

Coaching as Pedagogy: A Doorway to Teacher and Student Empowerment

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Paper presented at the International Teacher Leadership Conference

March 3, 2017

Miami, FL

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In the current climate of high-stakes accountability in American school systems, many programs have been identified to create systematic change, and while constant implementation of reform programs occur, researchers and educators continue to question if these “one size fits all” policies will indeed create the changes needed for student success in our schools. Of all the factors that have been researched and proven to contribute to positive effects on student learning, those factors relating to the teacher and classroom instruction are most conducive to creating significant improvement in classrooms (Barry, 2012; Danielson, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Knight, 2007; Marzano, 2003a).

Instead of stand-alone conventional workshop models of professional development, many educational scholars have agreed the most effective professional development is that which provides new information, content or strategies (often given in workshops) combined with the necessary follow-up and support of modeling, practice, and feedback created through job-embedded learning opportunities for teachers (Barkley, 2005; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2006; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Knight, 2007). Job-embedded professional development that directly relates to the challenges teachers face in the classroom and is provided by people familiar with those contexts can create enhanced teacher learning, instruction, and thus, increase student achievement (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Guskey, 2000; Taylor, 2008). Among the most implemented models of job-embedded professional development such as professional learning communities, practitioner research, and lesson study groups, school-based coaching is considered the most promising for changing teacher practice from within the classroom (Knight, 2007).

Coaching has been discussed and implemented as a new paradigm for teacher learning and professional development in literature for the past two decades (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson,

& Autio, 2007; Duffy, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Knight, 2004, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). But the term *coaching* is used in a myriad of ways, and coaching behaviors and goals vary as much as the theories that underlie them. In practice, coaching roles often involve a delicate balance between peer coaching and mentoring responsibilities and whole-school improvement or system-wide professional development (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Knight, 2004).

Instructional coaching, which focuses on providing appropriate supports to teachers so they are able to implement scientifically-proven teaching practices in the classroom (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Knight, 2007, 2009) depends on three broad categories of coaching skills: pedagogical knowledge, content expertise, and interpersonal and facilitation skills. Instructional coaching has been shown to change the culture of a school, raise proficiency rates in literacy and numeracy, and create a successful school-wide phenomenon of change (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006). The goal for teachers, therefore, is not only to learn new instructional approaches, but to learn when to use practices and how to modulate them to students through knowledge transfer (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

While recent studies have lent credence to coaching as an effective means of impacting teacher learning and classroom practices (e.g. Bean et al., 2007; Deussen et al., 2003; Sailors & Price, 2010; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010), few report upon the “how” of coaching by investigating specific elements of the coaching process and how coaches learn and implement practice. There have also been mixed results both within the United States and in international educational settings in terms of coaching and teacher efficacy (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Ross, 1992; Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, 2009), coaching and teacher change (Gutierrez, Crosland & Berlin, 2001; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Zwart,

Wubbels, Bergen, & Bolhuis, 2007), and the impact of coaching on student achievement (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Deussen et al., 2007; Garet et al., 2008; Poglinco et al., 2003).

As determined from the literature on instructional coaching, there is a need to focus on how coaches and the teachers they coach understand the tension and balance of specific coaching behaviors, how these coaching relationships contribute to teacher learning, and what elements of these coaching approaches contribute to changes in teacher practice (Bean et al., 2010; Borman & Feger, 2006; Cornett & Knight, 2009; Dozier, 2006; Heineke, 2013; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). To help answer these inquiries recommended from coaching literature, this paper presents a follow up qualitative study based from a larger research effort on the impact of coaching from teachers' perspectives which specifically examined how teachers experienced coaching with a reflective (teacher-driven) approach, and what factors of this coaching approach contributed to teacher learning and change in practice (Rodgers, 2015). Based on the findings of the original research study, the focus of this paper is the continuing study of one of the original research study's teacher participants, and examines her coaching journey in order to understand and explain the transformational change in her teaching and practice, as well as how she translated coaching in to new levels of learning to benefit herself, her school, and her students.

Review of Literature

Examining the experience of this teacher who was transformed through being coached with a reflective coaching model requires an understanding of the empirical literature related to how instructional coaching is situated within school settings; how coaching and teacher leadership are intertwined; and the causal link between coaching and student achievement. The

complex nature of the intersections between coaches, teachers and students lies at the heart of this journey, and therefore each stakeholder's lens is examined through a theoretical base of literature.

Instructional Coaching in Schools

The essence of school-based coaching is changing teacher practice to increase student learning, and by offering support, feedback, and intensive, individualized professional learning, coaching provides a way to improve instruction in schools. Instructional coaches are onsite professional developers who work collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to incorporate research-based instructional methods into their classrooms (Knight, 2007; Knight & Cornett, 2009). According to coaching research, instructional coaches can support instructional improvement in a multitude of ways, including: observing lessons and providing feedback to a teacher; modeling effective teaching techniques and strategies; effectively using assessment data to provide interventions; conducting professional development to help introduce new strategies; developing and monitoring school improvement goals; and designing systemic and organizational changes to improve student achievement (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Deussen et al., 2007; Dole, 2004).

Within the coaching literature, studies have focused on different theoretical frames in which coaching is derived and which predicates how coaches position themselves to teachers (Borman & Feger, 2006; Deussen et al., 2007; Dozier, 2006; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2007; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003) and coaching stances and behaviors in order to determine how to best meet teacher needs in learning (Bean et al., 2010; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Dozier, 2006; Heineke, 2013; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2007). With increased pressure on teachers to improve instruction and increase student achievement in varied school contexts,

many researchers have specifically examined coach roles and responsibilities, and how these coaches create change in teacher instruction (Deussen et al., 2007; Ippolito, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010; Veenman & Denessen, 2001).

In the current educational climate, coaching and evaluation are often tied together (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Thus, a growing body of research is investigating the relationship between coaches and teachers, and how the effectiveness of coaching is impacted by teacher accountability in the classroom. Duessen et al. (2007) referred to different coaching stances as directive and reflective, and studied these stances within literacy coaching models. Heineke (2013) found that during one-on-one sessions, coaches tended to take the dominant approach with teachers and initiated the majority of exchanges during coaching conversations. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) also found that coaches who influenced teacher learning and teacher change did so through authoritative stances, using such techniques as pressuring and persuading to push teacher growth.

Yet according to other researchers, for coaching to be successful, coaching relationships must be reflective, safe, non-evaluative, and geared toward a partnership in learning *between* the coach and teacher (Borman & Feger, 2006; Dozier, 2006; Knight, 2007, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). A coaching stance in which the coach and teacher engage in the process of inquiry about instructional practices that support and improve student learning is found to promote teacher efficacy and instructional effectiveness (Bean et al., 2010; Knight & Cornett, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1996).

The subject of teacher transformation as a result of instructional coaching is scarce in the literature. Few researchers discuss teachers' perceptions of their change in beliefs and practice

from group coaching (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2011). Most recently, in her mixed-methods study of instructional coaching for teachers of diverse learners, Teemant (2014) defines transformation as “significant quantitative growth in the use of the instructional model” measured through instructional coaching interventions with urban elementary teachers. This researcher found that teachers’ instructional practices became more sociocultural, their feelings of efficacy increased, and these teachers “became different teachers,” being less controlling and more welcoming of student participation as a result of instructional coaching (p. 596).

Coaching and Teacher Leadership

York-Barr and Duke (2004) define teacher leadership as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (p. 287). In addition, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) identify three broad functions of teacher leadership: leadership of students or other teachers, leadership of operational tasks, and leadership through decision making and partnerships. It is this first function in which coaching falls. Teachers who take on the role of coach are often viewed as sharing leadership with district office leaders, principals, and school administration (Galluci et al., 2010). There is also evidence that coaches can act as mediators between district reform efforts and classroom practice (Galluci et al., 2010; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006).

Other studies of both school and teacher success cite the value of teachers supporting teachers, and conclude that peer consultation, coaching, and teacher collaboration enhance teachers’ self-efficacy and encourage a bias for action (Blackman, 2010; Poekert, 2012). Coaching is intertwined with teacher leadership in that it can *create* teacher leadership by providing powerful professional development and empowerment for teachers, but also be an

outcome of teacher leadership through collaborative teacher learning and study (Murphy, 2005; Poekert, 2012). Thus, coaching creates teacher leaders, and teacher leaders employ coaching.

The Impact of Coaching on Student Achievement

In an increasingly accountability-based climate in education, all professional development is ultimately measured by the end goal, which is improving student achievement in schools. To date, the findings regarding coaching and the impact on student achievement are mixed. Some researchers' caution that coaching is not a uniform intervention (Deussen et al., 2007; Poglinco et al., 2003) and thus, creating a study that "employs rigorous methodologies that could establish a causal link between coaching and student achievement" is problematic (Deussen et al., 2007, p. 7). Linking coaching to student outcomes is complex because demonstrating the "causal chain" from professional development to student achievement with scientific methodology presents tremendous challenges for researchers due to varying school context, coaching models and roles, and leadership support (Garet et al., 2008; Kowal & Steiner, 2007).

Proponents of coaching argue there is good reason to expect that coaching can improve instruction, and therefore improve student achievement if implemented properly (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Knight, 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Showers, 1984;), and many studies have claimed a perceived link between coaching and student achievement (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Deussen et al., 2007; Ross, 1992; Sailors & Price, 2010; Showers, 1982, 1984; Swartz, 2005). For example, Bean et al., (2010) described a mixed-method study that investigated the work of 20 Reading First coaches in Pennsylvania to determine how coaches distribute their time and rationale for their work, and what relationships exist among coach qualifications, coach activities, and student achievement. The researchers detailed seven

significant findings relating to coach qualifications, teacher perceptions, and student achievement. Time spent coaching teachers appears to be related to improvements in student achievement, but the researchers advise that this finding is not causal in any way.

Theoretical Perspective and Conceptual Framework

A concept central to this research is that effective professional development must “focus on deepening teachers’ understanding of the processes of teaching and learning and of the students they teach” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 82). This premise is rooted in research claiming that professional development should enable teachers to become leaders of their own learning, have a voice in the process, and use self-direction to guide learning practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Evolving from the constructionist paradigm, the theoretical perspective of constructivism served as a guiding framework for the original interview research from which this following qualitative study was based. Constructivism emphasizes the *individual’s* meaning making, and the focus on the individual’s interaction with the world (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln 2005; Hatch, 2002).

Knights’ (2007) Partnership Coaching Approach

The instructional coaching approach developed at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning by James Knight (2007) incorporates many processes of learning in collaboration with specific components of coaching. Knight’s (2007) theoretical framework for instructional coaching, referred to as the partnership approach to professional learning, comprises seven principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. These principles are grounded in disciplines such as adult education and cultural anthropology and synthesized from concepts of knowledge transfer, knowledge development, and human interaction (Cornett & Knight, 2009).

According to Knight, the seven theoretical principles he identified provide “a conceptual language for how instructional coaches interact with other professionals in the school” (Cornett & Knight, 2009, p. 4). Knight’s basis of partnership, in which both coaching partners benefit from the success, learning, or experience of others and are rewarded by each individual’s contributions, posit the instructional coach’s position to be learning *alongside* collaborating teachers (Knight, 2007). Thus, learning about each teacher’s strengths and weaknesses enable a coach to collaborate with teachers as well as define the coach’s skill in using the new teaching practice. Knight’s seven partnership principles focus on the elements that are deemed “reflective” in stance by coaching literature (Deussen et al., 2007; Heineke, 2013; Ippolito, 2010), and thus this theory of coaching was used as the definition of reflective coaching to frame this study.

The Lastinger Instructional Coaching Model

The Lastinger Center for Learning is a privately endowed learning center at the University of Florida specializing in professional development for low-performing, high-needs schools in the state of Florida. The Lastinger Center’s mission is to “develop master teachers who ignite learning by ALL students, with an intentional focus on improving teacher learning and practice, and by helping schools and districts develop structures, conditions, and supports to best foster continuous teacher learning throughout the school year” (Ross & Burns, 2013, p. 1). A key structure in professional development for the Center’s development of master teachers is instructional coaching.

Developed in 2011, the Lastinger Instructional Coaching Model is currently being implemented throughout districts in Florida in an intensive, year-long professional development initiative. The theoretical underpinnings for this coaching model are grounded in Knight’s

(2007) partnership coaching theory, and the Lastinger Instructional Framework (Ross, 2011).

Because the state of Florida is deeply embedded in teacher-evaluation based models of instructional effectiveness (Marsh et al., 2010; Weldon, 2011), the Lastinger Instructional Framework was designed to synthesize the most commonly used observation frameworks in the state (e.g. Marzano, Danielson).

The Lastinger Instructional Coaching Model is comprised of five progressive steps of implementation in which the instructional coach and teacher engage in a teacher-centered method of professional development, as seen in Figure 1.

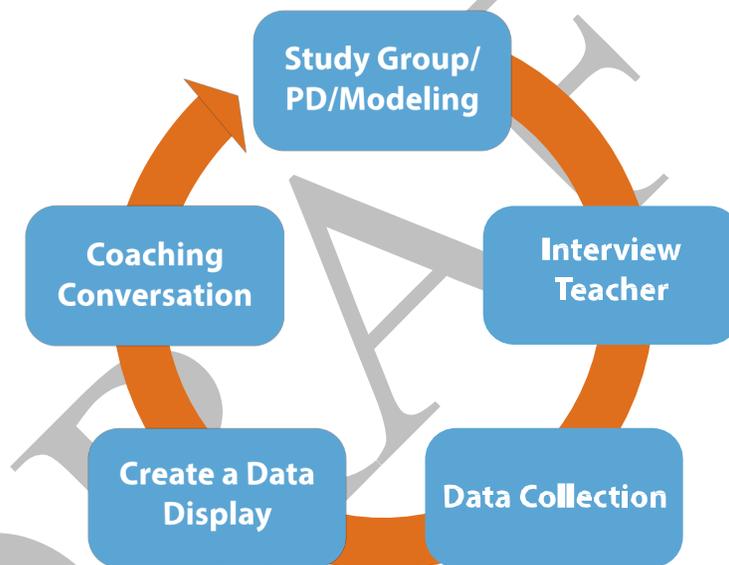


Figure 1. The Lastinger Coaching Model

In step one, the goal of increasing strategic knowledge of instruction is developed by teachers identifying a specific need or interest in their instructional practice. This can be done by watching a coach model a specific strategy, participating in a collaborative article study or school-based professional development, or being interested in a specific reform initiative within the school's improvement plan. After this initial training, step two involves the coach connecting the teacher's interest or need to the Lastinger Instructional Framework to determine a

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coaching focus. The coach and teacher meet, and the coach interviews the teacher to gather general information about the teacher's context as well as challenges he or she deems important. The teacher and coach then review the Lastinger Instructional Framework, decide a specific question to be answered, and determine from which domain of the framework the focus and coaching goals will come. They also decide what data will be most useful to the teacher to answer this question of practice, and determine how gathering that data will impact the lesson being observed.

Step three is the data collection observation, in which the coach observes the teacher, and collects descriptive evidence predetermined in the coaching interview that connects to the teacher's coaching focus. This is important to note because often teachers are coached with a broad focus, and get overwhelmed with the abundance of feedback they receive from coaches. This observation focus is strategically targeted to provide evidence to answer the teacher's question about their practice. Evidence can be recorded through note taking, video or audio equipment (agreed upon by the teacher), and will help the coach create non-evaluative feedback for the teacher. Once this observation is completed, step four entails the coach creating a "data display" that presents the evidence in a non-judgmental way, providing the teacher useful information related to his or her coaching focus. This data is presented in a non-attributive way, in order to provide open pathways of interpretation for both the teacher and the coach. Prior to the coaching conversation, the coach considers the data based on the coaching focus, and creates open-ended probing questions as well as some initial interpretations of the data to discuss with the teacher.

Step five is the coaching conversation, where the coach and teacher meet, ideally within three to five days of the coaching observation, to discuss the data collected from the observation related to the teacher's coaching focus. Because this model is based on Knight's (2007)

partnership principles of coaching, the coaching conversation must be situated with the coach and teacher as equals, sitting on the same side of the table and collaboratively exploring, interpreting, and discussing the data. At the end of this conversation, the coach invites the teacher to reflect on his or her learning, and then create a new or related coaching focus based upon this learning for future coaching cycles.

Research Methods

The larger research study from which this follow-up study was based (Rodgers, 2015) examined a reflective coaching model implemented as professional development in a large public school district in a Southeastern state, in which school-based coaches were trained and certified in this approach, using specific coaching methods based upon the Knight (2007) coaching philosophy and instructional framework developed by a nationally recognized learning center at a large public university in that state (Ross, 2011). The purpose of that interview study was to analyze and determine how the *teachers* being coached with this approach experienced coaching as professional development, and what factors these teachers perceived to contribute to their learning and change in practice.

Based on preliminary study's findings of coaching as a transformational tool for teacher learning and capacity (Rodgers, 2015), the author and one participant chose to continue this investigation through more qualitative research as co-researchers in order to determine how coaching changed paths of learning from teacher professional development to classroom pedagogy, based on this teacher's varied coaching experiences. This teacher participant documented her continued coaching and teaching experiences for the next school year through journaling, audio reflections (voice memos), and artifacts of student work. This second study took place for approximately 12 months after the first study concluded, and the two authors met

regularly to discuss, analyze, and categorize these journals, reflections, and student examples of work guided by Knight's (2007) coaching framework and the tenets of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Cranton, 1994; Kitchenham, 2008; Taylor, 1998).

Transformative learning theory refers to “learning that results in deep change or a transformation of our tacitly acquired frames of reference, composed of sets of assumptions and expectations, that determine, filter, and often distort the way we think, feel, decide, and act” (Marsick & Mezirow, 2002, p. 1). This adult learning theory is a way of processing, examining, questioning, validating, and revising perceptions of our experiences as adult learners. In order for adults to change or transform their thinking, they must problematize their meaning perspectives and critically reflect on assumptions supporting that problematic belief (Cranton, 1994). Within this research, teacher transformation is described as a *change of thinking, acting, and being*. This transformation means a change or adaption of a person's teaching *identity* based upon his or her reflective coaching experience, and thus, through that change of thinking and being, a change in acting, or practice, results.

A qualitative interpretive method of analysis (Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) was used to provide insight into the meanings constructed by this participant through her coaching experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 2002). Data collection for this research consisted of: (1) participant journals (both handwritten and typed); (2) participant voice reflections, that were transcribed verbatim; (3) one semi-structured interview with the researcher and participant, completed face to face; and (4) artifacts of student work and classroom activities based on the participant's coaching experiences with her students.

Artifacts, participant reflections, and interview transcripts were analyzed using procedures aligned with Hatch's (2002) process of interpretive analysis. Specifically, we each

examined one interview and journal entry asking what evidence existed in the data that was related to our research focus of a transformational coaching experience. From this, we clustered the data into salient themes and then met to discuss our individual analysis. We then sought confirming and disconfirming evidence of emerging themes (Glesne, 1999). Once themes and interpretations were discussed and we reached consensus based upon evidence from the data, the co-researchers analyzed additional data sets that included artifacts, reflections, and interview transcripts. During this process the co-researchers met several times to further discuss and refine codes and themes that were emerging. These intensive peer-debriefing sessions along with collecting data from a variety of sources helped to bolster the trustworthiness of this study's findings (Glesne, 1999; Hatch, 2002; Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

Findings: The Evolution of a Coaching Experience

In order to present the continuous coaching journey of this teacher, the authors have used a chronological narrative method of presenting themes from analysis. First, the background and context of this teacher's school and students will be presented through a vignette as told by the first author from the original research study to describe specific components of this teacher's peer coaching experience, and provide a foundational picture of how she began this journey of instructional coaching as a veteran teacher in a secondary alternative school setting. Following this, evidence will be presented from this current study's qualitative interviews and journals to provide the evolution of this teacher's coaching experience, and expand into the realm of taking coaching from professional development to pedagogy for her students. Finally, journal entries and artifact examples will be presented from the second author's own voice to narrate how this coaching journey has created not only coaching pedagogy in her classroom, but provided a way for her students to coach and learn from *each other*, and in addition, coach her as a teacher. This

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comprehensive analysis presents something not seen before in coaching literature, and provides an in-depth view of how instructional coaching can transform a teacher's practice, beliefs, and identity, as well as impact students' learning, confidence and collaboration in the classroom.

Nancy's Coaching Beginning...Fall, 2014

Nancy is a talented secondary Language Arts teacher and department head at an alternative learning school in her district, and is in her ninth year of teaching in this context. This school is comprised of students in grades 6 through 12 who have been removed from the district system, and have severe emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities. The purpose of Sally's school is to rehabilitate these students in a small, nurturing educational setting in order to mainstream them back into their regular public schools, and thus Sally's classroom is very different from other contexts. She has no more than ten students in each of her four classes, and has two full time aides for safety and security of both teachers and students. However, Nancy's students are still expected to follow district curriculum, and are assessed with the same instructional benchmarks. Nancy's principal, Mrs. J, leads the school by example and approaches each student with respect, compassion, and high expectations. Mrs. J actually uses coaching techniques in her teacher evaluation process, making the experience personal and positive. Because of this beneficial evaluation experience, Nancy was primed for coaching.

Nancy was approached by another teacher in her school to engage in this reflective coaching cycle, and she agreed because of the friendship she and her coach had fostered. When Nancy first began the coaching process, she viewed herself humbly, stating she wasn't "good enough" as a teacher to receive the attention of a coach. Her context created a sense of doubt in her abilities because her school is viewed within the district as the least rigorous, but most

difficult environment. Nancy recalled previous district professional development trainings in which she wasn't even given the materials because of the low expectations for her students.

Nancy's coach re-conceptualized Knight's (2007) reflective coaching model to make allowances for their special context, implementing additional observations and coaching techniques that made this experience benefit both Nancy and her students. In essence, Nancy's coach was coaching her as well as her students because of the close, personal teaching environment of their school. Teachers individualize learning for each student based upon the student's behavior plan, and therefore Nancy's coach incorporated these plans into her coaching goals. She established rapport with Nancy and her students by conducting a pre-observation before each coaching observation to create trust and respect in Nancy's classroom. Because of the learning needs of Nancy's students, it was crucial to create a common language for observations, feedback and discussions. Nancy's coach used the data display as a tool to both analyze Nancy's practice as well as examine student engagement, behavior and achievement. She encouraged praxis by having Nancy implement strategies the next day to further her student's learning. Nancy's coach provided validation and created pride in Nancy's practice, but also challenged this veteran teacher with new research and ideas to help her high-need students.

During her coaching cycle, Nancy realized that if she used these same coaching techniques as pedagogy for her students, she could empower them and make them reflect, just as she had done as a critical learner. She and her coach began to create lessons based upon their reflective coaching model. Students would teach each other lessons, critically observe each other and collect data, discuss their findings, and reflect and assess their own learning. The transformation of these special needs students was incredible. Nancy was being coached by her

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peer while simultaneously coaching her students, and her students were coaching each other. From this success, Nancy then incorporated coaching into her teacher leadership role, informally coaching other teachers and encouraging them to incorporate coaching within their teaching. Nancy decided to become a certified coach as her peer coach had been, and went through the powerful professional development that she had the benefit of receiving during her coaching experiences with her coach colleague. From Nancy's coaching cycles and creative data displays, she realized specific behavioral changes that she could implement in this alternative school setting, and after successful implementation in her classroom, she advocated to make these behavioral modifications school-wide. With the reflective coaching that Nancy received from her peer, she was transformed. She became a reflective learner, educator, teacher leader, and student advocate, and eventually a coach herself. While this veteran teacher improved her practice, more importantly, she also provided empowerment to all stakeholders by encouraging everyone to be a coach.

Nancy's context makes her story different from most coaches described in coaching literature in that she works with all emotionally and behaviorally disabled students (EBD) in a secondary school setting in which many students have been removed from their regular zoned schools. She teaches Language Arts, Composition, and Reading these students, with many students being far below grade level due to their learning disabilities and personal backgrounds. Several of Nancy's students are homeless or in foster homes, and her school is funded with Title One grant money because 100% of the student population is on free or reduced lunch (FRL). Nancy's school has a staff of 40 teachers, a principal and an assistant principal, teaching aides and support staff that are all trained to handle severe EBD students. But despite these tremendous challenges, this school is a remarkable place of learning, and Nancy attributes that to

her school leadership and the quality of teachers and staff. In her district that is known for its affluence and student achievement, Nancy often experiences a negative stigma related to her students and her school:

I can't tell you how many times I've been to PDs outside the school in our district...its so frustrating to hear, when I say I'm from (school), the looks, the stigma...they think we are a babysitting school. They think that we go to teach here because we can't teach anywhere else. Almost every single place I go, they say "oh" and turn their noses up. It's so frustrating because I've never met a group of more professional, capable teachers than at this school...none of those teachers could deal what we deal with on a daily basis (Interview 1).

A teacher-student coaching approach

Nancy's confidence in her abilities wavered at the beginning of the coaching process, and she was torn between wanting to help herself, and help her students:

It was really difficult to determine a coaching focus. I didn't know whether to be selfish and focus on how I'm teaching or if I wanted to really work on how to take care of the kids in terms of behavior and learning. I didn't want to focus on me. But at the same time you want to, which is so different from an evaluation perspective...But this, there were just so many choices and directions I could go (Interview 2).

Nancy and her coach decided the best course of action was to focus on individual student behaviors, and examine how each student in her classroom was engaged, and how that related to her instructional delivery. As a result of this personal coaching focus, Nancy's coach added specific elements to the reflective coaching model. She added a pre-observation to each coaching cycle in order to establish trust and rapport in the classroom by simply being present in that space, and she would often informally consult with students about their needs and goals as well before deciding on ways to collect data for the coaching observation. During the pre-coaching conference, Nancy and her coach determined common language and concepts in order to understand the data properly. Nancy's coach also incorporated both teacher and student data

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within the data display to give Nancy the full picture of the observation. In her second interview, Nancy describes her first coaching cycle, and the results she received about a specific student:

We needed to establish our parameters, what specifically she wanted me to know, when I said “off task”, my definition of off task may not be the same thing as what she thinks. So we listed out what I felt was the student’s off task behavior and then the progression of what he did. And then from there she wrote down what she saw... But she did see some things, and from that she researched one or two strategies... And it was pretty amazing the things that she saw, because I looked at them differently. Just like (student)’s hair twisting, I’m like, “Oh, that happens all the time” but she saw it as “That could be a trigger...” and it was a really good idea because we tried a strategy the next day and she actually came back and watched it... and I did start doing it... to observe triggers, and let them know about the subject before I would teach. I would say, “Okay, tomorrow we’re going start on this, start thinking about anything that you know about it, or if you have any issues with it let me know” (Interview 2).

Nancy realized through the data that she was definitely doing some good things in her classroom, but she saw many holes and opportunities for growth. What she and her coach also realized was that this kind of data display could be used as a teaching tool to directly help her students. What would happen if she showed this data to her student? They pondered the consequences, and decided that it might help in terms of the rewards system that the school had in place for positive student behavior. She discusses her experience with seeing the data for the first time, and discussing the outcomes with her coach:

Seeing that data was eye-opening. Because you don’t see it. And they don’t see it. You can say, “Oh my gosh that kid talks a lot,” but until you see it in black and white, whoa. Huge difference. And then to have her come back and see from the data, “Oh my gosh, what we changed has decreased his talking by 80 percent.” I think that is invaluable... And for it not to be attached to any evaluative process, I don’t know why we don’t do it all the time! It was like a Ping-Pong match, you know. Back and forth and back and forth... (Interview 3).

After Nancy’s initial coaching cycle, she decided that she would continue to focus on student engagement with each individual student, and she and her coach began to use coaching as pedagogy for her students.

Coaching as pedagogy for student empowerment...Spring, 2015

Nancy gleaned useful information from her coaching conversation and data display, and immediately transferred that learning to improve her practice through using coaching techniques with her students. She relayed a story of an intelligent male student who was unmotivated and not engaged in her classroom. Nancy had tried several times to engage him and spark his interest, but to no avail. She and her coach then discussed using data collection as a motivator to engage this student, and give him a sense of involvement and ownership in the classroom. Just as her data display made Nancy aware of elements in her classroom which she could analyze, she hoped this student would create his own data display and become involved and active in his own learning. In her third interview, Nancy describes her thought process of how to make this coaching technique into pedagogy:

I was actually thinking about a particular student that I have, he is extremely intelligent. He just didn't see any purpose in school at all. So his behavior was completely shut down at the beginning. He would pick at his scalp and it was horrible. So I thought, "Oh, this data collection... that's right up his alley." Because he wants to correct me and he notices everything, he wants to be the teacher. So when he came in, I said, "I'm having some issues and I want you to help me with something." So I asked him to help me chart and figure a way to display the discussion with the other kids, like if they were on task, and what their discussions were... And oh my gosh, it was night and day. He came up with amazing data! And his engagement improved. And he discussed his chart with me just like I did with (coach). The kid is like my best buddy now, he is ridiculous. He smiled at me, and he never smiled...and now he smiles all the time (Interview 3).

Coaching as Pedagogy with students is an undiscovered concept in the literature, and as evidenced by Nancy's success with this student. Nancy and her coach determined this student's needs through first collecting research themselves about his engagement through observation and data collection, and then connecting that learning to student need. Through scaffolding both his data collection and discussion process in order to ensure specific learning goals were met, Nancy opened the door to a new way to reach her often unreachable students.

As Nancy and her coach continued through the coaching process, she continued to transform her ideas about her practice from continuous data collection, conversations with critical feedback, and immediate implementation of strategies that her coach and she discovered and learned about together. From using coaching as pedagogy on one student, Nancy then decided to use coaching as pedagogy in an entire class. This presented several challenges because many of her students were inept at collaborating and working together due to their emotional and learning challenges.

She forged ahead with her coach, and carefully designed how this coaching “project” would be implemented while still continuously inquiring into her own practice with her coach. Students would be put into groups, and then each group would work together to present, or “teach” a subject of their choice within specific parameters. But as each group was teaching, their peers were observing them, collecting data, and creating feedback. After each group presented, there would then be a group discussion about the instructional content, the relevance of the topic, and what specific learning goals they covered. Students would then present their “data display” of things they learned, positive feedback about the lesson, and critical reflection for improvement. Reflective coaching came full circle in Nancy’s classroom and opened several doors: She was being coached to improve her practice and implement this strategy, and she was coaching her students to learn in a new way, who then in turn, were coaching each other. Nancy describes how she experienced this new pedagogy:

I was thinking differently about my instruction...I wanted the kids to come and experience it, this transparency and this empowerment, so I tried it with my English class. I flipped it to where they were teaching through their presentations, and I didn’t grade. I sat back and I let them teach the class. They had to teach the presentation. They had to control what was going on. And their peers were observing them and giving feedback. They had to collect data, and they were evaluating their learning from each other. WOW... And one of the kids said, “I don’t know how to explain this to you. This is the first time I’ve ever done anything like this. And it’s the only time I’ve ever liked learning

and understood why we were doing it.” And I was like... wh-ha-haaa!! It was awesome! This is the moment teachers dream of, you know?...and today they’re like, “When are we starting on the next one?” So now we’re brainstorming ideas of what to do next... I would have never guessed that would happen like that. I teach like I learn, and that’s what I learned through the coaching project. That gave me the idea to have them do this, to be coaches. So...it helped and all of that’s connected because they have to have an evidence base, and for them... I think the biggest part for the kids is the buy-in (Interview 4).

For Nancy as a veteran teacher, coaching reaffirmed many parts of her practice to make her confident, but also challenged her as a teacher, a teacher leader, and a learner. Reflective coaching not only transformed her practice and provided her with strategies to improve her high-need students learning, it transformed her beliefs about both teaching and learning. When asked what was most important about her coaching experience, she replied it was both the tangible evidence of her data combined with the ability to not only help her as a teacher, but help her students, and see their success:

And it’s something that I could see... you sit down and talk to somebody just like we’re sitting down now...it’s that quick and easy to do but it helps you grow, and I think it helps the kids grow a lot more than me actually. It reaffirmed me, you know? She said “Well, you’re an awesome teacher” and it reaffirms that...and I tell the kids the same thing. I have to continue to learn. The day I stop learning is the day I’m dead (Interview 5).

Because of the support of Nancy’s principal and school administration, and her coach’s innovative use of this reflective coaching model, Nancy felt like a new and different teacher after nine years of teaching in a very difficult teaching environment:

I thought we grew, and I grew a ton. I think I just totally flipped how I looked at things. You want to try new things, but you don’t know whether it’s going to work or not, and at least you have somebody to bounce it off of. It just sparks your ideas, it sparks your interest. It sparks everything for you to say “okay, now I need to do extra to help this kid.” It changed the whole dynamics of the room, and now it’s changing the dynamics of the school. The kids see it and feel it, it’s really exciting...and I’m totally rethinking how I teach. Because if it works with our kids here, it will work with everybody (Interview 5).

Coaching as teaching, learning, and building community... Fall, 2015

RUNNING HEAD: Coaching as Pedagogy

In the fall of 2015, Nancy transferred to a different high school in her district, and continued to work with EBD students as well as inclusive students in her secondary Language Arts classrooms. Though not in the same alternative setting as previously, many of Nancy's students from her alternative school were transferred into her new classroom due to their success in her teaching environment. Thus, she decided to continue to use coaching as pedagogy in several forms to promote collaboration, community, and confidence with these new students. In the following journal excerpt, Nancy describes how she incorporated abbreviated coaching conversations into her Language Arts curriculum to improve writing and comprehension, and the power that these relationships provided.

After seeing such a change in the students that I thought I could never get to work, I decided to try coaching as a constant strategy in my new class. I took my 12th grade class and looked at their last results on the practice SAT that they took in November. I saw that a great deal of their issues were on writing and on the same standards we had been drilling the past month. I thought, maybe they aren't understanding it because I am not explaining it the way they can understand it. So, I had them write a quick paragraph to a prompt that was related to our content. Then, instead of me taking up all the papers and grading them, I reverted to coaching. I had them exchange their papers with their binder buddies (shoulder partners). We all went through the items that should be in a good paragraph and I had the students highlight those items in different colors. Then below the paragraph, they had to write down things they enjoyed about the writing and one thing they would like to see improved upon. I then had them have a coaching conversation: one student talked to the other for one minute about their paper, making sure to finish with the one thing they would like to see improved upon, and they had to use the data (their paragraphs) in the conversations. After the one minute, the second student

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repeated the process. The next step was to return the papers to their owner and have the student make any adjustments. There were a few flaws. I did have a couple of students say that the paper was perfect and another student commented that everyone can always improve. The students ended up counseling each other and themselves as well as learning things that they didn't realize they needed to improve upon. The data always speaks.

I use this and other strategies for many different lessons. I have even created Binder Buddies which is a mentor/coaching strategy that keeps all students coaching, and more importantly, listening and not judging. Binder Buddies are responsible for checking and signing off on their buddy's work, keeping them organized and accountable. It has been an eye opener for many students because they are no longer just not doing the work because they don't want to. They now know that it isn't always all about them, and they feel a connection with their buddy, or coach, and want to succeed for that person as well. This has created tremendous strength and community in a group that didn't like each other, generally. They realize what they do or do not do affects others. They are held accountable and to the standard that their coach would like, just as if a coworker relied on you or a colleague in your next educational adventure. The coaches are learning, too, and cooperating. Not only has it helped these kids, but it has helped me understand as a teacher where their gaps in understanding really are, and they are taking ownership of those gaps and working on them together.

From this journal entry, we can see that the same coaching outcomes that Nancy originally experienced in her peer coaching relationship are occurring within her students. Trust and rapport are cultivated, and data provided within these "buddy" relationships helps students understand the challenges in their writing and comprehension skills. An interesting finding from

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this journal also illustrates the power of the coaching cycle, and how each stakeholder within this coaching journey benefit from non-judgmental dialogue, reflection, and praxis (See Figure 2).

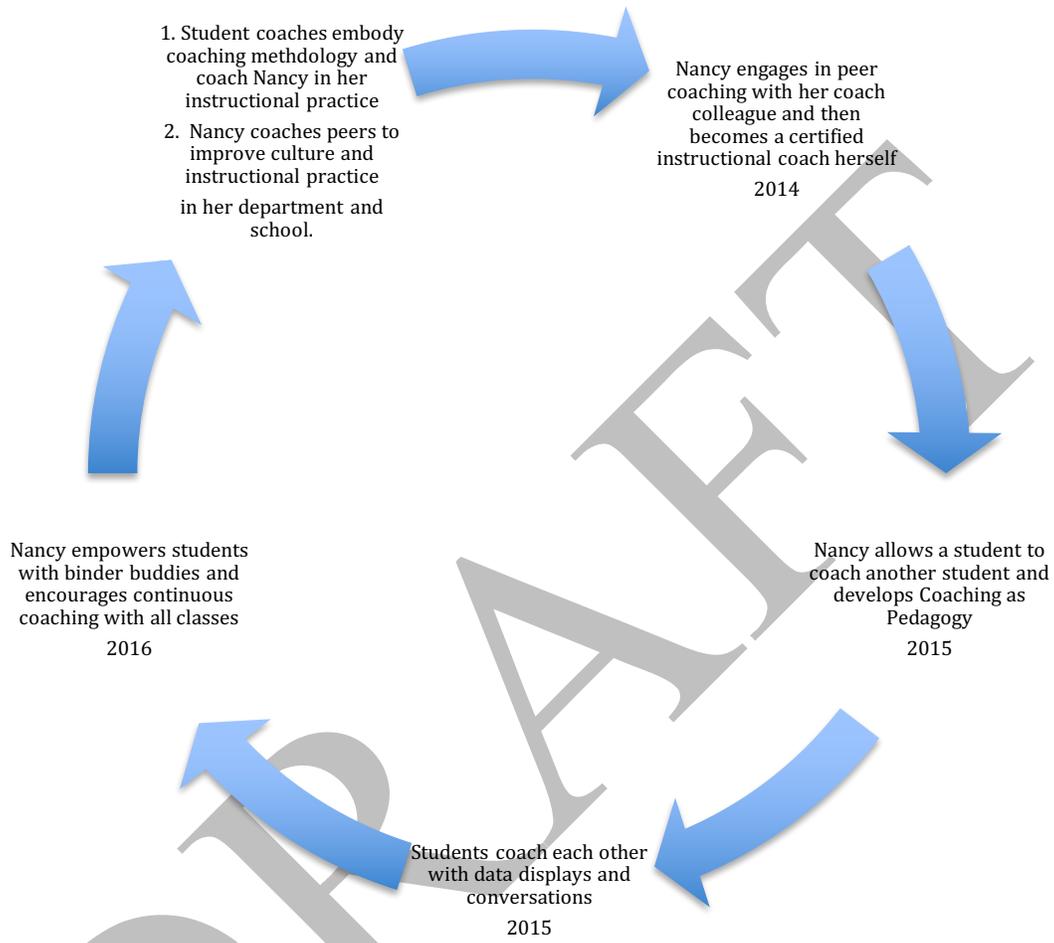


Figure 2. Nancy's Coaching Journey

A Coaching Culture...Spring, 2016

After being in her new traditional high school for a little less than a year, Nancy reflected on her coaching experience, and the experiences she noticed with her students and her colleagues.

I swear now coaching is in everything I do. It's my identity. I became the leader for our 9th grade English team and have gone into other team members' classes to give feedback on a

certain lesson or on select students' behavior. I'm coaching teachers. We have also taken it one step further and visited other PLC groups to share how we are working to help each other improve. I'm coaching other PLCs. I am also a part of the DLL team for my school which takes strategies and updated programs relating to technology from county professional development and brings them back to the school in the form a Lunch N Learn. Staff is encouraged to ask us for help with their employee requirements as well as student performance. Finally, I have been working with a few older veteran teachers that are having a hard time transitioning from the old curriculum to the new. When you have a teacher that has taught the same way for 30 years and it has worked, it is hard to ask them to adjust to a new way. However, utilizing our coaching method has helped us transition these teachers to a more updated curriculum with little or no reluctance. Actually, it has been quite the opposite. These teachers are commended for their expertise and we utilize that knowledge, as we should, in creating a fusion that includes what they already teach with today's updated techniques.

My kids are continuing to coach each other, and have even come up with ways to coach me in my teaching practice. It has become a transparent, non-judgmental environment. Every so often, I ask them to collect data on things they see I'm doing that don't make sense. I look at that data, and realize they've got it, they understand this method. I realize there is no perfect way to teach or learn, and no perfect classroom. But coaching has allowed me to reinvigorate my love for teaching, and has giving some pride and community to my kids, and really helped them learn better.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this research add to coaching as professional development literature by presenting detailed examples and experiences of reflective coaching from a teacher's perspective,

as well as describing the impact and outcomes of these coaching experiences within the different contexts of this study. A coaching approach is complex, made up of a coach's thinking (philosophies) and doing (behaviors). Within coaching literature, the term approach and stance are used interchangeably, and researchers define coaching approaches or stances in these two same parameters (Borman & Feger, 2006; Deussen et al., 2003; Heineke, 2013; Ippolito, 2010; Killion, 2009). Killion (2009) described the difference in stances between coaching *light* and *heavy* as a difference in the coaching relationship. Coaches who coach light build a trusted relationship with a teacher, but focus solely on that trusting relationship. Coaching heavy refers to behaviors and interactions of a coach that force teachers to uncover assumptions, and this coaching relationship is one of tension and growth, which pushes both coaches and teachers out of their comfort zone.

We can transfer this same theory of coaching light and heavy to Coaching as pedagogy for student improvement. Instructional pedagogy for students (add more lit here and in review to best practices).

Another important discovery from this research was the concept of coaching as pedagogy, and how that instructional strategy progressed and evolved through different students, contexts, and content. This teacher transformed this reflective coaching model from professional development to pedagogy to empower her students, who then in turn coached each other. This finding has not been reported in the literature thus far, and warrants continued examination. It is important to note that Nancy's original school context offered an environment conducive to trying this pedagogical approach (small classes, two teachers, block schedule, and administrative support), but then she transferred this approach to her new traditional high school in order to reach her inclusive and EBD students. This finding suggests that while this type of

professional development impacts instruction within the classroom, this impact can reach beyond to a holistic approach in which coaching can be used to improve practice, and can be used *as* practice, thus broadening the range of stakeholders who benefit from this approach.

Transformation seemed to be both an outcome of coaching as well as a principle these teachers identified as necessary in order to broaden the scope of their coaching towards overall school improvement. According to Nancy, her peer coach never initiated this process looking to create a transformation, but yet she viewed the transformation of her teaching identity as necessary in order to push her coaching experience further. Transformations occurred in these classrooms, and included Nancy, her students, and her colleagues. This transformational shift was presented as both process and product. Findings suggest that if the principle of transformation is incorporated as a coaching goal and outcome, such as praxis, then the scope and breadth of coaching can be widened, strengthened, and used to create overall school reform. If a coach and teacher engage in coaching to transform, they no longer just focus on a specific set of criteria, they focus on the school environment as a whole, and see the big picture of the power of coaching.

Nancy's coaching journey is one that goes beyond any description reported in coaching literature, and should be dubbed as the "perfect storm" of coaching. Within Nancy's experience, it is important to deconstruct the specific pieces of this puzzle that created different kinds of transformation: (1) Nancy's teaching identity and skill level, (2) administrative support and school culture, (3) Nancy's coach and coaching lens, (4) the transfer of coaching from professional development to pedagogy for student empowerment, and (5) the scope of transformation from reflective coaching, in a cycle of impact that included the coach, teacher,

students, other teachers, and administrators, showing comprehensive school implementation and change.

When beginning this coaching process, Nancy felt unsure of herself as a teacher, but possessed reflective qualities and was motivated to learn and improve her practice. Because of the stigma she encountered being a teacher in her alternative school, being considered a “glorified babysitter” and not considered rigorous or professional in stature by other schools within her district, her teaching identity was one filled with conflict. Within her school culture, however, Nancy felt supported, appreciated and challenged, and recognized similar exemplary teaching qualities in her peers and in her administration. This positive, evidence-based culture established an environment conducive to inquiry-based teacher learning through reflective coaching, and was the first piece of this puzzle.

The second piece of this puzzle was Nancy’s peer coach. Nancy’s coach approached this process with an ability to decipher exactly what she needed as a teacher through a lens focused on her students. According to Nancy, her peer coach intentionally did not incorporate a coaching frame based upon evaluation, and instead concentrated on aspects of this process to benefit Nancy’s teaching. In other words, she focused on the process, not the product. Nancy’s coach tailored elements of this coaching model to fit this context specifically based upon the special needs of her students, as well as the non-traditional aspects of her classroom. Because of their specific context and her principal’s support, Nancy’s coach was given time outside of class to observe and work with Nancy and her students, which was paramount to the success of this endeavor. Through this combination of elements, Nancy’s coach created an experience that surpassed internal teacher change in beliefs and practice, and instead created transformation of her entire classroom.

The third piece of this puzzle relates to the creativity and intuitiveness of both Nancy and her peer coach. By realizing the empowerment and learning that she encountered through this process, both she and her coach connected this outcome to the needs of her students who suffered from engagement and behavioral issues, and translated reflective coaching from professional development to pedagogy for her students. Nancy's alternative students not only embraced coaching as pedagogy, but advocated for this to be an instructional practice in all their classrooms. Thus, Nancy and her coach broadened the scope of this coaching process from coach to teacher, teacher to students, students to each other, and students back to teachers, making this coaching process continuous and encompassing all stakeholders.

As this transformation occurred, turning Nancy from teacher into coach, she started to encourage this same transformation in her students, and continued to use this instructional strategy in her new teaching environment. Coaching "infected" her new school, from students to teachers, and created a culture of strength, empowerment, and learning for all stakeholders. This final piece of the puzzle is the most important, and supports findings in professional development literature with regard to comprehensive change and school reform (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011; Fullan, 2008; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Knight, 2007). This holistic approach to coaching, in which the focus widened from improving teacher practice to improving student learning to improving school success, provides empirical support for this reflective coaching approach as a method of school improvement and reform.

The challenges of teachers and coaches to provide effective professional development to improve teacher practice and student learning is well documented in the literature, and this study has presented just a snapshot of the tensions and transformations that teachers and students experience when engaging in reflective coaching. This research shows the potential of reflective

coaching to push teachers toward a level of reflection, praxis, and transformation that will not only will help them better meet the diverse needs of their students, but also provide benefit to their classrooms, colleagues and schools. The ultimate goal of coaching is improvement in student learning (Killion, 2009; Knight, 2007), and this research has shown several detailed pathways towards achieving that goal.

DRAFT

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