VOICES OF TRANSFORMATION: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAMS

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

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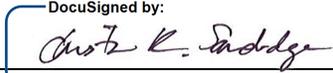
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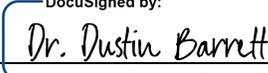
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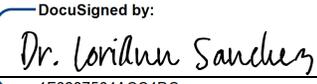
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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative dissertation explores the implementation of new instructional coaching programs in elementary schools, focusing on the perceptions of instructional coaches and teachers. Amid growing demands for educational improvement and teacher support in the United States, instructional coaching has emerged as a pivotal strategy for enhancing teacher performance and student outcomes. This study specifically examines the relationship-building practices and barriers encountered in the initiation of new coaching programs, defined as those implemented within the 2022-2023 academic cycle. Employing a narrative inquiry approach, this research conducts in-depth interviews and observations with sixteen participants (eight coach-teacher pairs) to explore their lived experiences and insights in their new instructional coaching program. The findings reveal that successful relationship-building between coaches and teachers is identified as a critical factor in the implementation process. Furthermore, significant barriers included communication challenges, lack of resources, and resistance to change, which can hinder the effectiveness of coaching initiatives. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the need for structured support systems in coaching programs and offering recommendations for districts to enhance the efficacy of such initiatives. It underscores the importance of fostering strong coach-teacher relationships and addressing the barriers to effective coaching to improve the overall educational environment.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Educational leaders are faced with many difficulties leading them to make drastic decisions to improve education for all students. One of the most challenging encounters includes educational leaders researching support services for teachers. In the United States, 18 billion dollars are spent yearly on educators' professional development and trainings with the aim of equipping teachers with tools to make factual, evidence-based decisions (Education Next, 2018; Martin et al., 2019). For decades, the quality of education for students has been a growing concern in the United States (Walkowiak, 2016; Westmoreland & Swezey, 2019). Teachers are responsible for providing their students with a high-quality standard of education. With the demands and responsibilities teachers are faced with, many realize that meeting the requirements is almost impossible without support. Therefore, educational leaders must provide teachers with the proper guidance they need to meet the high demands of quality education for students in the United States (Martin et al., 2019; Schweisfurth, 2023; Colson et al., 2017; Walkowiak, 2016; Westmoreland & Swezey, 2019).

Administrators can offer support services to educators by providing knowledge of teaching strategies from an experienced academic instructional coach (De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Knight, 2019; Schweisfurth, 2023; Walsh et al., 2020). Instructional coaches are teachers who have undergone extensive pedagogical training to support and work with educators on best instructional practices (Colson et al., 2017; De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020). Academic instructional coaches can also provide ongoing professional development while reviewing data and strategies with the teacher so they understand what the next step would be to help students be successful (De Jong & Campoli, 2018). The growing demands and responsibilities facing teachers make it difficult for them to stay current with increased

expectations (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ramos & Hughes, 2020). These expectations can result in low levels of self-efficacy, increased burnout, and unpleasant experiences with teaching, which can result in leaving the teaching profession altogether (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Therefore, academic instructional coaches can serve as vital resources for classroom teachers, as they provide support services and guidance (Wood et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The greatest barriers districts face regarding the implementation of instructional coaching programs include communication (i.e., interpersonal relationship skills between teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches), lack of knowledge by the instructional coach (e.g., curriculum, classroom management), and lack of available resources (e.g., curriculum programs, teachers' time availability, funding) (De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Research reveals that further challenges to implementing instructional coaching programs in school districts may be due to some of the following reasons: (1) a lack of district funding for academic instructional coaches (Bouffard, 2021; Lewis, 2021); (2) a lack of teachers' time availability during school hours (De Jong & Campoli, 2018); (3) teacher resistance due to lack of knowledge (Kho et al., 2020); and (4) districts finding or training qualified and experienced instructional coaches (Dahlkamp et al., 2017; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Despite these barriers, districts continue to search for ways to improve systems already in place. To offset aforementioned barriers, teachers should receive support through instructional coaching programs so they can learn to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy, build confidence, and persevere through complicated situations (Bandura, 1977; Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Donohoo, 2018).

The available literature has shed light on coaching practices implemented in classrooms. However, there is a gap in research specifically examining the implementation of new instructional coaching programs in school districts. The specific problem to be addressed in this study has been how ineffective communication strategies, lack of knowledge, and lack of access to available resources create barriers when implementing a new instructional coaching program, resulting in adverse impacts to teachers' job satisfaction, decreased attrition rates in school districts, and, ultimately, student achievement. This qualitative study focused on elementary instructional coaches and classroom teachers to evaluate relationship-building strategies between teachers and their instructional coach, and the barriers faced when implementing a new instructional coaching program.

This study focuses on the perceptions of elementary school instructional coaches and teachers involved in implementing a new instructional coaching program. The present dissertation study distinguishes between coaching practices and coaching programs. This study defines coaching practices as occurring at the micro teaching level. Such practices by the teacher are repetitive, continuous, and implemented on a day-to-day basis, and includes changing teachers' behaviors to meet the needs of their students. On the other hand, this study defines coaching programs as the macro structured support systems that involve a mentor-mentee relationship consisting of methods that not only modify behaviors and daily practices, but also change the teacher's perceptions on continuously seeking additional support. Few studies have been conducted on teachers' and coaches' perceptions, particularly in regard to examining the coach-teacher relationship and barriers associated with new instructional coaching programs. Exploring factors related to relationship-building and barriers helps identify important milestones in the development of productive, effective, and successful coaching programs.

Background and Theoretical Framework

Academic instructional coaches are viewed as a critical component of teacher effectiveness, as they have become an integral part of assisting teachers with instructional delivery, collaboration, and implementing best classroom teaching practices (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). In addition, educators work with teachers in a variety of instructional methods (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2018), such as relationship-driven, teacher-centered, and student-centered coaching, as well as instructional coaching cycles (Knight & Skrtic, 2021; Teemant et al., 2011). Coaches can thus help create professional learning communities based on content, grade level, and vertical and horizontal alignments (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Teachers feel that instructional coaches can provide consistent opportunities to work with colleagues, share ideas, and reflect on their practices (Bair, 2017; Knight, 2019). Through coaching opportunities, teachers can create their lessons together, analyze student data, and conduct observations of one another (Knight, 2019). This learning environment helps bring them together, so they do not have to teach in isolation (Bair, 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). As a result, sharing their experiences and ideas helps teachers to feel more fulfilled in their position (Kraft & Blazar, 2018). This type of collaboration empowers and builds capacity for educators (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018).

Academic instructional coaches can help teachers see instructional delivery from a different point of view. Coaches can assist teachers in providing differentiation for their students based on the student's intelligence, identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, and developing an instructional plan to meet those students' needs (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Furthermore, instructional coaches can provide ideas for instructional delivery, such as class discussions, lectures, and project-based learning (Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018).

These instructional delivery methods help teachers keep students engaged and encourage learning (Bair, 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Furthermore, research conducted by Bair (2017) showed that teachers who used a coach were able to implement a variety of instructional strategies that fit the learning needs of their students. The teachers recognized the coach as someone who could model best practices, show how to acquire more student engagement, and provide ongoing and reflective support (Bair, 2017). As a result, teachers could apply the new strategies to their teaching to address student needs (Bair, 2017).

Academic instructional coaching is a proven form of professional development for educators across the United States (Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2011a; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). This type of professional development allows teachers to collaborate with each other, empowering them to incorporate research-based methods into their instruction (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Research projects directed by Knight (2019) have demonstrated the positive impact that instructional coaching has in ensuring that teachers use research-based practices to improve their instruction. Knight's projects used instructional coaching to advance the teachers' methods and skills for the aim of improving student academics. Throughout the United States, coaches have implemented these coaching methods in various ways to help support classroom teachers.

Instructional coaching provides teachers with tools that can positively impact their instructional practices, such as classroom management, methodological approaches, and analysis of data (Bell & Ramkellawan, 2017). Regarding classroom management, teachers have struggled with determining ways in which they could be better supported through instructional coaching. Bell and Ramkellawan's (2017) study revealed classroom management practices elaborated by instructional coaches that have helped teachers build community within their classroom and

model best instructional strategies. For example, to build community in classrooms, Bell and Ramkellawan's (2017) suggest a reciprocal approach, which begins with teachers building a trusting relationship with their students so that students can learn to trust their teacher. Having an instructional coach to model best classroom management practices provides teachers with vital tools they can implement in their daily teaching routines. Gaining the proper knowledge and skills to overcome classroom management struggles allows teachers to better pace their lessons and efficiently instruct with minimal interruptions (Bell & Ramkellawan, 2017).

With regard to the second impact, methodological approaches, Ehri and Flugman (2018) examined the year-long effects of a mentoring program for teachers to improve reading and writing skills for kindergarten through third-grade students in an urban New York area. Mentoring and instructional coaching can be viewed as similar concepts, as they involve one-on-one relationships between the learner and the mentor/coach. The major difference between mentoring and instructional coaching is that coaching generally deals with a specific area of development that draws from reflective dialogue and learning (Brockbank & McGill, 2006). In a study by Ehri and Flugman (2018), sixty-nine primary teachers from kindergarten through third grade were trained to teach systematic phonics instruction to students and a group of mentor teachers trained classroom teachers in Orton-Gillingham or the Spalding Method. Ehri and Flugman (2018) commented on the program's success, elaborating on the importance of having mentors teach teachers about speech structure and writing systems. Ehri and Flugman's (2018) study is useful in understanding how teachers may or may not properly implement approaches similar to the Orton-Gillingham or the Spalding Method because it helps determine whether they teach reading or other content correctly. When teachers are not fully trained in a program, they

can run the risk of not implementing methods successfully, which is why instructional coaching is important for curriculum instruction and data analysis (Ehri & Flugman, 2018).

Concerning the third impact, analysis of data, Bertrand et al. 's (2015) study investigated the use of data to alter instructional practices by examining a group of teachers working with an instructional coach. The aim was to understand how instructional coaches can help influence a teacher's responses in their data interpretation, which results in altering their instructional delivery (Bertrand et al., 2015). Bertrand et al. (2015) study also shared that working with an instructional coach can often guide teachers on data analysis to improve student growth. The results indicated that coaches helped facilitate responses to data, particularly in cases where teachers changed their instruction based on findings. Teachers who did not interpret data with an instructional coach demonstrated little change in their instruction. In fact, teachers responded to data by just re-teaching topics, having students reflect on their results, or providing students with extra support from an outside source. The findings identified a slight improvement for students if the teachers' delivery of instruction did not change (Bertrand et al., 2015). The analysis of data thus provides coaches with quantitative findings that allow them to make informed decisions, with the goal of increasing student achievement (Bertrand et al., 2015).

By examining the above studies, it is apparent that providing instructional coaching support to elementary school teachers provides a positive effect, as it offers them valuable tools to improve their instructional practices (Bell & Ramkellawan, 2017; Bertrand et al., 2015; Ehri & Flugman, 2018). Ehri and Flugman (2018) revealed that many teachers' attitudes changed once teachers saw the impact that coaching was making on student achievement. Furthermore, Bell and Ramkellawan (2017) also noted that teachers felt they could improve their teaching and became more open to implementing new teaching strategies as a result of working with an

instructional coach. For instance, Bertrand et al.'s (2015) study argued that teachers working with instructional coaches are more likely to use new skills than unassisted teachers. Findings also demonstrated that teachers who received support from coaches made more instructional changes than those who received no support (Bertrand et al., 2015). In sum, research indicates that instructional coaching can positively influence teachers' practices and, ultimately, student achievement. Instructional coaching can provide support and professional development that is essential for enhancing the skills of teachers practices (Bell & Ramkellawan, 2017; Bertrand et al., 2015; Ehri & Flugman, 2018).

In aiming to understand teachers' and instructional coaches' perceptions of relationship-building practices and barriers to implementing new instructional coaching programs, this study combines a theoretical and a conceptual framework. The theoretical framework useful for understanding the teacher's perspective and their need for instructional coaching is Abraham Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, which examines ways in which human activity is motivated by physiological or psychological needs (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020; Maslow, 1943; Milheim, 2012). Within the Theory of Human Motivation, Maslow (1943) proposes a Hierarchy of Needs to examine the motivation behind teachers' responses to academic support from an instructional coach. To be successful, Maslow (1943) suggests people must first fulfill their basic needs (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). In the case of the teacher-instructional coach relationship, it is first important to understand the teachers' needs, motivations, and perspectives.

The conceptual framework used to understand the instructional coach's perspective and the methods used to help teachers is Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy, which is heavily used by instructional coaches to reflect upon the reasons behind their actions and methods. To frame this study, Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy theory is referenced

to draw on effective strategies that build on strong relationships between instructional coaches and teachers. This theory is founded on the equality and mutual respect between instructional coaches and teachers. The Partnership Philosophy theory uses seven guiding principles to examine how an instructional coach can support teachers. These seven core principles are equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2007). Since these principles are based on conceptual knowledge, they provide useful language for instructional coaches to describe the value of each coaching session.

Although Knight (2007) presents his Partnership Philosophy as a theory, it has practical applications. Through developing a partnership mindset, the reflection processes lead teachers to evaluate their teaching methods and challenge preconceived ideas regarding their teaching practices. Given that this study focuses on the perceptions of implementing a new instructional coaching program, the Partnership Philosophy theory provides useful ways to apply these principles to the overall relationship development between coaches and teachers. The Partnership Approach thus combines theory-based principles with practical approaches that can benefit instructional coaches, teachers, and school districts.

Research Questions

This narrative inquiry research study investigated the perceptions of instructional coaches and teachers on relationship-building practices and barriers they have experienced in their new instructional coaching programs. For the purposes of the present research study, a new instructional coaching program is defined by: (1) the implementation date, as it must have been initiated within the last academic cycle (i.e., during the 2022-2023 academic school year); (2) being a new onsite program; (3) having at least one full-time instructional coach per school.

Having set the parameters for a new instructional coaching program, the research questions for this study included the following:

RQ1: In a new instructional coaching program, what are the teachers' perceptions of

practices that build relationships with the instructional coach?

RQ2: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are teachers' perceptions of

barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

RQ3: In a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of

practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?

RQ4: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches'

perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

Description of Terms

Related terms that are important to the topic covered in this study are listed below. The terms have been identified by reviewing the relevant literature and are provided for guidance.

Academic instructional coach. An individual who works closely with a group of educators to improve instructional practices in a classroom (Knight, 2016).

Andragogy. The science behind teaching adult learners (Loeng, 2018).

Coaching. Coaching is any form of ongoing non-evaluative method of professional development one can receive. Coaching offers a safe environment where teachers can work with one another or a mentor to collaborate with new ideas and self-reflect on skills and strategies being used in the classroom (Knight, 2016).

Cognitive coach. A coach who helps teachers be aware of their thought processes, which encourages self-efficacy and a sense of pride in their work (Knight, 2007).

Collaboration. A group of professionals working together to achieve a unified decision (Yan, 2019).

Job satisfaction. Specifically related to teachers being fulfilled with their job (Atmaca et al., 2020).

Literacy coach. A literacy coach is an educational leader who possesses expert understanding of teaching methods in reading and writing and collaborates closely with a teacher to foster professional development by reflecting on student learning and curriculum (C. A. Toll, 2014).

Mentoring. A mentor shares a set of skills, experiences, and knowledge with a mentee to gain insights, overcome barriers, and achieve developmental goals (Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

Peer coach. A non-threatening person or group of people who help each other to improve instruction or a learning situation (Rice et al., 2020).

Professional development. Ongoing training where teachers can continue their professional growth weekly, monthly, or several times a year (Pokhrel & Behera, 2016).

Professional learning community (PLC). A group of educators who regularly meet to collaborate on common teaching goals, work-integrated learning, and data drive decision-making (Pilotti et al., 2024; Richmond & Manokore, 2011).

Reflective dialogue. An exchange between mentee/mentor (Brockbank & McGill, 2006) and instructional coaches/teachers (Varghese et al., 2023), which helps promote the learning and development of one's skills.

Self-efficacy. An individual's confidence in their ability to plan and carry out actions necessary to achieve specific levels of performance (Bandura, 1977).

Teacher retention. The ability to maintain teachers in the same school, year-to-year, with no movement (Lochmiller et al., 2016).

Significance of the Study

Instructional coaching has been described as a proven form of professional development for educators across the United States (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018), and has provided teachers with pedagogical improvement regarding their subject matter (Knight, 2019; Martin et al., 2019). Research has demonstrated that, when implemented correctly, instructional coaching positively impacts classroom teachers (Hunt, 2019; Knight, 2019; Martin et al., 2019; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). In addition to providing guidance, instructional coaches also help monitor student and teacher growth by providing ongoing support (Aguilar, 2013; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). While instructional coaching has been applied in classrooms across many school districts, research has centered on its practices rather than on the overall implementation of a new structured program (Hunt, 2019; Knight, 2019; Martin et al., 2019). The findings from this narrative inquiry study aim to bridge a gap in the literature regarding the implementation of new instructional coaching programs. Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to the field by identifying factors related to relationship-building and barriers between teachers and coaches, highlighting strategies that would benefit teachers, instructional coaches, and school districts.

School districts that do not currently have a coaching program would benefit by learning about perspectives and barriers that could impact the success of an instructional coaching program. For districts seeking to start a new instructional coaching program, the findings of this study would provide them with useful information to (1) define the role of an instructional coach and (2) create the proper infrastructure, such as training, administrative support, and streamlined processes. Instructional coaches would benefit from this study by learning more about teachers'

perspectives on mentoring styles, coaching strategies, and relationship-building preferences. Teachers would benefit from this study's findings by learning how to identify and address barriers, such as communication, lack of knowledge by the instructional coach, and lack of available resources.

Overview of Research Methods

This study uses a narrative inquiry approach to analyze the coaches' and teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching, taking into account their years of experience in education and any barriers they have faced. A narrative approach analyzes, describes, and explores lived experiences by sharing stories about phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This approach allowed the researcher to create and describe the meaning of participants' narratives (Chase, 2011). Sixteen in-depth interviews and observations were conducted with coach-teacher pairs who have shared similar lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Once the data was collected and interpreted, the findings were analyzed.

Convenience sampling was used to identify and recruit 16 participants that fit into two participant types. First, the researcher invited instructional coaches via an email list provided by the school district and by posting the call on social media. The researcher selected a total of 8 instructional coaches, four from the district email and four from social media. Once selected, each instructional coach recommended at least one teacher they were currently working with who satisfied the selection criteria. The researcher selected the teacher participants based on fulfilling the criteria. The criteria for the participation selection included the completion of a traditional education program, holding a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and currently participating in a new instructional coaching program in a K-6th elementary school during the time of this study. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with

instructional coaches and teachers to learn how they perceive relationship-building and barriers in a new instructional coaching program.

Following the completion of semi-structured one-on-one interviews, the data was collected, analyzed, and coded (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Once coded, the researcher explored the overarching themes that developed during the interview process. These themes were reported back to the participants for validation. After the interviews were verified by the participants, the themes were then used to answer the research questions of this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Conclusion

This narrative inquiry study focused on how coaches' and teachers' experiences, as a pair, in new instructional coaching programs, have influenced their perceptions of relationship-building and barriers. Using qualitative methods, this study's findings aimed to fill the void in the available literature on strategies for implementing a new instructional coaching program. The researcher engaged in semi-structured one-on-one interviews with instructional coaches and teachers to collect, interpret, and analyze the data, describing in-depth perceptions of the relationship-building and barriers they have experienced in a new instructional coaching program.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Relevant research on instructional coaching for educators across the United States has revealed increased benefits for school districts, schools, teachers, and students (Knight, 2019; Ingersoll, 2014; Jacobs et al., 2018; Marr et al., 2020). Instructional coaching has provided positive outcomes and improvements in both instructional efficacy and student outcomes (Aguilar, 2013; Westmoreland & Swezey, 2019). While some researchers state that teachers who received academic coaching support have promoted supportive collaboration, competence, and the desire to stay in the teaching profession (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2019), not all teachers are provided with the support of an instructional coach or take advantage of using a coach when they are available (De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020). This type of professional development can provide teachers with the best instructional practices, collaboration, resources, and planning (Aguilar, 2013; De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Knight, 2007, 2019; Walsh et al., 2020). Despite the vast research on the benefits of instructional coaching, not all school districts have instructional coaching programs in their schools (Atmaca et al., 2020; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this research follows Abraham Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, borrowed from the field of psychology, to examine how human activity is motivated by a hierarchy of needs. This theory is useful in understanding how a teacher's needs can be met by receiving support from an informed and experienced instructional coach. To apply Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation to this research study, Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy was included as a conceptual framework foundational to the field of education. Combining these two approaches provides a deeper understanding of the perceptions

that teachers and instructional coaches have regarding new instructional coaching programs, specifically related to barriers and relationship-building practices.

Abraham Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

In Abraham Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, he provides a framework known as a Hierarchy of Needs: a five-tier model describing the positive potential of human beings (Figure 1). His perspectives originated from the idea that all people have a drive for personal success, with the ultimate goal being the realization of one's full potential (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020; Maslow, 1943; Milheim, 2012). Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is an important theoretical framework for examining a teacher's motivation in accepting support from an instructional coach. According to Maslow (1943), people must first fulfill their basic needs to seek order and predictability in their lives, helping them develop a sense of personal value and significance, affection and love, and the best version of themselves (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020).

Figure 1

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
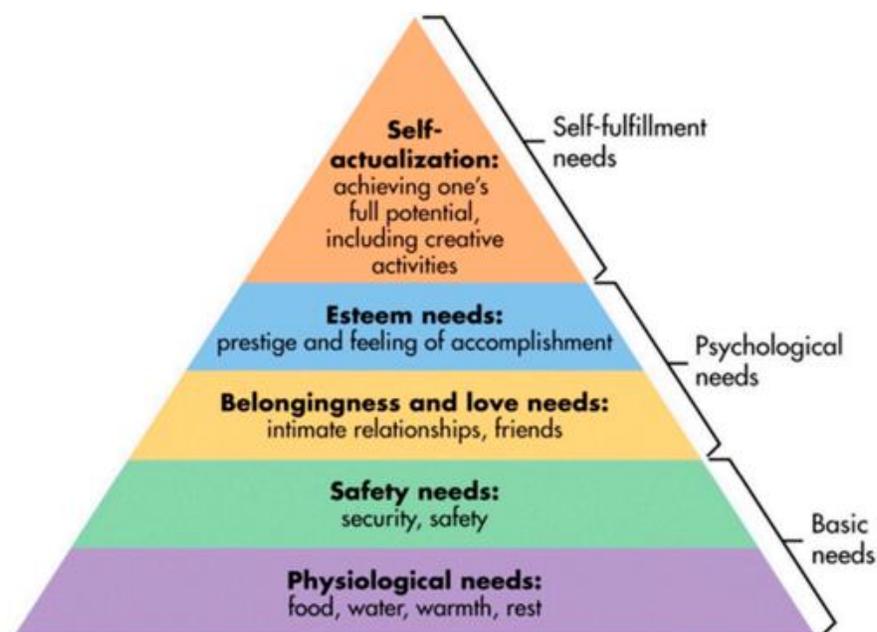
Note. From *A Theory of Human Motivation,* by Abraham Maslow, 1943.

The levels in his model include five human needs: physiological, safety, relationship, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). In recent research, Frei-Landau and Levin (2023) have applied Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to conceptualize the needs of school teachers. Furthermore, Milheim (2012) aligned pedagogical prescriptions for teachers with each of Maslow's five levels and major tenets (Table 1). Milheim's (2012) pedagogical prescription, as aligned with Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, provides insight into teachers' perspectives and needs for instructional coaching.

Table 1

Five Levels of Maslow's Model and Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers

Maslow's Five Levels	Major Tenets	Pedagogical Prescription for Teachers
Level 5: Self-actualization	Achieving potential	Learner guided Humanistic Assistive tools to foster sense of self
Level 4: Self-esteem	Acceptance	Responsive feedback Inclusive climate Evaluative Collaboration
Level 3: Relationship	Belonging to a group	Administration presence Personalized feedback Community of learning
Level 2: Safety	Safe home environment, Comfort	Preparation Clear requirement
Level 1: Physiological	Food, shelter, health	Curriculum Teacher tools for classroom

Note. Maslow's five levels of hierarchy. Adapted from "Towards a Better Experience: Examining Student Needs in the Online Classroom," by Milheim (2012).

In the first level, the physiological needs include the basic needs required to begin the teacher's academic year (Milheim, 2012). Some basic needs include relevant teaching materials, such as school supplies, contact with their team lead, class list, onboarding processes, and

technology access and training (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). According to Milheim (2012), the

pedagogical prescription for teachers in Level 1, physiological needs, include a course

curriculum and useful tools for teachers to utilize in the classroom (Figure 2). Second, safety

needs include personal, emotional, financial, and health security (Milheim, 2012). In addition to

needing a safe environment in which to work, teachers also need to feel stability in their work

environment (Milheim, 2012). For Milheim (2012), the pedagogical prescription for teachers in

this level includes lesson planning, classroom management procedures, preparation, and clear

requirements (Figure 2).

In the third level, relationship needs, Maslow (1943) includes building relationships and

connecting professionally with all stakeholders, such as districts, school administrators, teachers,

colleagues, parents, and students. When the teachers' needs are not fulfilled in their work

environment, they may be susceptible to increased anxiety and depression, which could

adversely impact their job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). According to Milheim

(2012), the pedagogical prescription for teachers regarding relationship needs includes factors

such as collaboration, administration presence, personalized feedback, and a positive community

of learning (Figure 2). In the fourth level, esteem needs include the desire to gain recognition,

prestige, and attention for work they accomplish in and outside the classroom (Milheim, 2012).

Since esteem results from quotidian experiences, instructional coaching can help teachers receive

that recognition and attention from an experienced individual observing their work to share it

with others (Kurz et al., 2017). In addition to the feeling of gained recognition, prestige, and

attention, Milheim (2012) clarifies that a major tenet in this level is acceptance (Figure 2). The

pedagogical prescription for teachers for level 4 includes receiving responsive feedback, working

in an inclusive climate, and having evaluative outcomes (Milheim, 2012).

Finally, the fifth level, self-actualization needs, refers to individuals achieving their full potential (Milheim, 2012). Maslow (1943) describes this as the need to accomplish everything possible to be the best that one can be. For Milheim (2012), the pedagogical prescription for teachers in this final level include approaches that are learner guided, humanistic, and have assistive tools to foster a strong sense of self (Figure 2). When teachers reach this level, an instructional coach serves an essential function in helping teachers achieve their teaching goals (Kurz et al., 2017). When instructional coaches assist teachers in focusing on self-directed learning, teachers can become empowered to direct themselves on various strategies, resources, and tools to help them gain a better sense of self (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2019). This last level is vital in instructional coaching because its value-based system is directly related to the principles behind instructional coaching (Tison, 2022). Other important needs in the self-actualization level include pursuing and achieving goals, using and developing skills and abilities, and partner acquisition (Knight, 2007). The need for partner acquisition in the last level, self-actualization, also connects with Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy, the conceptual framework used to understand the instructional coach's perspective and the methods they use to help teachers.

Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy

Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Approach Theory is a conceptual framework highlighting how instructional coaches adopt a partnership approach when working with teachers. The belief in this approach is that the coach is no more important than those with whom they work, and their work with the teachers must be conducted with respect and equality (Knight, 2007). While an instructional coach may have multiple educational degrees and useful instructional techniques for the classroom, implementing counterproductive ideas could potentially fail to bring meaningful changes for the teacher and school (Knight, 2007). Knight's

(2007) Partnership Approach Theory helps examine how an instructional coach can support

teachers using seven core coaching principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection,

praxis, and reciprocity. As shown in Figure 2, these seven principles are grouped into what

Knight refers to as "The Principles Behind Instructional Coaching," which stem from his

Partnership Philosophy.

Figure 2

Seven Principles in Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy
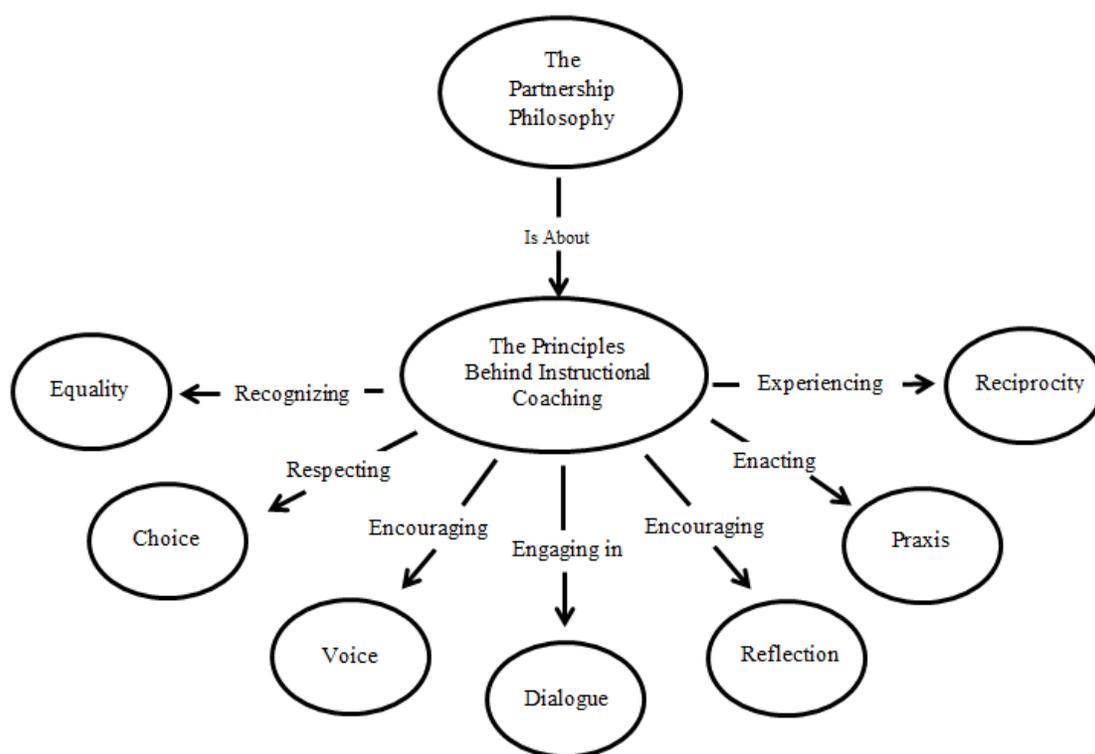
Note. Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction, by Jim Knight,

2007, p. 36 (reproduced by permission; see Appendix D).

Equality. In the first principle, equality, instructional coaches and teachers are equal

partners. In this regard, coaches and teachers have equally valuable thoughts and beliefs (Knight,

2007). The coach's role is not to persuade, but to listen to the teacher to foster learning, understanding, and responding (Knight, 2007; Scarbrough, 2011). Teachers should be able to view a coach as someone they can confide in and trust (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Sanstead, 2015; Scarbrough, 2011; Wise & Sundstrom, 2010). When developing a coaching relationship, the coach should present themselves as an equal partner to the teacher (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Scarbrough, 2011). To model an equal relationship, the coach can begin by getting to know the teacher on a personal level (Knight, 2022). Developing an equal relationship will allow the coach to efficiently conduct conversations around coaching the teacher. During a coaching session, the coach should center the dialogue on the strengths the teacher possesses (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Scarbrough, 2011; Wise & Sundstrom, 2010). Increased dialogue allows opportunities for teachers to make changes, grow, and improve their craft as they develop their skills. Coaches who identify teachers' strengths can encourage a balanced dialogue that will help foster stronger teacher-coach relationships (Scarbrough, 2011).

Modeling strategies or lessons is another way to show equality between a coach and a teacher (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Casey, 2006). Coaches who feel comfortable stepping into a classroom to model a lesson for a teacher or a group of teachers can improve the teacher's understanding of a specific practice, technique, or strategy (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Casey, 2006). Modeling lessons can correct misconceptions a teacher may have about a new strategy or clarify questions from a recent professional development session (Anderson & Wallin, 2018; Casey, 2006). Teachers need to be able to witness effective teaching strategies in action before they can apply the principles to make them their own (Casey, 2006).

Choice. In the second principle, the teacher has a choice regarding the strategies they learn and the best practices to implement for successful teaching. This principle states that

decisions are made collaboratively between the teacher and the coach (Knight, 2022). Research has shown that when professionals are not encouraged to make their own choices, it tends to result in failure (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Knight, 2022). However, when autonomy is given to professionals, they feel motivated and competent in what they do, have a large measure of control over their lives, and are engaged in and experience positive relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Teachers who feel they have less autonomy are more likely to move from school to school, leave their position, or leave the profession altogether (Ingersoll & May, 2012).

When educators have the freedom to choose strategies that best fit their teaching style and the students' learning style, they can be more accountable for their professional learning (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Knight, 2007). When teachers have an authentic voice, the level of commitment deepens because they make decisions based on what matters most (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Knight, 2007). Offering choices in instructional coaching sessions produces improvements in teachers that lead to successful outcomes for students (Knight, 2007).

Voice. For the voice principle, all individuals in the partnership must have opportunities to verbally express their ideas (Knight, 2007). Coaches who partner with teachers encourage them to talk through opinions about what they are learning. Rather than pressuring teachers to think a certain way, coaching needs to be viewed as a process that helps teachers identify and express their voices (Finkelstein, 2019; Knight, 2007). According to Knight (2007), one of the most important services a coach can provide teachers is to lead them to express their voice, which helps demonstrate that their beliefs and opinions matter.

When coaches collaborate with their teachers and are committed to helping them make decisions about what occurs in their classroom, they are able to hear and understand what teachers are thinking (Knight, 2022). Coaches can model this principle by providing

opportunities for teachers to express their opinions throughout all phases of the instructional coaching process. Teachers should feel they are the subject and not the object of their activities (Quaglia & Corso, 2014). When teachers feel their voice matters, they are five times more likely to feel engaged in what they are doing with their students (Quaglia & Corso, 2014). In addition to coaches being able to share ideas with their teachers, they must also craft conversations in such a way that topics, themes, and strategies honor the teacher's thinking (Knight, 2022). An essential part of coaching is having the ability to have open conversations that engage teachers to think creatively; therefore, voice is vital for making positive changes in the classroom (Knight, 2022; Quaglia & Corso, 2014).

Dialogue. The fourth principle allows for authentic dialogue between the coach and the teacher. In this regard, they partner in learning conversations to explore new ideas (Hunt, 2016; Knight, 2022). Through the development of dialogue techniques, coaches are listening more than telling, as they engage teachers in meaningful conversations about content that brings critical thinking and learning to the forefront (Knight, 2022). In this principle, the teacher and coach hone in on their listening skills, allowing a dialogue of rich ideas to flow between them (Knight, 2022). Furthermore, this dialogue provides a space to energize the excitement of creating, learning, and reflecting.

Through the dialogue principle, people become observers of their own thinking by reflecting (Senge, 1991). Coaches who commit to the principle of dialogue show they are rooted in respect for their teachers (Finkelstein, 2019). They enter coaching conversations with the intent of learning from their partnering teachers. Coaches do not force teachers to think in specific ways; rather, they enter into a collaborative investigation with their partnering teacher to discuss their ideas (Finkelstein, 2019; Knight, 2022).

Reflection. The fifth principle allows coaches and teachers to reflect on an integral part of learning. In encouraging teachers to consider ideas before adopting them, coaches have the opportunity to provide teachers with sufficient information to make prudent decisions independently (Eastman, 2019; Hunt, 2018; Knight, 2007). For reflection to occur, teachers need the freedom to reject or accept what they learn as they see fit (Knight, 2007). In the reflection principle, coaches can empower teachers to think more deeply about what has happened in the past, what occurs in the present, and what will take place in the future (Hunt, 2018).

Knight and Skrtic (2021) describe the process of reflection as having three dimensions: (1) looking back, (2) looking at, and (3) looking ahead. In the looking back dimension, the focus is on how something has already occurred in the past, and is presented in the past tense. This dimension allows conversations to be centered around what did or did not go well and what should change before the next lesson (Knight & Skrtic, 2021). In the looking at dimension, the reflection is focused on the moment of the experience, and is in the present tense (Knight & Skrtic, 2021). One example involves a teacher deciding to spend additional time on a class discussion because it leads students to new insights. Finally, the looking ahead dimension is when a tool, idea, or strategy may be used in subsequent teaching environments, and is presented in the future tense (Knight & Skrtic, 2021). This phase could help teachers plan items they may want to use for future learning. Throughout the reflection phase, Knight (2022) stresses the importance of allowing teachers to do the thinking rather than coaches to do the telling. If coaches get caught up in telling teachers what to do or how to think, they create dependency and rob the teachers of the chance to reflect critically about the past, present, and future for themselves (Hunt, 2018; Knight, 2022).

Praxis. For the sixth principle, praxis, teachers are encouraged to apply what they learn, while they are learning, to real-life practices in the classroom (Hunt, 2018; Knight, 2007, 2022). When coaches implement this principle, the learning is shaped by the realities of the classroom, teachers, and life (Knight, 2022). Teachers tend to be engaged because it is more meaningful, as it helps increase student learning and well-being (Finkelstein, 2019; Knight, 2022). This principle urges educators to be critical about their process of reflexive practice to transcend any limitations regarding formal pedagogy to cultivate new ways of understanding practices (Arnold et al., 2012). Praxis should lead someone to analyze their own lives and the world around them so they can make changes to better themselves or the world around them (Knight, 2022).

Reciprocity. Finally, in the reciprocity principle, coaches should learn alongside collaborating teachers (Knight, 2022). In this phase, the coach identifies the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, encouraging them to collaborate on the instructional practices that work best for the teacher (Knight, 2022). Working from this principle, coaches are able to get as much as they give during conversations with their collaborating teacher. The reciprocal-centered dialogue increases the desire and expectation to learn, which has many rewards. When coaches and teachers learn together, they share the love of discovery, learning, and exploration, from which students reap the benefits (Finkelstein, 2019; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Knight, 2022). In sum, understanding the seven core principles as the foundation of the Partnership Approach theory provides the framework for designing and implementing a successful new instructional coaching program (Knight, 2022).

History of Mentoring and Professional Development

Teacher mentorship and instructional coaching can be understood as fulfilling teachers' "esteem needs" and "self-actualization" in Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation. For

example, researchers have noted that receiving mentorship and coaching has increased a

teacher's sense of self-esteem and self-confidence (Colson et al., 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Knight,

2019). To further understand the importance of instructional coaching, it is essential to review

the historical underpinnings of instructional coaching in relation to mentoring. Between the

eighth and ninth centuries, the term "mentor" first appeared in the ancient Greek language to

indicate giving advice or teaching someone with fewer experiences (Garvey, 2023; Irby &

Boswell, 2016). In the late eighteenth century, the word "mentoring" first appeared in America

though children's educational writer Ann Murry, who wrote a book called *Mentoria, or the*

Young Ladies' Instructor in Familiar Conversations (1778), which presented a dialogue between

Mentoria and a few of her pupils (cited in Irby & Boswell, 2016). Over a century later, two

publications regarding mentoring and education surfaced in 1884: Alfred Ayers' *The Mentor*,

about mentorship and etiquette for young men, and *The Journal of Education*, in which the

teacher-student relationship was discussed (cited in Irby & Boswell, 2016). Ten years later, Fitch

et al. (1894) published *The Teacher's Mentor*, considered the first book to help people become

teachers (cited in Irby & Boswell, 2016). Towards the end of the twentieth century, Routledge

began publishing in 1993 a scholarly journal called *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in*

Learning (M&T), followed by other journals, such as the *International Journal of Coaching and*

Mentoring (IJMC) and the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*

(IJMCE) (cited in Irby & Boswell, 2016).

In the 1980s, instructional coaching began as a mentorship endeavor to carry out new

programs and educational strategies that improve the quality of academic instruction in the

classroom, offering mentorship support to teachers using new instructional teaching strategies

(Knight, 2011b). Coaching was developed after employee evaluations showed that less than 10%

of teachers applied their knowledge in the classroom after receiving professional development on a particular topic (Knight, 2011a; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). The idea of "coaching" was intended as an alternative to specialized training to help execute new instructional practices (Joyce & Showers, 1996; Knight, 2011a). The most effective way to support teachers through coaching has been through reflective dialogue, which involves a dialogue between coaches and teachers, who establish a professional rapport by reporting and exchanging their ideas to promote teacher development (Varghese et al., 2023). Educational leaders have since sought to explore professional development and support services for teachers. The aim has been to promote a collective and collaborative environment where all teachers feel safe and are encouraged to share ideas with their colleagues and instructional coach (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Cowan et al., 2016; Dawson & Leytham, 2020; Knight, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020).

Although some teachers may have followed standardized teaching content and methods for their district, there was no common standardization across districts within the same state, much less across the nation (Edelfelt & Raths, 1999). By the 1990s, individual states began to establish their own state standards; however, due to the lack of standardization across the nation, U.S. governors and 48 state commissioners of education started the development of the Common Core State Standards in 2009 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2022). The Common Core State Standards aimed to guarantee all students, independent of their background or residence, the appropriate education preparing them for higher education, professional careers, and life (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2022). With states adopting Common Core State Standards, school districts have been required to provide ongoing professional development training for educators to successfully teach these standards to students. Some states help teachers learn the new standards by appointing a content specialist or an academic instructional coach,

which provides positive educational results to support teachers (Knight, 2019; Walkowiak, 2016; Walsh et al., 2020).

Educators play an important role in nurturing society's next generation of leaders, inventors, and citizens. Therefore, academic mentorship allows teachers to feel confident, supported, and trusted in their teaching practices in the classroom (Knight, 2019). Academic instructional coaching can thus be considered a type of specialized development training for educators, which can help develop curriculum planning, instruction, and classroom management skills (Colson et al., 2017; Walkowiak, 2016). One goal of the academic instructional coach has been to mentor classroom teachers during planning times to demonstrate live lessons where teachers could watch and replicate the lesson with their students (Johnson, 2016; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Working with an instructional coach has allowed teachers to gain insight into best instructional practices and support efforts that could raise student achievement (Johnson, 2016; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Kraft & Blazar, 2018).

Professional Development for Teachers

Professional development is defined as continuing education and career training after a person has entered a profession to help develop new skills and stay up with current trends in their career (Hunt, 2019; Martin et al., 2019). According to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, the major tenet in "Level 5: Self-actualization" in Maslow's Model and Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers (Milheim, 2012) refers to "achieving one's full potential" (Figure 2). "Level 5: Self-actualization" is understood as a form of professional development, in which the pedagogical prescription for teachers includes processes that are learner guided, humanistic, and assistive with tools to foster self-actualization (Milheim, 2012). The primary purpose of

professional development in education is to help encourage the change of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices in the classroom (Smith & Gillespie, 2023).

Professional development has been shown to positively impact teachers in terms of their knowledge and competencies, and can provide them with rich and flexible knowledge regarding their subject areas (Smith & Gillespie, 2023). Studies have shown that interventions by instructional coaches have contributed to positive teacher experiences, improved self-efficacy, and increased retention (Hunt, 2019; Martin et al., 2019). Professional development for educators is found to be most successful when they are encouraged to collaborate when the needs and perspectives of the participants are considered, are implemented with long-term support and follow-up sessions, and are adequately funded (Martin et al., 2019; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018).

In elementary school education, much research has focused on professional development in literacy and mathematics (Hunt, 2019; Martin et al., 2019; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). Literacy specialists are instructional coaches widely used across the United States to provide literacy training to teachers, as they facilitate teacher study groups, work with individual teachers, and support grade-level meetings (Hunt, 2019; Martin et al., 2019). While literacy specialists focus on working with teachers, they can also directly help students by providing them with instructional support in reading. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics has required many states to provide ongoing professional development for educators in the area of math. Professional development in mathematics aims to support teachers' development of knowledge in mathematics content and pedagogies. A mathematics specialist is an example of someone who can support teachers in the area of math. Not only is this specialist equipped with mathematical knowledge, pedagogy, curriculum, and standards for

teaching, but they can also assist teachers in how to instruct, lesson plan, and model lessons (Hunt, 2019; Martin et al., 2019).

Educators continually face changes in all facets of the classroom. The constant changes that teachers face include student behaviors and academic levels, student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management (Hung et al., 2019; Martin & Mulvihill, 2017). Educators must participate in continuing education courses, seminars, and workshops that pertain to all professional learning areas. Professional development is one tool teachers must have to do their jobs effectively.

The Role of an Instructional Coach

The role of an instructional coach is to assist teachers to become more effective with instructional delivery, providing resources, curriculum development, collaboration, and implementing best classroom teaching practices (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Academic instructional coaches support instructional delivery by identifying the specific needs of each teacher to develop a personalized instructional plan (Knight, 2018). According to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, it is important to identify the layers of needs, from basic and psychological to self-fulfillment needs. Thus, the coach's process of identification of a teacher's needs is important because it helps determine whether they need to first address self-esteem needs or self-actualization (Milheim, 2012). Once these items have been identified, coaches can help teachers examine and analyze data, such as formative, summative, and state assessments (Aguilar, 2019; Sweeney & Harris, 2017). Furthermore, they can also assist by acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of students to improve their classroom engagement and encourage learning (Bair, 2017; Kho et al., 2020). Using adequate data-driven

coaching methods can improve student achievement and classroom management practices in schools (Colson et al., 2017; Fallon et al., 2019; Knight, 2019).

Second, an academic instructional coach is not only an expert in teaching, but also responsible for providing resources and instructional training (Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Instructional coaching supports educators by collaborating and encouraging teachers to try new teaching practices (Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020). Successful instructional coaches must be able to assist educators in creating goals, provide support with lesson planning, build a solid coach-teacher relationship, and demonstrate strong interpersonal skills (e.g., self-confidence and empathy) (Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020). Instructional coaches must know how to instruct and master various research-based proven practices to share those practices with the teachers they mentor (Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020).

Third, the academic instructional coach can be an expert in teaching and curriculum development (De Jong & Campoli, 2018). The coach is responsible for safeguarding curriculum and teaching to meet the needs of students and provide ideas for activities that include developing critical thinking skills, learning skills, and creating various assessments (De Jong & Campoli, 2018). Instructional coaches are change agents in promoting the adoption of a new curriculum by providing training and assistance to teachers in implementing the new curriculum (De Jong & Campoli, 2018). Therefore, the importance of instructional coaches being professional developers is critical when creating standards-based professional training for all teachers that address the standards (Knight, 2011a; Walsh et al., 2020).

Fourth, academic instructional coaches can allow educators to collaborate with one another in a small group centered on student learning (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018;

Walsh et al., 2020). Coaches can help create professional learning communities based on content, grade level, and vertical and horizontal alignments (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Teachers feel that instructional coaches can provide consistent opportunities to work with colleagues, share ideas, and reflect on their practices (Bair, 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020). Through coaching opportunities, teachers can create their lessons together, analyze student data, and conduct observations (Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Teachers believe this learning environment helps bring them together so they do not have to teach in isolation (Bair, 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Moreover, they can share their experiences and ideas, which helps them, feel more fulfilled in their position (Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Not only does this form of educational collaboration empower educators, but it also builds their self-efficacy (Kho et al., 2020; Kraft & Blazar, 2018).

Lastly, instructional coaches also help teachers implement best classroom teaching practices (Milheim, 2012). For example, research conducted by Bair (2017) shared that teachers who worked with a coach learned to implement various best practices that fit their students' learning needs. Therefore, the instructional coach models the best teaching practices, shows teachers how to increase student engagement, and provides ongoing and reflective support (Bair (Bair, 2017; Knight, 2019). Modeling provides teachers with an opportunity to reflect upon discussions regarding instructional practices (Knight, 2007; Aguilar, 2013). Considered one of the most powerful coaching techniques, this type of modeling provides teachers with explicit instruction on teaching academic concepts to students (Knight, 2007; Aguilar, 2013). As a result, teachers could apply these new strategies to their teaching to address student needs (Sweeney & Harris, 2017).

Instructional Coaching Methods and Models

The goal behind instructional coaching is to offer teacher-specific feedback on instructional practices to promote student growth. Instructional coaches should possess seven qualities for effective coaching: building relationships, being student-focused, analyzing data, questions with no judgment, instructional practices with high knowledge, risk-taking, and best practice are used (ASCD In-service, 2018). Throughout the implementation of instructional coaching in elementary schools, various methods and models have been developed. For over two decades, Jim Knight (2019) at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and Instructional Coaching Groups have been studying the science behind instructional coaching, communication, and types of professional development for educators.

Professional learning is a way for teachers to interact with other teachers or professionals to evaluate and reflect on their own practices (Christopher et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2023; Ingersoll, 2014; Martin & Mulvihill, 2017). For teachers to not lose newly acquired skills, they must take advantage of opportunities to practice them continuously (Knight, 2019; Walsh et al., 2020). Academic instructional coaches can assist teachers in facilitating and applying these learned skills in the classroom (Christopher et al., 2023; Knight, 2019; Martin & Mulvihill, 2017). Coaches can model the new skills, remind teachers of what they have learned from past professional development, and collaborate with teachers on how they plan to incorporate the new skills in the classroom (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Dawson & Leytham, 2020; Ingersoll, 2014; Knight, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020; Walsh et al., 2020). An instructional coach is a master teacher who can offer instructional support to teachers weekly, monthly, or as needed (Christopher et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2023; Knight, 2019). These types of specialized learning models can offer the support that educators need to succeed in the classroom (Carver-

Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Christopher et al., 2023; Dawson & Leytham, 2020; Knight, 2019; Ramos & Hughes, 2020). Relevant research identifies three main coaching methods, which include: relationship-driven (i.e., between teacher and instructional coach), teacher-centered (i.e., peer coaching model), and student-centered (i.e., focuses on student outcomes).

Relationship Driven Coaching Methods

Relationship-driven methods highlight the reflective dialogue between the teacher and the instructional coach. During the 1980s, cognitive coaching was developed to enhance instructional coaching among teachers. As one of the most used academic coaching forms, cognitive coaching centered on changing the teacher's beliefs before changing the behaviors (Costa & Garmston, 2016). Cognitive coaching cultivates the reflective practice of lesson planning, which helps instructors determine the best training practices that would positively change teachers' behaviors and increase their self-determination and self-efficacy (Costa & Garmston, 2016). For Costa and Garmston (2016), there are various aspects that impact states of mind as qualities of a teacher's sense of excellence. Factors that impact a teacher's state of mind include efficacy, flexibility, consciousness, craftsmanship, and interdependence (Costa & Garmston, 2016).

Furthermore, in the cognitive coaching approach, three cycles initiate the reflective process: (1) a goal must be identified and set; (2) a teaching strategy must be chosen and used; and (3) the teacher must learn and implement the teaching strategy in a lesson (Göker, 2020; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2007). This is a reflective process with tight and precise goals and questions, but flexible enough to allow another strategy to be implemented if a utilized strategy is proven to be ineffective (Göker, 2020; Knight, 2007). Throughout this process, it is important to establish

equality within the teacher and coach relationship, allowing teachers to have voice and choice, and encourage quality conversations that involve reflection and dialogue. Furthermore, instructional coaches provide resources and participate in the teacher's professional support network.

One of the most critical aspects of an academic instructional coaching method is building trusting relationships with teachers (Colson et al., 2017; Göker, 2020; Knight, 2019). Having a strong relationship founded on trust would significantly help teachers feel free to convey ideas and thoughts, knowing they will not be judged throughout the coaching process (Colson et al., 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2019). Teachers should feel confident in communicating with their coach regarding any instructional concept and whether they struggle with any aspect of their job (Colson et al., 2017; Göker, 2020; Knight, 2019). A trust-based communication process also prepares teachers and coaches to get to know one another on a personal level (Colson et al., 2017; Knight, 2019). Conversing about everyday life or discussing different hobbies helps establish a connection that aids in building respect and trust between the teacher and the coach (Colson et al., 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2019). The relationship should be protected and nurtured as much as possible to build a trusting relationship so that the teacher can be student-focused on student data with no judgments (Colson et al., 2017; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2019). Teachers who feel they have a trusting relationship with their coach are more likely to feel comfortable asking questions and taking risks when trying a new method of instruction (Colson et al., 2017; Göker, 2020; Knight, 2019).

Teacher Centered Coaching Methods

Teacher-centered coaching methods, or the peer coaching model, is when members of a group collaborate to develop new ways of teaching a concept, create lesson plans, execute the

lessons, and analyze the results of the lesson to determine the effects of the instruction (Hagen et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017; Rice et al., 2020; Sider, 2019). This peer-based coaching method can also serve to fulfill Maslow's (1943) categories as referenced in Milheim's (2012) Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers. Teacher-centered coaching methods thus utilize "Level 3: Relationship," "Level 4: Self-esteem," and "Level 5: Self-actualization." For example, coaching each other as peers can fulfill the need to feel a sense of belonging with other teachers, which includes activities such as collaboration, administrative presence, personalized feedback, and community of learning (Milheim, 2012). Furthermore, working as a group can also help with sharing their accomplishments for encouragement (esteem needs) and pushing one another to meet higher expectations (self-actualization).

Since the 1970's, educators such as Joyce and Showers (1996) proposed the peer coaching model so that teachers can meet in groups and share their experiences and practices in their learning process. A major benefit of peer coaching is that teachers can learn from their peers in a non-evaluative way. For example, peer coaching can positively increase change in the classroom by creating a safe and nurturing environment. Various researchers have agreed that a teacher-to-teacher learning relationship is effective in providing immediate feedback, encouragement, companionship, support, and application analysis (Hagen et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017; Rice et al., 2020; Sider, 2019). To exemplify this method, two teachers agree to identify an area of weakness to improve upon, observe and reflect on one another's lessons, and collaborate on mutual ideas. Embedded in ongoing professional learning, peer coaching can efficiently meet the teachers' needs. After developing an understanding of peer coaching, teachers typically demonstrate positive attitudes because this model aims to reduce the isolation that some teachers will experience (Sider, 2019; Yee, 2016).

Literacy coaching is a form of teacher-centered coaching. School districts use literacy coaching to develop a teacher's knowledge base and help them strengthen their teaching abilities in literacy to improve student achievement (Camburn & Han, 2015; Pletcher et al., 2019). A literacy coaching model usually involves conversations centered on reading, modeling reading instruction, data analysis, or a book study. Although literacy coaching focuses on reading instruction through each subject area, this form of coaching has a set of duties that can be provided to all teachers in any subject area. Found to improve classroom reading instruction and teacher self-efficacy, literacy coaching has significantly assisted teachers in being more open to the idea of literacy training that a coach can offer (Goodnight et al., 2020; Pletcher et al., 2019).

Student-Centered Coaching Methods

Student-centered coaching is a collaborative model focusing on student outcomes rather than "fixing" the teacher (Spelman et al., 2016; Sweeney & Harris, 2017; Wang, 2017). Commonly used by reading coaches, student-centered coaching works collaboratively with teachers to deliver better education for students (Wang, 2017). A coach will partner with a teacher to design learning targets based on a specific objective that a student needs to master (Sweeney & Harris, 2017). Various authors examine how student-centered coaching methods focus on highlighting student work and data to analyze student mastery, which includes collaborating with the coach to make educated decisions on the next steps (Spelman et al., 2016; Sweeney & Harris, 2017; Wang, 2017). When using this method, a coach will visit a classroom to gather data from observing student responses and watch instructional strategies that the teacher and coach developed during a meeting session (Wang, 2017). After observing the classroom, the teacher and coach work together to overcome obstacles to the student's progress (Wang, 2017). In this model, the coach is viewed as a non-evaluative partner and supports the

teacher in moving students toward mastery (Spelman et al., 2016; Sweeney & Harris, 2017; Wang, 2017).

Instructional Coaching Cycles

An instructional coach partners with teachers to help improve their teaching skills so that students become more successful in their learning (Aguilar, 2013; Göker, 2020; Knight, 2018). One way a coach can help teachers become better at instruction is through the use of a coaching cycle. In reference to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, working through coaching cycles can both build a teacher's self-esteem (esteem needs) and help them achieve their full potential (self-actualization). For example, with coaching cycles, coaches can identify what teacher need to work on to improve, and in the process, engage in discussions and brainstorming sessions, followed by observations and reflections that can build their self-esteem by achieving their goals.

Knight's (2018) impact cycle can allow coaches to identify a goal, learn from its outcomes, and improve by making modifications to the teaching strategy. For this to occur, an instructional coach will collaborate with a teacher to gain a clear understanding of the current reality, help identify goals, choose best teaching practices to meet the goals, monitor the progress, and help teachers solve problems until all goals are met (Göker, 2020; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2018). For teachers to want to be coached, teachers must feel that they are the professionals and are the ultimate decision-makers about what and how they learn. Knight (2018) states that when coaches are consistent with using the approach of a partnership when working with teachers, teachers will do most of the thinking with the goal of positively impacting students. Since instructional coaching is considered a partnership, the coaching comes from the knowledge of the students that the teacher has acquired about them. Researchers have also more

recently suggested for teachers and coaches to have discussions centered around the unique needs of the students and classroom, allowing the teacher to engage in most of the thinking and the coach to help create positive changes for students alongside the teacher (Göker, 2020; Kho et al., 2020). Instructional coaching allows teachers to do what they want and need to do for their students. If a teacher chooses not to take advantage of a coaching session, then a solution should not be to force the teacher but rather find out why they are choosing not to receive coaching (Kho et al., 2020).

To accomplish successful coaching, an instructional coach needs to (1) see the teacher as a partner and (2) apply the actions within a coaching cycle (Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2018). Knight (2018) refers to this coaching cycle as the Impact Cycle, which has three important stages: identifying, learning, and improving. In the first stage of the impact cycle, identifying, a teacher and a coach need to clearly recognize what is occurring in the classroom that needs to be addressed. Education experts have agreed that the identifying stage is important and will be unsuccessful unless the teacher and coach collaborate on what needs correction (Costa & Garmston, 2016; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2018). Aligning these needs is critical because teachers and coaches may not hit the designated goal if they have a different focus. Furthermore, having a clear focus also saves time and establishes a baseline for growth (Costa & Garmston, 2016). Instructional coaches and teachers with a clear focus shift their conversations into actions. The second stage of the impact cycle, learning, is where coaches help teachers improve their student learning and well-being by improving the teaching (Knight, 2018). A coach may use an instructional playbook to help teach instructional strategies to teachers. The instructional playbook consists of a list of best teaching strategies, a description of these strategies, a checklist needed to describe the teaching practices contained in the playbook, and includes modeling

lessons for the teacher (Knight, 2018). In the final stage of the impact cycle, improving, there are four steps: confirming the direction, reviewing the progress, inventing improvements, and planning the next action (Knight, 2018).

To confirm the direction of a teacher's needs, instructional coaches and teachers must learn to think in the same direction. Therefore, a coach should begin every conversation by asking the teacher about their most pressing concerns (Costa & Garmston, 2016). After confirming the direction, the teacher and coach move into reviewing the progress. During this step, the teacher and coach collect data on students to determine whether they have achieved the goal, which helps measure the teacher's progress in using the new teaching strategy (Costa & Garmston, 2016; Knight, 2018). The next step is inventing improvements, which involves the teacher and the coach working together to predict roadblocks that may be encountered (Knight, 2018). The teacher and coach then identify and evaluate what works and does not work well to make improvements. The last step, creating an action plan, involves setting goals, writing the plan, prioritizing tasks, and ensuring the actions are completed.

Teachers as Adult Learners and Transformational Learning

Knowles (1984) defines andragogy as the art and science of helping adult learners learn. According to Arthur Chickering (1969), an adult learner can be defined as an individual whose main role in life is not associated with being a full-time student (as cited in Farenga & Ness, 2015). Adult learners have particular needs and wants that must be considered in their professional development. Following Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, considering adult learners' needs and wants helps ensure they gain self-actualization to achieve professional growth. Identifying these needs allows teachers to build confidence, self-esteem, and feel supported in their jobs (Conaway & Zorn-Arnold, 2015). When the needs and interests

of adult learners are not considered, there could arise resentment or resistance to new learning opportunities (Charungkaittikul & Henschke, 2018).

Adults who receive significant professional development are usually empowered through self-improvement, and reflective practices extend their learning experiences over time (Charungkaittikul & Henschke, 2018). Adult learners will participate in team learning opportunities depending on where they are at in their lives and usually seek out learning developments, based on their role in their jobs, that can help improve their life circumstances (Smith et al., 2020). This professional development can transpire in settings supported by educational institutions, businesses, or community organizations.

Adult learners are motivated by learning interests focused on their experiences, needs, and social position (Charungkaittikul & Henschke, 2018; Conaway & Zorn-Arnold, 2015; Smith et al., 2020). Knowles (1984) developed a set of assumptions and principles regarding adult learners and made recommendations concerning planning, directing, and evaluating adults in their learning. The first assumption was that as an adult matures, their self-concepts move from being a dependent personality to being more self-directed (Knowles, 1984). For adult learners to be engaged in their learning, they must be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction (Loeng, 2018). The second assumption is that an adult learner accumulates experiences that become a resource for learning (Knowles, 1984). This resourceful experience provides the adult learner with the basis of the learning activity (Loeng, 2018). The third assumption is that adult learners become increasingly focused on the task based on their social roles (Knowles, 1984). Adult learners are most interested in learning about topics that have immediate significance and directly impact their personal life or job (Loeng, 2018). Finally, adult

learners' perspectives change from a delayed application to an immediate application that shifts from subject-centeredness to performance-centeredness (Knowles, 1984; Loeng, 2018).

While andragogy refers to how adults need to apply previous experiences (i.e., *a posteriori*, which is defined as knowledge obtained through experience) in guiding their learning process, transformative learning, guides their learning by engaging in critical thinking skills as they reflect upon previous learning experiences. As a result, transformative learning can be a powerful approach, as it involves a process for learners to experience a change in their perspectives, which alters and expands their views (Papathanasiou, 2023; Rocks & Lavender, 2018). Learners begin to question their views regarding what they already know about a certain topic and try to look at their views from a different perspective to make room for a new perspective. Consequently, transformation learning dives into how learners can find meaning and understanding in their lives, which encompasses a profound structural shift in thoughts, feelings, and actions (Papathanasiou, 2023; Rocks & Lavender, 2018).

Since education is constantly changing, educators are forced to investigate and implement best instructional practices, finding new ways to incorporate technologies while learning standards (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2020; Walkowiak, 2016; Westmoreland & Swezey, 2019). Each year educators are confronted with the challenging task of meeting expectations of the No Child Left Behind to act and ensure that students are prepared for college or careers (Fallon et al., 2019; Wilcoxen et al., 2019). With these challenges that educators face, they continually have to develop their instructional practices and continue to grow as professionals to meet their students' needs (Fallon et al., 2019; Wilcoxen et al., 2019). When developing professional development for educators, districts should consider adult learning theories to ensure that the professional development is influential (Hunt, 2019; Martin et al., 2019).

Teacher Resistance to Instructional Coaching

Teachers who are more than willing to work with an instructional coach to improve their craft will find that the support they receive is highly beneficial and important to what they do in a classroom with students (Aguilar, 2019; Knight, 2007). However, some teachers prefer to not benefit from the support provided by an instructional coach (Jacobs et al., 2018; C. Toll, 2019). Researchers have described this resistance as unwillingness to receiving support from a trained academic coach (Aguilar, 2019; C. Toll, 2019). While a teacher's reasons for not wanting coaching can vary, the literature suggests it may be due to how instructional coaches present themselves or how the teacher feels about changing their practices to meet the needs of students (Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Jacobs et al., 2018; C. Toll, 2019).

An instructional coach can offer support to teachers in pedagogy and instructional practices; however, teachers may be reluctant to take advantage of this opportunity for many reasons (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Jacobs et al., 2018). First, teachers may resist the instructional coach's working style, oppose how the coach relates to them, or feel they cannot trust the coach (Finkelstein, 2019). C. Toll (2019) suggests a teacher's reluctance to coaching may be due to not understanding the coaching process, thus having formed an idea that the coach may be acting as their teaching evaluator. Instructional coaches should make it clear to the teacher that they are only there to support the teacher and not to evaluate them. Other examples of resistance to an instructional coach include a teacher's inability to recognize the need for change, the fear of the unknown, previous unsuccessful experiences with a coach, a threat of expertise, and a struggle for power (Aguilar, 2019; Jacobs et al., 2018). When teachers like their instructional coach, they are more willing to implement what the coach recommends (Knight, 2016). Knight (2016) suggests it is important for the coach to know the teacher and be fully aware of prior experiences

the mentee may have had with a previous coach. These prior experiences could lead a teacher to be hesitant in a coaching relationship (Knight, 2016).

Job Satisfaction

In the last three decades, teacher job satisfaction has dropped drastically, which has led to increased teacher attrition (Atmaca et al., 2020; De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Toropova et al., 2021). Teacher job satisfaction is critical in their career choice, particularly since low job satisfaction negatively impacts their desire to continue teaching. In reference to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, job satisfaction is impacted by various categories within the Five Levels of Maslow's Model and Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers: "Level 1: Physiological," "Level 2: Safety," "Level 3: Relationship," and "Level 4: Self-esteem" (Milheim, 2012). For example, a teacher may have increased job satisfaction when the school provides basic needs, a sense of security and safety, a sense of belonging among the teaching and administrative staff, and programs that can provide support in their teaching.

Teachers with higher job satisfaction tend to offer quality instruction for their students, are committed to the profession, and are less prone to leave their district and the field. Job satisfaction is especially important when teacher decline is at its highest (Atmaca et al., 2020; Blackburn et al., 2017; Liang & Akiba, 2017; Toropova et al., 2021). Job satisfaction involves positive or negative perceptions of one's job (Atmaca et al., 2020; Toropova et al., 2021). The constant use of negative perceptions of one's job can make teachers feel stressed, have job dissatisfaction, and control their psychological well-being (Atmaca et al., 2020; Blackburn et al., 2017; Liang & Akiba, 2017; Toropova et al., 2021). One of the components of burnout is emotional exhaustion, which can lead to personal and professional stresses (Atmaca et al., 2020; Blackburn et al., 2017; Liang & Akiba, 2017; Toropova et al., 2021). In education, teacher job

satisfaction may have long-lasting effects on all stakeholders (i.e., districts, school administration, teachers, parents, and students). In essence, the primary effect of teacher job satisfaction is their well-being, as satisfied teachers are less susceptible to stress and burnout (Atmaca et al., 2020; Toropova et al., 2021).

To help increase teacher motivation, confidence levels, and the overall culture within a school, educational leaders should consider all factors that influence a teacher's job satisfaction. Variables affecting teacher job satisfaction in education include interaction with students and colleagues, professional difficulties, professional autonomy, business conditions, salaries, and opportunities for movement (Atmaca et al., 2020; Yildiz, 2016). Teaching has been considered an occupation that constantly uses intense labor of emotions, which can make teachers feel stressed, contribute to job dissatisfaction, and control their psychological well-being (Toropova et al., 2021). As such, emotional exhaustion is one of the components causing burnout, and can lead to personal and professional stresses.

Research shows that instructional coaching can improve teacher job satisfaction and levels of self-efficacy (Fallon et al., 2019; Knight, 2019; Colson et al., 2017). Various coaching models shed light on how coaching methods can help increase teacher job satisfaction. Joyce and Showers (1996) presented four standard coaching methods that could help support classroom teachers: instructional, cognitive, literacy, and peer coaching. As more instructional coaching programs were implemented, researchers began highlighting additional coaching methods (e.g., relationship-driven, teacher-centered, and student-centered), which have proven to be successful as teaching strategies and increasing a teacher's job satisfaction. Teachers who can effectively communicate with their coach about their feelings regarding the job and how to become more effective can build self-efficacy and increase job satisfaction (Colson et al., 2017; Knight, 2019).

Instructional Coaching Programs

The basis for getting started with instructional coaching programs can involve a wide

variety of frameworks. Although there are different stances an instructional coach can take, most

scholars have noted the following as the most common approaches: relationship-driven, teacher

centered, and student-centered (Göker, 2020; Kho et al., 2020; Knight, 2018; Rice et al., 2020;

Sweeney & Harris, 2017). The universal practice of coaching has been used across various

disciplines to improve the professional performance of individuals and organizations (Kurz et al.,

2017; Stefaniak, 2017). Federal legislative initiatives in education, such as the Every Student

Succeeds Act (ESSA), have emphasized the need to support teachers using research-based

practices to improve student outcomes (Connor, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017). These initiatives situate

coaching as a key component for school reform, providing teachers with individualized

professional development, which can allow school districts to rapidly increase the number of

teachers in a coaching role (Kurz et al., 2017). Professional development, through the use of a

coach, was thus created to help teachers feel supported with strategies they can use in their

classrooms (Connor, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017).

There are a variety of coaching approaches implemented across the United States (Kurz

et al., 2017; Stefaniak, 2017); however, they tend to lack a systematic consideration of the most

effective approaches (Kurz et al., 2017). Since most instructional coaching programs have

focused on classroom management with first-year teachers, the issue of including instructional

practices (i.e., instructional coaches modeling a lesson, using the curriculum correctly, and

monitoring and or adjusting the lesson) has generally been omitted in the early stages of an

instructional coaching program. As mentioned above, the most common coaching approaches

used by districts include peer (i.e., teacher-centered methods), cognitive (i.e., relationship-

driven), and outcomes (i.e., student-centered). Administrators and coaches could benefit from examining whether their instructional coaching programs address the five categories for identifying teacher's needs presented in Milheim's (2012) Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers, which includes physiological, safety, relationship, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs. Therefore, it is necessary to study coaching approaches in an educational setting (Kurz et al., 2017).

Existing Coaching Programs

Existing coaching programs can be found in many school districts across the United States (BetterLesson, 2018; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). Coaching programs have been created to help improve continuous support and provide communication and collaboration among teachers with the aim of improving classroom instruction (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). An effective coaching program usually consists of an instructional coaching cycle that provides teachers with highly targeted coaching (Knight, 2007; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). The coaching cycle can look different from district to district, depending on institutional expectations, which are usually based on the needs of their teachers and students. This form of targeted coaching provides a teacher with ongoing quality professional development that can be embedded into their practices daily (Knight, 2007; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). During the coaching process, the coach guides the teacher through a reflective process that helps the teacher analyze student data, interpret how students are doing, and guide the teacher on which action steps to take next (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). A coaching cycle is a model that can help facilitate conversations on improving instructional practices in the classroom. The coaching cycle can be short or long, based on the teacher's data or goals they want to accomplish during the cycle.

Existing coaching models have shown that three attributes can contribute to a successful program: time and structure, data analysis, and culture (BetterLesson, 2018; Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). For the first attribute, instructional coaches need time to work with the teacher they are working with. The time in which a coach spends with a teacher should be embedded within the context of instruction or systems to increase instructional and leadership effectiveness (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). For the second attribute, processing the data is a vital component of the coaching process. Coaches must be data literate and know how to facilitate collaborative inquiry by using multiple sources of student data and instructional data (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). Being data literate will allow the coach to help teachers reflect on their practices, set goals, and determine a focus for coaching observations and lesson modeling (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). Lastly, the third attribute is centered around creating a culture where the teacher is involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). Being involved in the planning and the evaluation process can allow a teacher to choose an area where they are most interested in having an immediate impact on what they are doing in the classroom. Part of the coach's job is to have reflective conversations, co-plan, and help the teacher facilitate (Vermont Agency of Education, 2016). The culture of the coaching relationship should be one where it is allowed to grow organically to reach its full potential.

Starting Coaching Programs

In starting a new instructional coaching program, districts tend to select teachers to be instructional coaches without clearly identifying instructional coaching goals. An effective program when promoting teachers as instructional coaches involves establishing an efficient training plan and a continuous learning structure to become successful coaches (BetterLesson,

2018). The learning structures should allow teachers to receive the personalized training that would help focus on improving their abilities to instruct and interpret data (BetterLesson, 2018). The ultimate goal of establishing a training and learning structure is to help the teacher become proficient in teaching their students.

To develop a new instructional coaching program, it is important to establish a culture that nurtures adult learning, which requires deep planning and effort. Investing time and energy during the planning process stage will yield high returns at every level of the coaching program. There are eight steps to implementing an effective and successful coaching program: (1) clearly identify the instructional vision for the school or district; (2) conduct a needs assessment among stakeholders; (3) determine staff needs; (4) determine the coaching expertise needed; (5) select the appropriate methods to recruit and develop coaches; (6) decide which metrics will be used to measure results of coaching support; (7) create a plan for feedback and communication expectations of stakeholders before and during coaching implementations; and (8) monitor progress and plan ahead (BetterLesson, 2018).

Barriers to Implementing Instructional Coaching Programs

The greatest barriers districts face regarding instructional coaching programs include communication, lack of knowledge by the instructional coach, and lack of available resources (De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Knight, 2022; Kraft & Blazar, 2018). Regarding communication, Knight (2019) defines an instructional coach as someone who collaborates with educators as a mentor to help develop teachers' skills in the classroom. Instructional coaches need to have the skills to help teachers set objectives and prepare effectively, be empathetic, adept at listening, and skilled in fostering relationships, alongside possessing strong interpersonal abilities like self-confidence and respect (Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020).

Secondly, with respect to the lack of knowledge by instructional coaches, to be successful, coaches must undergo the proper training to understand research-based proven practices to later share them with the teachers they mentor (Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018; Walsh et al., 2020). Thirdly, concerning the lack of available resources, an academic instructional coach is responsible for supporting the classroom teacher by providing resources, being an expert in teaching, and providing instructional training (Knight, 2019; Kraft & Blazar, 2018).

Relationship Building

Knight (2019) defines an instructional coach as a mentor who establishes relationships with educators to help develop their skills in the classroom. In applying the concept of relationship building to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, the category that emerges above the rest in Milheim's (2012) Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers is "Level 3: Relationship," which highlights work associated with teacher-coach collaboration, administration presence to ensure coach and teacher work well together, personalized feedback tracking progress, and a community of learning to build trust. When beginning a new coaching relationship with a teacher, instructional coaches need to instill a strong level of trust from the beginning (Aguilar, 2013; Knight & Skrtic, 2021). Covey (2008) defines trust as the feeling of confidence one has in another person's character and competence. An instructional coach must demonstrate their excitement about wanting to help teachers and their students be successful (Aguilar, 2013; Knight & Skrtic, 2021). One way is by sharing relevant resources and grade-level-specific support from which teachers can greatly benefit (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2007). Developing trusting relationships between coaches and teachers is challenging because trust tends to reside in the realm of emotions and beliefs. Thus, a teacher must believe they can trust

the coach prior to sharing their most vulnerable moments; otherwise, coaching will not occur (Aguilar, 2013; Echeverria & Olalla, 1993; Richardson et al., 2019). Not only does a coach's character compromise their integrity and intent, but it can also impact the level of honesty exhibited in the collaborative relationship, and whether particular actions are aligned with what is said and done (Aguilar, 2013). Teachers who feel their instructional coach has the skills, abilities, and knowledge to support them will also be increasingly participatory in building trust (Aguilar, 2013; Richardson et al., 2019). Since a critical part of being an instructional coach is having emotional intelligence, they must critically reflect on their intentions, integrity, and communication skills, which will foster a trusting relationship with the teachers they coach (Aguilar, 2013).

Conclusion

The relevant literature on the history and current state of instructional coaching programs, methods, models, and theories provides a wealth of information describing the extent to which instructional coaching programs have been successful. Examining the history of mentorship highlights important considerations regarding how the practice of instructional coaching has changed over time. The successful implementation of instructional coaching programs provides classroom teachers with support to promote higher student achievement (Aguilar, 2013; De Jong & Campoli, 2018; Knight, 2007, 2019; Walsh et al., 2020). This research study refers to Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy as a conceptual framework by which to examine successful methods and models for implementing instructional coaching programs. The seven core coaching principles (i.e., equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity) provide important guidelines to help districts design and implement a successful new instructional coaching program (Knight, 2007). In addition to using the seven principles behind

instructional coaching, Knight's (2007) partnership approach is vital in promoting a well-balanced relationship between coaches and teachers.

A concise review of the literature reveals a critical gap in how to implement new instructional coaching programs in school districts. This dissertation research thus presents an application of Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, as applied by Milheim (2012) in his Five Levels of Maslow's Model and Pedagogical Prescriptions for Teachers, as a guide to understand new instructional coaching programs. Research has revealed various challenges that school districts face when implementing a new coaching program, some of which include ineffective communication strategies, lack of knowledge, and lack of access to available resources. Such challenges can ultimately result in lower teacher job satisfaction, attrition rates, and, lower student achievement. Understanding the perceptions about practices relevant to relationship-building and barriers between instructional coaches and teachers can offer administrators critical information on how to implement a new coaching program

Chapter III: Design and Methodology

The aim of this qualitative research study was to explore the lived experiences of instructional coaches and teachers when creating a new instructional coaching program. The two-fold aspect of this study includes an examination of relationship-building practices and barriers faced by teachers and coaches in a new instructional coaching program. While general barriers to instructional coaching programs have included ineffective communication strategies, lack of knowledge, and lack of access to available resources in various school districts, the purpose of this dissertation has been to investigate the specific barriers that coach-teacher pairs have experienced when implementing a new instructional coaching program. These barriers can negatively impact a teacher's job satisfaction, increase school attrition rates, and impede student achievement. Research questions guiding this study included the following regarding new instructional coaching programs: (1) What are the teachers' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the instructional coach?; (2) What are teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?; (3) What are instructional coaches' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?; and (4) What are instructional coaches' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

The outcomes of this dissertation research involve various stakeholders. First, school districts without a coaching program could benefit from useful information collected regarding the perspectives and barriers coaches and teachers face, which could affect the success of an instructional coaching program. Second, instructional coaches would also gain insight by learning about a teacher's preference for mentoring styles, coaching strategies, and relationship-building values. Third, teachers could learn from the findings of this study, which could be useful in identifying and addressing barriers, such as communication, lack of instructional coach

knowledge, and lack of available resources. Finally, as districts, coaches, and teachers learn about barriers and relationship-building strategies, students, too, will benefit from the findings which could help students raise academic achievement due to benefiting from the best instructional practices.

This dissertation study combined a theoretical and conceptual framework to examine the perceptions of relationship-building practices and barriers that coaches and teachers face in a new instructional coaching program. The theoretical framework used was Abraham Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, which proposes a Hierarchy of Needs for examining the motivation behind the insight and responses by teachers receiving academic support from an instructional coach. For Maslow (1943), people must first fulfill their basic needs to be successful (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). For this dissertation study, Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, as a theoretical framework, focuses on the elements behind a teacher's basic needs with respect to carrying out their job as classroom educators. Similarly, Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy, a conceptual framework, highlights the instructional coach's reflections behind their actions and methods, and is categorized by the seven core principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2007).

Research Design

This narrative inquiry research study included teachers' and coaches' perceptions of new instructional coaching programs. According to Mills (2017), qualitative research involves engaging in activities to collect data, answer questions, and contribute to understanding the research topic under investigation. Qualitative research tends to have a smaller sample size, as the researcher delves deeper into understanding the phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In this qualitative study, the research design used semi-structured questions for

participants to express their experiences and perceptions of new instructional coaching programs. The narrative aspect in the field of education is important, as it centers on the study of lived experiences of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In undertaking this qualitative project, data was gathered via interviews with people who reflected upon specific activities (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

The data for this study was collected through the exploration of lived experiences. A narrative inquiry study was relevant because it placed value on the perceptions of instructional coaches and teachers. Data collected from this study results from communication with participants, emphasizing stories, perceptions, and beliefs that highlight the importance of meaningful practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Understanding meaningful and effective professional relationships between instructional coaches and teachers required careful attention to—and the description of—personal narratives. Due to the vital role of instructional coaches and their impact on teachers, the narrative inquiry research method was necessary.

This narrative inquiry dissertation study thus included narratives, perceptions, and challenges that instructional coaches and teachers faced regarding relationship-building and barriers in their new instructional coaching programs. Specifically, this study sought to address the following research questions:

RQ1: In a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?

RQ2: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

RQ3: In a new instructional coaching program, what are the teachers' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the instructional coach?

RQ4: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are teachers' perceptions of

barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

Participants and Setting

This qualitative research study examined two participant types: teachers and instructional

coaches working together in a new instructional coaching program. The criteria for instructional

coaches included the following: (1) completed a traditional education program from an

accredited teaching program; (2) received a bachelor's degree in elementary education; and (3)

currently work with a teacher in a new instructional coaching program in a K-6th elementary

school during the time of this study. The criteria for teachers included the following: (1)

currently working with the instructional coach selected in a new instructional coaching program;

(2) completed a traditional education program from an accredited teaching program; and (3)

received a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Each participant held a teaching

certification from the state where they reside and had experience providing general education

instruction in a K-6 elementary school.

To understand the importance of relationship-building between instructional coaches and

teachers, this study interviewed coach-teacher pairs from one district, and amplified the outreach

to external participants via convenience sampling through the social media platform, Facebook.

All participants were selected using convenience sampling, "a non-probability sampling

procedure in which the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available"

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Upon receiving IRB approval to conduct this research study, the

researcher sought written approval from a school district that recently created a new instructional

coaching program in 2022. This school district conferred authorization to conduct this study and

provided a list of instructional coaches and teachers (see Appendix A). The researcher sent an

invitation to all fifty instructional coaches on the district's email list, which was followed up by emails from the administrator of coaches (see Appendix B). Some responses led to contacts with instructional coaches who met the criteria for this study. The researcher selected four instructional coaches from this procedure. The convenience sampling recruitment to increase outreach occurred via invitation emails and public postings on relevant Facebook group pages, which was directed at instructional coaches who fulfilled the participant criteria (see Appendix C). The participants selected through convenience sampling included four instructional coaches. Following the instructional coaches' consent to participate in this study, each selected one teacher with whom they have been working with in a new instructional coaching program to participate in this study as a coach-teacher pair. The sample size consisted of a total of 16 participants, eight instructional coaches and eight teachers who fulfilled the participant criteria. To incentivize coaches and teachers to participate in the interviews for this study, the researcher offered a gift card from Amazon.

This study did not require participants to have a minimum number of years of coaching or teaching experience. Some instructional coaches may have had years of experience working with teachers in different capacities, such as team leader roles or mentors. Others may have had fewer years of experience but came with increased theoretical knowledge about implementing new instructional coaching programs. For these reasons, it was important to eliminate any limit to the years of experience as an instructional coach.

For the purpose of confidentiality, the researcher provided a pseudonym for the school district and each participant. The selected school district provided education to a population of approximately 33,000 students. Additionally, this district had recently received federal support in response to COVID-19 from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER)

fund to help with learning loss. The evidence-based interventions used by this research location included implementing a new instructional coaching program.

- The eight participants that did not work at this school district represent four other districts nationwide.

- All coaches agreeing to participate in this study were female; four coaches had at least 10 years of teaching experience and the four had over twenty years of teaching experience.

- Of the eight teacher participants, six were female and two were male; one teacher had at least 20 years of teaching experience, one teacher had between 11 and 20 years of experience, and the remaining six teachers have one to five years of experience teaching.

Data Collection

The data collection instrument selected for this research study was a semi-structured interview for teachers and coaches. Each interview was recorded for documentation purposes. The researcher pre-designed two sets of interview questions, one for teachers and another for instructional coaches (Knight, 2022) (see Appendices E and F). Each set contains 15 semi-structured open-ended questions, which provided participants the opportunity to further expand on their thoughts and perceptions (Wood & Smith, 2016). According to Knight (2022), an instructional coach's success is grounded in partnership beliefs, which can help them understand their relationship with teachers, thus implementing an "equal distribution of power" (p. 35). Based on Knight's (2007) Partnership Approach Theory, Knight designed a set of reflection questions categorized by his seven core partnership principles (i.e., equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity), which were intended for instructional coaches to examine their thoughts, words, and actions about the reality of their coaching progress (Knight,

2022). Knight's (2022) questions were grouped into each of the seven partnership principles and consisted of about two to four questions each.

Instrumentation

For this dissertation study, the interview data collection instrument utilized the same categories in Knight's (2022) reflection questions. The questionnaires for instructional coaches and teachers were designed in three major sections: I. Background (five questions); II. Partnership Principles (eight questions); and III. Concluding Comments (two questions). To adapt Knight's (2022) reflection questions to this research study, three modifications were necessary. The researcher obtained permission from Dr. Jim Knight to adapt these questions (see Appendix D). First, the number of questions for coaches were adapted and reduced to one or two per category. Second, under the section called "II. Partnership Principles," the researcher ensured that at least one of the questions in each category (i.e., equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity) would reference the themes of relationship-building and barriers, with the exception of the praxis category, which warranted both themes. For example, under the praxis principle, instructional coaches were asked one question dealing with relationship-building (i.e., "What does it look like when teachers enthusiastically implement the ideas you discover and create together? What can you do to ensure that happens more often?") and another dealing with barriers (i.e., "What are the greatest barriers you consider for teachers when implementing what they learn from their coach?"). Finally, the researcher created questions for teachers, which were not originally in Knight's (2022) reflection questions. For example, under the equality category, teachers are asked, "What barriers do you consider evident when thinking about an equal partnership between coach and teacher?"

The interview questions for instructional coaches (see Appendix E) focused on providing rich insight into coaches' and teachers' perceptions of relationship-building and barriers when implementing a new instructional coaching program. Interview questions for instructional coaches were modeled after Knight's (2022) reflection questions: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. For example, under the dialogue category, instructional coaches were asked, "What barriers do you believe could impact a successful dialogue between coaches and teachers?" In the choice category, the question emphasized the theme of relationship-building: "How do you explain teaching strategies while honoring the teacher's choice?"

The interview questions for teachers (see Appendix F) focused on their perspectives regarding relationship-building and barriers as they participate in a new instructional coaching program. Questions also mirrored Knight's (2007) seven partnership principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. Since Knight (2022) prepared his questions specifically for instructional coaches, the researcher modified the questions to consider the teachers' perspectives under each partnership principle. The interview questions were expanded to focus on the impact of coach-teacher collaboration as key in the relationship-building process, highlighting the importance of the teachers' perspective. For example, under the praxis principle, the teacher was asked a multi-layered question dealing with relationship-building (i.e., "In what ways has your coach helped you implement the ideas you both created together? What can you and your coach do to ensure that this happens more often?") and another dealing with barriers (i.e., "What are the greatest barriers you face as a teacher when implementing what you learn from your coach?"). Including the relationship-building and barriers categories in teachers'

interview questions provided them the opportunity to highlight areas they have more experience with.

Validating Interview Questions

In qualitative research, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness is achieved through various procedures examining the quality of the research study. Validity considers the integrity of the methods and the extent to which findings accurately reflect the data collected (Noble & Smith, 2015). To ensure the validity of the interview instrument, a panel of six experts in the field of Education were invited to review and validate the interview questions. Each reviewer came with at least fifteen years of experience as an educator and about half of them had two to five years of experience as an instructional coach. The expert reviewers determined: (1) whether the questions were aligned with the factors (i.e., relationship-building and barriers) as identified in the research questions and (2) whether interview questions specifically elicited answers that helped answer the research questions. The researcher provided the experts with a Google Doc containing the proposed interview questions for their review (see Appendix H).

Of the six expert responses, most experts rated the interview questions for instructional coaches and teachers as a "(3) Quite Relevant…(could be improved with minor changes)" and a "(4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)." Questions rated a (3) or below were modified by the researcher. For example, a few comments suggested revising for clarity in the question, for which the research provided additional context as required. The expert review resulted in helpful suggestions to modify some original interview questions and structure formatting, which are reflected in the final interview questions for coaches (see Appendix E) and teachers (see Appendix F).

Pilot Interview Process

To pilot the interview process, the researcher invited two colleagues to participate in a brief pilot study. The first colleague was a teacher who had previously participated in an instructional coaching program, and offered valuable insight into the clarity of questions involved in the interview process for teachers. The recommendation to improve the clarity of the questions were implemented in the revision process. The second colleague, currently an instructional coach, also provided helpful suggestions regarding the interview process for coaches. Conducting these pilot interviews highlighted the fact that each interview can span between 30-45 minutes, depending on the knowledge, expertise, and descriptions of scenarios to answer each question. This exercise allowed the researcher to be familiarized with the Google Meets technology and get a sense of the length of each interview.

Procedures

To properly analyze and interpret qualitative data, six steps that must be followed include: organizing the data, coding the responses, looking for common themes, representing the findings through narratives and visuals, interpreting the data, and validating the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to collect data. To begin the data collection process, approval was obtained from the selected school district that had implemented a new instructional coaching program in their schools. Four coach-teacher pairs were selected from this district. Additionally, with convenience sampling recruitment via the researcher's social networks on Facebook groups and pages, four additional coach-teacher pairs were selected. The names of social media groups and pages will not be provided to protect the confidentiality of all participants. The data collection methods implemented in this study involved one-on-one semi-structured interviews accompanied by thick description of behavioral

observations to build a narrative story of the participants' experiences. Once the data was collected, it was reviewed for coding.

Figure 3

The Qualitative Study Flow Diagram of Processes and Data Analysis
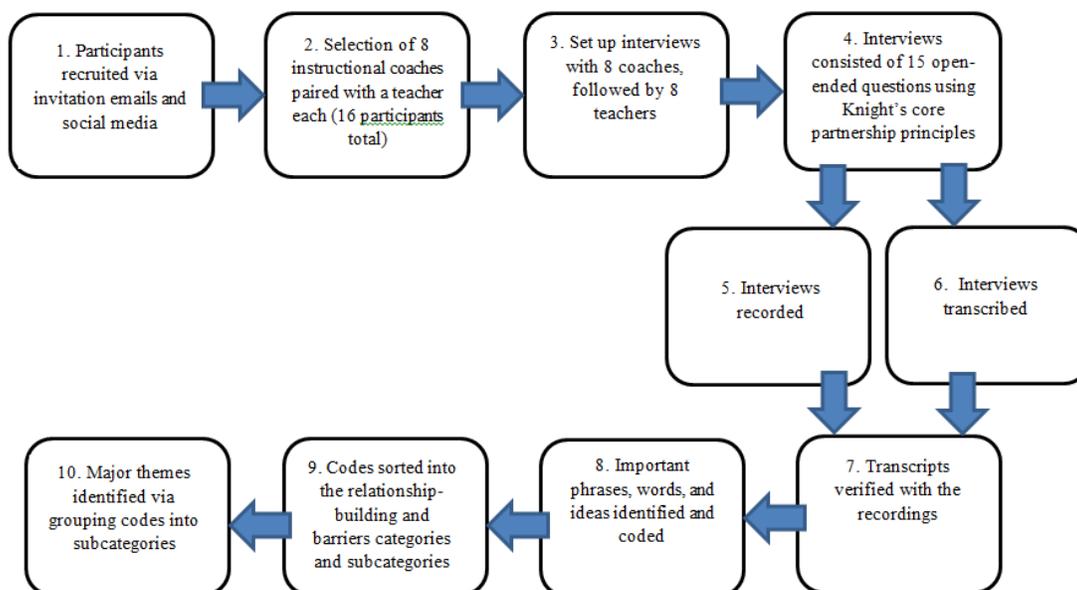
The qualitative research study process began with convenience sampling recruitment via invitation emails to instructional coaches and teachers who fulfilled the participant criteria (Figure 3). The process followed with a selection of eight instructional coaches grouped with one teacher each, with 16 participants total. Each participant signed an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix G) electronically via Qualtrics. All participants were notified that their involvement in this research study was entirely voluntary and confidential, and they could withdraw from the study at any moment they desired. The researcher then set up individual interviews with the eight coaches, followed by eight teacher participants. A different set of interview questions was used for instructional coaches (Knight, 2022) (see Appendix E) and teachers (see Appendix F). The semi-structured interviews provided a map guiding the conversations, such that if the participant

touched on an emerging theme, the researcher could ask for further narrative elaboration. The researcher engaged in one-on-one semi-structured interviews with teachers and instructional coaches, which were conducted after school through an online platform called Google Meets. Each interview was recorded via Google Meets (audio and video) with prior consent, and recordings were backed up on the researcher's computer under password protection. The videos were transcribed using riverside.fm/transcription and Transkriptor, which allowed the researcher to manage, code, and retrieve qualitative data. The researcher carefully reviewed all automated transcriptions, and corrected any errors.

In addition to Google Meets, the researcher also employed two data collection processes involving interview notes, which included researcher reflexivity and Geertz's (1973) thick description of field notes. Researcher reflexivity refers to the researcher's positionality, insights into personal biases, and experiences involving the research topic. As a teacher and an instructional coach, the researcher recognized the importance of maintaining neutral perspectives on the positive outcomes and barriers involved with creating a new instructional coaching program that could be revealed during the interview process. Having teaching and coaching experience, the researcher employed reflexive unbiased empathy with each participant during their interview.

The second process involved a thick description of analytical field notes, which included factual information during the interviews, detailed descriptions and interpretations, and data for research notes (Geertz, 1973). Thick description also involved the documentation of any physical or behavioral responses not exactly portrayed through words. For example, a participant's body language, choice of words, pauses or delays, repetition, and facial expressions can help contribute to an interpretative analysis (Chase, 2011). The researcher carefully observed

participants' body language to determine if they appeared to be holding back information or if any questions made participants feel uncomfortable. Body language can convey how people are feeling at a certain given moment in time. Some examples of people's body language included avoiding eye contact, moving from side to side, finger-pointing, or having their arms crossed (Jain, 2016). Therefore, a thick description of the responses to open-ended questions permitted an increased response rate, analysis of non-verbal behavior, and control over the environment (Bailey, 2008).

Analytical Methods

To determine the findings of this research study, the researcher engaged in a process to organize raw data collected from qualitative interviews (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The data from these sources were analyzed using Lichtman's (2012) "Three C's of Data Analysis," which included identifying codes, categories, and concepts, in this order. First, once the interviews were conducted, the information was coded by identifying coded descriptors (Charmaz, 2006). The code merging processes for each interview was streamlined using Delve software, a coding system that facilitated the grouping, refining, and organizing of themes and subthemes. The code descriptors included common words, phrases, and themes, which added qualitative value to the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). A synopsis of the concepts for each participant was identified after coding the data, and was sent to each participant for verification, member checking, and accuracy. The researcher identified on common concepts that emerged from the participants' data.

Second, the researcher identified over twenty codes, and organized them into hierarchical categories and subcategories (Lichtman, 2012). The two major categories were Relationship-Building and Barriers. Comments coded to the relationship-building category included "going

above and beyond," "I can choose," "listens and responds appropriately," "asking questions," "bounce those ideas back and forth," and "learning from each other." Phrases and ideas such as "don't necessarily want to listen," "it feels like an evaluation," "limited amount of time," and "lack of continuity," were coded to the barrier category. Subcategories emerged under each partnership principle. For example, there were common subthemes across teachers and coaches that included trust, attitudes, and time limits.

Third, once the first layer of categorization into the relationship-building and barriers categories was complete, the categories were divided into seven concepts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The Delve software allowed for structural coding of concepts for each teacher and coach using Knight's (2007) seven partnership principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. Since the interview questions utilized Knight's (2007) partnership principles, the majority of the responses naturally fell into these subtheme concepts. However, there were some instances in which a teacher or a coach responded to a question specific to barriers with a phrase that indicated a relationship-building practice. For example, teachers responding to the question on equality (i.e., What barriers do you consider evident when thinking about an equal partnership between coach and teacher?) also highlighted items that helped build a relationship with their coach, such as the importance of having equal perceptions, mutual collaboration, and fostering trust (Figure 4). Some responses were coded to multiple principles, which highlights some overlap. In these instances, the researcher selected the best category considering the full context of the response. This coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing process helped the researcher identify, understand, and display similarities and/or differences between the interview results (Gibbs, 2007).

Limitations

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) highlighted that "limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with a study identified by the researcher," adding that these limitations are useful to other potential researchers who may choose to conduct similar or replication studies (p. 200). Potential limitations of this study included the disadvantage of collecting extensive data in an allotted time frame (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). For example, a data collection instrument in the form of a survey can be distributed to numerous individuals, which can gather extensive data within a relatively short period of time. With open-ended qualitative interviews, the number of individuals is decreased and the data collection timeframe per participant is significantly increased.

The first potential limitation includes data being collected from a relatively small convenience sample. To offset this limitation, the researcher widened the candidate pool by inviting via social media networks participants who fit the selection criteria. A second limitation is that the sample size is small relative to the amount of instructional coaches and teachers in these school districts, which may pose a challenge in determining whether particular outcomes are valid findings. Furthermore, there may also be self-selection biases due to the fact that the researcher selected research locations and each of the qualified participants. Since each school has its unique demographics, students, and teachers, it is a challenge to make any generalizations across schools. A third limitation involves factors that the researcher cannot control, such as district funding, participant time availability, and number of instructional coaches available, which could impact outcomes of a new instructional coaching program. One way of eliminating bias in the qualitative data collection was to validate findings via member checking, which entails asking all participants to verify that the interview documentation was complete, realistic,

and fair (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). After the interview, the researcher distributed an email to each participant, summarizing the responses to the interview and any additional information provided by the participant at will. A fourth potential limitation concerns the eight participants recruited via snowball sampling on social media. Since four coach-teacher pairs were recruited via an institutional email provided by a school administrator, their eligibility criteria can be confirmed by the school district. The eligibility for the four coach-teacher pairs recruited via social media was based on an honor system, given that they signed a consent form.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher approached this dissertation study with 18 years of teaching experience, and has received mentorship as an instructional coach. This experience has shaped the researcher's views on elementary school instructional coaching, allowing for the understanding of lived experiences, perceptions, and barriers to new and existing instructional coaching programs. In 2022, the researcher became an instructional coach, having been given the opportunity to work with new teachers as well as with teachers working in the profession for several years. The researcher's experience as a teacher and an instructional coach has contributed to the knowledge involving the creation of new instructional coaching programs. With qualitative research, Chenail (2016) observes challenges regarding bias, which necessitate methodological rigor. To offset this challenge, this research study used a narrative inquiry approach, which aids in providing useful opportunities for narratives by the instructional coaches and teachers participating in this qualitative study.

The researcher of this study served as the interviewer, and may have had some connection to the participants through conversations or prior interactions. To demonstrate validity and credibility, the researcher employed researcher reflexivity during the data collection

and analysis. Every aspect of the researcher's experience has contributed to the researcher's positionality. In the research process, the researcher considered participants' points of view and positionalities. Due to the researcher's specific experience in the realm of instructional coaching, a potential selection bias and closeness to this research setting can be identified. To offset this bias, the researcher only selected the instructional coaches, who were asked to select the teacher participants they worked with. In this scenario, the researcher had no preconceived knowledge of the teacher participants. Interviewer bias was offset by creating semi-structured interviews based on Knight and Skrtic's (2021) seven partnership principles, as mentioned above. Finally, to avoid research bias, the researcher included a peer debriefing process for the analysis and writing of the research findings, which underwent various reviews.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter unveils the findings and data interpretations of an inquiry study on the perceptions of relationship building and barriers in a new instructional coaching program. The findings of this study represent responses by eight coach-teacher pairs working together within the last year and a half, in a new onsite instructional coaching program, with each coach working full time at their school. The two main focus areas of this research study, relationship building and barriers, were categorized under the Seven Principles in Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. These findings highlight the strategies and challenges faced within a new instructional coaching program.

The four research questions in this study address both the teachers' and coaches' perspectives pertinent to relationship building and barriers. This study sought to address the following research questions:

RQ1: In a new instructional coaching program, what are the teachers' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the instructional coach?

RQ2: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

RQ3: In a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?

RQ4: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

Results

Reporting Participant Responses

The qualitative research study process involved one-on-one semi-structured interviews with coach-teacher pairs via Google Meets. Once the transcriptions (i.e., using riverside.fm/transcription and Transkriptor) and the coding (i.e., using Delve software) for each interview, the researcher corrected errors and provided each participant with a summary for verification, member checking, and accuracy. In the coding process, the researcher removed extra syllables and filler words, such as "like," "I mean," "you know," and "um," to ensure an accurate depiction of the participants' thought process and clarity of ideas in their responses. Brackets were included to provide a continuity in responses. For example, a sentence quoted in these findings may be referring to a previous topic just a few sentences earlier.

With regard to the process of thick description, the researcher prepared analytical field notes during the interviews, which included detailed descriptions and interpretations, and data for research notes. The thick description involved observations that provided rich and contextual information beyond interview transcriptions. For example, two coaches and two teachers preferred not appear on camera during the interview. Of these four participants, three were in their home and did not want their children to appear in the background, and one was driving. This indicated that participants were free to be in their comfort zones during the interview. For other participants, their comfort zone was in their classroom or an office setting, which made them feel pleasant and at ease. Having a secure comfort zone is crucial for qualitative research involving thick description methodologies.

Despite having access to questions in advance, some participants had a difficult time answering certain questions. For instance, participants shared that they deemed Question 10 (i.e.,

"Reflecting on the past helps educators learn from successes and mistakes. Looking at the future helps educators plan and be prepared. What are some barriers that have prevented you and your teachers from reflecting on the past to learn or looking towards the future to grow?") rather difficult because they had little time throughout their profession to reflect on the past or future. One reason provided for this lack of time was that they were merely trying to get through the day, and could not reflect as much as they should. As a result, participants paused many times when trying to answer this question.

On the other hand, the majority of participants were quick to answer Question 11 (i.e., "What does it look like when teachers enthusiastically implement the ideas you discover and create together? What can you do to ensure that happens more often?"), and were excited to provide the researcher with a multitude of examples regarding how much they share with each other. Responses included many smiles and laughs as they described how they created activities together. In their responses, participants were focused and looked into the camera to share their thoughts and excitement with the researcher. When participants could easily relate to a question, they were quick to answer and provided relevant examples and lived experiences.

Participants

With signed authorization, each participant in this study was assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. Six coach-teacher pairs were from Arizona and two coach-teacher pairs from California. Table 2 below illustrates the pseudonym, role, and experience length of each participant. To protect their confidentiality, their location has been removed from the following table.

Table 2

Participant Pseudonyms, Role, and Experience Length

Pair	Pseudonym	Role	Experience Length
Pair 1	Addyson	Coach	20+ years
	Jayda	Teacher	20+ years
Pair 2	Callie	Coach	11-20 years
	Sarah	Teacher	1-5 years
Pair 3	Kayla	Coach	11-20 years
	Layla	Teacher	1-5 years
Pair 4	Maya	Coach	11-20 years
	David	Teacher	11-20 years
Pair 5	Montana	Coach	20+ years
	Nick	Teacher	1-5 years
Pair 6	Paige	Coach	20+ years
	Chrissy	Teacher	1-5 years
Pair 7	Teressa	Coach	11-20 years
	Amy	Teacher	1-5 years
Pair 8	Tina	Coach	20+ years
	Ana*	Teacher	1-5 Years

Note: At the time of data collection, Ana was in the process of completing her teaching degree and was on a sub-certificate. While she did not fulfill the eligibility criteria of holding a teacher certificate, she was permitted to continue with the study given that she was close to completion.

The Partnership Philosophy, as outlined by Jim Knight (2007), emphasizes the importance of collaboration, respect, and shared decision-making between instructional coaches and teachers. Knight's Partnership Approach Theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding how instructional coaches can adopt a partnership approach when working with teachers. By focusing on seven core coaching principles –equality, choice, voice, dialogue,

reflection, praxis, and reciprocity– coaches can create a supportive and empowering environment for teachers.

Research Question One: Relationship Building – Teachers

This section details results from Research Question 1, focusing on teachers' views regarding the practices that contribute to relationship-building between instructional coaches and teachers in a new coaching program. Responses by teachers reveal their views on the specific strategies, behaviors, and approaches deemed effective for establishing positive and supportive connections with their instructional coach. Overall, teachers value coaches who treat them as equal partners, offering them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes regarding the instructional coaching strategies. For teachers, it was important to have a voice and be heard, engage in meaningful dialogues with their coach, and be actively encouraged to critically reflect on their teaching practices. Although praxis was beneficial for teachers when having the opportunity to implement practical strategies suggested by their coach, the element of reciprocity was also important for building a successful relationship with their instructional coach. Knight's (2007) seven core coaching principles were all deemed by teachers as relevant and empowering factors in relationship-building.

Equality. The principle of equality emphasizes that instructional coaches and teachers should view each other as equals in the coaching process. According to Knight (2007), coaches should not be considered experts who know everything, but rather as partners who can collaborate and learn from each other. The interviews with the teachers participating in a new instructional coaching program explored their perceptions regarding practices that build relationships with their coach by fostering equal perceptions, mutual collaboration, and building trust (Figure 4). For example, Jayda expressed her appreciation for the relationship she has built

with her instructional coach, Amy. She described how her coach has created an equal environment where she feels comfortable asking any questions and sharing anything with her. Referring to Amy, Jayda stated that "She's created a relationship and an environment where I feel like I can ask her anything and tell her anything. And so for me, that's number one." This sense of trust and openness allowed Jayda to feel supported and valued as an equal partner in the coaching process.

Similarly, Ana spoke highly of her instructional coach's efforts to establish personal relationships with both her students and the teachers she is coaching. Ana noted that her coach goes to great lengths to build these connections and create an environment of mutual respect: "So she definitely goes above and beyond to create that personal relationship with her students and the people that she's coaching." These insights highlight the significance of equality in the coach-teacher relationship. The teachers interviewed value coaches who treat them as equal partners, and appreciate their perspectives and input.

Nick shared his thoughts on the topic of equality, expressing his appreciation for his instructional coach, Montana. He described her as a "really good team player" who consistently demonstrated a genuine concern for his well-being. According to Nick, Montana made it a point to always look out for him as a teacher being coached. Nick's statement suggests that his coach established a positive and supportive relationship with him.

Choice. The relationship-building factors referenced in this partnership principle included having agency, autonomy, and flexibility (Figure 4). The choice principle allows teachers to have agency in selecting strategies and practices that align with their teaching style and goals. Chrissy shared her perception of practices that build her relationship with her instructional coach, Paige. She appreciated having the choice to decide which strategies to

implement in her classroom, and "even with the feedback that was given, it was communicated that they are suggestions, so I can still choose from that as well." Since the feedback provided was presented as a suggestion, Chrissy felt a sense of autonomy, which allowed her to have a collaborative relationship with her instructional coach.

Layla expresses a similar sentiment. She believes that teachers have the autonomy to make decisions regarding their classrooms and the literacy program they are implementing. Regarding the opportunity to make the best choices, Layla stated:

> I think, at the beginning of the school year, there was a time when I was able to sit down with my coach and [we were] able to lay out a plan. Then, strategies were discussed… From there, I was able to choose the strategies that I wanted to put in my classroom. So, [having been] given that choice was nice. Even with the feedback that was given, it was communicated like suggestions, and so I can still choose from that, as well.

She mentioned they were piloting a literacy program and that she had been provided with a script, from which she could "pick and choose" which parts to implement. Having this flexibility offers the teacher the opportunity to find what works best, both for the teacher and the students.

In sharing the choice options provided by the instructional coach, Nick, a teacher, shared an example where he approached his coach with a specific issue regarding his students' reluctance in using a computer program. Of the options given to Nick, he chose to implement a creative reward system based on the students' performance using the computer program.

Voice. For teachers, expressing their voice enables them to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns, which fosters an open and meaningful dialogue between the coach and the teacher (Figure 4). One of the school districts with a new instructional coaching program recently implemented half-day Wednesdays, which involves a reduction in the hours of student

instruction so that teachers receive professional development and participate in PLCS, grade level meetings, and student data reviews. These half days created an opportunity to have time during the school day for teachers and instructional coaches to voice their thoughts and opinions in a group setting. Layla, a teacher, mentioned that these weekly dialogues allowed for teachers to voice thoughts with one another. For example, she mentioned collaborative meetings with team members, school or district-wide grade level bands, or other committees. With respect to her voice being heard during her coaching sessions, Layla added, "when I express concerns, they get addressed, and [my coach] thinks of creative ways to help solve them and not just listen, especially if it's something that can be fixed at the moment or later." Her statement illustrates how her coach, Kayla, actively seeks solutions and is committed to helping with support to overcome challenges.

David emphasizes the importance of open and genuine communication in building a relationship with his instructional coach, Maya. He appreciated how Maya took the time to listen and respond appropriately, both in school-related matters and even personal aspects. For David, having the opportunity to continuously dialogue with his instructional coach was an expression of his voice during their sessions. Being able to commiserate with his coach made him feel like he not only has a voice, but that it is being heard:

> We'll talk a little bit about stuff in school, stuff outside of school, so that helps build a
> relationship. She has a class too, so we can kind of commiserate on things, and I think
> that helps. She listens and responds appropriately to the stuff [I] say. She doesn't seem to
> just blow anything off.

Since they both have shared experiences as teachers, David feels they can empathize with each other, further strengthening their relationship.

Teachers appreciated having their voice heard. While some teachers may feel more open to expressing their thoughts and ideas, others might need the coach to nudge teachers into expressing their voice by asking questions. Chrissy expressed: "I think one thing I appreciate about my coach is that she's always willing to just ask how things are going. Then, if there needs to be a moment to just listen to what's going on, she was very open to that." This willingness for her coach, Paige, to propel open dialogue allowed for her voice to be heard. Sarah acknowledged that she and her instructional coach, Callie, have a strong relationship built on open communication and mutual understanding. According to Sarah, "we both feel we have a relationship where we hear each other." The trust and respect they have for one another allow for effective collaboration during their sessions.

Dialogue. The principle of dialogue allows for authentic and meaningful conversations, which increases the opportunities for effective modifications, professional growth, and development of teaching skills (Figure 4). In reference to dialogues with his instructional coach, David mentions that Maya actively engages with him in the classroom. In addition to observing and providing feedback, his instructional coach suggested new strategies and approaches.

If we talk about trying something with the class or certain kids, she'll come in [to the classroom] and observe, talk about how it went, and give some suggestions for things to try. She has [also] offered to participate with certain activities and things like that.

The consistent and interactive dialogue enhances their involvement and collaboration, which helps build a stronger coach-teacher pair relationship. The fact that David's coach had the willingness to participate in specific learning activities demonstrated her support and commitment to his professional growth.

Similarly, Sarah, also appreciates her instructional coach's approach in using dialogue to build their relationship. Callie, her coach, "is really great about ask[ing] questions like, 'what's going on in the classroom?'" These consistent types of questions demonstrate an interest in Sarah's teaching experiences and challenges. Callie's attentiveness contributes to open communication and a more profound understanding of building their relationship by understanding the teacher's needs.

Reflection. Reflection encourages teachers to critically analyze their teaching practices in order to make any adjustments in their instruction. In this partnership principle, the major relationship-building factors referenced by teachers included the opportunity to reflect on ideas and experiences and analyzing teacher practices (Figure 4). One way teachers can collaboratively analyze their teaching practices is through a Professional Learning Community (PLC). These communities consist of a group of educators meeting regularly to collaborate on common teaching goals, integrate new learning outcomes, and evaluate data to drive instruction. In regard to PLCs, Amy mentions that these practices provide a platform for building relationships with the instructional coach. During these sessions, teachers have the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences to support each other's professional growth:

So, sometimes we'll have PLC's, and we bounce those ideas back and forth like: "Hey, this is what I did, and it worked for me." Or, "hey, when you do that? Maybe I could give it a shot." I'm very big on self-reflection, and she knows that, also.

In her relationship with her coach, Teressa, Amy highlights the importance of self-reflection, indicating that her coach values and encourages this reflective practice.

The reflection process not only involves a look into the past, which helps with understanding what modifications need to be implemented for effective outcomes; it also

involves a look into the future, to gain an idea of how to best work towards a particular goal. Nick, for example, mentioned the importance of goal-setting: "I think with the future, it's a little different because we have to know what the goal is or where [we're] trying to move." His reflection suggests that building relationships with instructional coaches involves having a shared understanding of the intended outcomes and the steps needed to achieve them. In this sense, clarity and alignment in goal-setting can contribute to stronger relationship building and reflection.

Praxis. The principle of praxis focuses on applying theoretical concepts into practical strategies in the classroom, ensuring that instructional coaching is relevant and applicable to each teacher's specific context (Figure 4). Jayda shares that her coach, Addyson, is extremely approachable and willing to listen. She adds that her coach is always open and "will work her tail off to help [me] or find the answer to [my] question. She's just very dedicated and devoted to her position." Addyson's dedication to practical support via instructional coaching showcases how instructional coaching is not merely about theoretical knowledge, but more about the practical application of that knowledge in the classroom in a way that is relevant and beneficial to Jayda's specific context. For example, since Jayda was an ELL teacher servicing K-6 grade levels, her schedule was very restricted; however, Addyson was mindful about utilizing a practical way to create a schedule that worked for Jayda and the homeroom classroom teacher. For Jayda, this practical support was not only meaningful and valuable to her classroom practice, but it also contributed to a strong relationship with her coach.

Ana also shared her positive experience with her instructional coach in relationship with a practical way of implementing a reward system. According to Ana, her coach, Tina, proactively reached out after the fact, telling her, "well, let's sit down and let's just have a

conversation about your reward system; let's talk about what you're implementing." Tina's proactive approach demonstrated her commitment to Ana's professional growth, particularly because she is working towards obtaining her teaching certificate, and, as a new teacher, all practical advice is welcome.

Part of Layla's work as a teacher is to implement a phonemic awareness program in her classroom. During the interview with Layla, she mentioned how her instructional coach, Kayla, provided a practical suggestion in utilizing this program, which was new to her. The recommendation involved "adding hand motions for segmenting words," allowing for a "different strategy to breaking up the syllables, instead of just clapping it out, because some kids don't understand that." Kayla's guidance demonstrates her expertise in providing practical solutions for instructional practices.

Reciprocity. Reciprocity is the principle that promotes a reciprocal relationship between coaches and teachers, with each benefiting and learning from each other. Instructional coaching programs are developed specifically to benefit teachers throughout their educational careers. The level of benefit to teachers may depend on where they are in their career. Coaches who learn more about the teachers' strengths and weaknesses can increase the level of reciprocity in their relationship by fostering mutual learning, providing tools and resources for mutual growth, and having regular visits (Figure 4).

Ana, who has recently started her second year as a teacher, greatly benefits from the coach offering a series of options that she can "cherry pick," so that she can experiment with what works best for her teaching style and students. Ana feels satisfied with her coach's efforts to guide her, commenting that "she's done a terrific job as far as supplying me with the tools to put in my toolbox." Ana's statement demonstrates that her coach's role is not limited to advising

her as a teacher, but also serves to provide practical resources that she can incorporate into her classroom practices.

In their fifth year of teaching, Sarah and Layla share similar experiences that illustrate a positive impact due to the support they have received from their instructional coach. Sarah states: "We have this new curriculum, and [she] helps me break down the lesson and [suggests] some things I could do to help engage the kids." Since both Sarah and her coach were new to the instructional strategy that was to be implemented in the curriculum, their collaborative and fluid conversations provided a reciprocal benefit to both. Furthermore, Layla mentions the value of regular meetings and classroom visits from her coach, which facilitates a hands-on collaborative relationship between the coach and teacher. Layla states that "just doing those check-ins and… visiting the classrooms allows [teachers] to discuss [the value of] pulling small groups from each of us and running [these groups], allowing us to get in even more interventions for the students." The reciprocal conversations between the teacher and coach allows for real-time feedback and opportunities to address any concerns the teacher may have. By being present in the classroom, the coach can tailor their support to meet the teacher's needs.

Figure 4

Findings of Teachers' Perceptions of Relationship-Building Practices
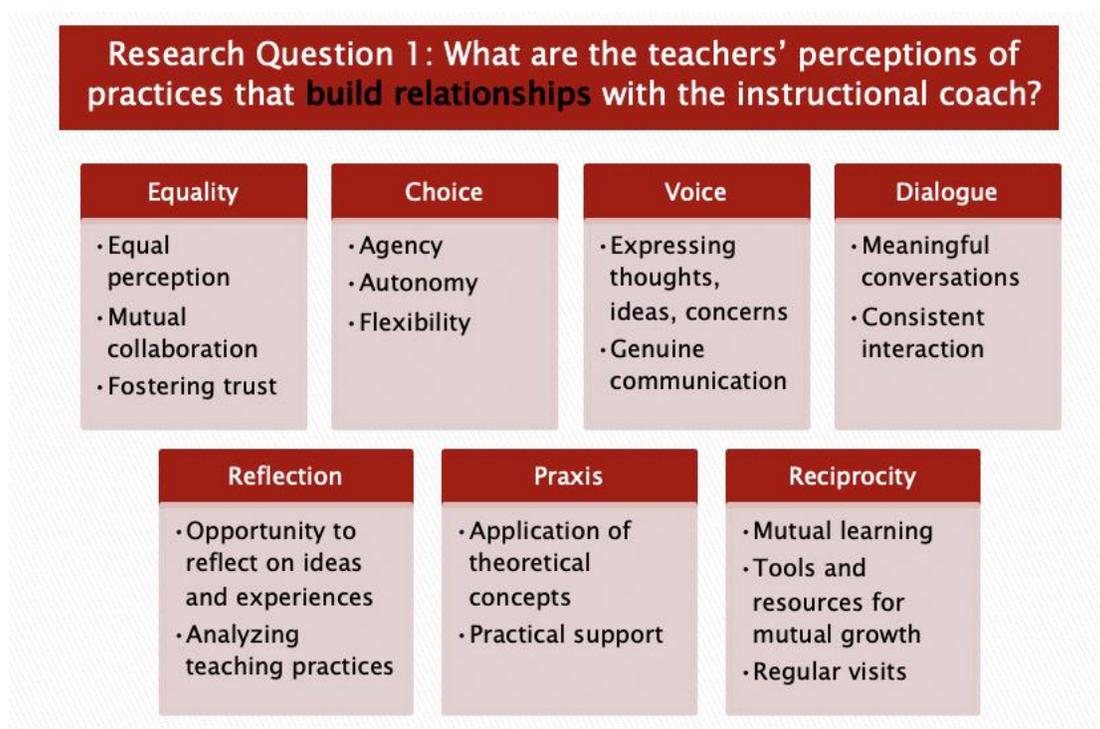
Research Question Two: Barriers – Teachers

The following section provides findings from Research Question 2, which explores teacher's perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program. The focus is on identifying the challenges and hindrances from the teachers' perspectives, emphasizing their experiences and the impact of these barriers on the implementation process of the coaching program. Various factors played a role in the barriers that teachers described regarding equality, which emphasized biases regarding teachers' and coaches' years of experience. While the principles of voice and choice were highly valued by teachers, responses revealed experiences in which a teacher felt their autonomy was compromised and classroom walk-throughs felt like evaluations rather than constructive feedback. Other barriers included a lack of agreement and alignment of expectations in teacher-coach dialogues, blaming external factors like COVID

rather than critically reflecting on instructional practices, and misunderstandings that can hinder the practical application of strategies. In some cases, teachers expressed sometimes feeling that their coach would dictate rather than foster reciprocal-centered dialogues.

Equality. From the point of view of a teacher, barriers relevant to the principle of equality would inhibit instructional coaches and teachers as equals in the coaching process. From interviews with six teachers, three described some sort of barrier when it comes to having an equal partnership with their instructional coach. In the case of Chrissy, she expressed her thoughts on understanding boundaries and finding balance with her coach. She saw this as a fundamental aspect of equality within the context of an instructional coaching program.

In an effort to shed light on the barriers to equality within a coaching program, Nick shared his observation regarding barriers to equality. While he is a new teacher learning from his instructional coach, he noticed some more experienced teachers were more reluctant to take advice from a younger instructional coach. Furthermore, Nick observed resistance on the part of some older educators to listen and value the expertise of their younger counterparts. In his words, "older people don't necessarily want to listen to younger people, even if they're an expert, you know, and you're not." Despite the younger coaches being knowledgeable in their field, their ideas and suggestions were often dismissed due to their age and perceived lack of experience (Figure 5).

Sarah, another teacher, shared similar sentiments during her interview. She highlighted the prevailing attitude among some colleagues who believed that their years of teaching experience granted them superiority, thus dismissing the valuable contributions of their less-experienced coaches. According to Sarah, there is an attitude by teachers with more years of experience that tend to have the mindset that, "oh, well, I've been teaching longer, so I shouldn't

really listen to what you have to say." Sarah stressed the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment where all teachers can feel comfortable engaging with their instructional coach by collaborating and learning from one another, regardless of how long they have been in the profession.

Choice. Interviews with teachers revealed valuable perspectives on the challenges they faced when the partnership principle regarding choice is limited, or when teachers feel like their autonomy is compromised (Figure 5). For example, Chrissy emphasized the importance of choice in the context of instructional coaching. She expressed her belief that if teachers are not given the option to choose, it can create a challenging environment that can feel like an evaluation rather than a partnership. According to Chrissy, "If there isn't any choice in things, then it makes it tough because then it feels like it is an evaluation if you do not allow for choice." Therefore, providing teachers with choices allows for a sense of ownership and empowerment.

Voice. In the pursuit of understanding teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new instructional coaching program, interviews with teachers highlighted the importance of voice in their partnership. Through these interviews, the researcher gained valuable insights into the challenges faced when it comes to providing teachers with a voice and promoting a collaborative environment. Frequent topics in this partnership principle included inappropriate timing, walk-ins feeling like evaluations, and the lack of teacher willingness to participate (Figure 5).

Chrissy expressed her thoughts on barriers she has faced regarding the opportunity to express her voice, emphasizing the importance of appropriate timing for feedback and classroom observations. For Chrissy, "I think there are times when the walk-ins were frequent, but then it almost felt like an evaluation." She acknowledged that while feedback and classroom visits are

valuable, it is crucial for them to occur at appropriate times. When walk-ins are frequent, it can create a sense of being evaluated rather than being supported. Chrissy's perspective highlighted the need for a balance between providing support and respecting professional space. When Chrissy voiced this sentiment to her coach, Paige, this resulted in less frequent visits. However, the issue for Chrissy was not so much about the frequency of visits and more about the feeling of being constantly evaluated.

Nick brought up a different aspect of the barrier in voicing opinions. He pointed out that there are teachers who are resistant to seeking help or making changes. Some teachers who prefer to do things their own way can be unwilling to ask for assistance. Nick acknowledged that this resistance can create difficulties in implementing a coaching program and hinder the collaborative process. He recognized that the barrier lies in both the lack of voice and the lack of willingness to embrace support.

Dialogue. Interviews with teachers provided valuable insights into the challenges faced in establishing meaningful dialogue between teachers and instructional coaches. A common theme throughout all interviews included the limited amount of time available, a stronger focus on logistics rather than on dialogues, and a lack of agreement between teachers and coaches (Figure 5). Regarding the limits in time, Nick suggested that having additional time would create more meaningful dialogue between teachers and coaches. He expressed his frustration with a lack of opportunities to meet with coaches to discuss instructional strategies and share insights. In response to barriers to dialogue, Nick stated the following:

> When did we have time to really meet with the coaches for meaningful dialogue? Very little. I mean, most of it was just them trying to figure out how they could help us get all these assessments done. And they said, "oh, we'll talk about the assessments when they're

all finished and we'll look at the data together." So, that's a barrier: a limited amount of

time on the teacher's end.

He noted that most of the interaction centered around logistical matters, such as coordinating the

completion of assessments. This limitation of time on the teacher's end hindered the development

of a partnership built on meaningful dialogue.

Sarah, on the other hand, addressed a different aspect of the barrier to implementing the

coaching program. She identified a lack of agreement and alignment between instructional

coaches and teachers as a potential barrier. For Sarah, a barrier is when "an instructional coach

and a teacher are just not seeing eye to eye, they're stuck in their ways, and [are] not agreeing on

something." Sarah noted that when teachers and coaches are disconnected, it can hinder

collaboration and the establishment of a fruitful dialogue.

Reflection. In seeking teachers' perspectives on the challenges faced when it comes to

fostering a culture of reflection within the coaching program, interviews revealed the importance

of understanding each teacher's individual context. The major barriers associated with this

partnership principle included a lack of thorough reflection and blaming external factors (Figure

5). Chrissy provided insights into the importance of reflecting on the opportunity to participate in

coaching cycles. She mentioned that sometimes the coaching program was not presented to

teachers efficiently, rather being brought in specifically to certain teams. For Chrissy, this lack of

reflection hindered the ability for teachers to fully embrace the coaching process and required an

adjustment. The barrier, for Chrissy, was the lack of a thorough reflection about how coaching

programs are introduced and implemented.

Another barrier presented in the reflection partnership principle dealt with events that

have occurred in the past. For example, Ana brought attention to the impact in the context of the

challenges faced during COVID-19: "when we look at the past, and maybe that's just the current state of our world that we live in, we place a lot of blame on COVID." She acknowledged that external factors, such as the pandemic, can influence the effectiveness of instructional coaching programs. In Ana's sentiment, instructional coaching programs should clearly identify the root of any current problems rather than blaming a historical event, like COVID.

In highlighting the complexity of teaching experiences, David also emphasized the need for continuous reflection and adjustment. Having worked with many coaches over his teaching experience, David provided insight into a possible lack of continuity:

Sometimes you try to look at the past and what kids have done, but it's tough because the groups of kids you get in each class or every year can be so different from each other. So, it's hard if one group got something, doesn't necessarily mean the next group will or will not. You know, if you teach it the same way, you get to make a lot of little adjustments each year. When it comes to coaches, if you're not working with the same coach for a long time, it's probably hard for them to jump in and know what every teacher they work with has been doing for the past few years or plans to do.

He explained that each group of students can be different from one another, making it challenging to rely solely on past experiences and approaches. Additionally, David noted that, if coaches frequently change, it can be difficult for them to fully understand the context and development of each teacher over time.

Teachers highlighted the importance of practicing reflection exercises in their coaching sessions. In this regard, Nick recognized a potential barrier related to the lack of time dedicated to reflection during these sessions. He highlighted that educators often do not prioritize taking

the time to reflect on their teaching practices, which can hinder personal and professional growth.

Praxis. The principle of praxis refers to applying practical strategies in the classroom. Interviews conducted with teachers revealed four barriers regarding these practical approaches during coaching sessions: feedback, time constraints, fixed mindsets, and misunderstandings (Figure 5). First, feedback emerged from Chrissy expressing concerns regarding the frequency of walk-ins and the nature of her coach's responses. With respect to the delivery of feedback, Chrissy contended: "Under appropriate times, [it's ok] to give feedback, [but there is an] appropriate time to come into the classroom. I think there are times, when the walk-ins were frequent, and it almost felt like an evaluation." This sensitive statement indicated a need for coaches to consider a more balanced approach when providing feedback to teachers.

Furthermore, the factor of time was also found to be an additional barrier by some teachers. Ana and Nick found that they were under constant pressure surrounding their meeting sessions with their instructional coach due to limited time. Ana stated: "Time is always an issue, no matter where you're at." For teachers like Ana, who were faced with scheduling conflicts, time constraints can pose a hindrance to the opportunity of learning new practical strategies to implement in the classroom.

Thirdly, fixed mindsets emerged as another significant barrier to implementing practical applications in teachers' classrooms. For example, David and Jayda witnessed other teachers form a sense of resistance to change due to long-standing habits or fears of using new instructional practices. Not only did this form of resistance complicate dynamics between the coach and teacher, it also furthered fixed attitudes, which can inhibit the opportunity to learn and apply evidence-based strategies regarding praxis in the classroom.

Finally, misunderstandings between teachers and coaches were highlighted by Sarah. In her experience, when she was involved in planning with her instructional coach, confusion could arise due to various reasons. When coaches do not convey information appropriately or teachers do not correctly understand the coach, misunderstandings can lead to a barrier to the practical application of strategies. Sarah expressed this concern by mentioning, "maybe I missed something, or I don't know something, or perhaps I'm trying to think of what to do or say with the coach..." These misunderstandings can stem from gaps in knowledge, possible overlooked details, or differing expectations.

Reciprocity. Teachers' perceptions of barriers to the partnership principle of reciprocity involved the lack of reciprocal-centered dialogues that increase their desire and expectation to learn. The major barriers in this partnership principle included scheduling inflexibility, lack of trust, and lack of communication (Figure 5). Regarding the issue of time, Layla mentioned that her instructional coach's schedule was essentially "dictated to them, and then they pass[ed] it on to us." For Layla, this lack of flexibility can create a barrier to fully implementing the new coaching program. Layla stated that, at the time of the interview, she and her coach were prioritizing working on a specific diagnostic assessment on the computer, which prevented them from collaborating on instructional strategies based on that data. However, once the assessments were completed, they could work on a more defined schedule for the instructional coach to be more actively involved.

In addition to availability in scheduling, Chrissy emphasized the importance of reciprocal trust in the coaching program. According to Chrissy, if teachers get the sense that an instructional coach is imposed upon them, "they will not be open." Furthermore, if teachers think that they can't trust their instructional coach, they will not open up to them. As a result, Chrissy

expressed that teachers who perceive any lack of trustworthiness or openness from the coaches will be less inclined to participate fully. Building trust and establishing a positive relationship between coaches and teachers is crucial for the success of the program.

Regarding the issue of reciprocity, Nick described a lack of communication between the district and the teachers. For Nick, instructional coaches seemed to serve as a kind of buffer who have possibly protected teachers by trying to pass on the positive aspects rather than bringing in the more negative feedback from the district. In this sense, Nick appreciated the role of the coaches in protecting the teachers in this way, which highlights the importance of maintaining a positive and supportive environment for the teachers during the coaching process.

Figure 5

Findings of Teachers' Perceptions of Barriers

Research Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

Equality	Choice	Voice	Dialogue
· Biases on experience · Dismissing expertise · Lack of support and inclusivity	· Limited decision-making · Compromising autonomy	· Inappropriate timing · Walk-ins feeling like evaluations · Lack of willingness	· Limited time · Focusing on logistics vs. dialogues · Lack of agreement

Reflection	Praxis	Reciprocity
· Lack of thorough reflection · Blaming external factors	· Lack of practical feedback · Fixed mindsets · Misunderstandings · Resistance to change	· Scheduling inflexibility · Lack of trust · Lack of communication

Research Question Three: Relationship Building – Coaches

While the first two research questions were aimed at revealing teachers' perceptions, the following section presents findings from the instructional coaches' perspective. Research Question 3, "In a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?" delved into coaches' thoughts and experiences based on the principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity, as outlined by Knight (2007) in his Partnership Philosophy. Through interviews conducted with coaches, their experiences, and perspectives provide knowledge about practices they have implemented that best contribute to relationship-building with their teachers.

Equality. The principle of equality in instructional coaching emphasizes the importance of coaches and teachers being treated as equals, which encourages a partnership that is collaborative rather than hierarchical. In exploring this principle, interviews with instructional coaches in a new program revealed five factors that help strengthen the coach-teacher relationship: gaining trust and respect, two-way learning processes, celebrating teachers' successes, personal growth, and emotional intelligence (Figure 6). Their perspectives highlight the significance of equality in building effective and supportive educational environments, suggesting that the most productive coaching relationships are those built on mutual respect, understanding, and the shared goal of enhancing student learning.

Regarding trust and respect, Maya shared that building an equal relationship with her teachers has been a critical part of building their relationship. From the instructional coach perspective, Maya communicated: "I'm here to cheer them on, but they also can trust me because I have built those relationships." She believes that being her teachers' cheerleader and offering

support has helped her foster stronger relationships, emphasizing equal partnerships between the coach and teacher. Secondly, Teressa emphasized the use of information gathered during coaching sessions to help foster equality, encouraging a two-way learning process where both the coach and teacher are treated as equals. Teressa states: "So this is where I get all that information and I strategically use that in my one-on-one sessions to build a relationship and get them to teach me some things, and a lot of it is very authentic." Her comment demonstrates a supportive and equal relationship between an instructional coach and teacher. Furthermore, she underlines the importance of equality and mutual respect when building a relationship with her teachers.

In addition to trust and respect from teachers and engaging in two-way learning processes, instructional coaches also highlighted the importance of recognizing and acknowledging their teachers' accomplishments. For instance, Kayla expressed: "I think celebrating the teacher's successes, learning from the teacher's successes, and sharing what is working for them really helps in the relationships that we're creating with the teachers." For Kayla, the importance of celebrating teachers' successes is key to building strong, supportive, and equal relationships.

Concerning personal growth, Callie pointed out that equality in relationship building is not confined to professional development, as it necessarily extends into a teacher's personal development. Callie expressed this concern, sharing that, "It may not be school related, but it could also be personal, in building those relationships with teachers." Callie's perspective demonstrates the nature of coaching relationships, emphasizing personal connection and mutual respect. This sentiment is shared by Addyson, who expressed the importance of confidentiality in establishing trust between coaches and teachers, ensuring a safe space for open and honest communication. Addyson states: "I think it's really important to have that confidentiality, you

know, and make sure that what we talk about stays here between the coach and teacher."
Maintaining confidentiality between the coach and teacher is essential to ensure that discussions remain private, promoting an equal partnership during the coaching process.

Lastly, Tina refers to the wisdom of Maya Angelou on emotional intelligence in coaching, suggesting that the essence of effective coaching lies not in the transfer of knowledge but in creating a lasting positive emotional impact. In Tina's words:

> Maya Angelou said that 1000%. We can be the smartest person in the room, but if you make people feel like shit, they won't do anything. They won't care. This quote is from Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Drawing on Maya Angelou's wisdom, Tina's viewpoint demonstrates the complexity and depth of building meaningful relationships in educational settings, focusing on equality, mutual respect, and emotional intelligence.

Choice. The choice principle emphasizes the importance of instructional coaches working collaboratively with teachers to identify and implement strategies and practices that resonate with their individual teaching styles and professional objectives. In this approach, it encourages a sense of autonomy among teachers but ensures that the coaching process is tailored to meet the specific needs and goals of the teacher (Figure 6). Which enhances the effectiveness of instructional coaching to promote the development of a teacher. Teressa, an instructional coach, elaborates on the use of cognitive coaching as a strategy to encourage teachers to shift their thinking independently. Teressa states:

So, with cognitive coaching, I'm using a strategy to get them to shift their thinking. So, if

they're the ones shifting their own thinking, then that's a built-in type of choice and voice

at the same time, if that makes sense.

This approach essentially offers teachers a sense of choice and voice, as it empowers them to navigate their own professional growth and decision-making processes. Another coach, Addyson, highlighted the importance of facilitating self-directed learning and reflection. She shares that it's important to know the teacher's strengths and weakness so that the coach can design coaching sessions specific to their needs. This demonstrates that instructional coaching sessions can foster a sense of ownership and personal investment in the teachers' development, which contributes to relationship building between the coach and the teacher.

Voice. In instructional coaching, enabling teachers to express their voice by sharing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns is fundamental to further open and meaningful dialogue between the coach and the teacher (Figure 6). This approach not only empowers teachers by acknowledging their expertise and insights, but also strengthens the coaching relationship through a foundation of trust and mutual respect. By valuing the teacher's voice, instructional coaches create a collaborative environment where both parties can engage in meaningful conversations that contribute to professional growth and improve instructional practices. Paige states that it is important to have the time and availability to validate teachers' concerns. Validating teachers' concerns and being readily available is a fundamental part in building strong relationships. Paige also expresses a deep appreciation for elementary school teachers, recognizing their hard work and dedication. She states: "I'm a champion of teachers and particularly elementary school teachers because I don't think anybody works harder than them." By openly acknowledging their efforts, she positions herself as a strong advocate and supporter,

which she believes is crucial in establishing a positive and trusting relationship with them. This advocacy is presented as a cornerstone of her coaching philosophy, aimed at empowering teachers and acknowledging their hard work.

Tina highlights the role of human kindness in the coaching process, suggesting that sometimes, simple acts of thoughtfulness, such as sending a text message that shows consideration and care, can be among the most effective coaching practices. While a text message is not someone's actual voice, it is a form of communication that not only transmits thoughts and ideas, but also a person's tone, emotions, and intention, thus representing the coach's voice. She states that, "a lot of times, some of my best coaching is [through] a text message." Tina considers that engaging with teachers in personal ways, like text messages, helps teachers know that "something has made me think of you," which creates a genuine connection between them. Tina's approach reinforces the importance of integrating humanity, such as showing concern and fostering personal connections, into instructional coaching strategies to build strong relationships. Her statement highlights that when teachers feel safe and supported in their environment, they are more inclined to express their thoughts and ideas openly. The emphasis on emotional and relational aspects facilitates a coaching environment where trust and mutual respect are paramount, ultimately encouraging teachers to share their voice more freely and engage in more meaningful professional development interactions.

Dialogue. Instructional coaches utilize the principle of dialogue to foster authentic and meaningful conversations that significantly enhance the potential for effective changes in teaching practices. The relationship-building factors most references in this partnership principle include discussing new strategies and establishing personal connections (Figure 6). In reference to dialogues with her mentee, Kayla feels that "in order for coaching to be successful, you have

to have those meaningful conversations." Through engaging in genuine interactions, instructional coaches are able to create a supportive environment where educators can explore new strategies, reflect on their teaching methods, and implement changes that lead to improved educational outcomes. Having meaningful conversations strengthens relationships and trust between the coach-teacher pairs. Paige, another instructional coach states that:

> I just held conversations with them, like just checked in on them, held conversations, listened to them, followed up. You know, if they're going through something, I would go back and ask, just like with students in a baby way.

This method of dialogue demonstrates that Paige is cultivating a relationship with teachers' she collaborates with by delving into the teacher's personal life. Paige understands that establishing a personal connection and gaining insight into the teacher's background, personal life, or experiences is pivotal before any coaching can happen. Such dialogue lays the groundwork for trust and rapport, which are essential for effective coaching. Page also states that: "It doesn't define you because now I understand who they are as people." By listening, Paige has prioritized this personal engagement, which sets the stage for more receptive and collaborative coaching sessions, acknowledging that meaningful professional development is built on the foundation of strong interpersonal relationships.

Tina states that she will highlight concerns during a coaching session so that the dialogue is documented and is more formal than the non-coaching conversations. Even if there is no formal write-up, except maybe when they leave, she may jot a couple of ideas down on a sticky note that can help her to follow up with the teacher. The sticky note serves as a documentation tool for Tina to help recall and reference previous dialogue with the teacher. Facilitating personalized conversations that are tailored to each teacher's previous conversations

demonstrates that Tina is invested in understanding her teachers and their needs, which establishes a strong and meaningful relationship between the coach and teacher.

      Reflection. Reflection is an essential tool for instructional coaches, enabling them to critically assess their coaching approaches with the teachers they coach. This process helps coaches identify areas for improvement in their methodologies, ensuring they can make necessary adjustments to better support their teachers (Figure 6). By continuously evaluating and refining their strategies, instructional coaches can enhance their effectiveness, ultimately leading to more productive and positive outcomes in the coaching relationship and teacher development. Maya states that:

> Anytime I get disenchanted, you know, and I wanna go back in the classroom, I try to think about the impact that a coach can have in that, you know, I can impact my classroom full of kids, but as a coach, I can impact hundreds of classrooms full of kids, which, you know, it's not easy when you're like, man I just want to go back to doing what I am good at.

Maya's reflection on the impact of her role, notes that she occasionally desires to return to the classroom, but she recognizes the significant influence she can have across multiple classrooms by being a coach. This realization has helped her to appreciate the value of her position in facilitating widespread educational improvements. The acknowledgment and understanding of her own experiences and challenges in her role allows her to empathize with the teachers she coaches. The empathy she demonstrates for her teachers promotes stronger connections, as she can relate to their situations, making it easier to develop meaningful relationships. Her appreciation for her position enhances her ability to support teachers effectively, recognizing and addressing their needs through a shared understanding of the educational environment.

Furthermore, instructional coaches Callie and Maya, discussed the importance of maintaining an open mind and the value of seeing tangible results from the implementation of new strategies being used in the classroom by the teacher. They note that when teachers witness the success of these strategies firsthand, it boosts their confidence, which allows for the teacher to want to continue collaborating with their coach. The process of reflection coaches use helps the coach to strengthen practical applications they give to teachers.

Praxis. The principle of praxis in instructional coaching emphasizes the transfer of theoretical ideas into practical, tailoring teachers' needs to improve classroom-based strategies and methodologies (Figure 6). This approach ensures that coaching is tailored to the unique needs and contexts of individual teachers, making it directly relevant to their teaching practice. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, instructional coaching becomes a more effective tool for enhancing teaching methodologies and improving student outcomes. Paige states: "I believe we were a B district and we're an A district now. The major change we made was that we added instructional coaches last year." Paige attributes the district's improvement from a B to an A rating to the introduction of instructional coaches, highlighting the significant positive impact of this initiative on academic and behavioral outcomes. This demonstrates the coaches' critical role in enhancing the educational environment and student achievement through their support and guidance.

Tina, an instruction coach, approaches her coaching practices by sharing with her teachers the importance of establishing classroom routines, structures, and engagement strategies. The practice that Tina uses helps to promote active learning and efficient use of classroom time. She states: "Of course routines, structure, and procedures come first. Then student engagement and active learning and time on task and you know, engagement strategies."

Tina suggests that integrating these approaches into teacher development not only enhances instructional methods but also strengthens the trust and confidence teachers have in their practices. This, in turn, contributes to building supportive relationships between coaches and teachers by showing the teacher they have someone they can trust to ask for help with instructional strategies.

Moreover, Montana and Callie share their strategies for building confidence and sustaining success among teachers, including co-teaching, modeling effective methods, and celebrating teachers' achievements. Callie mentioned a time when she had a teacher who successfully implemented a strategy she suggested. After trying the strategy, the teacher came back to Callie very excited to share with her that the strategy worked for her students. The impact instructional coaching practices have on teachers demonstrates the value of supportive and collaborative relationships between coach-teacher pairs.

Reciprocity. Reciprocity in instructional coaching is a foundational principle that fosters a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship between coaches and teachers. This approach fosters the importance of both parties learning from one another, enhancing the coach-teacher experience for personal and professional growth (Figure 6). By adopting a reciprocal mindset, coaches and teachers engage in collaborative and supportive partnerships, which is crucial for building relationships. The practice of reciprocity not only facilitates personal and professional growth for both coaches and teachers but also contributes to a more cohesive and productive educational environment.

Addyson, an instructional coach, shared her experiences using learning walks at her school. Addyson stated that: "When we did learning walks, it always amazes me that I always find something, there's always something that somebody's doing that you hadn't heard of or you

hadn't thought of in that way or, you know?" She highlights the importance of keeping an open mind, which suggests that she acknowledges that coaches should not pretend to know everything because there is no way that they can know everything. Similarly, Montana felt the same way, she mentioned that: "I will probably learn more from you than you'll learn from me because I'm here, to support you not to tell you what to do." Her coaching sessions with the teachers she coaches are viewed as opportunities for her to learn as much they are for the teachers she supports. Montana's coaching approach focuses on empowering teachers rather than being directive, which facilitates a foundation of trust and mutual respect that is needed for effective coaching to take place.

Kayla adds that it is important to acknowledge what she has learned from teachers whom she has coached. She states: "I think celebrating the teachers' successes, learning from the teachers' successes, and sharing what is working for them really helps in the relationships that we're creating with the teachers." When acknowledging and sharing the successful practices she's learned from the teacher, it validates the teacher's efforts, which encourages them to want to collaborate more. The practice of recognition and sharing contributes to creating a close relationship between the coach and the teacher, reinforcing a positive and productive relationship. Similarly, Callie stated, "So I look at everything as a learning opportunity. Deep down, I'm a learner…" In this regard, Callie viewed every interaction with her teacher as a learning opportunity.

Figure 6

Findings of Coaches' Perceptions of Relationship-Building Practices

Research Question 3: What are coaches' perceptions of practices that **build relationships** with the classroom teacher?

Equality
- Gaining trust and respect
- Mutual learning
- Celebrating success

Choice
- Collaborative implementation
- Increasing teacher autonomy

Voice
- Expressing thoughts, ideas, concerns
- Validating teachers

Dialogue
- Discussing new strategies
- Establishing personal connections

Reflection
- Assessing approaches
- Areas for improvement
- Enhancing effectiveness

Praxis
- Bridging theory and practice
- Tailoring needs
- Improving methodologies

Reciprocity
- Mutual learning
- Collaborative partnership
- Mutual personal and professional growth

Research Question Four: Barriers – Coaches

The section below outlines the findings related to Research Question 4, focusing on the barriers to implementing a new instructional coaching program as perceived by instructional coaches. Through interviews conducted with coaches, their experiences provide insight into challenges they have encountered in the development of a new instructional coaching program. While most of the barriers perceived by teachers were associated with lack of knowledge or support from their instructional coach, for coaches, most barriers were associated with lack of administrative support. For example, the principles of equality, choice, voice, praxis, and reciprocity all pointed to barriers in the way the administration supports the role of instructional coaches, imposes curriculum, communicates harshly, and lack of endorsement and support of

school leadership. For the principles of dialogue and reflection, the barrier centered on the issue of coach leadership styles, lack of time, and a full workload for both teachers and coaches.

Equality. From the perspective of an instructional coach, equality is a vital part in establishing successful coaching relationships between coach-teacher pairs. Oftentimes, barriers in equality will rise during the relationship process, making it difficult for the coach-teacher pair to build a relationship together due to bad or non-existent relationships and misperceptions about coaching (Figure 7). Addyson, an instructional coach, states that: "If there's no relationship or there's a bad relationship, obviously that's a barrier." Having a "bad" relationship shows that there is no equal partnership between the coach and teacher, creating a barrier.

Another barrier to equality within the coach-teacher process, was specifically mentioned by Tina, who pointed out challenges in the way administrations introduce and support the role of instructional coaching in their schools. She mentioned that the approach taken by administration could potentially influence how teachers perceive the position of the coach, which can impact the relationship-building process between the coach and teacher. Similarly, Maya states:

> So many teachers look at a coach as something that's only for struggling teachers, or something that's only for new teachers. So, experienced teachers are entirely unwilling to work with a coach because, in their head, "that's just for new teachers," or "that's just for struggling teachers."

Maya suggests that the success of a solid program requires thoughtful integration in the way instructional coaching is communicated to teachers. She emphasized that teachers who have the mindset that coaching is only new and struggling teachers can create a deterrent for experienced teachers who may resist working with an instructional coach.

Choice. The choice principle emphasizes a partnership relationship between coaches and teachers. When teachers are treated as a professional, a partner, and as an equal, change happens. When choice is taken away from a teacher, it denies their voice, equality, and partnership of the relationship with a coach. In this partnership principle, coaches the major barriers identified by coaches included facing opposing district directives and lack of teacher and coach autonomy (Figure 7). For example, Kayla expressed how the district instructed her to roll out a new phonemic awareness program and curriculum to all kindergarten teachers during the 2023-2024 academic year. Since this implementation involved teacher training of a reading program teachers were unfamiliar with, Kayla and a coach colleague worked tirelessly to help kindergarten teachers by modeling sessions and helping with diagnostic testing. Coming as a directive from the administration, the roll-out of the new program created a barrier of choice between the administration, instructional coaches, and teachers. Kayla noted that, since teachers did not understand the need for a different curriculum, and many felt that what they were doing was working, they questioned why they would need to change it. Although the district was imposing a new curriculum on these teachers, Kayla, as the instructional coach, provided teachers with the option of choosing three out of seven skills they felt most appropriate to cover with their students.

Voice. The instructional coaches' perspective on barriers of voice in a new instructional coaching program revealed the importance of empowering teacher voice within a coaching partnership. The major barriers coaches referenced in this partnership principle included having harsh administrators and working with teachers who felt they did not need to change (Figure 7). An example from Montana, an instructional coach, shared that "I think having very harsh administrators makes it really hard to learn from things when you don't understand why they're

so hard on you or another teacher." This sentiment provides deep insights into the hurdles coaches encounter when ensuring teachers feel their voice has been heard during a collaborative conversation that may involve administrative action with a teacher. Teachers need to feel empowered to be able to speak up for themselves when they are having action conversations with their coaches or administrators.

As instructional coaches, Kayla and Montana have encountered a significant barrier when teachers believe that there is no need for change. The teacher is under the assumption that their current practices are sufficient and that everything will continue to be fine. Montana states that sometimes: "The teacher doesn't even think that there's an issue." Montana highlights that these situations where teachers do not recognize there is any issue with their instructional practices, indicate a lack of awareness or resistance to change. Having this mindset come from the teacher, poses a considerable challenge, as it impedes the initiation of constructive conversations around instructional improvements and building a relationship between the coach and that teacher.

Dialogue. The interviews the researcher conducted with instructional coaches offered crucial perspectives on the barriers encountered in establishing a meaningful dialogue between teachers and coaches. The feedback from coaches' points to the necessity of developing an approach that facilitates trust and mutual understanding, which would allow the coach-teacher pair to fully engage in meaningful dialogues. Regarding barriers that impact successful dialogues between coaches and teachers, interviews revealed three major ways in which dialogues can be hindered: through direct instruction to teachers, the lack of coach-teacher time in a private setting, and inefficient coach leadership styles (Figure 7).

In the first barrier, Maya emphasized the significance of listening rather than providing direct instruction to teachers, expressing "I'm not here to tell you what to do. I'm just here to

listen. That works really well." In other words, instructional coaches should not dictate or tell teachers what to do. Rather, genuinely listening and understanding their teachers' perspectives has proven to be more highly effective. Furthermore, Addyson commented:

> It's going to ruin the dialogue if you just automatically come out with, "well, I think you should…," or "when I was a teacher, this is what I did…," You know? You want them to try on their own. It's just like students, right?

She also brings up an important point regarding the coach-teacher relationship: while teachers are equal in terms of their coaching partnership, it is still important to recognize that teachers must also be considered learners.

The second drawback was the aspect of having time in a private setting to dialogue about issues and concerns. Time, in general, was an issue. For instance, Addyson commented that, "You just got to give time for that dialogue, and it's hard because we are so busy." Moreover, conducting meaningful dialogue between the coach and teacher in a private setting, away from students and staff members, creates a secure environment that allows the teacher to feel they can be open with their coach. In this regard, Kayla states: "I really feel that in order for coaching to be successful, you have to have those meaningful conversations without the students." This statement demonstrates that having external influences does not allow for open and honest communication.

Thirdly, leadership styles also play a major influence on the kind of dialogues that are fostered–or hindered–between instructional coaches and teachers. Leadership styles should not undermine the autonomy, choice, and growth of teachers, or limit their ability to think critically. Teressa exemplifies how a leadership style can hinder dialogues:

There are different types of leadership styles when it comes to coaching and mentors. There is something called "the savior." I think that can be a barrier because the savior leadership style is: "I'm going to save you and rescue you. I'm going to take over and just tell you what to do."

Teressa believed that the savior leadership style posed a significant barrier to effective teacher-coach relationships. By assuming a dominant role and solely dictating what should be done, the savior style obstructs open dialogues, collaboration, and the development of the teacher's own problem-solving skills. Similarly, Addison expressed that an instructional coach's communication style is determined by their approach and delivery. When the communication style is perceived as negative, it can create a barrier between the coach and the teacher, which can hinder collaborative efforts.

Reflection. During the interviews with instructional coaches, four significant barriers emerged concerning the reflection partnership principle: workload, evaluation, traditions, and time constraints (Figure 7). These barriers highlighted significant challenges that needed to be addressed to successfully implement a new instructional coaching program.

One of the major barriers identified was the overwhelming workload faced by coaches. For example, Addyson expressed a sense of frustration, and pointed out that the increased number of tasks and responsibilities left little time for meaningful reflection with their teacher. With respect to the burden of workload, Addyson commented: "it's just gotten to the point where you can't focus on reflecting on what you've already done because you're doing 500 things to begin with." Such a workload can create challenges for coaches, particularly when needing to find the right moments for reflections on their practices and evaluate their effectiveness.

The barrier of evaluation was highlighted by Teressa, who pointed out that self-reflection can become challenging when either teachers or coaches already perceive themselves as top-tier professionals. Teressa expressed this concern, suggesting that the "self-reflection piece that could be a barrier [is] when they are self-evaluating, and already feel like they're top tier—that could be a barrier for future growth and reflection." For Teressa, any sense of hubris can hinder future growth and create a barrier to engaging in deep and critical reflection.

The practice of traditions emerged as another significant barrier. In this regard, Paige highlighted that some teachers tend to hold on to certain teaching practices, which they believe to be best for their students. For example, at Paige's school, there was a traditional scooter ride that took place during the day, established with the intention of building trust and relationships between teachers and students. From the standpoint of an instructional coach, Paige viewed this traditional activity as a distraction from instructional minutes. She believed that "a barrier would be that [teachers] have always done a lot of these traditions, and think it's what's best for kids," yet these activities can ultimately hinder the progress of reflective practices between the coach and teacher. To overcome this barrier, Paige emphasized the need to "go super slow, taking baby steps of moving towards reflecting." This strategy would allow Paige to gradually introduce new concepts and strategies, building trust with the teacher she is mentoring by demonstrating the benefits of reflection and change.

The theme of time constraints was a major issue echoed by multiple coaches and teachers throughout many of the interviews. Having the vision to look ahead was crucial for instructional coaches. Not having enough time to complete activities in the present can hinder plans for the future. For example, Montana argued that "a lot of us are in survival mode right now, so it's hard to look towards the future." As a result, she is focusing on immediate needs rather than preparing

for the future. Another instructional coach, Callie, expressed the need to be understanding and not be too hard on oneself, recognizing that coaches often take on excessive responsibilities that impact their available time. Callie suggests that instructional coaches should not be hard on themselves because sometimes, as a coach, "you just do not have time." She added:

> Sometimes we take on too much, get overwhelmed, just having that self-reflection for ourselves, knowing that we're [at work] for eight plus hours a day. Some of us probably stay a little bit longer than our principals. Since teachers are teaching during the day, and only have 30-minute preps or lunches, you don't want to bug them during that time because it's *their* time.

Callie points out the need for instructional coaches to manage their time effectively, respecting teachers' schedules and the limited opportunities to meet with teachers, highlighting the importance of efficient communication and support without intruding on teachers' personal time.

Praxis. Based on the interviews with instructional coaches, the barriers identified regarding praxis revolve around two main aspects: the perception of immediate results and the lack of administrative support (Figure 7). Kayla mentioned some teachers may not see the value in working with a coach because they expect a quick turnaround. In Kayla's view, "sometimes [teachers] just don't even see the difference because they want immediate results," which can hinder any activities that aim to produce long-term results.

Another barrier identified by Addyson was the lack of administrative support. She emphasized that it is essential for principals to actively encourage teachers to work with instructional coaches and include them in instructional conversations. Without the support and endorsement of school leadership, instructional coaches may struggle to gain the trust and participation of teachers, hindering the successful implementation of the coaching program.

Reciprocity. While very few instructional coaches identified barriers specifically related to the reciprocity principle, two coaches mentioned significant factors that could adversely impact reciprocity in a new instructional coaching program. The major barriers for these coaches included insufficient time and the lack of administrative buy-in (Figure 7). For example, Kayla highlighted the barrier of time, expressing that the amount of time required for effective coaching can pose a challenge. Following Kayla, it is a challenge for coaches to find sufficient time to dedicate to building reciprocal relationships with their teachers. Additionally, Tina emphasized the importance of administrative support in rolling out teacher-coach support. Similar to Kayla's view on the barrier of time, the barrier of lacking administrative buy-in could also impact the implementation of a reciprocal coaching program.

Figure 7

Findings of Coaches' Perceptions of Barriers
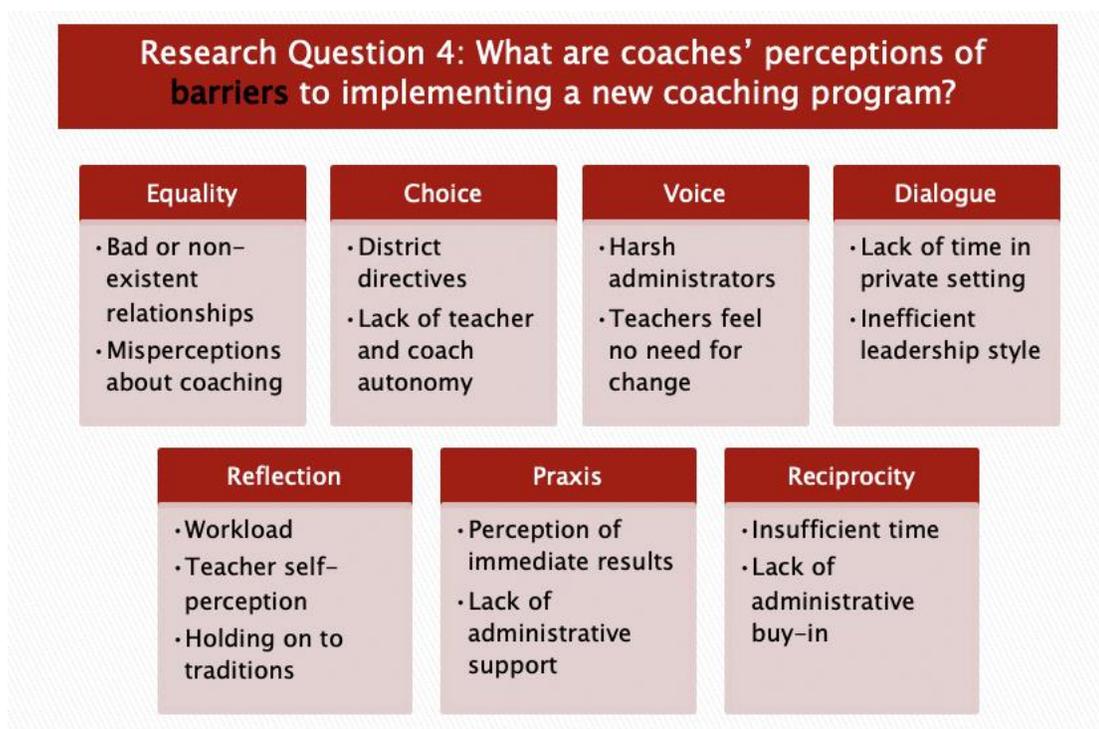
Coaches' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program are a crucial aspect of successful implementation. The findings in Figure 7 highlight the most prevalent barriers identified by coaches. In the equality principle, coaches underscored the existence of a bad or non-existent relationship with their teachers, as well as teacher and district general misperceptions about instructional coaching. Under choice, coaches tended to reference barriers related to districts imposing directives on teachers, causing a lack of autonomy in the coach-teacher pair. The barriers to voice involved harsh administrators and teachers not feeling the need for change. For the principle of dialogue, the prevalent barriers were time constraints and ineffective coach leadership styles. Barriers to reflection included overwhelming workloads, teachers' self-perceptions, and their adherence to traditional teaching practices. For praxis, the barriers included the perception of immediate results and a lack of administrative support. Lastly, barriers to reciprocity, such as insufficient time for effective coaching and a lack of administrative buy-in, can compromise the success of the program.

Table 3 below provides a condensed view of the frequency of codes for each of the seven partnership principles for coaches and teachers. Each number represents the amount of times a coach or teacher referenced one of the partnership principles under each major theme (i.e., relationship-building and barriers). In some cases, the same teacher or coach provided two or more different examples within the same partnership principle and major theme, which received multiple points. The findings in the frequency of codes from the interviews reveal that both teachers and coaches had increased comments regarding relationship-building as opposed to barriers when implementing a new instructional coaching program. Furthermore, the table highlights that both teachers and coaches provided ample descriptions in the choice, voice, dialogue, and reflection principles. Teachers provided more examples about barriers in the

principles of reflection, praxis, and reciprocity, whereas coaches provided increased examples in reflection, dialogue, and equality.

Table 3

Frequency of Codes from Interviews

	Teachers		Coaches	
	Relationship-Building	Barriers	Relationship-Building	Barriers
Equality	7	5	12	7
Choice	15	1	18	3
Voice	16	2	14	5
Dialogue	17	3	37	8
Reflection	20	8	34	14
Praxis	6	9	22	2
Reciprocity	7	9	6	3

Conclusion

Applying the principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity, from Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy has provided findings concerning the advantages and challenges the coach-teacher pairs shared during their interviews. All teachers and instructional coaches reported positive aspects regarding the importance of building relationships with their counterparts, expressing relevant details to support their statements. Through qualitative data collection, interpersonal and systemic factors emerged, which describe the impact and influence of the effectiveness of new instructional coaching programs in schools. Findings also provide insights for optimizing the implementation and effectiveness of future coaching initiatives, which will be further elaborated in the following chapter.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this narrative inquiry research study was to interview teachers and instructional coaches in a new instructional coaching program to: (1) understand perceptions about their experiences that have helped build the coach-teacher relationship and (2) identify barriers that have arisen throughout their collaboration. Specifically, the study focused on programs initiated within the last academic cycle (2022-2023), were new onsite initiatives, and employed at least one full-time instructional coach per school. By defining a new instructional coaching program with the aforementioned criteria, the study sought to understand the factors that contributed to or hindered the effectiveness of a new instructional coaching program aimed at improving educational practices. Chapter five clarifies the results of this study and how they connect to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation and Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Principles (Figure 8). Additionally, this chapter offers recommendations for future research and implications for professional practices.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation study draws on (1) Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs theory for understanding teachers' perspectives and their need for instructional coaching, and (2) Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy for understanding instructional coaches' perspectives and the methods they use to help teachers. First, from the teacher's perspective, Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, based on his Theory of Human Motivation, seeks to understand how human activity is motivated by physiological or psychological needs (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020; Maslow, 1943; Milheim, 2012). Second, Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy is a conceptual framework aimed at helping instructional coaches reflect upon the theories behind their actions and methods. Maslow's (1943) theory and

Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy provide an analytical view of teacher needs and instructional coaching practices.

Guided by Abraham Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation as a theoretical framework and Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Philosophy, the four research questions explored in this qualitative study were:

RQ1: In a new instructional coaching program, what are the teachers' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the instructional coach?

RQ2: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

RQ3: In a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?

RQ4: In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

The research findings directly appeal to Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, specifically in regards to the five-tier Hierarchy of Needs model, which helps examine a teacher's motivation when being supported by an instructional coach. The five levels included physiological, safety, relationship, esteem, and self-actualization needs. While Milheim (2012) utilized this five-tier model to highlight pedagogical prescriptions for teachers, Figure 8 below presents a general overview of the factors that affect relationship-building and barriers in a new instructional coaching program.

Figure 8

Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation and Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Principles

Maslow's Five Levels	Relationship Building	Barriers
Level 5: Self-actualization	–Understanding experiences & challenges –Impact of tangible results –Exchanging ideals & goal-setting	–Fixed mindset –Self-perceptions –Lack of continuity
Level 4: Self-esteem	–Involving teachers in decision-making –Recognition & thoughtfulness –Sharing successes	–Disregarding experience –Expecting immediate results
Level 3: Relationship	–Increased autonomy –Building confidence –Exchanging ideas for mutual benefit –Regular check-ins & collaborations –Mutual learning	–Feeling imposed –Lack of freedom –Resistance to change –Inefficient leadership styles
Level 2: Safety	–Trust and flexibility –Celebrating & learning from success –Opportunities to express ideas	–Lack of flexibility –Feeling evaluated –Reluctance to voice opinions
Level 1: Physiological	–Practical guidance and suggestions	–Lack of time

Summary of the Results

The interviews with teachers and instructional coaches examined the advantages and challenges faced in their new instructional coaching program. The study focused on eight coach-teacher pairs (i.e., sixteen individual interviews) who had been working together within the last year and a half, in a new coaching program at their respective schools. The analysis of the data focused on two main themes, relationship building and barriers, which were further categorized under Knight's (2007) seven partnership principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity. In the research questions, the first two refer to teachers' perceptions on relationship-building and barriers, while the last two concern coaches' perceptions on these same themes. To more thoroughly understand both teachers' and coaches' perspectives on each of these themes,

the discussion offered below has been divided into the partnership principles. The analysis includes both teachers' and coaches' perceptions regarding relationship building and barriers for each partnership principle.

Relationship Building and Barriers in Knight's (2007) Seven Partnership Principles

Findings from interviews with teachers and coaches offer insights into each of Knight's (2007) partnership principles, which reveal several practices that help build a stronger coach-teacher relationship. The analysis explores important factors that highlight the significance of trust, open communication, collaboration, and mutual growth in fostering successful partnerships.

Equality. Teachers and coaches emphasized the importance of equality in their professional relationships, focusing on trust and flexibility as well as celebrating and learning from their successes (Figure 9). Teachers like Jayda and Ana appreciated the trust and flexibility fostered by their coaches, which created an environment where they felt valued and supported as equal partners. Coaches like Maya, Teressa, Kayla, and Tina also recognized the significance of celebrating and learning from teachers' successes. Furthermore, these coaches were careful to make teachers feel good about their work in the classroom and about themselves. A supportive and equal relationship between instructional coaches and teachers fosters trust, open communication, and collaboration, which can lead to more effective instructional coaching and professional growth for teachers. The importance of affect was highlighted by Tina, who empathetically referred to Maya Angelou's famous statement regarding people never forgetting how you made them feel. Therefore, the impact of emotional connection clearly marks a critical factor in the coach-teacher relationship.

Despite the positive perceptions by teachers and coaches regarding equality, both also made references to a few barriers that can hinder equality, such as disregarding their previous experience (Figure 9). Sarah's interview revealed a potential barrier of seniority, where more experienced teachers tend to disregard the input of their coaches, assuming that their experience means they know better. On the coach's side, for example, Addyson described the lack of a positive and strong relationship as a barrier to achieving equality. These barriers underscore the significance of building trust, respect, and open communication to overcome potential inequality and establish a supportive and collaborative environment for both teachers and coaches.

Choice. The principle of choice also emerges as a positive aspect in the teacher-coach relationship, valued by both teachers and coaches, such as having the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process and having increased autonomy (Figure 9). Teachers like Paige and Layla expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to choose the strategies they want to implement in their classrooms. These teachers appreciated that, even when feedback is provided, it is communicated as suggestions, allowing the teachers to retain their autonomy in the decision-making process. This collaborative problem-solving approach demonstrates the importance of giving choice to teachers to build a trusting relationship. Coaches, such as Teressa and Addyson, also recognized the value of choice in their coaching practices. Teressa highlights the cognitive coaching approach where teachers are encouraged to shift their thinking, providing them with a built-in choice and voice in their professional growth. Addyson emphasized the importance of understanding teachers' strengths and weaknesses to offer choices during coaching sessions, which allowed for self-directed learning and reflection.

In addition to these relationship-building experiences and practices, major barriers to principle of choice that arose for both teachers and coaches included facing the lack of freedom

to have choices and the resistance to change (Figure 9). Chrissy admonished that, as a teacher, not having the freedom to choose to participate in a coaching cycle can make teachers feel as if their sessions felt more like an evaluation than a collaborative process. The lack of choice can undermine the teachers' agency in their professional development. For Kayla, an instructional coach, a barrier to choice was reflected in decisions imposed upon teachers by the district. In this case, some teachers faced resistance to change because, according to their experience, there was no need to have this forced change to the curriculum. This barrier reflects the challenge of navigating change and emphasizes the importance of communication and collaboration to overcome barriers to choice.

Voice. For both teachers and coaches, relationship-building played an important role in the principle of voice, particularly when having the opportunity to express their ideas and having their coaches' recognition and thoughtfulness (Figure 9). Layla, Chrissy, and Sarah expressed how voice served to be a dynamic way to build their relationship with their coach, highlighting problem-solving practices, willingness to ask the teacher questions, and the disposition to hear each other. Their responses suggested that having the opportunity to express their voice can help effectively address their concerns promptly to provide solutions for improvement. Instructional coaches Paige and Tina also expanded on the crucial role of the voice principle. For example, Paige's appreciation for elementary school teachers reflects the understanding and empathy that coaches should have towards their teachers. This recognition helps build a stronger coach-teacher relationship. Tina's perspective highlighted the power of simple acts of thoughtfulness, such as text messaging and sending gift cards to their teachers. Her caring practices highlight the importance of having constant personal engagement and connections beyond professional interactions throughout the week.

Teachers and coaches also presented experiences regarding barriers to the principal of voice, such as feeling evaluated and being reluctant to voice their opinions (Figure 9). As a teacher, Chrissy mentioned that the lack of opportunity to voice her opinion on the frequent walk-ins by her coach made her feel like she was undergoing a constant evaluation, which can hinder open communication. Nick also expressed his observations regarding other teachers who were reluctant to voice their opinions or ask for assistance. This hesitation could be influenced by factors such as their personal ego and perceived loss of autonomy in their classroom. When teachers are unable or unwilling to voice their concerns or struggles, it becomes challenging for instructional coaches to provide targeted support and guidance. Montana's observation about teachers lacking awareness or resistance to change underscores the importance of building trust and self-reflection. Overcoming this resistance to change would require coaches to foster opportunities for voicing opinions via dialogues and feedback.

Dialogue. Interview responses with teachers and coaches highlighted the significance of discussing each other's experiences and challenges as well as maintaining proactive check-ins in various ways, which helped with building effective relationships within the coach-teacher pair (Figure 9). Both David and Sarah appreciated the ways in which their instructional coach engaged in dialogue with teachers to understand their experiences and challenges. David enjoyed how his instructional coach, Maya, actively participated in his classroom and offered suggestions for improvement, demonstrating the desire to implement a collaborative approach in relationship building. Sarah also appreciated how her instructional coach, Callie, showed genuine interest in her classroom by asking questions that encouraged dialogue. Similarly, the instructional coaches also emphasized the importance of building their relationship with better dialogues. Kayla suggested that successful coaching requires meaningful conversations, which reveals the

significance of open dialogue in supporting a teacher's professional growth. According to Paige, engaging in proactive check-ins and follow-ups with their teachers not only builds their coach-teacher relationship, but is also likened to the way teachers engage with their students.

In addition to relationship-building factors relevant to the dialogue principle, teachers and coaches also shed light on some barriers that can hinder effective dialogues, such as the lack of time and having inefficient leadership styles (Figure 9). Responses by teachers like Nick provide evidence that lack of time allocated to meaningful dialogues can pose a significant barrier. For example, the teacher's pressure to complete assessments ordered by the district tends to take precedence over their engagement in discussions with their coaches. This time limitation can result in missed opportunities for teachers to receive guidance and support from their coaches. Another barrier is posed by Sarah, a teacher who addressed a situation in which coaches and teachers can have differing perspectives, not being in full agreement on particular working items. From the side of the instructional coaches, Teressa and Maya describe how leadership styles, if not implemented correctly, can pose a barrier to dialogues. Teressa identified the "savior" leadership style, as a directive role where a coach tells teachers what to do in order to "save" them. Maya, too, expresses that the role of a coach is not to dictate or give teachers orders. These types of leadership styles are a barrier to dialogues and can severely hinder the relationship-building process. Overcoming these barriers would require better communication and collaboration, coming to an agreement with shared goals and vision. Consequently, effective coaching requires clear dialogue that demonstrates mutual understanding. Therefore, coaches should use positive and constructive communication techniques with teachers during coaching sessions to ensure the approach is supportive and encouraging.

Reflection. According to interview results, the reflection principle serves as a valuable tool for building stronger relationships between teachers and coaches, highlighting opportunities to share successes, exchange ideals and goal-setting, and experience the impact of the tangible results (Figure 9). Responses by Amy and Nick depicted the significance of reflection from the teacher's perspective. Amy mentioned the importance of the exchange of ideas within PLC's, where teachers engage in discussions, share successes, and consider implementing new strategies based on teachers' reflections and experiences. Nick emphasized the importance of goal setting, indicating how teachers need to clearly understand their objectives to guide their reflection and growth. Regarding the coaches' perspectives on reflection, Maya compares the broader impact of coaching compared to being a classroom teacher. Her realization serves as a motivation to coaches, highlighting the potential to impact a larger number of students across numerous classrooms. Furthermore, Callie and Maya also underscore the value of tangible results and the positive impact it has on teachers' confidence. When teachers witness the success of their strategies, they feel encouraged to continue collaborating with their coach.

During their interviews, both teachers and coaches also referred to barriers, such as lack of continuity and self-perceptions, which impact their reflective process (Figure 9). As a teacher, David highlights the challenge of continuity when past successes or strategies may not be passed on as smoothly to the next generation of classroom students. From the instructional coach perspective, Teressa exemplifies another possible barrier to be teachers who already perceive themselves as having achieved a high level of professional development. This self-perception could hinder the necessary growth and reflection truly required for continuous improvement. Overcoming these barriers would require a better strategy for establishing a reflection process, which can be documented for future programs to foster continuity.

Praxis. Findings from interviews with teachers and coaches highlighted the importance of building relationships in the context of praxis, which refers to the application of instructional methods and strategies (Figure 9). From the teacher's point of view, Jayda's experience with her instructional coach, Addyson, demonstrates how classroom observations can be useful for providing practical guidance, in Jayda's case, about her classroom rewards system. Another teacher, Layla, highlights the value of practical suggestions. She appreciated her instructional coach's recommendations to implement a phonemic awareness program, which included adding hand motions for segmenting words, as a practical strategy to enhance instruction. For instructional coaches, Montana and Callie emphasize the importance of helping teachers build confidence and sustain success through practical strategies like co-teaching, modeling effective methods, and celebrating teachers' achievements. Callie's example of a teacher successfully implementing a strategy reveals the positive impact on the teacher's confidence and student outcomes. Furthermore, Tina provides additional practical applications by supporting teachers with establishing their classroom routines, lesson structures, and student engagement strategies.

While teachers and coaches identified numerous experiences that highlighted practical strategies that positively impacted the coach-teacher relationship, a number of barriers also emerged, such as expecting immediate results and having fixed mindsets (Figure 9). From the teaching perspective, Sarah identified how the lack of practical applications can create knowledge gaps, overlook instructional details, or influence differing expectations, which can lead to potential misunderstandings. Another barrier that emerged for teachers was how fixed mindsets could hinder the implementation of practical applications in teachers' classrooms. From the side of instructional coaches, there were two major barriers. Kayla highlights how some teachers tend to expect immediate results, which can hinder instructional advancements. Another

barrier raised by Addyson was the lack of administrative support involving conversations with their principals and coaches regarding instructional conversations, which impacts classroom instruction, on the one hand, and the overall instructional coaching program, on the other hand.

Reciprocity. The principle of reciprocity, as expressed by teachers and coaches, revealed the importance of exchanging ideas within the coach-teacher pair by exchanging ideas for mutual benefit, maintaining regular check-ins and collaborations, and experiencing mutual learning (Figure 9). Teachers, like Layla and Ana, expressed the value of reciprocal relationships with their coaches. For Layla, regular check-ins and classroom visits opened the possibility of greater discussions and collaborations with her coach, fostering a reciprocal relationship. For Ana, the tools she has received from her coach went beyond offering teaching advice, but also included actively providing practical resources for her to incorporate into her instructional practices. Upon implementing her coach's suggestions, she provided updates on her successes, which led to a reciprocal relationship, with constant back and forth dialogues. From the coaches' perspective, Montana and Addyson also emphasize the reciprocal nature of their relationship. Montana recognized that, as a coach, she learned more from the teacher she supports, and is available to provide support and not dictate what to do. Similarly, Addyson shared her experiences with learning walks, where she consistently discovered new ideas and practices from other teachers. These experiences demonstrate how both teachers and coaches benefit from their reciprocal relationships by continuously learning from each other.

Interviews with teachers and coaches also revealed barriers to achieving reciprocity, such as feeling imposed and having the lack of flexibility and time (Figure 9). One barrier expressed by Chrissy was that teachers may not be open to the instructional coaching process if they feel the instructional coach is imposing ideas and strategies on them. Layla, too, perceived that a lack

of flexibility can act as a barrier due to the limitation of time. Coaches also reported facing

barriers to reciprocity. Continuing with the issue of time, Kayla underscored the challenge of

finding sufficient time to foster a reciprocal relationship with the teachers she supports. The

demands of coaching, along with their responsibilities, can limit the available time for

meaningful engagement and collaboration.

Figure 9

Coach-Teacher Perceptions of Relationship-Building and Barriers

Equality	Choice	Voice	Dialogue
Relationship–Building • Trust and flexibility • Celebrating and learning from successes **Barriers** • Disregarding experience	**Relationship–Building** • Involving teachers in decision-making • Increased autonomy **Barriers** • Lack of freedom • Resistance to change	**Relationship–Building** • Opportunity to express ideas • Recognition and thoughtfulness **Barriers** • Feeling evaluated • Reluctance to voice opinions	**Relationship–Building** • Understanding experiences and challenges • Proactive check-ins **Barriers** • Lack of time • Inefficient leadership styles

Reflection	Praxis	Reciprocity
Relationship–Building • Sharing successes • Exchanging ideals and goal-setting • Impact of tangible results **Barriers** • Continuity • self-perceptions	**Relationship–Building** • Practical guidance and suggestions • Building confidence through practical support **Barriers** • Expecting immediate results • Fixed mindsets	**Relationship–Building** • Exchanging ideas for mutual benefit • Regular check-ins and collaborations • Mutual learning **Barriers** • Feeling imposed • Lack of flexibility and time

The qualitative findings from interviews with coach-teacher pairs in a new instructional coaching program highlight ideas, thoughts, and experiences that suggest areas of focus for training, development, and strategic improvement. When comparing these qualitative results with the quantitative insights in Table 3, the data from the Frequency of Codes from Interviews offers a snapshot of focal points. In general, the data highlights an emphasis on relationship-building over barriers. Both coaches and teachers reference relationship-building practices more frequently than barriers, suggesting a higher value is placed on building strong interpersonal connections for the success of a new instructional coaching program. With regard to relationship building, ample descriptions were provided for the principles of equality, choice, voice, and dialogue, as opposed to reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. This frequency indicates that these areas of interaction and collaboration are pivotal to both teachers and coaches.

Although there was some overlap in responses for each of Knight's (2007) partnership principles, teachers involved in these new programs expressed more barriers with the latter three principles (i.e., reflection, praxis, and reciprocity), which suggests that these principles can be viewed as a tiered system. Most coach-teacher pairs expressed insights relevant to relationship-building in these first four principles. Considering a tier system, the implementation of a new instructional coaching program must begin with an equal relationship and mindset between coaches and teachers (equality), which allows for both to make decisions and have autonomy (choice), and opens the space for freely expressing their opinions (voice), which is necessary for meaningful dialogues to occur (dialogue). Given that participants in this study were engaging as a coach-teacher pair for no longer than two years, it is important to consider the element of time, as building strong instructional coaching relationships takes time and effort. The next level after dialogue includes taking extended moments to reflect on what works or could be improved

(reflection), which clears the path for opportunities to implement practical support and advice (praxis). Once these six principles are successful, the coach-teacher pair can become a true partnership involving extended mutual learning, collaboration, and professional growth (reciprocity). Considering Knight's (2007) partnership principles as levels of achievement, it would make sense that the last three principles still require more work, given that it takes time to implement reflection strategies (reflection), the successful implementation of practical support (praxis), and trust-building to foster a reciprocal partnership (reciprocity).

Coaches, on the other hand, emphasized reflection, dialogue, and equality as areas of concern regarding barriers. Specifically, the frequency of barriers to reflection was almost twice as high as the barrier to dialogue, suggesting a lack of continuity due to teacher attrition, administrative uses of coaches' time, and coach turnover. The challenges coaches face in supporting effective reflection with their teachers could stem from systemic factors within the school administration or vary depending on individual coach-teacher experiences. For coaches, there were less frequent barriers to praxis and reciprocity, suggesting the lack of opportunity to achieve these last two of the tiered levels in Knight's (2007) partnership principles.

Conclusions

This research study identified factors related to relationship-building and barriers between teachers and coaches. The analysis of relationship-building and barriers across Knight's (2007) seven partnership principles offers valuable knowledge regarding the coach-teacher relationship and provided strategies that could benefit teachers, instructional coaches, and school districts. The overall findings highlight how each of these principles (i.e., equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity) are not only important for instructional coaches, as suggested by Knight (2007), but also for their teachers. Including teachers in the elaboration and

implementation of these partnership principles allows for truly equal partnership with their coaches.

In the relationship-building process, it was important for the coach-teacher pair to constantly be engaging in dialogues, actively listening, and offering support and suggestions. An analysis of these findings has provided a better understanding regarding the dynamics of teachers' and coaches' perspectives and how these can ultimately impact teaching practices and student outcomes. Regarding the barriers to implementing a new instructional program, the main challenges described by most teachers and coaches included: the lack of time, the perception of impositions rather than suggestions, and the feeling of being evaluated rather than engaging in dialogues. For instructional coaches, despite their intentions to fulfill each of Knight's (2007) core partnership principles, most of their challenges are associated with administrative barriers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Studying new instructional coaching programs within school districts is crucial for maintaining a strong coaching program. This research emphasizes the importance of continuous examination to enhance the literature on coaching effectiveness. By understanding the perceptions of coaches and teachers, the study sheds light on key aspects that influence the success of coaching initiatives, suggesting a need for broader investigation to uncover more about the difficulties of these programs.

For future studies, expanding the research beyond just the qualitative analysis of relationships and barriers is one suggestion. Further research can study the factors leading to the high frequency reported as barriers to reflection by coaches. Another suggestion is to explore additional facets of instructional coaching, such as the impact on student learning outcomes, the effectiveness of specific coaching strategies, the influence of administrative support,

interviewing coach-teacher pairs together, and the sustainability of coaching practices within districts. By examining these components, researchers can gain a more holistic view of the elements that either support or impede the success of instructional coaching programs, offering a pathway to refine and enhance these initiatives for greater efficacy.

Furthermore, understanding how successful coaching models can be scaled and adapted to different educational contexts is also recommended for future research. This exploration could yield valuable insights into methods for improving the quality and impact of coaching programs across various settings. By investigating the scalability and adaptability of coaching models, stakeholders can identify strategies to optimize coaching efforts, thereby contributing to the broader goal of elevating educational outcomes and the effectiveness of coaching programs in school districts.

Implications for Professional Practice

Exploring new instructional coaching programs is essential for advancing professional practice in education, especially for those teaching in a classroom setting. The ongoing study of these evolving instructional programs within school districts enriches the literature and provides valuable insights. By examining how coaches and teachers build relationships and overcome barriers, it is possible to identify ways to make coaching more effective. This process is vital for creating a collaborative environment between coaches and teachers, leading to improved student learning and outcomes. To overcome barriers to relationship building, the following strategies can be implemented:

1. Building trust: To overcome barriers related to trust, coaches and teachers can focus on getting to know their strengths and weaknesses, demonstrating respect and confidentiality, and establishing open communication.

2. Flexibility and autonomy: Overcoming barriers related to choice and autonomy requires coaches and teachers to be flexible and to trust one another in their relationship.

3. Effective communication: In overcoming the barrier of effective communication, coaches and teachers need to communicate in a manner that is respectful and effective.

4. Leadership style: Overcoming barriers related to leadership style requires coaches and teachers to adopt an open and inclusive approach, which involves active listening, valuing perspectives, and fostering a positive team culture.

5. Collaboration and shared goals: To overcome barriers related to collaboration and shared goals, coaches and teachers can align their objectives and establish common goals, which fosters a sense of shared ownership and encourages collaboration.

6. Professional development: Overcoming barriers related to professional development involves providing coaches and teachers with ongoing learning opportunities and resources, such as workshops, conferences, and online resources.

By implementing these strategies, coaches and teachers can navigate potential barriers, build strong relationships, and create a supportive environment for professional practice in education. These strategies can lead to improved student outcomes and a more fulfilling teaching and coaching experience.

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Appendix A: Permission from School District
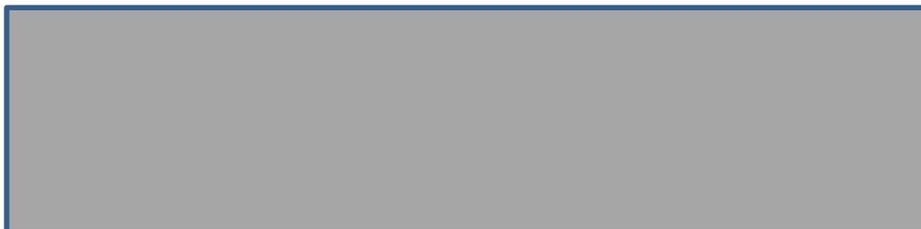
September 8, 2023

Dear Monique Bourgeois,

After reviewing your research request, I have granted authorization for you to conduct research in ▢ Public Schools. I feel this district is in a good position to support its participation in your study and am excited to collaborate further with you in this research.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Teaching & Learning Department if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,
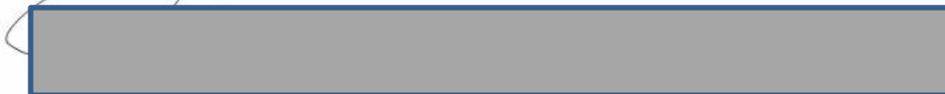
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning

Appendix B: Informational Communication Inviting Participants

Email Communication

Communication to Coaches and Teachers

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Doctorate degree in Education Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University. I hope to learn about instructional coaches' and teachers' perceptions of a new instructional coaching program. Additionally, I am interested in investigating factors that build relationships between coaches and teachers and understand the barriers that teachers and coaches may face while implementing a new coaching program. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to take part in an interview that should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks to you for your participation this study. It is possible that you will not benefit directly by participating in this study; however, the results will help educational professionals in charge of implementing a new coaching program. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under law. The data will be kept in a secure location and your identity and responses will be kept confidential.

If you agree to participate, indicate this decision by signing the electronic consent form. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me, Monique Bourgeois, at mbourgeois@nnu.edu, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Christa Sandidge at CSandidge@nnu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact Dr. Heidi Curtis, Program Director for the Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at **HLCurtis@nnu.edu,** telephone at 208.467.8492, or by writing 623 S. University Blvd., Nampa, Idaho 83686.

Sincerely,

Monique Bourgeois
Ph.D. Candidate
Northwest Nazarene University
Instructional Coach, MPS
mbourgeois@nnu.edu

Appendix C: Permission from Facebook Group
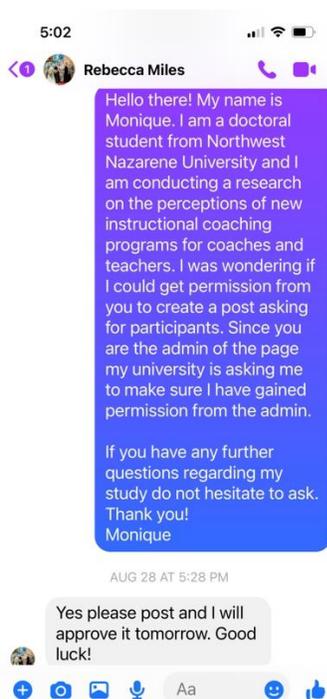
Dear Group Members:

I am a PhD student who is collecting research on instructional coaches and teachers' perceptions of a new instructional coaching program. Additionally, I am interested in investigating factors that build relationships between coaches and teachers and understand the barriers that teachers and coaches may face while implementing a new coaching program. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to take part in a Google Meet interview that should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. Instructional coach participants will be asked for names of 4 teachers they work with in a new instructional coaching program. If you choose to participate you will be awarded a gift card from Amazon for your time.

Thank you,

Monique Bourgeois

Appendix D: Permission Granted by Jim Knight

1. Permission Granted to use Jim Knight's (2007) Partnership Principles Graphic

Jim knight<jim@instructionalcoaching.com>
To: Monique Bourgeois

Wed 5/29/2024 4:44 AM

Hi Monique,

Yes of course. Do you have a copy of the Definitive Guide to Instructional Coaching? If not, please let me know and I'll send you a copy. It is the most recent version of the Partnership Principles.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can help you in anyway.

Best,

Jim

2. Permission Granted to use Jim Knight's (2022) Reflection Questions

Jim knight <jim@instructionalcoaching.com>
to me, Melissa ▾

Fri, Apr 14, 6:36 PM (2 days ago)

Hi Future Dr Bourgeois,

You are perfectly fine to use those questions, and please keep me posted on your research. I think it would be appropriate to reference the original questions in your dissertation. I'm grateful that you found them useful.

Thanks,

Jim

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Instructional Coaches

Participant:
Place:
Date:
Time of Interview:
      Introductory Comments: I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. The purpose of this interview is to identify the impact that instructional coaches have in elementary schools. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be taped for accuracy. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Your responses will remain confidential as well as your identity, school, principal, and school district. Please elaborate on specific details during the course of the interview. Please be candid, honest and accurate in your responses.

I. BACKGROUND

1. How many years have you taught in a classroom?
2. How many years have you been an instructional coach?
3. What motivated you to become a teacher?
4. What motivated you to become an instructional coach?
5. How often do you meet with the teacher you coach?

II. KNIGHT'S (2007) PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Equality: instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners and have equally valuable thoughts and beliefs.

6. Barrier: What barriers do you consider evident when thinking about an equal partnership between coach and teacher?

Choice: teachers have a choice regarding the strategies they learn and implement in the classroom.

7. Relationship: How do you explain teaching strategies while honoring the teacher's choice?

Voice: all individuals in the partnership must have opportunities to verbally express their ideas.

8. Relationship: What do you do to ensure that you deeply understand the emotions and needs of your collaborating teacher?

Dialogue: coaches listen more than tell, as they engage teachers in meaningful conversations about content to enhance critical thinking and learning.

9. Barrier: What barriers do you believe could impact a successful dialogue between coaches and teachers?

Reflection: allows coaches and teachers to reflect on an integral part of learning, encouraging teachers to consider ideas before adopting them.

10. Barrier: Reflecting on the past helps educators learn from successes and mistakes. Looking at the future helps educators plan and be prepared. What are some barriers that have prevented you and your teachers from reflecting on *past to learn* or looking towards the *future to grow*?

Praxis: teachers are encouraged to apply what they learn, while they are learning, to real-life practices in the classroom.

11. Relationship: What does it look like when teachers enthusiastically implement the ideas you discover and create together? What can you do to ensure that happens more often?

12. Barrier: What are the greatest barriers you consider for teachers when implementing what they learn from their coach?

Reciprocity: the coach identifies the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, encouraging a mutual and reciprocal collaboration on the best instructional practices.

13. Relationship: In what ways do you believe you can learn from every single teacher with whom you work with?

III. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

14. What else would you like to share with me regarding instructional coaching, in general, or about your collaborating teachers, specifically, and the impact instructional coaching has had in the school or districts you work in?

15. Was there anything you were expecting me to ask and I didn't?

Appendix F: Interview Questions for Teachers

Name:
Date:
School:
Time of Interview:

Introductory Comments: I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. The purpose of this interview is to identify the impact instructional coaches have in elementary schools. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be taped for accuracy. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Your responses will remain confidential, as well as your identity, school, principal, and school district. Please elaborate on specific details during the course of the interview. Please be candid, honest, and accurate in your responses.

I. BACKGROUND

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What grade level are you currently teaching?
3. Can you share with me your previous experiences working with children?
4. What motivated you to become a teacher?
5. How often do you meet with your coach?

II. KNIGHT'S (2007) PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Equality: instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners and have equally valuable thoughts and beliefs.

6. Barriers: What barriers do you consider evident when thinking about an equal partnership between coach and teacher?

Choice: teachers have a choice regarding the strategies they learn and implement in the classroom.

7. Relationship vs. barrier: Has your instructional coach given you the opportunity to choose the strategies that work best in the classroom? Please explain.

Voice: all individuals in the partnership must have opportunities to verbally express their ideas.

8. Relationship: What does your coach do to ensure he/she deeply understands your emotions and needs as a teacher?

Dialogue: coaches listen more than tell, as they engage teachers in meaningful conversations about content to enhance critical thinking and learning.

9. Barrier: What barriers do you believe could impact a successful dialogue between you and your coach?

Reflection: allows coaches and teachers to reflect on an integral part of learning, encouraging teachers to consider ideas before adopting them.

10. Barrier: Reflecting on the past helps educators learn from successes and mistakes. Looking at the future helps educators plan and be prepared. What are some barriers that have prevented coaches and teachers from reflecting on *past to learn* or looking towards the *future to grow*?

Praxis: teachers are encouraged to apply what they learn, while they are learning, to real-life practices in the classroom.

11. Relationship: In what ways has your coach helped you implement the ideas you both created together? What can you and your coach do to ensure that this happens more often?
12. Barrier: What are the greatest barriers you face as a teacher when implementing what you learn from your coach?

Reciprocity: the coach identifies the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, encouraging a mutual and reciprocal collaboration on the best instructional practices.

13. Relationship: How can you, as teacher, contribute to your coach's knowledge about coaching?

III. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

14. What else would you like to share with me regarding instructional coaches, in general, or about your instructional coach, specifically, and the impact he/she has had in your school or district?

15. Was there anything you were expecting me to ask and I didn't?

Appendix G: Qualitative Informed Consent

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND
Monique Bourgeois, a **Doctoral** student in the Department of **Graduate Studies** at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to **Perceptions and Barriers in New Instructional Coaching Programs**.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an instructional coach or a teacher working in a new instructional coaching program.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.

2. You will be asked to answer a set of interview questions and engage in a discussion on your perception and experiences in a new instructional coaching program at your school. This discussion will be recorded via Google Meets (audio and video) and is expected to last approximately 30 minutes.

3. You will be asked to reply to an email at the conclusion of the study asking you to confirm the data that was gathered during the research process.

These procedures will be completed via Google Meets outside of school hours, and the time will be decided upon by the participant and principal investigator.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS
1. Discussion questions are open ended and designed for participants to describe their experiences and perceptions in the coaching program in which they currently participate. If your response to any of the questions makes you feel uncomfortable at any moment, you are free to decline to answer, skip any questions, or decide to stop participation at any time without penalty.

2. Confidentiality: Participation in this research study will be recorded, which could imply a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled with confidentiality. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio, and video will be kept in locked files and a password-protected computer. In compliance with the Federal-wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

3. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand the factors that enhance the school environment to be a place of positive staff relationships.

E. PAYMENTS
There are no payments for participating in this study; however, to incentivize coaches and teachers to participate in and complete the interviews for this study, the researcher offered a gift card from Amazon.

F. QUESTIONS
If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. **Monique Bourgeois** can be contacted via email at **mborugeois@nnu.edu**. If for some reason you do not wish to do this you may contact Dr. **Heidi Curtis, Program Director for the Doctoral Programs in Educational Leadership** at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at **HLCurtis@nnu.edu** via telephone at **208.467.8492** or by writing 623 S. University Blvd, Nampa, Idaho 83686.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider.

G. CONSENT
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as an instructional coach or teacher in your district.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant	**Date**

I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be recorded in this study:

Signature of Study Participant	**Date**

I give my consent for the researcher to contact me for further questions after the interview:

Signature of Study Participant	**Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

Signature of Study Participant	**Date**

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	**Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix H: Content Validity Instrument

Thank you for reviewing this survey for content validity.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine teachers' and instructional coaches' perspectives on the implementation of a new instructional coaching program. This qualitative study focuses on elementary instructional coaches and classroom teachers to evaluate relationship-building strategies between teachers and their instructional coach, and the barriers faced when implementing a new instructional coaching program.

These two sets of interview questions address the following research questions:

1. In a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the classroom teacher?
2. In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are instructional coaches' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?
3. In a new instructional coaching program, what are the teachers' perceptions of practices that build relationships with the instructional coach?
4. In developing a new instructional coaching program, what are teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing a new coaching program?

Please rate each question with a 1, 2, 3, or 4 rating. You are not addressing the item, but rather helping to determine the strength of the item in relation to the study and the dimension with which it is aligned. If you have any comments, please use the space under each item.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

Background
1. How many years have you taught in a classroom?
2. How many years have you been an instructional coach?
3. What motivated you to become a teacher?
4. What motivated you to become an instructional coach?

Selected Rating for Background
  (1) Not Relevant
  (2) Somewhat Relevant
  (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
  (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

Equality: instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners and have equally valuable thoughts and beliefs.

5. Barrier: What barriers do you consider evident when thinking about an equal partnership between coach and teacher?

Selected Rating for Equality
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

Choice: teachers have a choice regarding the strategies they learn and implement in the classroom.

6. Relationship: How do you explain teaching strategies while honoring the teacher's choice?

Selected Rating for Choice
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

Voice: all individuals in the partnership must have opportunities to verbally express their ideas.

7. Relationship: What do you do to ensure that you deeply understand the emotions and needs of your collaborating teacher?

Selected Rating for Voice
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

<u>Dialogue:</u> coaches listen more than tell, as they engage teachers in meaningful conversations about content to enhance critical thinking and learning.

8. Barrier: What barriers do you believe could impact a successful dialogue between coaches and teachers?

Selected Rating for Dialogue
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

<u>Reflection:</u> allows coaches and teachers to reflect on an integral part of learning, encouraging teachers to consider ideas before adopting them.

9. Barrier: What are some barriers that prevent you and your teachers from reflecting upon the process of looking at the *past to learn* and at the *future to grow*?

Selected Rating for Reflection
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

Based on an expert's suggestion, modified this question for clarity: "Reflecting on the past helps educators learn from successes and mistakes. Looking at the future helps educators plan and be prepared. What are some barriers that have prevented coaches and teachers from reflecting on *past to learn* or looking towards the *future to grow*?"

<u>Praxis:</u> teachers are encouraged to apply what they learn, while they are learning, to real-life practices in the classroom.

10. Relationship: What does it look like when teachers enthusiastically implement the ideas you discover and create together? What can you do to ensure that happens more often?

11. Barrier: What are the greatest barriers you consider for teachers when implementing what they learn from their coach?

Selected Rating for Praxis
    (1) Not Relevant

(2) Somewhat Relevant
(3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
(4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

Reciprocity: the coach identifies the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, encouraging a mutual and reciprocal collaboration on the best instructional practices.

12. Relationship: In what ways do you believe you can learn from every single teacher with whom you work with?

Selected Rating for Reciprocity
(1) Not Relevant
(2) Somewhat Relevant
(3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
(4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

<u>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS</u>

<u>Background</u>
1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What grade level are you currently teaching?
3. Can you share with me your previous experiences working with children?
4. What motivated you to become a teacher?
5. How often do you meet with your coach?

Selected Rating for Background
   (1) Not Relevant
   (2) Somewhat Relevant
   (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
   (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

<u>Equality:</u> instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners and have equally valuable thoughts and beliefs.

6. Barriers: What barriers do you consider evident when thinking about an equal partnership between coach and teacher?

Selected Rating for Equality
   (1) Not Relevant
   (2) Somewhat Relevant
   (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
   (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

Comments:

<u>Choice:</u> teachers have a choice regarding the strategies they learn and implement in the classroom.

7. Relationship vs. barrier: Can you explain the opportunities you have had with your instructional coach in choosing the strategies that work best in your classroom?

Selected Rating for Choice
   (1) Not Relevant
   (2) Somewhat Relevant
   (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
   (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

<u>Voice:</u> all individuals in the partnership must have opportunities to verbally express their ideas.

8. <u>Relationship:</u> What does your coach do to ensure he/she deeply understands your emotions and needs as a teacher?

Selected Rating for Voice
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

<u>Dialogue:</u> coaches listen more than tell, as they engage teachers in meaningful conversations about content to enhance critical thinking and learning.

9. <u>Barrier:</u> What barriers do you believe could impact a successful dialogue between you and your coach? In what way is trust important in building dialogue?

Selected Rating for Dialogue
    (1) Not Relevant
    (2) Somewhat Relevant
    (3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)
    (4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)

<u>Reflection:</u> allows coaches and teachers to reflect on an integral part of learning, encouraging teachers to consider ideas before adopting them.

10. <u>Barrier:</u> What are some barriers that prevent coaches and teachers from reflecting upon the process of looking at the *past to learn* and at the *future to grow*?

Selected Rating for Reflection
> *(1) Not Relevant*
> *(2) Somewhat Relevant*
> *(3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)*
> *(4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)*

> *Comments:*
>
> Based on an expert's suggestion, modified this question for clarity: "Reflecting on the past helps educators learn from successes and mistakes. Looking at the future helps educators plan and be prepared. What are some barriers that have prevented coaches and teachers from reflecting on *past to learn* or looking towards the *future to grow*?"

Praxis: teachers are encouraged to apply what they learn, while they are learning, to real-life practices in the classroom.

11. Relationship: In what ways has your coach helped you implement the ideas you both created together? What can you and your coach do to ensure that this happens more often?
12. Barrier: What are the greatest barriers you face as a teacher when implementing what you learn from your coach?

Selected Rating for Praxis
> *(1) Not Relevant*
> *(2) Somewhat Relevant*
> *(3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)*
> *(4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)*

> *Comments:*

Reciprocity: the coach identifies the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, encouraging a mutual and reciprocal collaboration on the best instructional practices.

13. Relationship: How can you, as teacher, contribute to your coach's knowledge about coaching?

Selected Rating for Reciprocity
> *(1) Not Relevant*
> *(2) Somewhat Relevant*
> *(3) Quite Relevant (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)*
> *(4) Very Relevant (no modifications needed)*

Comments: