and schools were directed to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. States were encouraged to establish comprehensive reading programs rooted in scientific research. In addition, states and local school

districts were charged with improving teacher quality and funding was provided to ensure that all teachers were appropriately certified (NCLB, 2002).

Looking back after implementation of NCLB, many educators questioned the effectiveness of the legislation. Critics contended that the bill resulted in an overemphasis on high stakes testing that led to a narrowing of instructional practices (Giroux & Schmidt, 2004; Fuller, 2006). Although reading acquisition was specifically targeted, evidence suggested that NCLB had no impact on student achievement in reading (Fuller, 2006; Dee & Jacob, 2010; Ravitch, 2009). NCLB was also found to fail in closing of the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students (Ravitch, 2009).

There are many who feel that well-qualified teachers are the key to closing the achievement gap (Haycock, 1998; Haycock & Crawford, 2008; Hirsh, 2005; Wayne, 2002; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006). It has been suggested that the achievement gap would disappear altogether if schools only ensured that the highest quality teachers were assigned to the most at-risk students (Haycock, 1998; Carey, 2004; Allington, 2011). However, many school districts struggle to find and retain effective, high quality teachers for every classroom (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Improving teacher knowledge and practice has been linked to improved student achievement (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000). High quality professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. According to the National Staff Development Council (2009), professional development should focus on student learning and align with school improvement goals. Perhaps more importantly,

professional development should foster strong, collaborative relationships between teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Research has also indicated that effective professional learning opportunities should allow teachers to participate as a professional community who come together to study curriculum and instructional initiatives that are successful in improving student learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Dufour, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Many schools have shown great interest in providing professional development and support for teachers through the utilization of teacher leaders in a coaching role (Knight, 2009; Rennie, 2011). Neuman and Cunningham (2009) define coaching as “a collaborative relationship between an expert and a practitioner, who may have been working in the field for many years, to develop specific knowledge and skills related to instructional practice” (p.538). Instructional coaches typically support teachers by modeling lessons for other teachers; assisting teachers in planning, observing peers and providing feedback; facilitating learning teams; and, building strong relationships (Knight, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

This field-based study sought to examine the impact of a multi-layered approach to coaching on early literacy acquisition. The multi-layered professional development approach was rooted in instructional coaching cycles and also included training for campus leaders and literacy coaches.

Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted in response to a systemic problem faced by a school district and sought to determine the impact of the district's multi-layered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition. Bayside Independent School District (a pseudonym) is a large suburban school district that had experienced recent shifts in demographics. The large number of students reading below grade level in first through third grade was a district concern. Reading programs that were deemed to be ineffective in grades 1-3 necessitated increased tutoring and reading interventions to support students in achieving grade level reading ability by the end of third grade.

The district convened a team to explore possible reasons for lack of reading progress in grades 1-3. The team included the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, the Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction, and the Language Arts Coordinator. The team examined reading assessment data as well as classroom observation data.

Bayside Independent School District (BISD) administered a reading assessment to students in grades 1-3 twice a year. The Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), was individually administered to each child and assessed word-solving strategies and reading comprehension. Results highlighted students' performance levels of concern to district leaders. Individual campus scores indicated that between 10%-40% of 1 – 3rd students were reading below grade level.

Furthermore, classroom observations were conducted. The team conducted approximately 370 observations. Observations revealed that many teachers in grades 1-

3 lacked a deep understanding of how to identify and support early reading behaviors as children develop their individual systems for processing print. Literacy coaches found that teachers were following the district curriculum and provided guided reading instruction to their students, but many teachers did not know how to respond appropriately to individual student needs. The fidelity to which the teachers were implementing guided reading instruction was called in question.

Based on the results of the reading assessments and classroom observations, the district developed a multi-layered approach to professional development to better enable classroom teachers to support the learning of their emerging readers and writers. Professional development centered on instructional coaching that targeted a variety of goals aimed at improving students' reading levels. While this study examined a specific campus, teachers, coaches, and administrators from campuses throughout the district had access to one or more components of the district's professional development opportunities. The professional development was designed to address the following goals:

Goal 1: Teachers will utilize running records and observations to determine each student's unique acquisition of strategic actions for processing and comprehending texts.

Before a teacher can determine specific goals for students, the teacher must first learn to notice and observe strategic actions that students do and do not control (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009). Early readers are constantly changing and growing. It is critical that teachers continually observe students and analyze their development. One widely

accepted means for doing this is through the use of running records. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), utilizing running records to assess reading progress has many important purposes, including informing teaching decisions, determining a child's strengths and weaknesses, documenting progress for parents, and summarizing learning over a given period.

Goal 2: Teachers will utilize effective prompts “during students’ reading” to help them develop systems of strategic actions for processing texts.

When children encounter words that they do not know, teachers can make conscious decisions regarding the prompts to use, and thereby promote strategic actions to employ when reading. Teachers often fall into the habit of asking children to “sound it out,” or sound out the word for them in an effort to keep the children moving through the text. When teachers engage students in strategy prompts they empower children themselves, without the aid of their teacher (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

Goal 3: Teachers will participate in reflective teaching practices that will build capacity for making future teaching decisions.

BISD wanted to build problem-solving capacity not just in early readers but also in teachers. The district provided teachers opportunities to engage in reflection regarding their practice through coaching sessions. Knight (2007) defines reflection as, “believing that learning can be enhanced when we have numerous opportunities to consider how what we’re learning might impact what we have done in the past, what we are doing now, and what we will be doing in the future” p.54. Teachers had the opportunity for one-on-one coaching cycles at least four times a year and were able to reflect on

feedback provided by the coach. In addition, campus literacy coaches worked with small groups of three to six teachers during the school day for professional development. Coaches and teachers observed lessons together and then reflected on student learning.

Professional Development Structure

Learning Forward, formerly the National Staff Development Council, has reported that effective professional development is on-going, intensive, connected to practice and creates strong working relationships among teachers (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Joyce and Showers (2002) proposed that effective professional development should begin with teachers' exploring new theories and/or rationale aimed to improve specific teaching practices. Teachers explore new ideas through shared readings and discussions. Next, teachers should have the opportunity to see the new skill demonstrated or modeled and then practice the skill under simulated conditions. Finally, teachers should have the occasion to engage in peer coaching sessions and receive feedback the implementation of the new skill previously studied.

The professional development model developed by BISD incorporated the research presented by NSCD and Joyce and Showers. The professional development took place over the course of a fall semester. Teachers were first introduced to the research by Fountas and Pinnell (2009) on the use of assessment to inform teaching and using effective prompts to support students' acquisition of strategic reading systems through a six-hour professional development opportunity. The goals of the six-hour session were:

1. Teachers will identify observable behaviors that indicate reading competency.

2. Teachers will utilize precise language for teaching in order to support readers to use early behaviors and systems of strategic actions for processing texts.
3. Teachers will make instructional decisions based on behaviors inferred or observed during guided reading.

This professional development day included teachers studying and discussing theory presented by Fountas and Pinnell regarding the systems of strategic action readers develop. They also observed videos of teachers working with students during Guided Reading and were asked to transcribe and analyze prompts utilized by these master teachers. Teachers received verbal feedback from the workshop presenter regarding their analysis of the prompts.

An essential element of the BISD plan was scheduled follow-up coaching sessions that occurred throughout the semester. These cycles took place during September, October, and November for teachers in the first, second, and third grades. Each coaching cycle began with a 45-minute planning session between the coach and teacher. The teacher shared all accumulated running records for each student involved in a guided reading group. Together, coach and teacher determined strengths and needs for each child based on running records. They then discussed prompts specific to reading strengths and weaknesses. The next day, the coach observed the teacher during the Guided Reading lesson and transcribed the prompts used by the teacher. The following day, the coach and teacher met to debrief and data were shared with the teacher.

Another critical component of this professional development initiative was the inclusion of campus administrators. District principals and assistant principals met

monthly in small “cadres” of six administrators to study reading and writing teaching practices. During the November cadre session, administrators were given a one-hour overview of the use of prompting during guided reading. Following the overview, they observed master teachers employing effective prompts. Administrators then transcribed prompts and debriefed observations with the language arts coordinator. Administrators also received a protocol to assist them with future observations of guided reading in their own buildings.

In addition to training principals and assistant principals, BISD literacy coaches attended a series of five half-day professional development sessions aimed at improving their ability to support teachers in employing effective prompts. Coaches conducted a case study of a struggling first grade reader during the fall semester and collected BAS and running record data on the selected student. Through the training, coaches practiced the same prompting techniques expected of teachers.

Research Questions

This study explored the impact of a multilayered approach to coaching on grades 1-3 reading acquisition in BISD as measured by students’ BAS scores and running records. Research questions included:

1. Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers’ use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?
3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

Significance of the Study

Most problems facing school districts are complex with no quick-fix solutions. This is certainly the case with BISD. The district is struggling to find better ways to support at-risk readers in the primary grade levels. No one single action would adequately address the problem, so the solution proposed in the present study was multifaceted.

This study is important in that it examined the effects of a multi-layered approach to coaching that combined coaching teachers and equipping campus leaders and instructional coaches with new skills to support early reading acquisition. This study is relevant to the many school districts that experience challenges to equipping every classroom with a highly capable teacher (Carey, 2004; Wayne, 2002).

Study results can affect future professional development initiatives in the district by providing recommendations to district and campus leaders regarding the roles that literacy coaches should assume on a campus in order to achieve the greatest impact on students' reading achievement. This specific, multi-layered approach to professional

development could be replicated to target other instructional deficits in BISD and other school districts.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used.

1. Achievement Gap: Achievement gap refers to the discrepancy in scholastic success on state and national assessments between various student demographic groups (Anderson, Medich, & Fowler, 2007).
2. Coaching Cycle: Coaching cycles refer to a series of interactions between a teacher and an instructional coach whereby the pair work together to plan a lesson, teach the lesson, and then reflect on the impact of instruction on student achievement (Knight, 2009).
3. Guided Reading: Guided reading is an approach to reading in which teachers support students' development of effective strategies for processing text with increasingly challenging levels of difficulty (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
4. Instructional Coach: Instructional coaches are specially trained teachers who work with their peers in order to support them in the implementation of research-based practices. They also support teachers in identifying and reaching personal goals (Knight, 2009).
5. Prompting: Prompting is teacher's use of brief, strategic responses to a student who encounters difficulty when reading (Clay, 1991).

6. Running record: Running records are reading assessments in which teachers code student reading behaviors and collect data regarding reading accuracy, fluency, and use of specific reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

7. Strategic Actions: Strategic actions are systems that readers develop for processing texts. Strategic actions include the ability to solve words, monitor and correct errors, search for and use information, summarize, maintain fluency, adjust rate, predict, make connections, synthesize, infer, analyze, and critique (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the usage of teacher prompts in response to student needs. BISD adopted a guided reading approach for reading instruction in all general education elementary classrooms. Teachers were supported in the implementation of guided reading through a literacy-coaching program. This literature review will first present the components of guided reading, as presented by Fountas and Pinnell (1996).

In addition, this review investigates methods to build capacity in teachers and staff to effect change in instructional practice through *job-embedded professional development* (JEPD). Furthermore, professional development utilizing an instructional coaching program and professional learning communities are discussed. Lastly, adult learning theory is examined to ascertain how instructional coaching aligns with the current research regarding how best adults learn.

Guided Reading

Schools have an obligation to ensure that students achieve literacy capabilities, which means they can accurately read and comprehend text. While there are debates regarding the most effective approach to reading instruction, there is compelling evidence that children who fall behind in reading in the first grade are 88% more likely to be reading below grade level in 4th grade (Juel, 1988). Unless early intervention

occurs, it is unlikely that at-risk readers will catch up to their peers (Allington, 2002; Stanovich, 1986; Torgesen, 1998; Elwer, Keenan, Olson, Byrne, & Samuelsson, 2013).

Many school districts have adopted the research-based guided reading approach in an effort to provide effective first time instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Ford & Optiz, 2008; Iaquinta, 2006). Properly implemented, it has been shown to be effective in supporting early readers in developing and maintaining grade level reading achievement (Antonacci, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Iaquinta, 2006; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

Guided reading is deeply rooted in the constructivist teachings of Vygotsky (1986). Vygotsky introduced the concept of the “zone of proximal development” to explain that a learner can solve more complex problems with the guidance of a mentor than they can alone (p. 187). Guided reading supports Vygotsky’s theory and provides “an instructional context for supporting each reader’s development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 25).

Guided reading also provides explicit instruction targeted at the individual needs of students. Explicit instruction is defined as, “imparting new information to students through meaningful teacher-student interactions and teacher guidance of student learning” (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009, p. 126). Explicit instruction includes clear explanations, modeling, guided practice, independent practice, and feedback (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009; Reutzel, Child, Jones, & Clark, 2014). This type of instruction has been shown to be effective in supporting reading acquisition of students, in

particular, struggling readers (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009; Reutzel, Child, Jones, & Clark, 2014; Nelson-Walker et al. 2013).

Components of Guided Reading

One cornerstone of effective reading instruction is the use of ongoing assessment to guide teachers' instructional decisions. Effective reading teachers must continually assess progress and respond to student needs (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007). In guided reading instruction, teachers utilize weekly running records to assess the effects of recent instruction and to determine the strengths and needs of their students (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2012). When taking a running record, a teacher asks a student to read a short book orally and then records each error made as well as each time a student self-corrects an error (Clay, 1993). Teachers code student reading errors and behaviors and collect data regarding reading accuracy, fluency, and specific reading strategies. This information is then utilized to make informed decisions regarding support needed for the next guided reading lesson (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Running records differ from standardized reading assessments. Most standardized reading assessments focus on how accurately a student can read a passage and answer comprehension questions. Running records, however, provide opportunities for teachers to analyze and focus on errors. These errors serve as opportunities to capture a child's processing attempts and better target instruction to meet the individual needs of the student (Clay, 1991).

One example of weaknesses that can be uncovered with analysis of running record errors are oral language skills. Teachers must determine whether a child's oral

language skills are sufficient to process the given text. Alternatively, it is also possible that a child's oral language is so fluent that it inhibits the coordination of other important processing skills such as visual perception or motor movement (Clay, 1993).

An analysis of fluency can also yield important information. Phrasing and rate of reading are linked to reading comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Students who read accurately with appropriate phrasing comprehend better and enjoy reading more than students who read slowly and treat each letter or word as an individual unit (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Error analysis also provide important data regarding the type of information a child is using during the reading process. Three sources of information readers rely on are meaning of the text, syntactical structure of sentences, and visual information provided by the letters of words (Clay, 1993). Effective readers orchestrate all three types of information in order to accurately read and comprehend text. Understanding what information the child uses gives teachers valuable information in planning for future reading instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

An analysis of errors also gives teachers insight into student use of cross-checking strategies. Cross checking refers to the child's ability to check one kind of information with another (Clay, 1993). Clay (1993) describes cross checking as a "tentative behavior" that is evidenced when a child appears unsure. The child may look back into the text to confirm their attempt at reading, or may verbalize that something is missing. An example of crosschecking is when a child attempts to use visual information to decode a word, but realizes that the attempted word does not make sense.

In this case the child attempted to use one source of information, visual, and crossed checked with meaning (Clay, 1993).

Another important component of guided reading is that it targets small groups of students with similar instructional needs. Teachers select leveled reading texts that include language and concepts familiar to a particular reading group in order to support them during the reading process. Texts selected must also include new challenges that necessitate problem solving (Fountas & Pinnell, 1992). Challenges to consider are increased number of pages in books, increased complexity of sentence structure, reduced support through pictures, expanded variety of words, and exposure to new types of text structures such as dialogue and new forms of punctuation. In addition, teachers must expose children to more complex characters and plot structures as reading skills increase (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Each guided reading lesson is broken down into three distinct components: before reading, during reading, and after reading. Before reading, the teacher typically begins each lesson by introducing new text through a conversation with the group. During the course of conversation, the teacher provides support such as introducing challenging vocabulary, drawing on students' prior experiences, exploring unfamiliar text layout, explaining important concepts, and introducing unfamiliar language patterns. Students are typically asked to consider a question to think about while reading the story. Most importantly, the book introduction draws the students into the story (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

During reading, students read independently and the teacher closely monitors the reading, observing students' use of word solving and comprehension strategies. Teacher observations of student strategy use are recorded in writing to be analyzed after the lesson (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Throughout reading, teachers may also *prompt* students to use specific strategies that could help them through areas of difficulty. Prompting refers to the teacher's use of brief, strategic responses to a student who encounters difficulty when reading. Effective prompts utilized by teachers facilitate student use of effective reading behaviors (Clay, 1991). Teachers prompt strategies for maintaining fluency, strategies for decoding and correcting errors, and strategies for problem solving to understand unfamiliar words.

After reading, another conversation occurs. Students discuss events that occurred in the text and share their impressions and reactions. This conversation expands students' comprehension of the text read. The teacher then provides feedback to the group regarding evidence of strategy use observed during the reading process; this feedback reinforces the future use of strategies. (Clay, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

During many guided reading lessons, there is also explicit instruction regarding letters and words. While there are many views regarding the appropriate approach to phonics instruction, guided reading is based on Clay's theory of continuous text. According to Clay (1991), letters and words within a complete text offer more support to students than isolated focus on letters and sounds. Specific phonics principles are taught during the reading of continuous text and are reinforced during other components of the

language arts block, including interactive writing, read alouds, shared reading, and literacy stations (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Building Capacity for Change

BISD struggled to find a solution to the lack of adequate reading progress with students in grades K-3. Unfortunately, most of the significant problems that schools and districts face are not accompanied by an action plan or road map for leaders to follow. The idea of a list of steps for solving dilemmas or problems is appealing, but not realistic (Flett & Wallace, 2005). Many school district problems require wide-scale reform for resolution, and the process of reform is full of conflict and complexity. According to Fullan (2009), “There is no step-by-step shortcut to transformation; it involves the hard, day-to-day work of reculturing” (p. 18). Moreover, even when researchers provide promising practices that could lead to solutions, schools are slow to respond. This gap between research and practice is concerning (Spencer, Detrich, & Slocum, 2012).

So where should a district begin? Fullan (2006) believes that “any strategy of change must *simultaneously* focus on changing individuals and the culture or system within which they work,” p. 7. He suggested core premises that educational leaders should embrace in order to propel reform and move toward solving the significant problems faced by schools. One premise is that capacity building with a focus on results is a key to change. Another premise is strategies for reform must provide opportunities for learning within the context of the situation (Fullan, 2006). However, nine out of ten teachers in the United States participate in activities intending to increase capacity that primarily consist of short-term workshops or conferences. Most teachers lack

opportunities to learn within the context of their daily work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Professional Development

Researchers generally concur that the most important factor in student achievement is a highly effective teacher (Allington, 2002; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006; Haycock & Crawford, 2008). Researched-based student improvement programs fall short if they are not implemented by well-trained teachers who are responsive to the individual needs of their students (Allington, 2002). It has been suggested that the achievement gap would disappear altogether if schools only ensured that the highest quality teachers were assigned to the most at-risk students (Haycock, 1998; Carey, 2004). However, most school districts cannot meet the challenge of finding effective, high quality teachers for every classroom, particularly in low income schools (Carey, 2004; Ingersoll & Thomas, 2003).

In spite of this lack of effective teachers, many campus leaders are realizing that less successful teachers can become more effective with high quality professional development (Hirsh, 2005). There is a large pay-off in providing professional development that can equip teachers with the content knowledge as well as the instructional strategies necessary to ensure success for all children. A recent study indicated that when teachers received 50 hours or more a year of high quality support, test scores increased by 21% (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). These results were corroborated by Long's (2012) research demonstrating that student

achievement was enhanced when teachers received between 49 and 100 hours of focused professional development.

Teachers in the United States, however, lack opportunities to participate in effective professional development (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Wei et al., 2010). U. S. teachers are less likely to engage in practice-focused, extended learning opportunities that can lead to increased student achievement (Wei et al., 2010). Other countries, including Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Singapore, and South Korea, have made teacher development a priority and are experiencing significant positive results. Teachers in these competing nations are assuming responsibility for improving education, are staying in the profession longer, and showing more satisfaction with their work (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Unfortunately, too often U.S. teachers teach in isolation and professional learning opportunities are delivered in “one shot” doses of disconnected workshops (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hirsh, 2009).

The consensus is that high quality professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). According to the National Staff Development Council (2009), professional development should focus on student learning and align with school improvement goals. Perhaps more importantly, it should foster strong, collaborative relationships between teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Research supports that effective professional learning opportunities should enable teachers to participate as a community of professionals who come together to study curriculum and instructional

initiatives that are successful in improving student learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Dufour, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Job-Embedded Professional Development

One method of providing high quality professional development described by the National Staff Development Council is *job-embedded professional development* (JEPD). JEPD is an approach to teacher learning that is school-based and integrated into the workday (Croft, Cogshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, B. 2002, Han, 2012). Components of JEPD that have been the undergirding are that it is a continuous process of assessing and finding potential solutions to problems they encounter (Hill & Rapp, 2012) . Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) claimed that JEPD possesses the following characteristics:

1. Engage teachers in the concrete tasks of teaching, assessing, observing and reflecting;
2. Grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation;
3. Collaborative among teachers with a focus on the community of practice and not on the individual teacher;
4. Connected to and derived from the teachers' work with students;
5. Sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of problems of practice;
6. Connected to other aspects of school change. (p. 598)

JEPD is showing promising results. Desimone, Parker, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) conducted a three-year longitudinal study that revealed teaching practices

improved when teachers were given the opportunity to participate in professional learning opportunities that involved regular and active collaboration with colleagues discussing student learning. Professional learning had the greatest impact on teaching when teachers participated in active learning opportunities.

Table 2.1 from Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, and Killion (2010) lists format options supporting JEPD.

Table 2.1

Formats that Support JEPD. Adapted from Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion (2010)

Format	Description
Action Research	Teachers select an area of their teaching and design an investigation in order to learn how to improve their own practice.
Case Discussions	Teachers utilize written or video case studies to analyze student thinking.
Coaching	A coach provides consist support to a teacher through demonstration teaching, observations of teachers, and reflective conversations.
Critical Friends Groups	Teachers meet together to analyze artifacts such as student work, lesson plans, or assessments.
Data Teams/Assessment Development	Teachers meet together to develop assessments and analyze results.
Examining Student Work	Teachers meet as a team to examine student work samples in order to identify student misconceptions and evaluate teaching practices.
Implementing Individual Professional Learning Plans	Teachers work with a mentor, campus leader, or professional learning community to identify professional growth plans and track their growth.

(continues)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Format	Description
Portfolios	Teachers assemble artifacts such as lesson plans, student work, and assessments that are used to document a teacher’s development and provide evidence for reflection.
Lesson Study	Teachers work as a team to develop a lesson to demonstrate specific instructional goals. Other teachers observe the lesson and document what happened. Later, the team reconvenes to discuss the strength of the lesson and to offer suggestions for improvement.
Study Groups	Teachers work in small groups or as a faculty to read and study topics related to specific school improvement goals.

Building Leadership Capacity

Job-embedded professional learning opportunities are designed to empower educators to work effectively toward solving real problems. These practices provide opportunities for schools to identify problems, research possible solutions, test solutions, and evaluate the results. Furthermore, these practices promote problem solving by focusing on building leadership capacity within the staff and embedding research opportunities for school teams in the context of the classroom (Croft, Cogshall, Dolan, Powers, and Killion, 2010).

Practices of JEPD rely upon the development of leadership capacity that should occur within the setting that teachers work. According to Elmore (2004), successful school reform begins inside our schools with teacher leaders at the helm. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) contended that “teacher leaders [:] lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders;

influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership.” (p. 6). Teacher leaders can contribute much more than educational expertise. They offer sensitivity to their community and families, dedication to their schools, knowledge of children, and team spirit (IEL, 2001).

Reeves’ (2008) study of 81 schools in Clark County, Nevada, found that teachers not only strongly impacted student achievement, but they also influenced the performance of other teachers. Teachers reported that they were more likely to be influenced by the instructional practices of their peers and by the action research of their peers than they were influenced by professional articles or published research. When asked to rank factors influencing their practice, teachers felt that their own personal experience and the opinions and feedback from their peers mattered much more than curriculum guides and information from their leaders (Reeves, 2008). Reeves held that these findings are important in that they discredit the idea that change happens in a top down fashion. Teachers connect with and trust their peers.

There are many roles that teacher leaders can play on a campus, and many contributions that they make. Informally, teacher leaders may serve as models of professionalism to other teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and are lifelong learners who share new ideas and techniques with their peers. They advocate for change when change needs to happen, and can serve as “moral stewards” who act on behalf of children. Teacher leaders also facilitate teacher empowerment by building relationships with administrators and other teachers in order to share in decision-making and smooth the progress of building a democratic community (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Professional Learning Communities

According to Schmoker (2009), “the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community” (p. 424). A professional learning community (PLC) is a community of learners that work together to research and improve the learning of the students in their school (Fullan, 2006). The assumption at the core of a PLC is not to ensure that teachers teach well, but to ensure that students learn. This shift of focus from teaching to learning is at the heart of a PLC (DuFour, 2004).

DuFour (1998) has been instrumental in defining the practice of PLCs. In his work, *Professional Learning Communities at Work* (1998), he presented several characteristics common to PLCs. PLC members share a mission, vision, and values. They have a collective commitment to their purpose. The focus is not on how to do their jobs better; rather they work to define their purpose and why they exist in the first place. Another characteristic is that PLCs participate in a cycle of collective inquiry. Described as a “team learning wheel” where the group continually examines and modifies their beliefs as a result of the inquiry process. PLCs are collaborative teams that are committed to building the school’s capacity to learn. Action orientation and experimentation also characterize PLCs. They realize that learning takes place in the context of action and they are willing to experiment to develop and test new theories. They also have a commitment to continuous improvement. According to DuFour (1998), “becoming a learning community is less like getting in shape than staying in shape—it is not a fad diet, but a never-ending commitment to an essential, vital way of life” (p. 28).

Finally, PLCs are results oriented. They assess their progress on the results they achieve, not just their intentions.

A PLC extends beyond the traditional grade level or department team. Elmore developed a specialized PLC that supports district superintendents and other district leaders in developing a shared understanding of high-quality instruction (2007). This PLC is a network of leaders that engage in an inquiry-based process referred to as *instructional rounds*. It is based on the medical model of rounds whereby practitioners work to diagnose issues together and work through possible solutions.

Instructional rounds are grounded in principles of *the instructional core*—i.e., the relationship between the practices of the teacher, the engagement of the student, and the content or task that students are asked to do. Members of a rounds network are trained to focus their observations on the instructional core and collect data that are free of judgment (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). Each instructional rounds session begins with the identification of a problem of practice. The school presents an issue connected to a broader strategy of improvement within the school system. The network divides into small groups of three or four and observes several classrooms for approximately 20 minutes each. Data, specific and descriptive that are related to the problem of practice are gathered. The group reconvenes and discusses what was observed utilizing a brainstorming and mapping process to group and analyze data. As patterns emerge, the network makes predictions regarding what students are learning. Finally, the network brainstorms suggestions for future school level and district level work (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). These instructional rounds are not about

“fixing” teachers or improving individual classrooms. The instructional rounds process is concerned with understanding the dynamics of what is happening in the school and in the district and strives to identify and solve problems through the power of collective inquiry (City, 2011).

Coaching

An important component of JEPD is coaching in which onsite experts or peers assist in teacher development within an on-going and systematic structure (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010). Many schools have shown great interest in providing professional development and support for teachers through the utilization of teacher leaders in a coaching role (Knight, 2009; Rennie, 2011, Joyce & Showers, 2002; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009). Neuman and Cunningham (2009) define coaching as “a collaborative relationship between an expert and a practitioner, who may have been working in the field for many years, to develop specific knowledge and skills related to instructional practice” (p.538). Instructional coaches typically support teachers by modeling lessons for other teachers, assisting teachers in planning, observing peers and providing feedback, facilitating learning teams, and building relationships (Knight, 2009; Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers & Killion, 2010).

JEPD coaching models exist in various forms, but most have a few common elements. One commonality is that coaching focuses on specific educational practices. The goal of coaching is to improve the way teachers deliver instruction and, in turn, improve student learning (Knight, 2009; Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers & Killion, 2010). Another common factor among coaching models is that coaching is job-

embedded. Coaches collaborate and work with teachers in their classrooms as they teach. Coaching is not a “one-shot” training session; rather coaches specifically design their interactions with individual teachers to meet their unique needs. Teachers benefit when they have opportunities to practice their skills while receiving feedback from a supportive coach (Steckel, 2009). Common forms of coaching include Cognitive Coaching, Instructional Coaching, and Literacy Coaching.

Cognitive Coaching model. Cognitive Coaching is a distinct approach that provides a model for facilitating conversations about planning, reflecting, or problem solving employing the use of mediative questions, (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Costa and Garmston define mediative questions as, “intentionally designed to engage and transform the other person’s thinking and perspective” (p. 86). Cognitive coaches possess skills and values that are intentionally put into practice to support others (Costa & Garmston, 2002). They fundamentally believe that people have the ability to construct their own meaning through reflection and through meaningful interactions with others (Knight, 2009; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham & Schock, 2009). Cognitive coaches adopt positive presuppositions about people and believe that everyone has the capacity to continue to learn throughout their lives. A fundamental feature of cognitive coaching is that behavior is determined by perceptions. Thus, for a behavior to change, a person must first alter their perceptions (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Knight, 2009). In cognitive coaching, a mediator trained in cognitive coaching methods engages in a supportive conversation with another person to enhance that person’s self-reflection and self-modification (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Instructional Coaching model. Instructional coaches are typically specially trained teachers who work with their peers in order to support them in the implementation of research-based practices (Knight, 2009; Driscoll, 2008). They are charged with supporting teachers in identifying personal goals, and then support them in reaching those goals. One key element of the instructional coaching model is that the coach must build an emotional partnership with the teachers they serve (Knight, 2009). The teacher and coach enter into a partnership whereby the coach's desire is to develop trust and respect with teachers (Gill, Kostiw, & Stone, 2010). This partnership is based on equality. Teacher's thoughts and views are equally as important as the coach's and both parties are given the opportunity for open dialogue (Knight, 2009).

Literacy coach model. Literacy coaches are similar to instructional coaches, but focus primarily on supporting teachers in improving instructional practices in reading and writing. The International Reading Association (IRA) identified major responsibilities of a literacy coach. Literacy coaches provide intensive interventions for struggling students. They also work with classroom teachers in an effort to build reflective capacity to improve students' learning. In this role of supporting teachers, literacy coaches adopt the stance of a co-learner who scaffolds teacher learning (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007; Peterson, Taylor, Burnham & Schock, 2009). Finally, literacy coaches serve as leaders in developing, leading, or evaluating the school or district literacy program (IRA, 2010; Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010).

Promising results. There are promising results indicating that professional development coupled with instructional coaching led to improved implementation of

teaching practices. Batt (2010) found that the addition of a cognitive coaching phase to Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) staff development added substantial value to teacher implementation of the training. SIOP training prepared teachers to utilize defined strategies to support English language learners. Coaching also positively impacted the teacher use of language to support mathematical development in young children (Rudd, Lambert, Satterwhite, & Smith, 2009). In the latter study, when training was accompanied by structured coaching sessions, teacher usage of this math-mediated language practice increased by 36%. Neuman and Wright (2009) found similar results. Teachers who received both coursework and coaching made statistically significant improvement in their knowledge of quality of literacy practices, whereas professional development alone had a negligible effect on improving the quality of teacher practices.

Coaching has also been shown to improve student outcomes. The use of literacy coaching positively impacted the literacy achievement of kindergarten through second grade students (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010). Also, students' understandings of comprehension skills improved when teachers participated in coaching sessions (Rennie, 2010). Research by Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) similarly found that students achieved higher reading gains when taught by teachers who received coaching support.

Adult Learning Theory Model

Adult learning theory, known as andragogy, is attributed to Malcolm Knowles (1980). Knowles studied the differences between how children and adults learn and presented a comparison of pedagogy (teaching children) and andragogy (teaching adults). According to Knowles, in pedagogy, the role of the learner is one of dependence

and the teacher is in control of which and how concepts are to be learned. The experiences the learner brings to the situation are of little importance to the teacher and information is best transmitted from teacher to student. Furthermore, in pedagogy, it is assumed that most learners are ready to learn concepts at roughly the same time. Therefore, instructional objectives are organized into a standard curriculum with all learners progressing through a step-by-step progression. Finally, in traditional pedagogy, learners view education as an acquisition of subjects that will be useful later in life and curriculum is organized into subject-matter units organized from simple to more complex concepts.

By contrast, andragogy views learners as having an innate need to be self-directing, although they may need more support in temporary situations (Knowles, 1980; Merriam 2001). As people grow and mature, they begin to value and use their own experiences more and want to use them as a resource for their own learning as well as the learning of others (Chall, 1996; Richardson & Prickett, 1994). In addition, the theory of andragogy indicates that people will learn when they have a need to learn. Therefore, learning opportunities should be developed to support knowledge with real life application that is timely and relevant to the learner. Learners view education as “a process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life” (p. 44). Learning experiences should be developed to support the development of competencies.

The views of androgogy are also echoed by Smith and Pourchot (1998). They present four specific circumstances to promote adult learning (p. 30):

1. Duration: The time period should be long enough to let the learners construct an intuitive understanding.
2. An appealing situation: The learners should have a reason for investing the effort to create the developing learning.
3. Autonomy: Learners should have the autonomy to define and choose their own problems, goals, and strategies and change their activity throughout the process.
4. Challenge and support: The learning situation must challenge the learners yet give them sufficient opportunities to meet the challenge.

Recently, there has been criticism of the assumption that andragogy is characteristic of adult learners only (Merriam, 2001). While Knowles (1980) compared and contrasted pedagogy and andragogy, he did not view the two concepts as opposing approaches to learning. Rather, he proposed that pedagogy and andragogy should be viewed as two ends of a spectrum. There are many instances in which children bring experiences to a learning situation and prefer to be more self-directed in their acquisition of new skills. But there are also instances in which adults will defer to the expertise of the teacher when encountering a situation with which they have little or no experience. Educators are encouraged to focus on the learning situation at hand rather than the age or maturity of the learner (Houle, 1996; Merriam, 2001).

Links to Coaching

Coaching appears to positively impact teacher practice as well as student achievement (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010). It is also a practice that is congruent

with assumptions of adult learning theory. Knowles (1980) discusses several implications of coaching for professional development when teaching adults. Andragogy places an emphasis on involvement of adult learners in professional learning experiences. Adult learners should be involved in planning their own learning outcomes and should have opportunities for self-evaluation and reflection (Knowles, 1980). Coaching is rooted in collaboration between teacher and coach, who are viewed as partners and teachers who have choice in their own learning outcomes (Knight, 2007; Costa & Garmston, 2007). Teachers are encouraged to freely consider ideas and take opportunities to reflect on their experiences as they implement new practices.

Andragogy presumes that adults bring an array of rich experiences to a learning situation. Therefore, adult learners benefit most from experiential opportunities such as group discussion, case studies, action projects, laboratory methods, and demonstrations (Knowles, 1980). Coaching allows teachers to work collaboratively with a coach to engage in dialogue, observe model lessons, and reflect on feedback resulting from attempting new practices (Knight, 2009). Experiences rather than the transmittal of information are congruent with andragogical practices.

Summary

This chapter examined the instructional practice of guided reading and presented the applications of this approach as presented by the developers, Pinnell and Fountas (1996). Guided reading has grown to be a significant reading practices in the United States (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000) and was adopted by BISD as their reading instructional program.

Furthermore, this chapter explored research on ways of building capacity for change within school systems. JEPD is consistently emerging as an effective process in building capacity within all members of a school system (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). There were several examples of JEPD presented in this review. The practices of *coaching* and *professional learning communities* were highlighted because they were adopted by BISD in an effort to support reading instruction.

Finally, this chapter explored adult learning theory in an effort to determine links to the coaching practices adopted by BISD. Coaching appears to be a promising JEPD approach for teachers and is deeply rooted in androgyny.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Overview

Federal accountability measures continue to exert pressure on local school districts to ensure that every student can read and comprehend at high levels (NCLB, 2002). BISD has struggled over the past five years to meet the expectation that all students will achieve on-grade levels in reading. The district has invested heavily in implementing a literacy coaching model, believing that job-embedded professional development opportunities for teachers will positively impact student reading achievement.

Using a mixed-method design, this study analyzed the impact of a multi-layered approach to professional development rooted in a job-embedded professional development framework. The first layer of the intervention was classroom teacher participation in a six-hour training session aimed to equip them with a focused approach to strategic prompting during guided reading. Next, teachers in the experimental group were provided three one-on-one coaching cycles to support implementation of their training. Teachers in the control group attended the six-hour training session, but did not receive any coaching support following the session.

Outside of the experimental design, the principal of the building attended a professional development opportunity with a small group of six peers to study prompting for strategic action. The group read and studied strategic prompting during guided

reading and then observed three classrooms in order to solidify their understandings of effective prompting. This activity was not built into the design of the study, but served as a means for building background knowledge of the campus principal.

Research Questions

The impact of a multilayered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition in BISD as evidenced by students' Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) scores and running records was investigated. Research questions were:

1. Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers' use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?
2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?
3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

Design of the Study

This study used a mixed-methods research methodology (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) to determine the impact of a multilayered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition in BISD. A mixed-methods approach was appropriate because it permitted investigation of quantitative data, including BAS reading scores, but also validation of

findings with qualitative data from observations, surveys, and interviews to reveal a deeper understanding of the results.

The study began with the qualitative component followed by the quantitative component. The qualitative component entailed an examination of teachers' running records as well as observations of guided reading lessons in both experimental and control groups to determine whether coaching teachers after staff development improved teachers' use of effective reading prompts as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching. The qualitative data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method (Glaser, 1965), based on grounded theory. This allowed for the ideas and theories to be generated from the data itself. The constant comparative method of analysis was utilized with triangulation in order to strengthen the validity of the results. The quantitative analysis was performed using a quasi-experimental design (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The quantitative component compared students' pre- and post- assessment reading growth as measured by the BAS.

Context

BISD is a large suburban school district that serves over 40,020 students and is growing by approximately 600 students per year. There are currently 45 campuses including 26 elementary schools, 10 intermediate schools, five comprehensive high schools, one early college high school, one alternate high school for at-risk students, and an alternative school for students with disciplinary infractions.

The surrounding community is a hub for aerospace engineering as well as other high tech industries, and BISD leaders express pride in educating the children of rocket

scientists. Despite the accomplishments of many of their parents, the district serves a diverse population and the number of students qualifying as economically disadvantaged has doubled over the past ten years. This change in demographics coupled with increased rigor in state assessment expectations has resulted in new challenges to this district's maintenance of the high academic achievement scores that they earned during the past 60 years.

Participants

This study was conducted at Garfield Elementary (a pseudonym), one of 26 elementary schools in BISD. The campus opened in 1976 and served 753 students in grades Pre-K through 5th grade during the research year. According to Texas Education Agency (TEA) 2012-13 Texas Academic Performance Report, the population was 12% African-American, 34.1% White, 16.6% Asian, 32.6% Hispanic, and 4.5% two or more races. Garfield is a Title I school that recently experienced rapid changes in demographics. The number of students qualifying as economically disadvantaged rose by 17% over the last five years, with 42% of students designated as economically disadvantaged. Thirty percent of Garfield students were at-risk, and 16.5% of students were English language learners. The campus became eligible for Title I funding in 2010.

Garfield Elementary has a relatively young staff; 54.1% of teachers have five years or less teaching experience. In this study, there was a total of 10 teachers: four first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, and four third grade teachers. The campus employs three instructional coaches that support teachers in literacy, math, and science. Campus-based professional development opportunities are offered for teachers through

an instructional coaching program. Coaches support teachers through modeling lessons, facilitating planning sessions, and directly providing professional development to teachers. Teachers also have opportunities to participate in one-on-one coaching sessions.

Teachers in this study were voluntary participants. All teachers at Garfield teaching grades 1-3 received information regarding the study from the campus math coach and could chose to either participate or not. A total of ten teachers agreed to participate. Participants were randomly assigned to either control or experimental group. Participants who teach grades 1-3 were ideal for the study because:

1. The campus literacy coach observes teachers in grades 1-3 at this campus.
2. The literacy coach coaches teachers in grades 1-3 at this campus.
3. The literacy coach provides professional development to teachers at this campus.
4. The teachers in grades 1-3 attended a common professional development session on prompting for strategic action at the beginning of the school year.

This sample of teachers represented a diverse array of experience and expertise in their grade level. The most experienced teacher had taught for 17 years, and the least experienced teacher had taught for two years. All teachers were female and all held a Bachelor's degree as the highest degree held. Table 3.1 below provides a demographic profile of the sample population.

Table 3.1

Teacher Sample Demographic Profile

Teacher # /Gender	Control/ Exp.	Total Years Teaching	Current Grade Level	# Years at this Level	# Years at Garfield	Highest Degree	Birth-date
#1 Female	Control	4	3rd	3	4	Bachelors	09/21/88
#2 Female	Control	15	3rd	3	15	Bachelors	01/18/74
#3 Female	Control	16	1st	16	11	Bachelors	05/12/65
#4 Female	Control	2	2nd	2	2	Bachelors	7/09/89
#5 Female	Control	17	1st	7	12	Bachelors	08/08/62
#6 Female	Exp.	3	3rd	3	3	Bachelors	01/21/86
#7 Female	Exp.	16	3rd	3	7	Bachelors	11/13/72
#8 Female	Exp.	5	1st	2	2	Bachelors	04/10/87
#9 Female	Exp.	4	2nd	3	4	Bachelors	3/26/87
#10 Female	Exp.	6	1st	3	6	Bachelors	12/03/83

Both experimental and control teachers attended a professional development session offered by a consultant with extensive training in guided reading. The six-hour

session was entitled *Utilizing Effective Prompts* and was held the week before school started in August 2013.

Following the professional development session, teachers in the experimental group received three individual coaching sessions with their campus-based literacy coach. These coaching sessions consisted of: (1) a pre-conference where teacher and coach both planned a guided reading lesson together, (2) coach observed the teacher's guided reading lesson and collected data regarding the usage of prompts, and (3) data were shared with the teacher during a debriefing session. The three coaching sessions took place between August and December. The teachers in the control group attended the professional development session but did not receive individual coaching sessions following the training.

Methods

This mixed-method study utilized a variety of data sources to answer the research questions. The first question addressed was:

1. Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers' use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

In order to address this question, the researcher observed two guided reading lessons of teachers in both the control and experimental groups. Lessons were observed at the beginning of the fall semester and after completion of first semester. Data regarding the components of the guided reading were recorded on the *Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System* for guided reading, developed by

Kerbow, Walkers, and Sawyer, 2001, (Appendix A). The lessons were also audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher collaborated with the district language arts coordinator to analyze the rubrics to determine to what extent the guided reading lessons were implemented with fidelity. Each of the five components of the lesson was ranked on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being the highest quality. Pre- and post- observations were compared to see if there was improvement in the observation scores over time.

In addition to analyzing the degree of fidelity of guided reading lessons, the guided reading transcripts were analyzed by both the researcher and the district language arts coordinator to determine the type of support—teaching, prompting, or reinforcing—offered to students when they encountered difficulty during the reading process. Lesson transcripts were analyzed a second time to determine the strategic actions of students that teachers attempted to support, with specific attention to the following reading strategies: early reading behaviors, searching for and using information, solving words, monitoring and correcting, maintaining fluency, and problem solving. Prompts from the lessons at the beginning of the semester were compared to the prompts from the end of the semester and descriptive statistics were calculated.

In addition, running records were collected three times during the semester from teachers in both the control and experimental groups. A running record is a record of an individual student's reading performance. Teachers typically capture a transcript of an oral reading sample and analyze the accuracy of the reading, as well as the self-correction rate of the reading sample (Clay, 1993). Reading levels for students in both

the control and experimental groups were calculated, and descriptive statistics were also calculated.

In addition to analyzing reading levels, the researcher collected teacher anecdotal notes from the running records to determine if teachers incorporated any specific language related to the six-hour professional development session entitled *Utilizing Effective Prompts* which was held the week before school started in August, 2013. Language from the running records was categorized into two distinct categories: actions teachers took to support students, and the strategic actions teachers attempted to support. These two categories were selected for coding because they were an integral part of the professional development session that all teachers attended at the beginning of the school year. These same categories were also aligned to the Fountas and Pinnell Prompting Guide (2009) that was distributed to all teachers at Garfield Elementary School.

At the end of the study, the researcher administered an end of year reflection survey to teachers in both the control and experimental groups. The survey attempted to determine how the six-hour professional development session impacted teachers' practice and whether it impacted the reading achievement of their students. The survey also asked if the new learning from the workshop faded over time. Teachers in the experimental group were asked to provide reflections regarding whether coaching sessions supported them and how (Appendix B).

In addition, both the literacy coach and the campus principal were interviewed. Interview questions were open-ended to allow the participants to express their views

without influence from the researcher. (See Appendix C and D for the interview protocols and questions.) Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. During the literacy coach interview the coach offered her personal coaching logs and an end of semester survey that she collected from the teachers in the experimental group. The transcribed interviews as well as the coaching logs and survey were analyzed and coded using a constant comparative method of analysis (Glaswell, 1965).

The next questions addressed were:

2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?
3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

To answer these questions, student reading data were collected through the administration of the *Benchmark Assessment System* (BAS) developed by Fountas and Pinnell (2004). This assessment is aligned with the Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient System that has been adopted by BISD, which assigns students a reading level on a gradient of A-Z. This same Text Gradient System applies to the texts teachers in BISD use for guided reading. The BAS is a formative assessment that can be administered individually to students in grades K-8. The assessment measures decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The purpose of the BAS is to support teachers and

reading specialists in determining students' developmental reading levels in order to identify instructional goals and document reading progress (Fountas & Pinnell, 2004).

The BAS was administered to all students in both the control and experimental groups in the fall and again in the spring with the exception of one 3rd grade teacher who did not administer the assessment in the spring. BAS pre- and post- data were analyzed and descriptive statistics were calculated. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine the effects of coaching on reading scores when teachers received both training and coaching sessions as opposed to teachers who received training but did not receive coaching sessions. An ANCOVA test was appropriate because pre- and post- scores were available for students in both the experimental and control groups.

Finally, student enrollment records were examined and demographic data were collected for students in both the control and experimental groups. Data collected included gender, socio-economic status, race, participation in special education, participation in gifted and talented, and at-risk status. Classrooms in the study were comparable as far as demographics and gender. However, there were no students identified as gifted and talented in the control group, so that population was not analyzed. Numbers of students in each class ranged from 14-23. An ANCOVA test was conducted to determine effects of coaching on BAS reading scores of students in control and experimental groups at the onset of the study. Table 3.2 below provides a visual representation of the demographic profile of students in control and experimental groups.

Table 3.2

Demographic Profile of Students in Control and Experimental Groups

Experimental or Control	Frequency	Valid Percent
Control		
Female	38	51.4
Male	36	48.6
Experimental		
Female	50	53.2
Male	44	46.8
Control		
2 or more	3	4.1
AS	15	20.3
BL	10	13.5
HI	21	28.4
WH	25	33.8
Experimental		
2 or more	6	6.4
AS	11	11.7
BL	14	14.9
HI	34	36.2
WH	29	30.9

(continues)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Experimental or Control	Frequency	Valid Percent
Control		
Not Eco	47	63.5
Eco Dis	27	36.5
Experimental		
Not Eco	60.6	60.6
Eco Dis	39.4	39.4
Control		
LEP	17	23
Non LEP	57	77
Experimental		
LEP	10	10.6
Non LEP	84	89.4
Control		
Sped	3	4.1
Non Sped	71	95.9
Experimental		
Sped	5	5.3
Non Sped	89	94.7

(continues)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Experimental or Control	Frequency	Valid Percent
Control		
GT	0	0
Not GT	74	100
Experimental		
GT	16	17
Not GT	78	83
Control		
Not At Risk	37	50
At Risk	37	50
Experimental		
Not At Risk	53	56.4
At Risk	41	43.6

Student demographic data were collected for students in the control and experimental groups, BAS reading levels were analyzed, and descriptive statistics were calculated. Because of the small sample size, this study focused only on the at-risk subpopulation. To qualify as at-risk, students must meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Did not meet grade level expectations in one or more content areas.
2. Was retained in a grade level.

3. Failed a state assessment in the current or prior year.
4. Qualifies as LEP.
5. Qualifies as homeless.
6. Has been placed in a residential facility.
7. Has been placed in the custody of the Department of Protective Services.
8. Has been expelled from school.

An ANCOVA test was conducted to evaluate if student reading growth was greater for any student identified as at-risk when teachers received both training and coaching sessions as opposed to teachers who received only coaching sessions.

Qualifications of the Researcher

The researcher currently serves as Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction. Duties include facilitating development and implementation of BISD curriculum documents for all courses and grade levels. She is also responsible for supporting instructional pedagogy initiatives and works to support professional development for all teachers and campus leaders.

The researcher has had an interest in early literacy for the past 28 years, and worked as a primary special education teacher. She received training in Reading Recovery©, an intensive reading intervention for at-risk first grade children, and also had the opportunity to serve as an assistant principal for six years and an elementary principal for 11 years. As a campus principal, she collaborated with a team of principals to secure grant funds that launched the district's first literacy coach initiative. The researcher has been involved in district coaching programs for the past four years. This

interest in early literacy as well as well as campus leadership experience supported this study.

Researcher Subjectivity

The researcher is employed by BISD as Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction. In this position, the researcher had a vested interest in the achievement of all students as well as professional development of teachers, campus principals, and instructional coaches. It is possible that the principal, coach, or teachers might have felt pressured to participate, or that personal bias could be introduced to the study. To address this, the following measures were taken to build trust and reduce pressure:

1. The Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education selected Garfield Elementary for this study.
2. The Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education met with the principal of Garfield to determine whether the principal would feel comfortable participating in this study.
3. The researcher met with the principal of Garfield to ensure that strict confidentiality would be upheld. It was assured that there would be a strict separation between the research study and the principal's annual evaluation.
4. The principal met privately with the literacy coach to determine whether the literacy coach would feel comfortable participating in the study.
5. Consent for participation in the study was obtained by the campus math coach. This was done to relieve any pressure to participate due to the researcher's position in the district. The math coach was trained by the researcher in how to

obtain consent. The principal, coach, and teachers were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The researcher attempted to limit contact with participants of the study to the greatest extent possible. The researcher was only present on the campus to observe and record the pre- and post- guided reading lessons. All other data collection was completed off-campus, or was collected by the literacy coach.

Limitations

This study was constrained by its small sample size and its limited time for treatment effects to emerge. Data from only one campus and ten teachers in a single district were explored. Therefore, the generalizability of this study is limited. It is possible that the findings of this study only pertain to this campus given factors involved, such as the training the instructional coach received as well as the previous professional development of the teachers. This study is also limited in that other variables were not taken into consideration, including teacher knowledge and effectiveness of strategic prompting before the study began.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Background

BISD struggled to find a solution to the lack of adequate reading progress for students in grades K-2. To address the problem a multilayered approach to professional development for teachers in the district was adopted. This mixed-methods study investigated the impact of this multilayered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition in BISD as evidenced by students' Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) scores and running records. The research questions question were:

1. Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers' use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?
2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?
3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

This chapter provides an analysis of data collected from a variety of sources, including student BAS data, classroom running records, guided reading observations,

teacher surveys, interviews, and coaching log notes from the literacy coach from Garfield Elementary School, an elementary school in BISD.

Methodology Summary

This study used a mixed-methods research methodology to determine impacts of a multilayered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition in BISD. This approach enabled the researcher to use student BAS reading level scores and validate findings with data from observations, surveys, and interviews to reveal a deeper understanding of the results.

Data were collected via observations and audio recordings of 20 guided reading lessons of teachers, examination of running records, two interviews, examination of coaching logs, and pre- and post- BAS reading scores of students. The data collection phase of the research spanned five months, starting September 2013 and ending in January 2014. BAS scores were obtained in September, 2013 and again in March of 2014. Table 4.1 provides a cross reference of the alignment between research question one and the corresponding data sources.

1. Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers' use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

Table 4.1

Research Sub-Question 1 Aligned to Data Sources

Methods	Data Source	Analysis
Observe guided reading lessons of teachers in both control and experimental groups during September and January using the <i>Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System</i> for guided reading. (Appendix A.)	<i>Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System</i> for guided reading. (Appendix A.)	The rubrics were analyzed to determine to what extent guided reading lessons were implemented with fidelity. In addition, pre- and post-observations for each teacher were compared using the constant comparative method of data analysis.
Running records were administered by classroom teachers in both the control and experimental classes three times during the semester.	Running Records based on Clay's research (1993).	Teacher antidotal notes from running records were analyzed using the constant comparative method to determine the extent to which language from summer professional development session was evident.
Guided reading lessons of teachers in both control and experimental groups were observed, audio recorded and scripted.	Transcripts of guided reading lessons.	Teacher prompts were analyzed as to type of support provided to students, as well as the strategic actions supported. After analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated. Pre- and post-observations for each teacher were compared. Researcher and district language arts coordinator collaborated on the analysis of the prompts.

(continues)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Methods	Data Source	Analysis
Post study survey was administered to teachers in both the control and experimental groups.	Reflection Survey for Teachers. (Appendix B)	Descriptive statistics were assessed and open-ended reflection questions were coded using constant-comparative method of analysis.
The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview of Literacy Coach at the end of the semester.	Semi-structured interview of Literacy Coach (Appendix C)	Interview was transcribed and coded using the constant comparative method of analysis.
The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview of the campus Principal at the end of the semester.	Semi-structured interview of Principal (Appendix D)	Interviews were transcribed and coded using the constant comparative method of analysis.
Literacy coach collected observation records and completed a coaching log.	Literacy coach log and observation notes.	Notes were coded using the constant comparative method of analysis.

Table 4.2 provides a cross-reference of the alignment between research questions two and three and the corresponding data sources.

2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?

3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on

the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

Table 4.2

Research Sub-Questions 2 and 3 Aligned to Data Sources

Methods	Data Source	Analysis
Teachers in both the control and experimental groups administered the BAS assessment.	<i>Benchmark Assessment System</i> by Fountas and Pinnell (2004)	Reading levels for each child were calculated and descriptive statistics were calculated.
Student demographic data was collected for students in both control and experimental classrooms.	Student enrollment records	Demographic data was compared to reading levels and descriptive statistics were calculated.

Data Analysis for Research Question 1

The first research question addressed by the researcher was: Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers’ use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

The researcher first analyzed transcripts of teachers’ guided reading lessons. The researcher observed and recorded one guided reading lesson for each of the ten teachers in both the experimental and control groups in September and again in January.

Although lesson transcriptions included all components of guided reading lessons, only “during the reading” component was analyzed. Transcripts were coded and categorized

into two distinct categories: actions teachers took to support students, and strategic actions teachers attempted to support. These two categories were selected for coding because they were an integral part of the professional development session that all teachers attended at the beginning of the school year. These categories were also aligned to Fountas and Pinnell’s Prompting Guide (2009) that was distributed to all teachers at Garfield Elementary School. See table 4.3 for specific coding categories.

Table 4.3

Specific Coding Categories for Analyzing Guided Reading Transcripts

Actions to Support Students	Six Strategic Actions to Support
Teach	Early Reading Behavior
Prompt	Searching for and Using Information
Reinforce	Solving Words
	Monitoring and Correcting Errors
	Maintaining Fluency
	Problem Solving

The researcher examined all guided reading transcripts and first identified each instance of evidence of teachers taking action to support students during the reading process. These actions were coded as examples of “teach,” “prompt,” or “reinforce.” Next, each of these examples of actions to support students was further analyzed to

determine the system of strategic action the teachers were attempting to support. The six strategic actions to support are: early reading behavior; searching for and using information; solving words; monitoring and correcting errors; maintaining fluency; and problem solving. The guided reading transcripts from September were compared to the transcripts from January in order to determine if teachers' use of effective reading prompts increased as compared to teachers receiving only staff development. Effectiveness was measured by the extent to which teachers utilized a variety of actions that supported a range of the six strategic actions.

In this first analysis of teachers' use of effective reading prompts, more teachers in the experimental group demonstrated an increase in the variety of strategic actions supported as compared to teachers in the control group. Four out of five teachers in the experimental group showed an increase in variety as compared to one out of five teachers in the control group. Conversely, three out of five teachers in the control group decreased the variety of strategic actions prompted as compared to one teacher in the experimental group who decreased in the variety of strategic actions prompted. Table 4.4 below indicates the differences between the control and experimental groups in terms of teacher change in usage of effective prompts between fall and spring semesters.

Table 4.4

Group Summary of Effective Use of Prompts

Teacher	Freq of	Variety of	Freq of	Variety of	Difference
C=Control	Actions	Strategic	Actions	Strategic	in Variety
E=Exper.	(T,P,R) Fall	Actions	(T,P,R)	Actions	of Strategic
		Supported	Spring	Spring	Actions
		Fall			
C1	12	4/6	8	3/6	-2
C2	5	1/6	*	*	*
C3	11	5/6	31	4/6	-2
C4	19	5/6	8	2/6	-4
C5	24	4/6	25	6/6	+2
C Mean	14.2	3.8/6	18	3.7/6	-1.5
Summary					
E6	41	3/6	14	4/6	+1
E7	10	3/6	12	2/6	-1
E8	9	2/6	7	4/6	+2
E9	9	3/6	12	4/6	+1
E10	12	3/6	10	4/6	+1
E Mean	32.4	2.8/6	11	3.6/6	.8
Summary					

*Teacher did not have students read aloud during the observation so no data were collected.

After this analysis, the guided reading transcripts were analyzed alongside the researcher's classroom observation notes to determine fidelity of implementation of guided reading lessons. The *Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System* for guided reading (Appendix A) was used for this analysis. Results from the September observations were compared to the results of the January observations to determine if there was a difference in the fidelity of the lesson delivery or the quality of the lesson components between control and experimental groups.

The *Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System* for guided reading assesses the quality of six required components of a guided reading lesson on a scale of 0-4 with four being the highest quality. The first required component assessed is Text Selection (TS) that assesses the appropriateness of text selected with regards to student needs. Next, Text Introduction A (TIA) and Text Introduction B (TIB) are evaluated. TIA evaluates the text introduction component of guided reading lessons, while TIB assesses the quality of engaging conversation facilitated among teacher and students. During Reading (DR) assesses the quality of prompts, demonstrations, and reinforcement provided students as they orally read. After Reading A (ARA) evaluates the quality of comprehension conversation after reading the text and After Reading B (ARB) evaluates the quality of the follow up teaching points. There were no discernable patterns or trends in the change in quality of guided reading components between the control and experimental groups. Table 4.5 provides the change in quality of guided reading components for all teachers from pre- to post- observation.

Table 4.5

Change in Quality of Guided Reading Components for All Teachers

Teacher		Change in Quality of Guided Reading Components				
Con or Exp	TS	TIA	TIB	DR	ARA	ARB
1 Con	0	0	0	1	-1	1
2 Con	*	0	1	*	*	*
3 Con	0	-1	-1	0	-1	0
4 Con	0	0	0	-1	0	-2
5 Con	0	1	0	-1	1	-1
C Means	0	0	0	-.025	-.025	-0.5
Summary						
6 Exp	-3	-1	-2	-2	-1	-1
7 Exp	1	0	0	-1	0	-1
8 Exp	-1	-1	-1	0	3	-2
9 Exp	0	0	-1	3	0	-2
10 Exp	-1	0	0	0	-2	0
E Means	-0.8	-0.4	-0.8	0	0	-1.2
Summary						

*Teacher #2 did not have students read aloud during the second observation so no data were collected in these areas.

The researcher then compared this analysis with experience levels of the teachers in the study to determine if the total years of teaching experience impacted the growth in quality of the guided reading components. There were four teachers from the control group and one teacher from the experimental groups with 15 years or more experience. Two teachers from the control group and three from the experimental group had six years or less teaching experience. No teachers in the study had between seven and 14 years teaching experience. Again, there were no discernable patterns or trends in the change of quality of guided reading components between the control and experimental group.

Following the analysis of guided reading observations, 578 running records were examined. In running records, teachers listen to individual students read aloud and collect data regarding reading accuracy, fluency, and specific reading strategies. This information is then utilized to make informed decisions regarding support needed for the next guided reading lesson (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Teachers in both control and experimental groups conducted an average of three running records per student during the fall semester. Running records were divided into three time periods: beginning of semester, mid-semester, and end of semester.

All of the teachers' written notes were entered into a spreadsheet and language was examined for evidence of parallel language introduced during the August workshop. The workshop directed teachers to notice and support students to think in three broad ways during the reading process: *within* the text, *beyond* the text, and *about* the text.

Three code charts of parallel language were created for each of the wide-ranging ways of thinking employed during the reading process. Language was derived from Fountas and Pinnell’s *Prompting Guide* (2009), which was referenced during the workshop. Language from running records was then compared to language from the coding charts to determine the extent to which the workshop influenced teacher observations of their own students. Table 4.6 summarizes examples of the language that was used to analyze the anecdotal teacher notes.

Table 4.6

Examples of Language Used to Analyze Anecdotal Data

Ways to Think During Reading	Language Associated with Ways to Think During Reading
Within the text	meaning, visual, syntax, monitor, self-correct, make sense, try that again, use the picture, make it match, make it sound right, say the first sound, it looked right and sounded right, read from the beginning and try again, get your mouth ready, say the first part look for a part you know, look at the base word, try something, read the punctuation, take a little breath make your voice go up, sound like you’re talking, choppy, fluent, tell about the whole story
Beyond the text	Predict, infer, make connections, synthesize, what happens next? Were you right? How does the character feel? What are you thinking now? What did you notice?

(continues)

Table 4.6 (continued)

Ways to Think During Reading	Language Associated with Ways to Think During Reading
About the text	Analyze, critique, notice craft, Why did the author write this? Fiction or non-fiction? How is this organized? How do the headings help? What confused you?

Each anecdotal teacher note was coded on a spreadsheet as being an example or non-example of language related to the workshop, *Prompting for Strategic Action*. For example, Teacher 8 indicated on a running record, “used syntax to self-correct.” This was coded as an example of language directly related to the workshop. Teacher 6 indicated “very nervous” on a running record. This was not related to any aspect of the workshop or the prompting guide. This teacher note was coded as a non-example. The numbers of examples of language usage related to the workshop was calculated for the three running record periods: beginning of semester, mid-semester, and end of semester. Language usage examples of the experimental group were compared to the language usage examples of the control group. Table 4.7 summarizes the evidence of language use related to the workshop over the semester as evidenced by running records.

Table 4.7

Evidence of Language Use in Running Records

Teacher	C or Ex	Numbers of Examples Beginning of Semester	Numbers of Examples Mid-Semester	Numbers of Examples End of Semester	Difference Between Beginning and End
1	C	14	6	1	-13
2	C	*0	*0	*0	*0
3	C	15	5	0	-15
4	C	26	20	14	-12
5	C	33	5	8	-15
C Means Summary		22	9	5.75	-13.75
6	Ex	14	20	16	+2

(continues)

Table 4.7 (continued)

7	Ex	9	9	11	+2
8	Ex	27	14	10	-17
9	Ex	23	21	6	-15
10	Ex	*0	3	2	+2
E Mean		18.25	13.4	9	-5.2

Summary

*Teachers did not write any anecdotal notes in running records.

Language indicative of the workshop declined over the semester in the running records of all five teachers in the control group, with the exception of Teacher 2 who did not write any anecdotal notes in running records. This decline was evident both at the end of the semester and at the mid-semester point. With the experimental group, language usage increased over the semester in three out of five teachers' running records. This trend was evident at the mid-semester as well as at the end of the semester. Of the two experimental teachers not showing growth, running records still indicated usage of language at the end of the semester, with Teacher 8 indicating ten examples, and Teacher 9 indicating six examples. Overall, there were two teachers who did not make any anecdotal notes in their running records at the beginning of the semester; one in the control group and one in the experimental group. With coaching sessions, Teacher 10 in the experimental group indicated language indicative of the workshop five times by the end of the semester.

There were other critical pieces of qualitative data that shed light on research question 1. Teachers were surveyed at the end of the study to determine the perceived impact of the staff development session they attended in August (Appendix B). Teachers responded to the survey via an electronic form in January at the conclusion of the study. They were asked to indicate their agreement to statements using a Likert scale with a range of 1-4. A score of one indicated strong agreement and a score of four indicated strong disagreement. The questions were are follows:

Q1: Immediately following the training session, I incorporated learning from *Prompting for Strategic Action* training into my practice.

Q2: Over time, what I learned at the *Prompting for Strategic Action* training slipped away.

Q3: I feel the *Prompting for Strategic Action* training impacted the reading achievement of my students.

Q4: The *Prompting for Strategic Action* training impacted my teaching practices.

Q5: I feel that I need more training on *Prompting for Strategic Action*.

Table 4.8 summarizes the results of the end of semester survey.

Table 4.8

Summary of End of Semester Survey

Teacher	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
1 Control	1	2	3	2	2
2 Control	2	4	1	2	2
3 Control	3	3	*	2	1
4 Control	1	2	3	3	1
5 Control	1	3	2	2	1
Teacher	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
6 Exper	2	2	2	2	2
7 Exper	2	2	1	2	3
8 Exper	1	2	1	2	2
9 Exper	1	2	2	1	2
10 Exper	1	3	1	1	2

* Teacher did not respond.

Nine out of 10 teachers indicated that they immediately incorporated new learning from the workshop into their practice. The one teacher who disagreed was in the control group. This finding is supported by the evidence of teacher use of language in

running records at the beginning of the semester (See Table 4.7). Eight out of ten teachers showed between nine and 33 examples of language used in the workshop.

Survey question 2 yielded surprising results. Four out of five teachers in the experimental group indicated that over time what was learned in the workshop *Prompting for Strategic Action* had slipped away. This is in spite of the focus on the training during instructional coaching sessions and evidence of language from the training in running records throughout the semester. Conversely, three out of five teachers in the control group did not feel the learning from the training had slipped away over time. This contrasts with the analysis of language in running records indicating that all five teachers who did not receive coaching cycles decreased usage of language indicative of the workshop.

All five teachers in the experimental group felt that the workshop positively impacted reading achievement of their students, while two out of five of teachers in the control group did not feel that the workshop positively impacted reading achievement of their students. Finally, nine out of ten teachers agreed that they felt a need for more training in Prompting for Strategic Action. Three teachers strongly agreed that they felt a need for more training in Prompting for Strategic Action, and all three were part of the control group. Only one teacher disagreed that she needed more training, and she was in the experimental group.

Qualitative Analysis to Support Research Question 1

During the literacy coach interview, the coach provided her personal coaching log notes, observation records, as well as her own end of semester survey. These qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser, 1965). The purpose of this stage of analysis was to determine possible themes regarding perceptions of the teachers, literacy coach, or campus principal that might add value to understanding what contributed to the positive outcome of the study.

The analysis started by carefully reading through all 10 teachers' comments from the end of the year survey, as well as teachers' comments taken from the literacy coach's personal survey. An interpretational approach was selected to examine verbal data to discover constructs, themes, and patterns for explanation of the phenomenon studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Each comment was read individually and then participant responses were categorized into themes. Transcribed interviews of the principal and coach were examined using the emerging themes as a lens, and continued to search for other possible themes. Finally, the comments from the coaching logs were analyzed until saturation was reached and no new themes emerged. After final analysis, the major themes to emerge were *focused*, *reflection*, and *efficacy*. However, these three themes were closely intertwined. The ability to focus long-term on a specific, narrow goal resulted in perceived student success. In addition, coaching cycles provided opportunities for reflection on teacher practice, which resulted in greater teacher confidence and self-efficacy.

Theme 1: Focused

The *focused* theme had two related connotations: *focus* as the ability to attend to a narrow, specific goal; and *focus* as the ability to remain consistent over time. Teachers who received instructional coaching cycles expressed that it supported their instructional ability of Prompting for Strategic Action. They reported having greater clarity of focus with regard to this component of guided reading. Several teachers noted that before the coaching they “went through the motions” of the guided reading components without really stopping to consider the impact of each on their individual students. One teacher’s comments were illustrative: “I feel like I was doing too much before and now I feel like I am more efficient and focused” (Teacher A, Coach Survey, January, 2014). Another teacher corroborated, “My goals were fresh in my brain and I was able to better focus on smaller, more specific goals” (Teacher B, Coach Survey, January, 2014). The literacy coach echoed this idea of positive impact of focus in supporting a narrow, specific goal. When asked if the coaching sessions impacted reading achievement, she responded, “I do in the sense that because it was on prompting, and that is something so specific” (Literacy Coach, Structured Interview, January, 2014). Because coaching sessions focused on a narrow, specific goal, teachers perceived a positive impact on their practice.

The theme of focused was also present in the idea that remaining consistent over time on a specific goal resulted in a positive impact on teaching practice and student achievement. The literacy coach indicated that in the past teachers determined the

direction of coaching cycles, but they did not typically have a long-term, clear goal.

According to the coach,

Typically the teachers are in charge of what we are coaching on, so during the pre-conference I am asking, “What do you want me to look for?” And I think in general that teachers are not making long-term goals. They were making goals of what they are not comfortable with at the time. They want to fix something so we work on it one time and the next time they would think of something else to work on. (Literacy Coach, Structured Interview, January, 2014)

Teachers appreciated consistency of the coaching cycles and the fact that the goal remained consistent over the semester. One teacher declared, “I like this consistent coaching. I like having to look at myself and be reflective” (Teacher C, Coach Survey, January, 2014). Another teacher echoed this sentiment: “I thought it was beneficial to be able to meet with my coach every month. I was able to track my goals and get immediate input about ideas and strategies” (Teacher D, Coach Survey, January, 2014). One teacher shared that having the coach work with her supported her because the coach became aware of her students’ strengths and needs. This knowledge equipped the coach better in recommending strategies.

While coaching consistently over time for a specific goal appeared to provide support to the teachers in this study, the literacy coach reported that narrowing her focus to a smaller group of teachers impacted her as well: “A big take away for me is that I think my coaching was more effective by narrowing my focus to a smaller group of people” (Literacy Coach, Structured Interview, January 2014). She went on to say that

she perceived pressure to support all teachers on the campus equally. However, doing so resulted in working with teachers at a surface level. “You can spread yourself too thin and hit the surface with everybody, or you can dig deep with a smaller number of people. But I do feel like I took much bigger strides with the people I was working with” (Literary Coach, Structured Interview, January, 2014).

The principal of the campus also felt consistent coaching added value to the initial training. “I think the constant in-class support with the coach makes it more doable and real than just hearing about it. I think it is much more effective when teachers continue that professional conversation with somebody after the training” (Principal, Structured Interview, January 2014).

Theme 2: Reflection

The theme of *reflection* was also evident during interviews and teacher surveys. According to the International Reading Association (2010), a major responsibility of a literacy coach is to work with classroom teachers in an effort to build reflective capacity to improve student learning. Through participation in coaching cycles, teachers in the experimental group were provided opportunities during the school day to reflect on their goals. This opportunity for reflection impacted teachers positively and also enhanced their ability to remain focused on their goals.

All five teachers in the experimental group expressed appreciation for the opportunity for reflection. This was exemplified in one teacher’s remarks: “The coaching sessions did support prompting in guided reading groups. I became more familiar with the prompting guide and was able to reflect (with a colleague!) on what

was going well and what needed improvement. It was helpful to have a specific block to review, reflect, and plan my prompting” (Teacher 9, Reflection Survey, January, 2014). Teachers also indicated that time to reflect helped to maintain their focus on their goals. When asked if there were benefits to the coaching cycles, one teacher responded, “It helped me be more reflective of my teaching. I was in charge of my goals and what I felt like I personally needed to work on” (Teacher E, Coach Survey, January, 2014).

As stated earlier, the three themes of focused, reflection, and efficacy were all related. A narrow, focused goal that was explored consistently over time resulted in perceived improvement in reading instruction. The opportunity for reflection helped teachers to maintain focus on their goals. Through reflection, teachers had the opportunity to consider the impact of their instructional decisions on the reading achievement of their students. Teachers were able to connect their strategic moves to student success. As a result, the final theme of efficacy emerged.

Theme 3: Efficacy

Teacher *efficacy* has been defined as “teachers’ judgments about their abilities to promote students’ learning” (Hoy & Spero, 2005, p. 343). Teachers’ sense of efficacy has been linked to student achievement, motivation, and also to their own students’ personal sense of efficacy (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Research indicates that teachers with high levels of efficacy are more likely to implement innovative instructional programs (Ross, 1992).

In this study, teachers who received both professional development and coaching experienced increased levels of confidence and efficacy as indicated by surveys and

observations of their literacy coach. Teachers described an increased comfort level with the new reading techniques and, as a result, more confidence. One teacher observed, “I am more comfortable with my prompting during their reading. I feel that I am giving higher level prompts instead of just word work prompts” (Teacher A, Coach Survey, January, 2014). Another teacher indicated, “I feel much more confident that any given lesson is meaningful for the kids” (Teacher B, Coach Survey, January, 2014).

The literacy coach also shared during the structured interview that she believed teacher confidence had increased. “A lot of the teacher feedback to me was that they feel more confident in what to teach the kids when they are at the table[...]. That has got to lead to reading achievement” (Literacy Coach, Structured Interview, January 2014). One explanation for the increased confidence could be consistency in the coaching cycles.

The literacy coach described a success story:

I would say one of my biggest (success) ones was a teacher who has been here all five years that I have been here. She does not like people observing her, which most teachers don't. I don't either, but she just has a really big fear of it. I have been trying to tell her the only way to be more comfortable is to just have people do it. Just let me come sit and watch in a non-threatening way. I won't even bring a clipboard or a pen. You know, I think that consistency, being in her room every time, she had the most visible “ah ha” moments. I have heard her say, “Now I get it. I have heard you say that three times, and now I get it.” I created a survey for them to fill out, and her feedback talked a lot about confidence, which for me is

more important than any of the reading work we were doing.” (Literacy Coach, Structured Interview, January 2014)

Data Analysis for Research Question 2

This study began with an analysis of the effects of coaching on students’ reading achievement. Research question two examined:

2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?

Teachers were randomly placed into control and experimental groups, and students in each classroom were assigned to teachers by the campus principal before this study began.

The quantitative data collection began with an examination of student reading achievement as measured by BAS. Student reading accuracy levels as determined by the BAS were collected in the fall and spring. Each reading score was categorized as either below level, on-level, or above level. In addition, the reading level itself was collected. The BAS assigns a reading level using letters A-Z, with “A” representing the beginning level of reading. The BAS does not yield a numerical raw score. Thus, the researcher consulted with BISD Director for Assessment and Evaluation to determine a process to convert the alphabetic system to a numerical one so descriptive statistics could be calculated. Each alphabetic level was converted to a corresponding number. For example, reading level “A” was converted to “1,” level “B” was converted to “2,” and so on.

Data collected were imported into Microsoft Excel (2010) with columns for student identification number, teacher code, gender, ethnicity, limited English proficiency (LEP), special education, gifted and talented, at-risk, testing year, testing date, BAS level, instructional level, comprehension score, and accuracy rate. Students who were not continuously enrolled for the duration of the 2013-14 school year were omitted from this data. In addition, Teacher #2 did not administer the BAS to her students in the spring, so those results were not included in this first stage of analysis.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. The independent variable was instructional coaching and included coaching cycles or no coaching cycles. The dependent variable was the spring BAS reading scores and the covariate was the fall BAS scores before the coaching cycles. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, $F(1, 164) = 0.39$, $MSE = 2.07$, $p = .84$, partial $\eta^2 < .01$. The ANCOVA was significant, $F(1, 165) = 16.76$, $MSE = 2.06$, $p < .01$. The strength relationship between the coaching cycles and the spring BAS reading scores was weak as assessed by a partial η^2 , with the coaching cycles accounting for 9% of the variance of the spring BAS scores.

The mean spring BAS reading score difference between the control and experimental groups was as expected. The experimental group had the larger mean ($M = 14.07$) and the control group had the smaller mean ($M = 12.05$).

Table 4.9 shows the descriptive statistics for all students.

Table 4.9

Group Statistics for All Students

Group Statistics					
Exper. or Control	N	Pre-test Means	Post-test Means	Std. Deviation	Adjusted Means
C	74	8.297	12.05	3.8850	12.669 ^a
E	94	9.660	14.07	4.0831	13.611 ^a

Table 4.10 (below) further illustrates the results of the ANCOVA.

Table 4.10

Results of the ANCOVA Test for All Students

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial η^2
Experimental/Control	1	6.08	16.759	.000	.092
Error	165	2.07			

Data Analysis for Research Question 3

Research question 3 determined the impact of the intervention on student sub-populations:

3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

Because of limited sample size, this study only analyzed the sub-population of students qualifying as at-risk. An ANCOVA was conducted to examine effects of coaching on spring BAS scores of at-risk students in both the experimental and control groups with fall BAS scores as the covariate. To qualify as at-risk, students must meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Did not meet grade level expectations in one or more content areas.
2. Was retained in a grade level.
3. Failed a state assessment in the current or prior year.
4. Qualifies as LEP.
5. Qualifies as homeless.
6. Has been placed in a residential facility.
7. Has been placed in the custody of the Department of Protective Services.
8. Has been expelled from school.

The sub-population of students identified as at-risk was analyzed to determine effects of coaching on spring BAS reading scores. An ANCOVA was planned. The posttest scores served as the dependent variable and the pretest scores were the covariates. Group and at-risk and their interaction were the two independent variables. A preliminary analysis did not result in homogeneity of regression slopes, therefore the homogeneity of slopes assumption was violated and the results were not significant.

CHAPTER V
RESEARCH OVERVIEW, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Overview

BISD struggled to find a solution to the lack of adequate reading progress with students in grades 1-3 and attempted to address the problem by providing a multilayered approach to professional development for teachers in the district. This mixed-methods study investigated the impact of this multilayered approach that combined on-going coaching with a six hour staff development. It compared the reading progress of students whose teachers received only staff development to teachers who received staff development and coaching. Reading progress was measured by 1st-3rd grade students' Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) scores and running records. Research questions included:

1. Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers' use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?
2. Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?
3. Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on

the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?

Results provided evidence to suggest that teachers better retain what is learned during the Prompting for Strategic Action training when they receive follow-up coaching cycles. This is based on the observed decline in the use of language in teacher running records associated with the training session when teachers did not receive follow up coaching support. In contrast, when teachers received follow up coaching cycles, language indicative of the workshop increased in three out of five teachers' running records. Of the two experimental teachers not showing growth, running records still indicated usage of language associated with the training at the completion of the study.

The results also indicated that overall student growth in reading as measured by the BAS was significantly higher in classrooms when teachers experienced both professional development and coaching sessions with a focus on prompting as compared to teachers who experienced professional development with no follow-up coaching sessions. Results were not significant for students identified as at-risk.

Chapter V provides an overview of the research, a summary of the findings, analysis of the findings, practical implications for educational leaders, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research and conclusion.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that overall student growth in reading as measured by the BAS was significantly higher in classrooms when teachers experienced both professional development and coaching sessions with a focus on prompting as

compared to teachers who experienced professional development with no follow up coaching sessions. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the overall findings for each sub-question that was presented in Chapter IV.

Table 5.1
Key Findings Linked to the Study Sub-Questions

Research Sub-Question	Findings
Does the practice of coaching teachers after staff development increase teachers’ use of reading prompts as compared to the practice of teachers receiving staff development without coaching?	1. More teachers in the experimental group demonstrated an increase in the variety of strategic actions supported as compared to teachers in the control group. 2. There were no discernable patterns or trends in the change of quality of guided reading components between the control and experimental group as indicated by the <i>Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System</i> for guided reading. 3. Evidence of the language associated with the use of effective reading prompts increased in teacher running records when teachers received both professional learning and coaching.
Do students whose teachers receive staff development combined with coaching have significantly higher reading BAS spring scores than students whose teachers receive staff development only?	Coaching significantly impacted student reading scores in reading when teachers experienced both professional development and coaching sessions with a focus on prompting as compared to teachers who experienced professional development with no follow up coaching sessions.

(continues)

Table 5.1 (continued)

<p>Does any student sub-population show greater increase in reading levels as measured by BAS scores when teachers receive staff development and coaching on the use of effective prompts during guided reading as compared to teachers receiving staff development without coaching?</p>	<p>Sub-Population Analysis Outcomes: 1. Coaching did not significantly impact the BAS reading scores of students identified as at-risk.</p>
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There is evidence to suggest that teachers better retain what is learned during training when they receive follow-up coaching cycles. When teachers did not receive follow up coaching sessions, there was a decline in the use of language in teacher running records associated with the training session. In contrast, when teachers received follow up coaching cycles, language indicative of the workshop increased in three out of five teachers' running records. Of the two experimental teachers not showing growth, running records still indicated usage of language associated with training at the completion of the study.

The findings of this study further showed that student reading achievement is significantly higher when teachers experience focused professional development in prompting for strategic action combined with follow-up coaching cycles that are also focused on prompting for strategic action. This finding did not hold true for students identified as at-risk.

The qualitative component of the study shed light on underlying themes present and added value in understanding the outcomes of the study. The themes of focused, reflection, and efficacy emerged in relation to teachers' perceptions of reading

instruction after an analysis of teacher surveys, interviews of the literacy coach and principal, and the analysis of coaching logs. The ability to focus long-term on a specific, narrow goal resulted in perceived student success. In addition, coaching cycles provided opportunities for reflection on teacher practice, which resulted in greater teacher confidence and self-efficacy.

Practical Implications for Educational Leaders

This study, including its literature review and data analyses, has certain practical implications for campus and district school leaders who strive to improve the teaching practices of teachers and in turn, improve student achievement: (a) leaders must provide multiple opportunities for job-embedded professional development (JEPD), focused on specific research-based strategies; (b) leaders must create structures that allow for consistent, focused coaching cycles; and (c) school leaders must encourage coaches to prioritize their focus.

Job-embedded professional learning opportunities are designed to empower educators to work effectively toward solving real problems. The practices of JEPD rely upon the development of leadership capacity that should occur within the setting in which teachers work. With opportunities for JEPD teachers not only strongly impact student achievement; they also influence the performance of other teachers (Reeves, 2008).

The principal at Garfield Elementary recognized that “one shot” professional development opportunities do not result in sustained change in practice. This study confirmed that when teachers receive a one-shot workshop, the strategies learned tend to

erode over time. The consensus is that high quality professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). According to the National Staff Development Council (2009), professional development should focus on student learning and align with school improvement goals. Perhaps more importantly, it should foster strong, collaborative relationships between teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Campus leaders should heed this research and provide focused opportunities for teachers to learn together, receive timely feedback, and reflect on data related to specific goals. Leaders should especially ensure that there are relevant connections between the various professional learning opportunities so that a clear focus is maintained.

The goal of coaching is to improve the way teachers deliver instruction and, in turn, improve student learning (Knight, 2009). Coaching is not a “one-shot” training session; rather, coaches specifically design their interactions with individual teachers to meet their unique needs (Knight, 2009). Coaches are charged with supporting teachers in identifying personal goals, and then supporting them in reaching those goals.

While many school districts have adopted a coaching model to support teacher development, this study revealed the value in maintaining a specific focus or goal over time. Teachers in this study gained confidence and increased their sense of efficacy because all professional learning opportunities were focused on utilizing strategic prompts during guided reading. Teachers found value in receiving consistent coaching support throughout the semester focused on this specific teaching strategy.

Coaches can serve many different roles on a campus. Learning Forward has identified ten specific roles: mentor, learning facilitator, instructional specialist, catalyst for change, data coach, resource provider, classroom supporter, school leader, learner, and curriculum specialist (Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). Each role serves a valuable purpose on a campus. However, instructional coaches should work with the campus principal to clarify and prioritize their role (Frank, 2010; Petersen, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009). Attempting to serve equally well in all roles can lead to diluted results.

The coach at Garfield Elementary indicated she felt a sense of pressure to support every teacher on the campus equally. Garfield has 36 teachers who teach reading and writing. The positive gains in reading achievement occurred when teachers underwent three individual coaching cycles related to a professional development session during the semester. According to coaching logs, the coach at Garfield spent approximately 26 hours and 25 minutes during the semester with the five teachers in this study. If expected to serve more teachers in this way, the instructional coach will need to be relieved of other roles and duties in order to have the quality time necessary to support individual teachers through coaching cycles.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Bayside Independent School District

BISD is a large school district employing over 2,000 teachers and serving approximately 40,000 students. The district struggled to find a solution to the lack of adequate reading progress with students in grades K-2 and attempted to address the

problem by providing a multilayered approach to professional development for teachers in the district. Based on analysis of the data, it appears that providing a combination of professional development and focused coaching cycles had a significant impact on students' reading achievement. While this particular study focused on improving the reading progress of students in K-2, lessons learned could be applied to other concerns as well. In order to replicate the success of this professional development model, the following actions are recommended: (a) support principals in prioritizing responsibilities of the coach; and (b) support schools in implementing PLCs.

As stated earlier, there are many roles that a coach can play on a campus and many teachers to support. Coaches in BISD feel it is their duty to serve all teachers equally, which can result in limited support for all. This study revealed that student progress significantly improved when teachers spent sustained time focused on a specific practice and received individual support through coaching cycles. School districts should work with campus leaders to utilize data to identify specific instructional goals. Data could include assessment results, walk-through feedback data, and teacher and student surveys. These data should be utilized to determine the roles that the coach will serve and the teachers who will be supported.

In a PLC, teachers participate in a continuous process of assessing and finding potential solutions to problems they encounter (Fullan, 2006). Through PLCs, teachers strongly impact student achievement and also influence the performance of other teachers (Reeves, 2008). BISD has not yet provided training or support for PLCs, resulting in a dependence on outside workshops and training. Supporting campus-based

PLCs will build capacity within the staff to respond to the needs of their students and activate their own talent and skills to address these needs. PLCs will also facilitate identification of goals that will help teachers and coaches maintain a clear focus.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research examined the impact of a multilayered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition. Results suggest maintaining a clear focus on a specific research-based instructional strategy supported by professional development and coaching can lead to increased student achievement. There are multiple ways, however, that this study could be enhanced through future research.

This study focused on reading acquisition in grades 1-3 at an elementary school. BISD chose to focus specifically on improving teachers' use of prompting for strategic action during guided reading. Additional research could explore whether a focus on other specific reading practices would have a different impact on student reading results. Research such as this could provide evidence regarding the root cause of the student improvement. Was it the specific focus on prompting for strategic action, or would a sustained, consistent focus on other instructional practices result in student gains in reading as well?

Student reading growth was significantly greater when teachers received both professional development and coaching sessions. However, four out of five teachers in the experimental group indicated that over time what was learned in the workshop *Prompting for Strategic Action* slipped away. It would be worthy to investigate whether

coaching with a focus on prompting without attendance at a workshop would have resulted in similar student growth in reading.

One limitation of this study is that it occurred on one campus and examined the effects of one coach working with five teachers. It would be worthwhile to replicate this study to determine if similar results are obtained with other coaches. In the case of this research, there was no attempt made to determine the preexisting skill set of the coach assigned to Garfield Elementary School. In addition, this study did not observe the coach interacting with teachers. It would be valuable to study interactions between a coach and a teacher in order to determine ways a coach can best interact with and support a teacher.

Another extension to this study would be to expand the study beyond the length of one semester. The teachers in the experimental group in this study experienced three one-on-one coaching sessions following a professional development workshop. It would be worthwhile to research the effect of an increased number of coaching cycles on student achievement. This information would be useful to school districts when planning for appropriate staffing allocations of coaches.

This study revealed that teachers receiving both professional development and coaching sessions demonstrated an increase in the variety of strategic actions supported during guided reading as compared to teachers in the control group. It is possible that some teachers may have withdrawn support through prompting because students were reading and comprehending on grade level and needed no support. However, reading skills develop and deepen over the course of the student's school career. Teachers are charged with providing increasingly complex texts in order to allow students

opportunities to stretch and develop new skills sets to meet the challenges posed by the higher level texts. Additional research could explore whether a lack of prompting during guided reading results from students being provided non-challenging texts.

Finally, this study analyzed the extent to which guided reading lessons were implemented with quality and fidelity, as indicated by the *Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric*. The results of this analysis were inconclusive. There were no discernable patterns or trends to indicate that quality of guided reading lessons improved when teachers received coaching as compared to with teachers who did not receive coaching. This result seems contradictory to the increase in student reading achievement. Further research is warranted to better understand this contradiction.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of a multilayered approach to coaching on early reading acquisition in a large suburban school district in Texas. Specifically it sought to determine the impact of teacher training with a focus on the use of effective prompts during guided reading on student reading levels as measured by BAS. It also sought to understand if any student sub-populations showed a greater increase in reading levels as a result of this training. Finally, this study explored whether the practice of coaching after staff development improved the teachers' use of effective reading prompts during guided reading lessons.

The school district in this study adopted guided reading as their approach to literacy instruction. A review of the literature showed that guided reading properly implemented has been shown to be effective in supporting early readers in developing

and maintaining grade level reading achievement (Antonacci, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Iaquinta, 2006; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000). BISD utilizes literacy coaches to support teachers in implementing guided reading with fidelity. Literacy coaches typically support teachers by modeling lessons for other teachers, assisting teachers in planning, observing peers and providing feedback, facilitating learning teams, and, most importantly, building relationships (Knight, 2009).

This study found that overall student growth in reading as measured by the BAS was significantly higher in classrooms when teachers experienced both professional development and coaching sessions with a focus on prompting for strategic action as compared to when teachers experienced professional development with no follow-up coaching sessions. In addition, certain student populations also experienced significantly higher growth in reading when their teachers experienced both professional development and coaching sessions. These sub-populations included Hispanic, Asian, two or more races, non-economically disadvantaged, male, LEP, at-risk, not at-risk students.

Besides student reading achievement, this study also explored whether professional development combined with coaching sessions focused on prompting for strategic action affected the quality or fidelity of teacher use of effective prompts during guided reading instruction. Results showed that teachers receiving both professional development and coaching sessions demonstrated an increase in the variety of strategic actions supported during guided reading as compared to teachers in the control group. However, there were no discernable patterns or trends in the change of quality of guided

reading components between the control and experimental group, as indicated by the *Developing Language and Literacy Teaching Rubric System* for guided reading.

Finally, qualitative analysis of verbal records included in surveys, interviews, running records, and coaching logs was conducted. After final analysis, the major themes to emerge were focused, reflection, and efficacy. However, these three themes were closely intertwined. The ability to focus long-term on a specific, narrow goal resulted in perceived student success. In addition, coaching cycles provided opportunities for reflection on teacher practice, which resulted in greater teacher confidence and self-efficacy.

The results of this study have certain practical implications. Campus leaders should provide multiple opportunities for job-embedded professional learning focused on specific research-based strategies. Teacher efficacy increased with consistent, focused support and leaders should create structures that allow for consistent, focused coaching cycles. Finally, school leaders must encourage coaches to prioritize their focus. Coaches can serve many roles, and they need support in establishing mutual priorities.

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APPENDIX A

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY TEACHING RUBRIC SYSTEM FOR

GUIDED READING

Guided Reading – (Group)	Date:	Time/Duration:	Time spent:	Teacher never uses their element
Text Selection: The teacher: Selects a text that is not the appropriate level for the group
Text Introduction: The teacher: Provides an introduction that includes some or all elements (meaning of whole text, language, aspects of print) but is fragmented and uncohesive.
Engaging Children: The teacher: Does not engage children in some conversation that sets a meaningful and does not help them engage with meaning of the text.
During Reading: The teacher: Either does not sample and re-teach or interacts too much with interactions that like the teacher "tell track."
After Reading: The teacher: Does not engage children in discussion of the meaning of the text.
Word Work: The teacher: Shows something about words but the work is either too easy or too hard for students and may have little with learning word work any interactive teaching areas from the book.

Notes:

APPENDIX B
REFLECTION SURVEY

Name _____

Earlier this year you attended a training session called “Prompting for Strategic Action”.

Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.

1=Strongly Agree

2=Agree

3=Disagree

4=Strongly Disagree

Circle the number that best describes your response.

1 2 3 4 5

The “Prompting for Strategic Action” training impacted my teaching practices.

1 2 3 4 5

Immediately after the training session I incorporated new learning from the “Prompting for Strategic Action” training into my practice.

1 2 3 4 5

Over time, what I learned at the “Prompting for Strategic Action” training slipped away.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel that the “Prompting for Strategic Action” impacted the reading achievement of my students.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel that I need more training on “Prompting for Strategic Action”.

1 2 3 4 5

Did you receive individual coaching sessions to support prompting for strategic actions?

Yes _____

No _____

If you answered yes, please complete the following questions:

Did the individual coaching sessions support you in prompting for strategic action? If so, how?

APPENDIX C

LITERACY COACH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

- This semester you have worked with five teachers to coach them in prompting for strategic action. Talk to me about this experience.
(Probe for successes, failures)

- What did you learn from this experience?

- If you were to do this again, what would you do differently?

- Do you feel that the coaching sessions impacted reading achievement? Why or why not?

- How did this experience impact your role as a coach on this campus?

APPENDIX D

PRINCIPAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

This semester we have provided professional development on “Prompting for Strategic Action”. Your teachers attended training in August, and principals studied this together in November. Your literacy coach has also supported five of your teachers in practicing this new learning.

- Based on your classroom observations, have you noticed any impact from this training? If so, what?
- Did the principal session in November impact you? If so, how?
- Have you noticed any impact on student reading achievement as a result of the teacher training in August? If so, how do you know?