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Study of Milwaukee Public Schools Literacy Coach Initiative:
Combined Year 1 Report

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Robert Meyer
Director
Value-Added Research Center

Eric Camburn
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Steven Kimball
Researcher

Tony Milanowski
Assistant Scientist

Rachel Lander
Assistant Researcher

With the assistance of:

Ernest Morgan,
Associate Researcher
Rebecca Lowenhaupt
Kristin Schomisch
Mina Kim
Project Assistants

Executive Summary

In November of 2005, the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) Division of Assessment and Accountability asked the Value Added Research Center at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research to conduct a study of the Literacy Coach initiative.

Based on the literature on literacy coaching and the structure of the MPS program, we conceptualized the Literacy Coach initiative as a two-stage intervention. Literacy Specialists train and support Literacy Coaches who in turn train and support teachers. Literacy Specialists are resources for the Coaches, and the Coaches are resources for teachers. In this model, the interactions between Literacy Specialists and Coaches and between Coaches and teachers are likely to be the primary mechanisms for program effects to propagate. The three major research questions guiding the study were:

1. How has the initiative been implemented?
2. What is its impact on teachers?
3. What is its impact on student achievement in reading/language arts?

The evaluation was conducted in two phases. The first phase was carried out during the period of December 2005 to April 2006. The first two questions represented the focus of the Phase 1 report. They were addressed using a mixture of techniques, including interviews with Literacy Specialists, Literacy Coaches, teachers, principals, program managers, and participants in program design. The Phase 1 report was delivered in May 2006. Addressing the third question was delayed due to the timing of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Content Exam (WKCE). Final data from the WKCE became available in the spring of 2007, allowing the complete value-added analysis to be conducted. This report represents the combined report from the work carried out during Year 1 of the Literacy Coach evaluation.

We believe that the information we collected during this study implies the following conclusions.

1. Literacy Coaches function as key members of school Learning Teams and help to focus administrators and teachers on literacy. As well as being the 'go to' people in the school for literacy, they are also key links with the District office on literacy matters.

2. Overall, there is less emphasis on Coaches doing one-on-coaching with teachers aimed at instructional improvement than the original design seems to have envisioned, and less than portrayed in the Literacy Coaching literature. It would appear that, over time, the role of the Literacy Coach has been shifting away from direct coaching interactions with teachers toward more time and effort spent in quasi-administrative activities.

3. Coaches appear to have the support of leaders and teachers at their schools, have positive attitudes toward the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, and understand the expectations of the initiative.

4. While many Coaches do not appear to be literacy experts, they appear to be credible to teachers, they seem to have the skills they need for their coordinative and administrative responsibilities. However, new Coaches may need additional introductory training, as was provided in the initial year of the initiative.

5. Factors such as Specialist turnover, the fewer number of Specialist and high school/Specialist ratio, and increased emphasis on using the Specialists to communicate District-level priorities have limited the scope for one-on-one interaction between Coaches and Specialists around literacy instructional practices. The transition of Specialists to a more coordinative role parallels the evolution of the Coach role within the schools.

6. Coaches' impact on instruction is on average not likely to be deep. There is not, in most schools, the emphasis on the kind of intensive one-on-one or small group coaching that research on teaching practice improvement suggests is needed to make major changes in how teachers teach.

7. Measures of coaching implementation within schools derived from teacher and principal surveys did not, in general, have the positive and significant relationships with value-added outcomes that would be expected if better implementation was producing increased student achievement. As we detail in this report, there are a number of qualifying factors to consider when interpreting this finding.

Based on our results, we believe the district should consider the following questions:

1. To what extent should Coaches be providers of embedded professional development rather than coordinators and facilitators of literacy programs in schools?

2. How much flexibility in the use of the Coach positions should schools be allowed? A high flexibility approach provides the ability to use the Coaches as needed for local priorities, but it appears to facilitate using Coaches in ways not intended by the original program design or the literature on coaching.

3. Should schools and especially principals be held accountable for how coaches are used? Currently, there is no specific accountability for how Coaches are used, which in turn contributes to Coaches taking on coordinative or administrative roles.

4. What activities would be most valuable for Literacy Specialists to undertake that could help Literacy Coaches improve literacy instruction within their schools? Should the primary emphasis be providing expertise to Coaches on literacy instructional practice or being a conduit for communication between District and schools?

5. What level of staffing and professional development is most appropriate for the Literacy Specialists? If the District decides to use Specialists more as literacy experts, it might want to provide them with more professional development resources and resolve issues around the "underfilling" of these positions.

6. How can the human resource management system be aligned to help support coaching? Modifications to performance evaluation, selection, and pay for Coaches and Specialists should be considered. For example, it is not clear how Coaches are now held accountable for their responsibilities. They are evaluated using the general teacher evaluation system, which appears largely irrelevant to specific Coaching duties. The recently introduced Literacy Logs provide a potential accountability mechanism, but they provide information to District office staff rather than principals, who are the Coaches' direct supervisors.

7. Would it be useful to look across all of the coaching initiatives in operation, including the Math Lead Teacher and Principal Coach programs to identify the conditions under which effective coaching is most likely to occur, and allow the cross fertilization of best practices between programs?

I. Introduction

In November of 2005, the Milwaukee Public Schools Division of Assessment and Accountability asked researchers at the Value Added Research Center of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research to develop and conduct a study of the Literacy Coach initiative. After developing a proposal and meeting with MPS program managers[1], an agreement was developed to guide the study. It was agreed that a preliminary study would be completed by the early spring, 2006. A more extensive study, to include other aspects of literacy programs in the District, would then be developed, guided in part by the results of the preliminary study. This report summarizes the findings of the preliminary study and sets out some suggestions for the more extensive study. It also includes the student achievement value-added analysis based on the 2005 and 2006 WKCE scores. This portion of the report was completed in the Fall of 2007, once the WKCE scores were available for the value-added analysis.

The report is organized in five sections. The first section provides an introduction to the study, including a brief summary of the literature that helped frame our inquiry, and an overview of the Literacy Coach initiative as it has evolved over the first four years of the program. The second section describes the mixed-method design and data sources we applied. In section three of the report, results are described relating to the program's implementation and perceptions of program impact. This section includes our findings about the impact of literacy coach program implementation on student achievement. Implications and interpretations of findings are then presented in section four. Finally, section five describes a potential research agenda that could build on this report.

Research Questions

The three major research questions guiding the study were:

1. How has the initiative been implemented?
2. What is its impact on teachers?
3. What is its impact on student achievement in reading/language arts?

Literacy Coaching as an Intervention

Literacy coaching is a relatively new intervention, aimed at improving the instructional capacity of content teachers, so that they can provide better literacy instruction for all students, rather than depending on specialists and pull-out teachers for students struggling with literacy (Hall, 2004). While there is no one established model of literacy coaching, there appears to be some consensus in the practitioner literature (e.g., Toll, 2004; Symonds, 2003; International Reading Association, 2005) about the qualifications and role of literacy coaches. According to this literature, literacy coaches are teachers with content and instructional expertise in literacy who are released from teaching full or half time to perform the following activities:

- Observing literacy lessons and providing suggestions for improvement
- Modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms

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[1] "Program managers" refers to district staff with direct oversight of the Literacy Coach initiative. This includes the Director of Teaching and Learning, the English/Language Arts Curriculum Specialist, and the K-12 Literacy Coordinator. Individual titles may not be identified in order to maintain confidentiality.

- Coaching teachers one-on-one or in small groups
- Disseminating current literacy research findings and 'best practices'

The coach role may also include reviewing assessment data, helping teachers interpret assessment scores, presenting workshops on aspects of literacy instruction, and helping create literacy plans for schools. Coaches are not envisioned as either reading teachers or administrators. Coaches support teachers rather than instruct students and work directly with teachers in individual or small group settings.

Districts that use literacy coaches include: Boston, New York City, Stafford County (VA), Long Beach, and several districts in Utah and in the San Francisco area.

In a review of four studies on the effects of literacy coaching, Learning Point Associates (2004) concluded that there is empirical evidence that this type of initiative can have a positive effect on student achievement. The potential effectiveness of literacy coaching is also supported by research on professional development and adult learning theory (Learning Point Associates, 2004; Symonds, 2003; Dole, 2004). Coaching may help develop a collaborative teacher culture and professional learning communities. Adding observation, feedback and coaching to theory, demonstration, and practice have been found to increase teacher skill development and improve the transfer of training to teachers' daily instructional practice (Joyce and Showers, 1995). Barnes, Camburn, Kim, and Rowan (2004) in their study of comprehensive reform models, found empirical evidence that teachers who interact with reform model coaches more frequently perceived greater clarity in expectations for instruction, as well exerted greater efforts to improve practice. This research suggests that a well-implemented coaching initiative might be expected to have a positive impact on teachers' instructional practice and student achievement.

Literacy Coaching in the Milwaukee Public Schools

The Literacy Coach initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools started in 2001 after District leaders attended presentations on literacy coaching models at an annual meeting of the Council of Great City Schools. At the time, the recently initiated Milwaukee Partnership Academy (MPA) was working with MPS and other key partners (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association) on ways the District might improve student literacy achievement by bringing more consistency to literacy instruction. The partners decided to pursue a strategy based on a Balanced Literacy Framework, which would be supported by funding from the Title I program. Previously, schools had considerable discretion over use of Title I funding. Many schools used those resources to fund Reading Resource teachers or other pullout arrangements for students struggling with reading. Rather than providing instruction to a small group of struggling readers, Literacy Coaches were seen as a key facilitator of professional development within schools and could use the Balanced Literacy Framework to help improve literacy instruction for all students. The idea was embraced by the Milwaukee Partnership Academy and further developed by the MPA Implementation Team.

At the same time, another workgroup of the MPA was drawing up a model for school learning teams that could further support professional development within schools and leverage the resource of Literacy Coaches to improve literacy instruction. All schools were to establish learning teams that had core membership of principals, literacy coaches and math teacher leaders. Math teacher leaders were added after a $20 million grant was awarded by the National Science Foundation to support a Milwaukee Mathematics Partnership in the District. In

addition to these core members, other members of school staff could participate on the learning teams. Combined, the learning team program, the literacy coach initiative, and the math teacher leader program were all ways to promote and empower teacher leaders within the District and within schools. It was also part of a paradigm shift from District controlled professional development to school embedded professional development that was advocated by the MPA, with groups of teachers and leaders at the school level identifying professional development needs based on analysis of school level data.

The MPA worked through the role literacy coaches would play in schools, how they could support their schools, and how the District could support them. The purpose of the literacy coach position was to help classroom teachers implement the Balanced Literacy approach to reading instruction (subsequently changed to the Comprehensive Literacy Framework). It was envisioned that each coach would work with teachers and students in the classroom by modeling effective reading instruction. Further, the coach would collaborate and facilitate job embedded professional development to build the instructional capacity of all teachers. The duties and responsibilities of the literacy coach position initially entailed the following:

a. demonstration teaching, classroom modeling, and collaborative teaching
b. delivering professional development including facilitating study and/or action research groups
c. conferencing with teachers in regard to goal setting, observation and reflective feedback
d. strategic planning around student data
e. serving on the school learning team
f. maintaining an ongoing weekly summary report
g. attending summer training and weekly training during the school year

(Source: New Literacy Coach 2005-2006 Toolkit)

Literacy Coaches would in turn be supported in a coaching relationship by six Literacy Specialists[2] working at the District level. One additional Specialist position was added to support schools that had adopted the Direct Instruction/SRA program. This Direct Instruction (DI) Coordinator/Specialist had a different job description and reporting structure than that of the other Literacy Specialists. Literacy Specialists were to work with Coaches at school sites or in training through the school year in a non-evaluative teacher-peer capacity. Coaches would be trained on adult interaction, including cognitive coaching, balanced literacy and scientific research-based reading instruction across content areas, and literacy assessment. The Specialists had the following identified responsibilities:

a. Interact with school-based Literacy Coaches and staff
b. Assist in identifying successful intervention strategies with readers and writers
c. Demonstrate and model appropriate strategies for Literacy Coaches and classroom teachers
d. Collaborative in the development of high quality on-going professional development to support school-based Literacy Coaches, Learning Teams and school staff

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[2] Throughout the report, the shortened title of "Coaches" refers to Literacy Coaches, and "Specialists" refers to Literacy Specialists. The district includes other types of coaches and specialists (e.g., Principal Coaches, English/Language Arts Curriculum Specialist), and when appropriate, these full titles may be referenced.

    e.   Collect and analyze information on research-proven practices in Balanced Literacy
    f.   Review and respond to logs submitted by Literacy Coaches
    g.   Deliver school-based professional development as requested
    h.   Engage in appropriate activities that support Family Literacy

(Source: New Literacy Coach 2005-2006 Toolkit)

The Literacy Coach program was initiated in 2002 and Literacy Coaches were hired by schools at the end of that school year. The Literacy Specialist positions, and resources to support coach training, were initially housed within the MPS Office of Academic Excellence in the Professional Development Division. At the end of the 2003-04 school year, this division was eliminated and the Literacy Coach program was moved to the Division of Teaching and Learning (also within the Office of Academic Excellence). Other changes also affected the program. Over time, many of the leaders who helped design or had initial oversight of the Literacy Coach program, both within the District and from the Milwaukee Partnership Academy, moved into different roles or in some cases moved out of the District.

The succession of a new Superintendent also affected the program. The new Superintendent identified five priorities that would provide focus for the District and build capacity for instructional improvement within schools. These priorities are described as "Capacity Builders," and include the following five elements: 1) professional learning communities; 2) shared decision making; 3) effective education plan; 4) aligned curriculum, assessment, and instruction; and 5) fiscal responsibility. Consistent with these priorities, the Division of Teaching and Learning worked to develop Learning Targets derived from Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards that would help schools align their curricula to the state standards. The Learning Targets would help schools map a strategy for instruction in those grades that fall between the state benchmark grade levels of 4, 8 and 12. Literacy Coaches and Specialists would eventually be called upon to help implement Learning Targets. In applying the Learning Targets, it was intended that schools would align curriculum, classroom assessments, and professional development to create more consistency within schools and across the District. The division also modified the Balanced Literacy Framework to include oral communication, language, media/technology, and research and inquiry. The result was the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, which was seen as a better match with the Wisconsin English Language Arts academic standards and federal expectations for research proven strategies.

Initially, the Literacy Coach Program was fully funded centrally, primarily through the use of Title I carryover funds. After the first year of the program, the District set aside Title I and Title II funds to support a District match of 75% of the coach position for elementary schools. Schools had to match for the remaining 25%. Middle schools and high schools were required to provide a 50% match for the Literacy Coach position. Out of the 223 schools within MPS, about 55 did not have coach positions at the time of this study or chose not to accept the District match and purchase the positions. When the program began, Literacy Specialists were responsible for assisting about 20-25 schools. During this study, the program was operating with 4 Literacy Specialists, who were each responsible for about 45-50 schools. Two of the Specialists were in temporary 'underfill' positions.

II. Study Methods and Data Sources

Based on the literature on literacy coaching and the structure of the MPS program, we conceptualized the literacy coach initiative as following a two-stage model. Literacy Specialists train and support Literacy Coaches who in turn train and support teachers. Literacy Specialists are resources for the Coaches, and the Coaches are resources for teachers. In this model, the interactions between Literacy Specialists and Coaches and between Coaches and teachers are likely to be the primary mechanisms for program effects to propagate. Through these interactions, Coaches will potentially be exposed to new forms of literacy instruction and assessment (e.g., through direct training or observing "model" lessons by Literacy Specialists), receive information about best practices and District policies, and receive advice and consultation about literacy issues in their assigned schools. Classroom teachers will potentially a) be exposed to new forms of literacy instruction and assessment, b) have opportunities to try out new literacy practices, c) receive formative observations of their existing practice and coaching to improve it, and d) have opportunities to discuss what they are learning with other teachers. Since the basis of the program is the interactions between Coaches and Literacy Specialists and between Coaches and teachers, our primary focus was on characterizing these interactions and relating variation across schools to impacts on teachers and student achievement. Our study questions were addressed using a mixture of techniques, including interviews with MPS staff, surveys, and analysis of existing MPS data on student achievement.

<u>Interviews with District-level Staff</u>

Interviews with current program managers, current and former Literacy Specialists, and individuals involved with the initial design of the program were conducted in person or by phone during December 2005 and January 2006. Semi-structured interview protocols guided the interviews and allowed for triangulation of findings relating to the evolution of the program, perspectives on program effects, and recommended resources or possible changes. Interviews conducted in person were audio recorded. Phone interview responses were entered into a response format as the interviews progressed, but were not audio recorded. We interviewed current and former Literacy Specialists (n=8), current and former curriculum and professional development program managers (n=4), and individuals involved with the design of the program through the Milwaukee Partnership Academy (n=2). Interview notes were transcribed and entered into matrices for analysis. Audio recordings were referenced during transcription to verify accuracy of interview notes.

<u>Interviews at Schools</u>

Interviews at schools were conducted in December 2005 and January 2006. We visited eight elementary schools (3 K-5, and 5 K-8) selected by the MPS Division of Assessment and Accountability to provide a sample of schools in which the level of student achievement varied. Two schools were represented in each of the following four categories: 1) high attaining, high value-added; 2) high attaining, low value-added; 3) low attaining, high value added; and 4) low attaining, low value-added. School sizes in the sample ranged from about 175 students to 670 students. School socio-economic status, as represented by eligibility for the free and reduced-prince lunch program, ranged from 47% to 84%. A second round of school visits occurred in a small sample of high schools and middle schools following the Phase 1 report, in the spring of 2006.

School level interviews were conducted with principals (n=8), literacy Coaches (n=8), and two classroom teachers in each school selected at random (n=16). Principal interviews

lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour. Teacher interviews averaged about 25 minutes. Literacy Coach interviews ranged from 45 to 75 minutes. Interviews were done using semi-structured protocols designed to allow for triangulation of findings and exploration of emerging themes from principal, teacher and Coach perspectives. Protocols covered the activities of the Literacy Coach, their impact, and possible changes that may improve the program. Interview notes were transcribed and entered into matrices for analysis across and within schools. Audio recordings were referenced during transcription to verify accuracy of interview notes.

<u>Surveys</u>

Data from the 2005 MPS Instructional Survey of Teachers and Principals was also used in this study. The Instructional Survey was a collaboratively developed instrument designed to better understand instructional practices within the MPS. The core of the survey is based upon the District's "Characteristics of a High Performing Urban Classroom" (CHPUC). Two surveys were developed, one for teachers, one for principals. The intended use of the surveys is to better define District professional development needs and identify instructional practices that promote student achievement. This year's survey had three sections. The first section had items related to the Characteristics of a High Performing Urban Classroom. The second section had items related to schools' test preparation practices, and the final section had items related to the Literacy Coach Program Evaluation. This year's survey had 3,436 teacher's respond or 54.5% of MPS's teachers and 110 principals respond or 49% of MPS's principals.

A survey of the Literacy Coaches was also conducted. This survey was developed in order to collect information on how the Coaches spend their time, their experiences working with Literacy Specialists, their professional development experiences, and their training and work-related experience. In addition, their perceptions of the coaching role and school level support were also assessed. Survey drafts were reviewed by members of the Milwaukee Partnership Academy research working group and Implementation Team, staff of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, and staff of the Division of Teaching and Learning. It was sent to 163 Coaches in January of 2006. Seventy-five Coaches returned the survey for a response rate of 46%.

In addition to the interviews and surveys, our team reviewed several documents, including the Memorandums of Understanding with the MTEA covering Literacy Coaches and Specialists, the New Literacy Coach 2005-06 Toolkit, position descriptions, agendas from Literacy Coach training sessions, and other documents obtained during school interviews (e.g., learning team agenda) and from the MPS web site.

Comments on an initial draft of this report were received from two district level respondents and helped clarify program context, implementation, and evolution. The comments were largely factual in nature and did not change the overall findings.

III. Results

<u>Implementation</u>

Based our conceptualization of the Literacy Coaching initiative as working though Specialist-Coach and Coach-teacher interactions, we begin our summary of results by focusing on each set of interactions. We then summarize results relating to Coaches' work with school

Learning Teams, and to requirements for successful implementation, including the qualifications of the Coaches and Specialists, Coaches' perceptions of role clarity, and perceptions of school leader and teacher support.

Coach-Teacher Interaction

Clearly, the Literacy Coaches are the central figures in the coach initiative. According to the design of the initiative, Coaches play a central role by bringing knowledge gained from their interactions with Specialists to their schools, by providing programmatic support for literacy initiatives in their schools, by acting as coordinating agents between the school learning team, the principal, and teachers, and by providing direct instructional support to teachers. Understanding what the Coaches do therefore is central to understanding how the initiative works.

With respect to Coach-teacher interactions, our results address four inter-related questions:

1. How are Coaches used in schools?
2. Does this vary by school, program emphasis, and grade level configuration?
3. What is the nature of the interactions between Literacy Coaches and classroom teachers?
4. How do the Literacy Coaches work with school faculty to provide embedded professional development?

1. How are Coaches Used in Schools?

Overall, our study suggests that Coaches are used in a variety of ways, and that there is considerable variation across schools. In some schools, Coaches provide a substantial amount of one-on-one coaching to teachers, while in others they provide virtually none. Most Coaches appear to spend a considerable amount of their time in coordinative and administrative activities. In most cases these activities are related to literacy, but in some instances they are focused primarily on administering a certain literacy program, such as Direct Instruction, which may be directed at selected grades within a school. In some instances Coaches also perform duties such as acting as Direct Instruction teacher, school-wide assessment coordinator, Implementer, or filling in as substitute teacher or assistant principal.

Results from the Coach Survey suggest that the vast majority of MPS Literacy Coaches have a 100 percent Coach appointment, but spend less than 100% of their time in coaching activities. Of the 75 coaches who returned surveys, 73 percent reported a 100% appointment, ten percent reported having a 50 percent appointment, and another ten percent said they had a 75 percent appointment. We also asked Coaches to indicate what percentage of time they *actually* devoted to Literacy Coaching activities. Among those surveyed, only 13 percent said they devoted 100 percent of their time to coaching. About 50 percent of the Coaches said they spent between 75 and 99 percent on coaching. Approximately 20 percent of the Coaches reported that they spent between 50 and 74 percent of their time coaching, while the remainder of the Coaches said they spent less than 50 percent of their time on coaching duties. Figure 1 plots Coaches' officially designated percentage against the actual percentage of time they spend coaching. That figure provides a graphic illustration of the general point that most Coaches do not spend as much time in Literacy Coaching activities as is formally allocated for their positions.

Figure 1: Time Spent on Coaching – Actual Versus Allocated Time

Actual Time Spent Coaching Relative to Time Allocated to Position
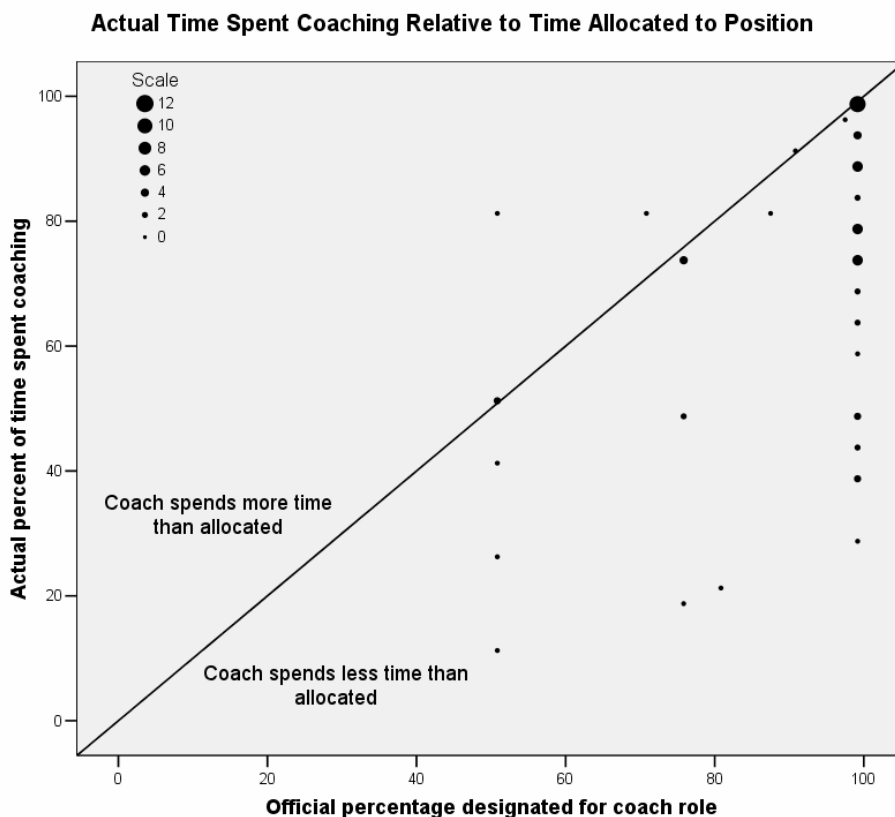
To get a broad picture of what the Coaches do, we asked Coaches responding to the survey to answer a series of questions designed to measure their engagement in six kinds of leadership activity:

- maintaining school climate
- planning/setting goals
- contact with agents external to the school (e.g., District staff, parents)
- program management
- monitoring improvement efforts
- direct support to teachers' for their instructional improvement efforts

Given our understanding of the theory of action of the MPS Literacy Coach initiative, we anticipated that Coaches would spend the most time providing direct support to teachers and would also spend time performing program management tasks. We also expected that Coaches would spend relatively less time on tasks such as maintaining school climate, planning/setting goals, and monitoring improvement efforts. Table 1 displays the mean responses of Coaches on these questions.

Table 1: The Activities of Literacy Coaches

Frequency with which literacy Coaches engage in various tasks

Task	Mean	Std. Deviation	Purpose of task
Complete routine paperwork	4.14	1.00	Program management
Monitor public spaces	3.99	1.46	Maintain school climate
Demonstrate instructional practices	3.79	1.08	Direct support to teachers
Coordinate programs	3.74	1.30	Program management
Troubleshoot or support implementation of school impv.	3.70	1.11	Direct support to teachers
Examine school's progress on improvement goals	3.34	0.89	Plan/set goals
Examine and discuss student work	3.32	1.03	Direct support to teachers
Help develop staff development program	3.32	0.86	Direct support to teachers
Planning for instructional improvement	3.28	0.98	Plan/set goals
Frame & communicate goals for improvement	3.22	0.89	Plan/set goals
Clarify expectations or standards	3.19	0.81	Plan/set goals
Monitor instructional practices	3.14	1.20	Monitor improvement
Personally provide staff development	3.13	0.94	Direct support to teachers
Observe a teacher	3.10	1.22	Monitor improvement
Attend district meetings	3.10	0.58	External contact
Monitor curriculum used in classrooms	3.04	1.16	Monitor improvement
Set timelines for improvement	2.60	0.94	Plan/set goals
Provide support of special ed. Program	2.49	0.84	Program management
Examine & discuss standardized test results	2.47	0.82	Direct support to teachers
Work with students	2.22	1.09	Maintain school climate
Work with local community members	2.14	0.82	External contact
Assist with the administration of special education	1.68	0.78	Program management

1=never, 2=a few times a year, 3=a few times a month, 4=1-2 times/week, 5=more than 2 days/week

The task which Coaches report doing most frequently is the completion of routine paperwork. They report performing this task 1-2 times per week. We interpret this result to mean that Coaches spend a substantial amount of time completing paperwork as they administer literacy programs in schools. The Coaches also reported that they worked to coordinate programs nearly every week. Finally, as discussed below, "distributing materials" was the activity the Coaches said they worked on most frequently with teachers (see Table 2 below). These data clearly indicate that the management and coordination of school programs are a major responsibility of the literacy Coaches. The general pattern of results we observed is that Coaches do appear to spend substantial time on program administration and direct support to teachers, and relatively less time on tasks such as goal setting and maintaining school climate.

Two of the most frequently mentioned tasks involve direct support of teachers' efforts to improve their literacy instruction. The Coaches who were surveyed indicated that they demonstrated instructional practices and troubleshot or supported the implementation of school improvement efforts approximately once each week. These Coaches also indicated that they helped develop staff development for teachers and examined and discussed student work with teachers a few times each month.

Our interview results are generally consistent with those from the survey. The Literacy Coaches we interviewed were filling many roles within their schools, including: participating as members of school Learning Teams; organizing professional development in literacy; meeting with principals about training needs, the school curriculum, and the Education Plan; researching teacher requests for information; problem solving with individual or small groups of teachers; analyzing student assessment data; ordering text books; coordinating after school tutoring or family nights; acting as program implementers; filling in for the principal or assistant principal when they are out of school; and some modeling of instructional techniques. The Coach was often the school's primary or sole school assessment coordinator, which required much of their attention when the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Examinations are administered in late October through November. Three of the Coaches interviewed were Reading First coordinators. Four were also Direct Instruction (DI) Coaches, responsible for all aspects of DI, including helping train teachers in DI, testing students in reading, grouping students and monitoring their progress. They also filled in for a teachers' reading group if the teacher was absent.

2. Does this vary by school, program emphasis, and grade level configuration?

While, as mentioned above, the Coach role varied considerably across schools, we did not find major differences by grade level configuration (e.g., K-5 vs. K-8). We did find, through our interviews, that Coaches in DI schools had substantial involvement doing reading assessment, regrouping students, checking DI logs, and explaining DI procedures to teachers. Some also did Direct Instruction themselves, often on a substitute basis.

3. What is the nature of the interactions between Literacy Coaches and classroom teachers?

We found that direct, one-on-one coaching was not as prevalent as might be expected. It would appear that a lot of teacher-Coach interactions revolve around providing information or materials relating to literacy instruction in the course of the school day. Coaches are clearly resources for teachers, but often primarily for procedural aspects of literacy programs.

On the Literacy Coach survey, we asked Coaches about how frequently they engaged in certain activities when working with teachers. Those results are displayed in Table 2 below. Coaches interact with teachers in a variety of ways, most frequently involving coordination of the literacy program by distributing and working with materials, analyzing achievement results, presenting instructional strategies, and problem solving with teachers about their instruction.

Table 2: How Literacy Coaches' and Teachers' Work Together

Literacy Coaches' Activities When Working With Teachers

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Distribute materials to teachers	3.21	0.63
Use curriculum materials when working with teachers	3.13	0.60
Analyze student achievement results	3.11	0.70
Problem solve with teachers about their instruction	3.06	0.60
Plan & prepare for work with teachers	3.01	0.76
Present a literacy strategy to teachers	2.91	0.59
Test students or score assessments	2.85	0.82
Model a literacy lesson for teachers	2.73	0.83
Work with teachers to analyze student work	2.67	0.71
Observe a teacher's instruction	2.60	0.82
Give feedback to teachers after observing them	2.58	0.92
Help teachers plan lessons	2.18	0.72

1=no time, 2=very little time, 3=moderate amount of time, 4=large amount of time

Some of the key activities associated with direct support for teachers' efforts to improve their literacy instruction appear to occur less frequently than might be expected. For example, as shown in Table 1, Coaches report demonstrating instructional practices a little less than once or twice a week. Similarly, they report presenting a literacy strategy to teachers a "moderate amount of time", and actually monitor instructional practices a few times a month. They spend "very little time" helping teachers plan lessons, and model lessons less than "a moderate amount of the time." Coaches' most frequent activity with teachers involves distributing materials.

Our interviews found that, in general, one-on-one coaching aimed at improving individual teachers' literacy instruction was much less common than other activities, such as coordinating programs, facilitating professional development, and completing administrative functions. Only three of the eight Coaches regularly modeled instruction with teachers in their classrooms and one of those focused their modeling on new teachers. This is consistent with survey responses indicating that Coaches do not spend much time observing instruction and providing feedback to teachers. As in other mentoring or coaching initiatives (Wang and Odell, 2002), Coaches tend to wait for teachers to approach them about such coaching, rather than intrude on teachers' classrooms when the Coach or another school leader sees a need. Some teachers mentioned that they had limited opportunities to engage in one-on-one interactions with Coaches, since their schools had eliminated "specials" (e.g., art, music) due to funding cuts. As a result of time or tradition, many teachers do not participate in this sort of coaching, either due to lack of time or lack of perceived need.

The MPS teacher survey also provided information about teacher-Coach interactions from the teacher point of view. However, before discussing results from this survey, we first provide two caveats about data on the Literacy Coach program that comes from the survey. The first is that a screening question at the beginning of the section of the teacher questionnaire on the Literacy Coach Program may have screened out some teachers who worked with Literacy Coaches. The first question in that section asked whether teachers taught reading. Teachers who answered no were directed to skip the questions on literacy coaching. Clearly other teachers also work with the Literacy Coaches, and by only asking about Reading teachers

in the screening question, we may have inadvertently screened out some teachers who worked with Literacy Coaches. It is likely that in high and middle schools, other content teachers in English, and perhaps even science and math, who may also benefit from coaching, were also screened out. Despite this screening question, however, over 200 teachers who said they did not teach reading went on to answer the questions on Literacy Coaching. A second caveat is that the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association discouraged teachers from answering questions 56 and 57. After inspecting the amount of missing data for questions directly preceding these questions, we have come to the conclusion that relatively few teachers (no more than 60) heeded the Union's request.

Approximately 1,700 teachers answered a question asking whether or not they had worked with a Literacy Coach in their current school. This is about 40% of the teachers responding to the survey. Of those teachers, 70% reported they had worked with a Coach in their current school (See Figure 2)**.**

Figure 2: Percent of Teachers Who Have worked With a Coach in Their Current School by School Type
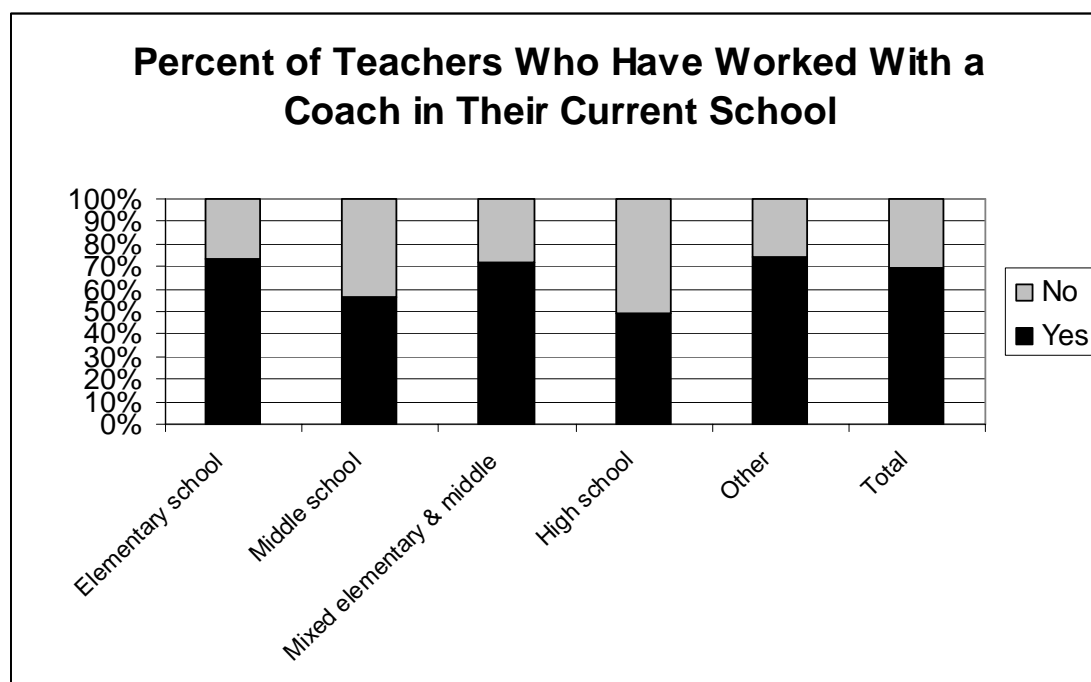

While a slightly higher percentage of elementary school teachers (73 percent) worked with Coaches, only 56 percent of the middle school teachers and only half the high school teachers said they had worked with a Coach in their school. This result may be partly explained by the fact that teachers not teaching reading were directed to skip the questions in the Literacy Coach Evaluation section.

We observed an interesting difference in the percentage of teachers working with Coaches between low achieving/high value added and high achieving/high value added schools. In the former schools, 76 percent of all teachers reported working with a Coach, while

in the latter schools, only 66 percent of all teachers reported the same thing (See Figure 3). While we certainly refrain from making causal inferences based on these data, these results provide suggestive evidence that low achieving/high value added schools might be making more productive use of literacy Coaches.

Figure 3: Percent of Teachers Who Have worked With a Coach in Their Current School by Value Added Quadrant
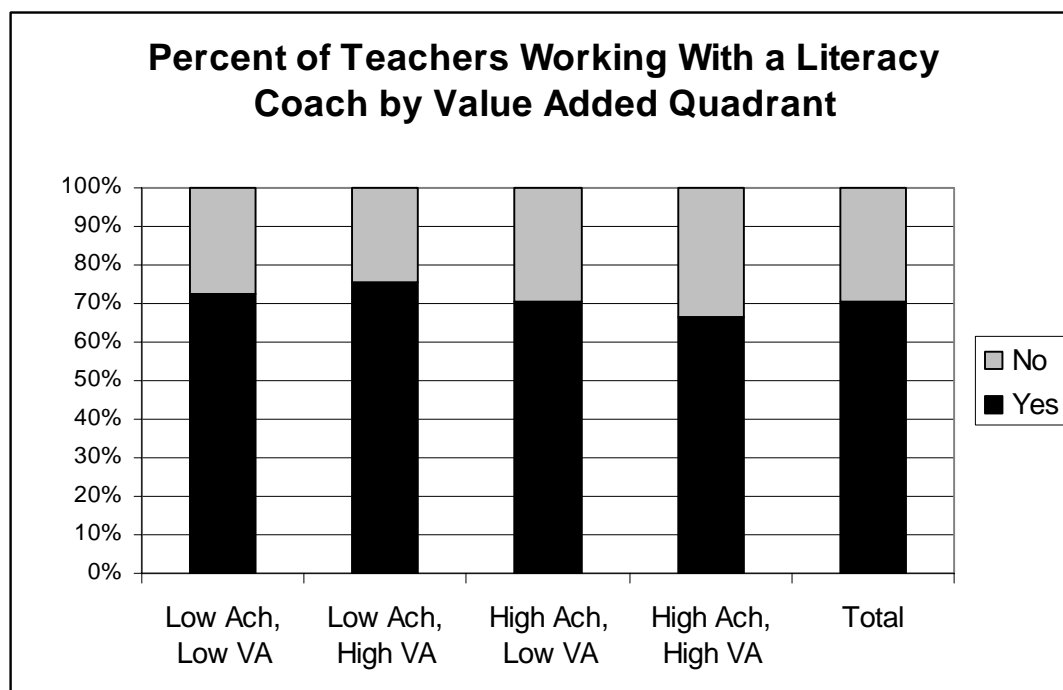
Clearly the potential for Coaches to impact the teachers with whom they work will depend at least in part on how frequently they are able to work with one another. How frequently do teachers meet with their Coaches? On average, teachers reported that they worked with a Coach about 7 times this school year). This number varied widely; 15 percent of the teachers answering this question said they have not met with their Coach at all this year, while a handful of teachers reported more than 50 meetings.

When Coaches and teachers work together, some activities will be more conducive to the improvement of teachers' literacy practice than others. We asked teachers what kinds of activities they engaged in when they worked with Coaches. Two of the three most frequently reported activities involve Coaches presenting or explaining a new literacy teaching strategy to teachers (See Tables 4 and 5 below). This kind of interaction between Coaches and teachers strikes us as consistent with the MPS literacy Coach model whereby Literacy Specialists pass on expertise to Coaches who in turn pass it on to teachers through the explicit presentation of teaching strategies. Beyond presenting new strategies, Coaches can model strategies for teachers, and Coaches can observe teachers and provide feedback about what they see. These sorts of peer observation activities occurred less frequently than the presentation of new strategies. It is important to note that in general, teachers reported quite modest levels of engagement in activities typically associated with coaching – hearing a presentation from a Coach, being observed, or modeling. The modal response to the activity items in Table 2 was "2" which indicates teachers and Coaches engaged in the activity only "occasionally".

Tables 4 and 5 also show how the frequency with which teachers engaged in various activities with Coaches varied by school type and value added quadrant. For nearly every activity examined, teachers in elementary and elementary/middle schools reported engaging in the activity more frequently than high school and middle school teachers. Teachers in low achieving schools, regardless of the school's value added score, tended to engage in nearly every activity with greater frequency than schools with higher average achievement.

Table 4: Frequency With Which Teachers and Coaches Engage in Various Activities by School Type

	K-5 School	Middle school	K-8 School	High School	Other	All Types
LC gives presentation on teaching strategy	2.33	2.10	2.23	2.52	2.47	2.30
LC and I work with reading curriculum materials	2.28	1.88	2.35	1.91	2.13	2.24
LC explains a teaching strategy	2.20	2.10	2.13	2.39	2.24	2.19
LC and I analyze student work	2.11	1.62	2.13	1.85	1.92	2.06
LC gives me feedback after observing me	1.88	1.59	2.01	1.87	2.18	1.93
I observe LC model a lesson	1.90	1.66	1.88	1.85	1.95	1.88
LC observes my teaching	1.74	1.46	1.82	1.81	1.95	1.77
LC helps me plan lessons	1.61	1.58	1.60	1.65	1.53	1.60

1=never, 2=occasionally, 3=generally, 4=always

Table 5: Frequency With Which Teachers and Coaches Engage in Various Activities by Value Added Quadrant

	Low Ach, Low VA	Low Ach, High VA	High Ach, Low VA	High Ach, High VA	All
LC gives presentation on teaching strategy	2.50	2.37	2.13	2.16	2.28
LC and I work with reading curriculum materials	2.43	2.37	2.05	2.10	2.23
LC explains a teaching strategy	2.43	2.23	2.02	2.03	2.17
LC and I analyze student work	2.08	2.13	1.92	2.03	2.04
LC gives me feedback after observing me	2.05	2.17	1.73	1.73	1.90
I observe LC model a lesson	2.02	1.96	1.70	1.75	1.86
LC observes my teaching	1.84	1.93	1.61	1.65	1.75
LC helps me plan lessons	1.74	1.71	1.48	1.43	1.58

1=never, 2=occasionally, 3=generally, 4=always

4. How do the Literacy Coaches work with school faculty to provide embedded professional development?

Responses during interviews indicated that Literacy Coaches engaged in a variety of professional development tasks, from setting up inservices with outside providers to personally conducting training. Formal training typically occurred with larger groups during banking days or periodic faculty meetings. However, other items in addition to literacy training were on these agenda. According to school interview respondents, examples of professional development content included working through new textbook adoption, writing instruction, aligning instruction to District standards (i.e., Learning Targets), and school-based assessment analysis. Many of these professional development sessions were based on training Coaches received at the District level from Literacy Specialists and curriculum specialists. Coaches also provided professional development through periodic, informal interactions with teachers, such as responding to teacher inquiries for research or materials. As noted previously, encounters with teachers were not commonly classroom-based using modeling or direct feedback on instruction. Coaches also provided professional development planning by working with the Learning Team to develop the school's professional development plan and aligning professional development to the Learning Targets and Comprehensive Literacy Framework.

This picture is consistent with the Teacher survey results discussed above. There, the most common form of professional development activity, of those we asked about, was providing presentations on a teaching strategy. However, on the average teachers perceived this activity (and all of the others) as occurring only occasionally. Activities such as Coaches observing instruction and providing feedback, and observation of the Coach modeling instruction occurred even less often, as perceived by teachers.

Coach-Specialist Interaction

With respect to Specialist-Coach interactions, we looked at two questions:

1. What is the nature of the interactions between the Literacy Specialist and Literacy Coaches?

2. What is the nature of the professional development provided by the Specialists to the Coaches?

Our findings relevant to these questions are presented in order below.

1. What is the nature of the interactions between the Literacy Specialist and Literacy Coaches?

As discussed previously, the primary vehicle for increasing Literacy Coaches' capacity to deliver high quality embedded professional development in literacy instruction is through their interactions with Literacy Specialists. Through these interactions, Literacy Coaches can potentially be exposed to new forms of literacy instruction and assessment (e.g., through direct training or observing "model" lessons by Literacy Specialists), receive information about best practices and District policies, and receive advice and consultation about literacy issues in their assigned schools. Thus, in addition to their experience and expertise, Coaches' interactions with Specialists will in part determine their ability to help teachers improve their literacy instruction.

On the Coach survey, we asked about the nature of Coaches' interactions with Literacy Specialists including the frequency of their interactions, the topics on which they focused, and the kinds of activities in which they engaged. Figure 4 shows the number of times Literacy Coaches responding to our survey met with Literacy Specialists this school year. A total of 20 Coaches, 30 percent of those who returned a survey, had not met with a Literacy Specialist at the time of the survey (January, 2006). About 40 percent of all Coaches had met with Literacy Specialists between 2 and 4 times this year, with an overall average of approximately 3 meetings.

Figure 4: Frequency With Which Coaches Worked With Specialists
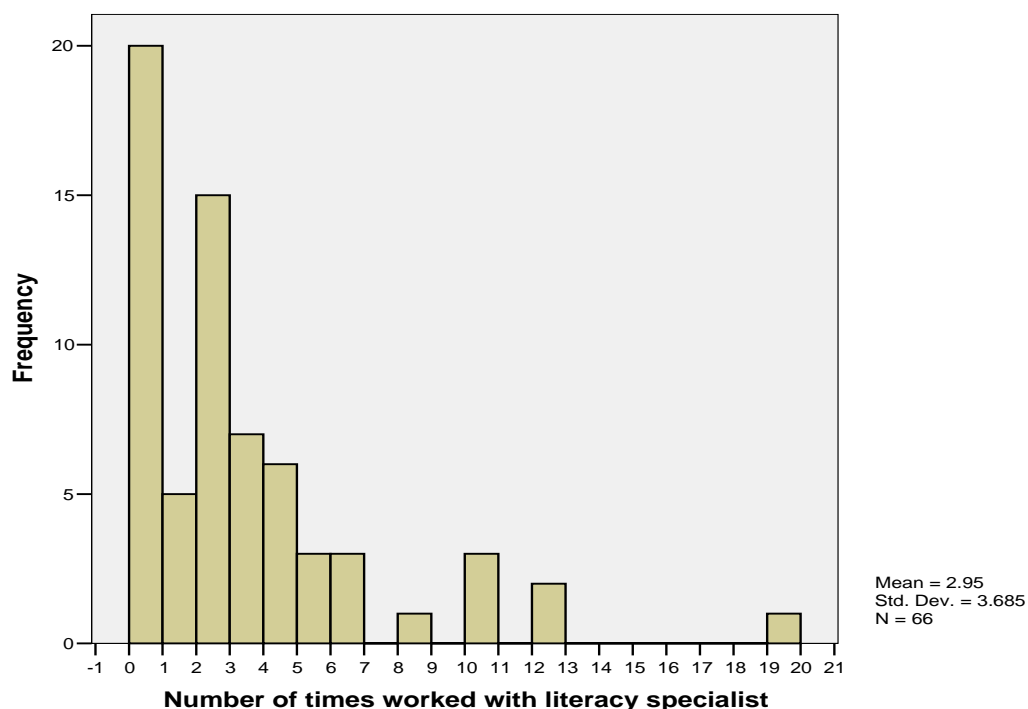
During their meetings with Literacy Specialists, Literacy Coaches spend more time on core literacy topics—reading, assessment, and writing—than on other topics (See Table 6). However, on average, Coaches report spending "very little time" on these topics. The topics on which they spend the least amount of time are decision-making and team building, research & inquiry, and family/community involvement.

Table 6: Topic focus of Literacy Coaches' work with Literacy Specialists

Time spent with Literacy Specialist on different topics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading instruction	2.33	1.06
Assessing students	2.11	1.08
Writing instruction	2.03	0.95
Interpreting assessments	2.00	1.05
Curriculum alignment	1.97	0.99
Media & technology	1.88	0.98
Language instruction	1.81	0.83
Coaching & adult learning	1.76	0.95
Oral language instruction	1.72	0.83
Decision making & team building	1.72	0.90
Research & inquiry	1.55	0.87
Family & community involvement	1.28	0.49

1=no time, 2=very little time, 3=a moderate amount of time, 4=a large amount of time

The most commonly occurring activity when Coaches work with Specialists is for Specialists to explain a teaching strategy (See Table 7). Working with literacy curriculum materials and observing the Specialist model a lesson also occur with greater frequency than other activities. Being observed by a Literacy Specialist while using new practice is the activity in which Coaches engage least often.

Table 7: Activities in which Literacy Coaches Engage with Literacy Specialists

Activity

	Mean	Std. Deviation
LS explains a teaching strategy	3.15	1.70
LS and I work with curriculum materials	2.64	1.71
LS models a lesson	2.46	1.48
LS assists with providing PD to learning team	2.09	1.48
LS models how to provide input to learning team	1.98	1.38
LS works on planning w. learning team using comp lit framework	1.94	1.38
LS observes me use a new practice	1.44	0.95

1=never true, …, 6=always true

In our interviews, current Literacy Specialists spoke of a number of roles they play with Coaches and at the District level, including:

1. Provide training on Learning Targets, curriculum alignment, education plan development, assessment analysis, literacy, and other instructional strategies (e.g., differentiated instruction). Monitor use of these strategies by Coaches within schools through Literacy Coach logs and other communication with Coaches.

2. Respond to requests for specific professional development tailored to schools, which could be provided for the Coach to deliver or delivered to school staff with Coach participating. Visit schools to check on Coach needs and their work with school staff.

3. Advise schools on education plan development; serve on District education plan review committees.

4. At the District level, in addition to Coach training, provide training at monthly principal meetings (principal institutes), and for Learning Teams.

One Specialist provided this example of a typical week: planning for school visits (1 day); school visits: (2 days per week); planning with other Literacy Specialists and Curriculum Specialists (2 days); In addition, there is Coaches training once monthly (two days), and Teaching and Learning Division meetings (1.5 days per month).

As might be expected given the relatively small number of Specialists and the fact that many are new to the job this year, our interview results suggest that the most frequent form of interaction between Coaches and Specialists occurs during the monthly District meetings, followed by individual email or phone conversations. In our sample, most Coaches commented that they rarely had contact with Specialists at their school. School visits from Specialists were more frequent during the first three years of the program, when there were 6 Specialists, and therefore lower Specialist to school ratios. Several Coaches also mentioned communicating with their Specialists through Literacy Logs. Through email or phone, Coaches inquired about and got feedback on such things as vocabulary or other instructional strategies, how to complete the Literacy Coach logs, and work on the Education Plan. In their Literacy Coach Logs, Coaches responded to Specialists on requests for information about their work on the Learning Team, school professional development, the nature of modeling and coaching, and which element of the Comprehensive Literacy Framework they were working on. One Coach mentioned calling on her Specialist for a variety of purposes, and found the support very helpful. Support for this new Coach included help on developing a workshop with parents, student assessments, generating data, strategies for teaching, working with staff, working on the education plan, and how to maneuver around staff that may not be as open and accessible as others.

Although most Coaches in our interview sample spoke positively about their work with the Literacy Specialists, there were a few concerns that Specialists assigned to work with them changed from year to year with no explanation. One Coach also expressed concern about the perception that some former Literacy Specialists were not supportive of the Direct Instruction program. In the survey responses, ten Coaches wrote comments indicating dissatisfaction with the support received from the current Literacy Specialists.

Our interviews also showed that Coaches worked with a variety of other resources, including textbook vendor representatives, instructional program providers (e.g., Direct Instruction) and District curriculum specialists in order to obtain information and bring professional development opportunities to their schools for teachers and Learning Teams. During the interviews and in comments on the Coach survey, for example, several Coaches mentioned receiving useful support from the District English/Language Arts Curriculum Specialist.

2. What is the nature of the professional development provided by the Specialists to the Coaches?

Our interviews with Coaches and Specialists suggest that the professional development is not strictly focused on literacy instruction, assessment and coaching, but also involves coordinative issues and District initiatives such as Learning Targets and curriculum alignment in all content areas. This change accompanied a shift in the program from the Division of Professional Development to the Division of Teaching and Learning. At the start of the initiative (summer of 2002), a two-week training was provided to Coaches. The training was facilitated by a consulting group that covered aspects of literacy instruction, coaching strategies, assessment analysis, and District initiatives, including Learning Teams, Balanced Literacy Framework, and curriculum alignment. In addition to the consultants, training sessions for Coaches were conducted by District professional development and curriculum specialists. Following this first two week induction, the Literacy Specialists and District curriculum managers have provided the primary training for Coaches during monthly meetings during the school year. During the first year of the program, training was designed by the Literacy Specialists and was tailored to the top 6 needs identified by Coaches based on surveys they conducted. Delivery was organized by strengths of Specialists (e.g., writing, reading, technology, secondary or elementary education), and Coaches could chose from a menu of options based on their needs. Cohort groups of Coaches with similar interests (e.g., literacy focus of their schools) or needs, were also provided time during the meetings to work together. Additionally, some groups of Coaches met as cohorts on a more frequent basis to learn from each other on coaching strategies that worked within their schools.

After the initiative was shifted to the Division of Teaching and Learning, training for Literacy Coaches became less frequent. While training was initially conducted bi-weekly and then monthly, during the school year of this study, the District required that no training occur during the month that the WKCE was administered since most Literacy Coaches are also school assessment coordinators. In addition, training does not occur during the approximately seven weeks in the spring that Literacy Coaches are involved with writing assessment scoring. Also following the shift to the Teaching and Learning Division, Literacy Specialists no longer had full discretion on training for Coaches. Instead, training was developed with input from Teaching and Learning curriculum specialists. By the third year of the program, training was directed by the curriculum specialists within Teaching and Learning, who became the program managers and supervisors of the Specialists, with the input of the Literacy Specialists. During this study year (2005-2006), two program managers establish the "big picture" for training sessions and collaborate with the Literacy Specialists on training details. The program managers start the training during the morning for all Coaches, and the Literacy Specialists carry out training during breakout sessions on applications to the different school levels. Rather than establishing training based on needs assessment of school Coaches through surveys, the program managers and Specialists are focusing on guiding themes across training sessions throughout the year. The focus of training for the school year was identified by interview respondents as differentiated instruction. Based on a review of the training agenda, however, it appears that only one session is devoted to this topic.

The program managers took on greater responsibility for training of Literacy Coaches and management of the initiative, due to their perception that training was not coherent from year to year and that there was no long range strategy for the Literacy Coach initiative. The managers were also concerned that Coaches were not receiving enough training on District initiatives such as the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, Education Plan development, classroom based assessment, and Learning Targets. As a result, the program managers spent

time re-focusing the Literacy Coach initiative by working on a mission and long-range plan. Finally, the practice of having groups of Coaches work together as collegial groups with similar literacy foci was scaled back. One program manager stated that these groups had become "cliquish" and unproductive, with people getting together to vent concerns rather than getting work done that could "move the district."   Coaches are still encouraged to network during lunch breaks of the monthly training sessions. Former Literacy Specialists felt that these types of changes eliminated their ability to steer training to school and Coach needs and was more focused on allowing the Division of Teaching and Learning to deliver their curriculum and accountability priorities through the Coaches to the schools.

Our results present a mixed picture of the quality of the professional development provided by the District to the Coaches. As shown in Table 8 below, Coaches who responded to our survey, on the average, agreed that the professional development they received during the last two years[3] was relevant and had impact on their practice, but there was less consensus on its coherence.

Table 8: Coaches' Perceptions of Professional Development

Professional development is	% Agreeing	Average Rating[a]
Relevant	81%	4.4
Coherent	48%	3.7
has impact on what coaches do	83%	4.8

a) Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Slightly Agree, 5=Agree,
   6=Strongly Agree.

It should also be noted, however, that twelve of the 45 Coaches who added comments to their survey responses indicated dissatisfaction with the current level of District-provided professional development, many comparing it unfavorably with that presented prior to this year.

In our interviews, most Coaches in our sample told us that training from current and former Literacy Specialists was useful. Training helped provide research based strategies that could be taken back to school and shared with staff; some training has helped with coaching strategies and working with teachers; other training sessions have helped clarify appropriate roles for Coaches. Several Coaches mentioned on-site training provided by Teaching and Learning Curriculum Specialists as useful. However, new Coaches felt that more intensive training on the functions of the position and coaching strategies would be beneficial. One Coach stopped going to training because of concerns that some Specialists in the past were not supportive of the Direct Instruction program, and that training was not useful. This Coach found the training provided by the DI Literacy Specialist/Coordinator more applicable.

Work with Learning Teams

Our interviews suggested that most Coaches worked closely with their school's Learning Teams, and that this interaction was an important part of the Coach's job. In most schools we visited, the Coach was a key member of the team, helping to link the team to District programs, draft the Education Plan, and plan professional development. Several principals said they

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[3] It should be noted that, given the changes in the professional development program described above, it might have been more useful to ask about this year's activities rather than the last two years.

worked closely with the Literacy Coaches on these Learning Team activities and that the Coaches were a key player. Many teachers, when asked about their Coach's impact, also pointed to the Coach's work with the Learning Team. However, in one school, the Learning Team was only recently becoming active in the school.

Qualifications of Coaches and Specialists

As discussed previously, we view the MPS Literacy Coach Initiative as a two-stage treatment in which Literacy Specialists train and support Literacy Coaches who in turn train and support classroom teachers. From this perspective Literacy Coaches can be thought of as resources on which classroom teachers can draw as they work to improve their literacy teaching, and Specialists serve as resources for Coaches. Clearly, the experience and expertise Literacy Coaches bring to their position will, to a significant degree, determine the quality of the support they are able to provide to teachers. Since the Specialists were intended to be key resources for the Coaches, the experience and expertise the Specialists bring to their position would be expected to influence the quality of the support they are able to provide to Coaches.

Coaches. We expected to see that Coaches had substantial teaching experience, particularly in the area of literacy. We also expected that substantial proportions of Coaches holding specialty certification in literacy (Reading Teacher, Reading Specialist, or English or Language Arts). Finally, since Coaches are in a sense "teachers of teachers", we expected that the Coaches would have experience in providing professional development to teachers. These expectations were largely true for the 75 Literacy Coaches who answered the Coach survey.

Most Literacy Coaches are experienced MPS teachers. As a group they have been teaching literacy on average for about 16 years. The number of years of experience ranges from 7 to nearly 20 years of teaching. The surveys indicate that no one enters the position without prior experience teaching literacy and that Coaches typically have about 15 years of experience teaching reading or writing. Overall, Coaches had over 5 years of experience providing professional development to classroom teachers. While it is typical for Coaches to have taught literacy, only 39% of the surveyed Coaches hold a Reading Teacher certification and only 19% have the Reading Specialist certification. In total, 55% have a certification specifically related to literacy. In terms of background education, 98% of respondents have completed coursework in English and 98% have studied the methods for teaching literacy. All of the respondents report completing coursework in reading. Coursework in other skills associated with the Literacy Coach position is much less common, with 43% having had no coursework in coaching or mentoring. More details on Coaches' backgrounds can be found in Appendix A Tables 1-3.

It is worth noting that 76% of respondents worked as teachers in their current school before becoming Literacy Coaches. This demonstrates the normal practice of hiring from within, an indication that most of the Literacy Coaches not only have literacy expertise to draw upon, but also may have knowledge of their school and a rapport with colleagues that may allow them to coach more effectively. These results indicate that most literacy Coaches are in their first assignment in their own school, showing the value placed on contextual knowledge as opposed to experience or expertise as a Literacy Coach.

Coaches, for the most part, perceived themselves as knowledgeable about the various facets of their work. On the survey, Coaches were asked to rate their level of knowledge in 11 areas. Table 9 shows that most Coaches rated themselves as proficient in each area.

Table 9: Coach Self-Ratings of Expertise

Area	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading instruction	3.6	0.6
Writing instruction	3.4	0.5
Oral language instruction (listening and speaking)	3.2	0.5
Language Instruction	3.2	0.6
Media and technology	2.8	0.7
Research and inquiry	3.1	0.7
Student assessment	3.4	0.5
Curriculum alignment	3.0	0.7
Coaching and adult learning	3.0	0.8
Family and community involvement	2.6	0.7
School decision making and team building	3.3	0.7

1=Novice, 2=Apprentice, 3=Proficient, 4=Expert

We also asked school principals to rate the competency of the Literacy Coaches. Principals' ratings of the Coaches are remarkably similar to the Coaches' ratings of themselves. On average, the principals rated the Coaches' competency on literacy instruction and literacy assessment as between "proficient" and "expert." (See Table 10 below.) In contrast, the Coaches were rated between "apprentice" and "proficient" on school decision making/team building and methods for involving families.

Table 10: Principals' Assessments of the Competency of Literacy Coaches in Their School

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Literacy instruction	3.3	0.8
Literacy assessment	3.2	0.8
Assessment data analysis & interpretation	3.1	0.9
Coaching and adult learning	2.9	0.9
Methods for involving families	2.6	0.9
School decision making & team building	2.4	1.8

1=Novice, 2=Apprentice, 3=Proficient, 4=Expert

Our original expectation was that on the average Coaches would have somewhat higher levels of technical expertise. Our interviews suggest that technical expertise in literacy instruction may not have been considered as important for Coaches as the ability to work with other teachers and get things done at the school. However, both principals and Coaches rate coaching and adult learning competency lower that instructional competency, suggesting some Coaches may need more professional development in this area.

Specialists. Three of the four Specialists are in their first year in that role. Only one Specialist from the initial year of the program was in that position during 2005-2006. Four of the

other original six Literacy Specialists left their positions after the 2004-2005 school year. All of those interviewed left their positions due to concerns about how the program was implemented and how it evolved. Sadly, the fifth original Literacy Specialist passed away during the 2004-2005 school year. All of the current Specialists are veteran MPS teachers. Two of the current Specialists have Master's degrees relating to reading instruction. Three are former reading teachers and three were formerly Literacy Coaches.

Literacy Specialists received professional development primarily from curriculum specialists and other District level staff. These sessions have included presentation skills, data analysis, and information on District initiatives. Literacy Specialists indicated that, with the exception of being able to attend an occasional conference or workshop, they did not have dedicated resources for on-going training in their role. Instead, from the start of the program, it was expected that Specialists either already possessed needed expertise or could obtain any needed assistance from other District staff. One program manager did assert that Literacy Specialists have had access to training opportunities in each year of the program. However, another program manager indicated that when the professional development division was eliminated, funding was no longer available for Literacy Specialist or Coach training. The 3 new Literacy Specialists have not received formal District training for their role. The one senior Specialist and other District level staff have worked with the new Specialists to adapt to their new roles. In addition, all of the new Specialists were Literacy Coaches and did receive training for that role. One new Specialist mentioned that it would be useful to have more time for training on breaking through teacher isolation or school principal resistance to the coaching role. The former Specialists we interviewed were concerned that they did not have access to regular training beyond that provided by interactions with District staff. Although they recognized that the intent for their positions was that they already possessed the needed expertise, it was mentioned that training or support on team building may have helped them work together more constructively.

Our Coach survey was not designed to collect information on Coaches' assessment of Specialists' expertise. We understand that this would be against the policy of the MTEA, and in their view, a contract violation. However, of the 45 Coaches who wrote comments on the survey, ten mentioned concerns about the qualifications or competency of the Literacy Specialists, contrasting them unfavorably with their predecessors. One respondent made a positive comment about a Specialist's expertise.

Coaches' Acceptance of The Comprehensive Literacy Framework, Understanding of Expectations, and Perceptions of Teacher and Leader Support

Our experience studying other initiatives directed toward improving instruction suggests that Coaches' attitudes toward the initiative and perceptions of support at the school level are likely to be important influences on success. We would expect success to be greater when Coaches support the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, understand what they are expected to do, perceive there is a systematic plan for improving literacy in place, and feel supported by school leaders and teachers. If these factors are absent, Coaches are less likely to be motivated to persist in their work.

We asked Coaches a variety of questions related to these issues on the Literacy Coach survey. Table 11 summarizes responses to scales we constructed from survey items to assess these motivational factors.

Table 11: Literacy Coach Perceptions of Support for the Comprehensive Literacy Framework and Understanding of How to Implement Literacy Coaching

	% Agreeing	Average Rating[a]
Support for Comprehensive Literacy Framework (3 item scale)	81%	4.5
Understand Expectations (5 item scale)	81%	4.7
Literacy Plan in Place (3 item scale)	79%	4.7
Leader Support (4 item scale)	92%	5.3
Teacher Support (4 item scale)	78%	4.7

a) Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Slightly Agree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly Agree.

These results show that on average the respondents support the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, which sets the stage for effective coaching around it. Second, despite the variety of roles Coaches play at schools, our survey results suggest that most of the survey respondents are clear on what is expected of them and their schools, perceive their school has a plan in place to improve literacy instruction, and feel supported by teachers and school leaders. For the most part, there were no significant differences in these attitudes and perceptions across school levels or levels of achievement, with the exception that Coaches in K-5 and K-8 schools perceived clearer expectations and more teachers support.

This positive picture may not apply to all schools. During our interviews, some Coaches told us they could be more effective if they had greater support from principals, including limits on non-coaching responsibilities placed on them by their principals. Some mentioned lack of support from teachers who were reluctant to allow the Coach to help them. But most teachers told us they respected the Coaches as credible sources of information, and would like to have more opportunity to work with them one-on-one.

Impact on Instruction

Specialist Impact on Coaches

Based on the two-stage model discussed above, we intended to examine the impact on instruction in terms of Specialists' impact on Coaches as well as Coaches' impact on teachers. However, reluctance on the part of the MTEA to including more specific questions about Coaches' views of Specialists in the Coach survey prevented us from gathering much specific information on the impacts of Specialists on Coaches via the Coach survey.

Based on our interviews, it appears that the change in the structure and delivery of professional development provided to Coaches over time, the reduction in the number of Specialists, and Specialist turnover reduced the scope for impact of the Specialists on the Coaches. The current situation is that, given the smaller number of Specialists, most Coaches interact with Specialists only at the monthly meetings or via phone or email contacts, which seem primarily to involve information exchange. While comments on the survey and in interviews suggest that Specialists provided more one-on-one support to Coaches in the past, there are now less opportunities for Specialists to spend time helping Coaches develop their

knowledge of literacy instruction. Few Coaches interviewed mentioned working with Specialists on developing literacy instruction. Topics more commonly mentioned include Learning Targets, curriculum alignment, and the Education Plan, all features that schools can use to support instruction, but not necessarily specific to literacy. It would appear that much of the Specialists' emphasis has become serving as conduits for information on District initiatives and Central office requirements, rather than serving primarily as professional development resources for Coaches.

It is important to note that because most of the Specialists are new to the job for the 2005-2006 school year, what can be concluded about the impacts of this particular group is limited. Interviews with Coaches and comments on the Coach survey provided some evidence about impacts, but it was hard to disentangle what applied to the current or former group of Specialists.

Impact of Coaches on Teachers

As discussed previously, we expected the main impact of the Coach initiative to come through interactions between Coaches and classroom teachers. On the teacher survey, teachers responded to a series of five statements about how much working with a Coach has affected them using a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). On all of these questions the average response is between agree and disagree, with no strong indication of impact (See Tables 12 and 13 below). The statement teachers were most likely to agree with was, "My teaching has a greater impact on my students." The statement they were least likely to agree with was, "I've made major changes in my teaching." However, it should be noted that the overall means for these and all other items are strikingly similar, and relatively low.

Disaggregating the data by school type and value-added designation provides further insight into the patterns of perceived impact in different kinds of schools. Analyzing the data by type of school indicates that teachers in the high schools feel like they have "made major changes in their teaching" to a lesser degree than elementary and middle school teachers. In comparison, teachers in low value added schools report being affected to a greater degree by their interactions with Literacy Coaches than teachers in high value added schools.

Table 12: Teachers' Reports of How Working with a Coach Has Affected Them by School Type

Potential Impact	K-5 School	Middle School	K-8 School	High school	Other	All Types
My teaching has a greater impact on my students	2.62	2.54	2.68	2.61	2.67	2.64
I have a better understanding of reading assessment	2.58	2.42	2.64	2.47	2.56	2.58
I feel more capable of helping my students read	2.53	2.46	2.60	2.47	2.58	2.55
I have a better understanding of student errors	2.50	2.37	2.56	2.50	2.50	2.51
I've made major changes in my teaching	2.37	2.36	2.44	2.18	2.39	2.38

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree

Table 13: Teachers' Reports of How Working with a Coach Has Affected Them by Value Added Quadrant

Potential Impact	Low Ach, Low VA	Low Ach, High VA	High Ach, Low VA	High Ach, High VA	Total
My teaching has a greater impact on my students	2.80	2.80	2.40	2.52	2.63
I have a better understanding of reading assessment	2.74	2.70	2.38	2.46	2.56
I feel more capable of helping my students read	2.75	2.66	2.31	2.41	2.53
I have a better understanding of student errors	2.66	2.64	2.29	2.39	2.49
I've made major changes in my teaching	2.55	2.52	2.16	2.24	2.37

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree

In our interviews, we asked Coaches, teachers, and principals about how they believed the Coaches affected instruction. Most Coaches felt they had made a difference in literacy instruction, particularly by focusing their school on test analysis and crafting solutions for school specific needs. Other ways they have helped was by raising teachers' awareness of research based instructional techniques, bringing back resources from their own training, and helping teachers align instruction for literacy. The few Coaches who were more actively working with teachers in their classrooms by modeling instruction saw changes based on on-going classroom work, feedback to teachers, and observations of instruction. They also thought their ability to affect change in their schools could be supported with flexibility from the District on expectations for Coaches (e.g., added responsibilities related to education plans and curriculum alignment). Newer Coaches felt they could be more effective if they had more training on coaching and working within their schools.

Similarly, most principals were very positive about the impact of the Literacy Coaches on the school instructional program. Only one principal in the sample was negative and did not appear to support the Literacy Coach model. Principals mentioned a number of ways that Coaches positively impacted instruction, including: coordinating school literacy efforts, keeping the school focused on the Education Plan, providing or facilitating staff development, bringing back information from District meetings to share with staff, some direct work with teachers in classes, and test score analysis. Principals clearly appreciated the Literacy Coach as an important school resource and counted on them for many functions. Some concerns were raised about the frequency of Coaches being away from school for District trainings or other activities, and requirements for Coaches to complete paperwork or non-literacy related activities they have been asked to fill.

Most teachers appreciated the Coach and cited examples of benefits from the Coach either directly on their teaching or on the school instructional program. Teachers said that the Literacy Coach helps them stay organized and focused on school goals, helps coordinate assessments, facilitates grade level or school-wide meetings, shares information with teachers on training received, and provides or makes available professional development opportunities. One teacher commented, "I think [the Literacy Coach] is the driving force behind why our literacy instruction is as successful as it is, through her modeling, through her support, through her gathering of resources… and (she's) a good mentor for us." In this school and one other, teachers benefited from frequent modeling and direct support of the Coach. In a third school,

teachers mentioned that the Coach would model for struggling teachers. As noted earlier, it appeared that modeling was less frequent or did not occur in the other five schools. In Direct Instruction schools, teachers noted that the Coaches impacted their work through coordinating that specific program. For example, the DI Coaches observed teacher use of DI strategies, including the need for frequent student assessment and regrouping, student responses to instruction, provided feedback on DI instruction, and kept teachers motivated to teach to the program. Across all schools, teachers would have liked more interaction with the Literacy Coaches, but recognized that Coaches were taking on a lot of work and that they "wear many hats." Several indicated that they felt there was not a clear definition of what role of Literacy Coach was supposed to entail. Some thought the Coach should be in classroom modeling instruction more often.

In summary, teachers and principals in the schools in our interview sample saw the Literacy Coach as important instructional leaders within their schools. They were often the "go-to" people for both literacy and non-literacy related requests. Regarding literacy and professional development, several referred to the Literacy Coach as the "mortar between the bricks" at their schools. As one principal commented, the Literacy Coach has become the expert in the school on Direct Instruction, and, "If it wasn't the Literacy Coach, the really good teachers, which we have a ton of, would still be doing a really good job, but the average teachers would not be doing as well as they're doing. And we do use paraprofessionals, in doing Direct Instruction, so it's all laid out for them, they're tremendous at it because of the Literacy Coach."

Impact of Coaching on Student Achievement in Reading/Language Arts

This section reports on the study designed to address the impact of the literacy coaching program on student achievement in reading/language arts. Ideally, the impact of coaching would be estimated using a randomized trial that would assign coaches to schools at random, then follow student achievement outcome measures over multiple years. Obviously, this could not be done retrospectively. While we also considered a comparative trend analysis that would track student achievement in schools *with* coaches compared to matched schools *without* coaches, there were not enough schools without coaches to use as a comparison group. The strategy chosen was therefore to make use of variation in the quality of program implementation in schools with Literacy Coaches and relate the variation to differences in school-level value-added student achievement. The rationale for this approach was that if literacy coaching improves instruction, which in turn improves student achievement, then those schools implementing coaching more intensively would have higher levels of value-added achievement. It should be recognized that this strategy is inherently weaker than the others mentioned above, so that the study's conclusions are not a strong as they might have been had the other research designs been possible.

Measures of Program Implementation

Measures of coaching implementation were developed from the 2005 Teacher and Principal Instructional Practices' surveys. These surveys provided information about teachers' and principals' perceptions of their involvement with coaching and its impact.[4] We used teacher responses to the 2005 Instructional Practices Survey to come up with measures of quality of

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[4] Originally, it was also planned to use data from the March 2005 survey of coaches, but there were not enough responses to make this useful.

literacy coach program implementation. Scales were developed representing *exposure* to the coach, the *content* of coaching activity, and the teachers' assessment of the coach's *impact* on practice. The values of these scales were calculated at the teacher level, and then aggregated to the school level by averaging across teachers within each school. Thus the scales represent an average of teachers' perceptions or reports about their experiences with coaching. Each of these scales was intended to capture variation in how well the school implemented the model of literacy coaching upon which the program was based. We have included tables detailing these scales as Appendices B and C of this report.

Student Achievement Measures

Student achievement was measured using reading data from the MPS value-added system. The value-added measures were based on the 2005 and 2006 WKCE scores in reading, measuring student achievement across the 2005-2006 school years.[5] We would also have liked to use language arts value-added, but since the language arts test was only given in grades 4 and 8 for 2005 and 2006 this data was not available.

We used three related measures of school level student achievement, all derived from WKCE reading tests. First, we used the school value-added for the combined elementary grades based on the November 2006 and November 2005 reading test. This measures the average achievement of the school's elementary students (grades 4 and 5) from November 2005 to November 2006. We used it to represent the outcome of instruction supported by coaching activities undertaken during the 2005-06 school year, as reported in teacher and principal survey responses from December of 2005. We used value-added for the elementary grades because it was in elementary reading instruction that we expected to see the clearest indication of program impact. Second, we used just the grade 3-4 reading value-added derived from the 2005 and 2006 WKCE. Third, we also constructed an outcome indicator by averaging the 2005 and 2006 reading value-added. This was done because the December 2005 Teacher Instructional Practices Survey responses were also likely to have reflected coaching activities that took place before the November WKCE, and these might be reflected in the 2004-05 valued added results. Additional details on the analyses conducted for this study are included in Appendix D.

Results and Interpretation

The measures of coaching program implementation did not, in general, have the positive and significant relationships with the value-added outcomes that would be expected if better implementation was producing increased student achievement. One interpretation of these results is that better implementation does not increase student achievement. This would imply that the literacy coaching model is not effective in improving reading achievement in the short run. It is important, however, to recognize that there are a number of qualifying factors that make this interpretation less certain.

First, the implementation measures themselves are not perfect reflections of implementation at a school. On the teacher side, some of those who got the most out of coaching may not have responded to the Instructional Practices Survey. Given the timing of the

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[5] It is because the 2006 WKCE scores and the value-added estimates were not available until recently that this part of the Phase 1 study was delivered after the rest of the initial first-year report.

survey, in December, it is also possible that many teachers within schools had not yet substantively interacted with their coaches. On the principal side, it may be that many principals did not really know what coaches were doing, and so their responses may not have been good indicators of implementation. The items on the survey may also not have captured all the important aspects of implementation.

Second, it is important to recognize that an intervention like literacy coaching has an indirect effect on student achievement. It works by helping teachers improve instruction, which is the primary school-based influence on student achievement. Even in schools where coaching was well implemented, teachers still have to change their instruction. It may be that some teachers lack the ability or motivation to use the assistance provided by the coach to change practice.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, coaching may take several years to have an impact. Teachers may require more than several months to perfect changes in instructional practice, and the coach in each school can only work intensively with a minority of teachers over a year. As our study found, many coaches had other duties during this period that further reduced the number of teachers they could work with on deep instructional change. This suggests that the impact of one year's coaching is not likely to show up strongly in the next year's value-added. It may also be that a more intensive level of coaching may be needed to change reading instruction enough to measurably improve student achievement, more intensive even than in schools where the coaching role was implemented more closely to the intended model in 2005-06.

There are also some limitations in the value-added measures we used for assessing coaching effectiveness. Value-added estimates are not perfectly reliable or consistent from year to year. 'Noise' in the value-added measures may be greater than a single year's effect of coaching. Further, we had only reading value-added data to work with. Some schools may have implemented coaching well, but may have concentrated on other aspects of literacy (i.e., writing) which are not measured by the reading tests.

Another finding that bears on the interpretation of the results is that there was a strong, positive relationship between some of the implementation measures such as working with teachers in small groups and observing and modeling, and teachers' ratings of coach impact. Similarly, principals' rating of coach effectiveness is strongly related to principals' ratings of coach expertise in reading, time teachers have to work with coaches, the alignment of coaching and professional development in reading, and coaches' engaging in core coaching activities. Coaches whose practice was closer to the model, and who worked with more teachers, were perceived to have more effect on teachers' practice. This supports the idea that implementation closer to the model was related to coaching effectiveness, but that effective coaching may not have a strong short-term influence on student reading achievement.

Since measures of literacy coach program implementation were also included in the 2006 teacher instructional practices survey, MPS may want to wait until the 2006-07 reading value-added results are available, and conduct an analysis of the relationship between two years of coaching implementation measures and two years of value-added. This would not require additional data collection and would provide better evidence on the impact of literacy coaching than was available using single year's implementation measures.

Other Themes Noted in the Results

Ownership of the initiative/change in focus.

In interviews, several respondents indicated that many of the initial "champions" of the initiative were no longer in the District (those who worked as partners with MPA or were key District leaders). After the first year of implementation, the program was shifted from Professional Development to Teaching and Learning, with new managers. Teaching and Learning was charged with providing professional development for the Literacy Coach initiative and other District initiatives, but program managers indicated that they did not have access to budgetary resources that were previously available under the Professional Development Division to administer the program. The current Teaching and Learning Division managers were not involved with the original design of the program. The Division also had other priorities, (e.g., Learning Targets). Further, there was an impression among the managers that the original Literacy Specialists were not well focused and were more interested in providing what they felt schools needed, rather than addressing broader District priorities. As a consequence of the shifts in leadership and shift in focus, some former Literacy Specialists said they felt "orphaned." The former Specialists did not feel there was a strong advocate for their work or for the original "vision" of the Literacy Coach/Literacy Specialist program as it was designed by the MPA and initially implemented within MPS. The function of Literacy Specialist was moving from a teacher leadership to more of an administrative model. The former Literacy Specialists also lost "intellectual ownership" of training focus. They did not believe adequate support was available for their own training and that accountability for their performance or those of some Coaches they tried to support was lacking. Finally, there was internal personnel strife between some of the Literacy Specialists, which affected their work together.

On the other hand, there is some evidence of a growing sense of ownership within the Division of Teaching and Learning for the Literacy Coach program. The Division of Teaching and Learning began working to develop a vision and long-range plan for the program in June 2005. Our interviews with Literacy Specialists suggested that they feel they are working as a more cohesive unit with each other and with the program managers. The program managers also feel this is first year that program is "theirs," which they now call the "Literacy Collaborative." They feel they have better control of training provided to Coaches and are trying to establish consistent protocols to track Coach participation in training and encourage their compliance with completing literacy logs.

Decentralization.

The initial effort from the Central Office and the MPA was to create positions of teacher leadership at District level (through Literacy Specialists) and at school level (Coaches), to foster job embedded professional development responsive to school needs, but once the program was initiated, the primary resources for professional development were cut. No resources were available to provide professional development to Coaches (e.g., materials and supplies) and Specialists other than personnel that remained at Central Office (e.g., curriculum specialists). Principals, who are responsible for funding from 25% to 50% of the Literacy Coach positions, have been left with considerable discretion with how to utilize Coaches in their schools. As our results show, Coaches have taken on a range of activities beyond the initial job description (e.g., school assessment coordinators; family night facilitator; special program coordinators

such as DI; substitute teachers; school grant writers; program implementers; ordering all textbooks). Decentralization gives principals the opportunity to use the Literacy Coach position for pressing needs. When combined with a lack of resources due to funding shortages (due, for example, to declining enrollments), principals may have little choice but to fill holes with the Literacy Coach. In some cases, the Literacy Coach is the only non-teaching position beside the principal. District managers struggle to keep Literacy Coaches focused on District initiatives. This program provides an example of the challenge for decentralization as seen by the ongoing struggle between District priorities and school flexibility. As one respondent indicated, the "Coaches are [the] delivery mechanism for everything the District wants to take to school level."

Accountability.

Both current and former Literacy Specialists perceived a lack of accountability on the part of principals about how Coaches are used, Coach training attendance, and completion of literacy logs by Coaches. In addition, former Literacy Specialists indicated that there was little accountability for the performance of their positions, which they would have welcomed. Principals also do not appear to be held accountable for how they are utilizing Literacy Coaches and the effectiveness of Coaches in working with teachers. Although there was no indication of poor performance of the Coaches in our sample, some principals and teachers indicated that they have heard of Coaches in other schools who are adding little value to their schools. It is incumbent on principals (along with learning teams) to help teachers break through norms of classroom isolation, and make them available for training. Certainly, some Coaches mentioned that they had to balance the need to attend all training sessions with staying in schools to provide professional development and fulfill other roles. In addition, some principals stated their concerns that Coaches were out of school too much, and they had to deal with dwindling resources to cover gaps at their schools. Yet, a train-the-trainer model hinges on Specialists training Coaches, then Coaches training learning teams and teachers. Literacy Coaches cannot bring back to schools training that they are unable to attend. Further, Coaches cannot model when they spend a majority of their time administering assessments, ordering school materials, and coordinating special programs (e.g., DI or SFA). As one Literacy Specialist stated, "… Coaches are very happy once they get permission from principals to support them in what they've been asked to do by the District." Similarly, one former Literacy Specialist said of Literacy Coaches, "They have to fight to do anything related to literacy coaching"

Coach Turnover.

Based on anecdotes we heard, we had expected that Coach turnover would be a significant issue. Our Coach survey results do not bear out this expectation. On our Turnover Intentions scale, only 10% indicated interest in leaving their position, and only 15% did not agree that they were satisfied with their job. While fifteen Coaches made comments on our survey about workload issues, seven made positive comments about job satisfaction and the positive impact of being a Coach on their own professional development. No information is available from MPS District data systems to track Coach turnover.

IV. Implications of Study Results

We believe that the information we collected during this study implies the following conclusions.

1. Overall, there is less emphasis on Coaches doing one-on-coaching than the original design seems to have envisioned, and less than portrayed in the Literacy Coaching literature. It would appear that, over time, the role of the Literacy Coach has been shifting away from direct coaching interactions with teachers toward more time and effort spent in quasi-administrative activities. Table 14 compares the original vision of the Literacy Coach's role to a composite picture built up from our interviews of the role as it is currently enacted in schools.

Table 14: Comparison of Original Vision vs. Examples of Enacted Literacy Coach Roles

Literacy Coach Role Description	Examples of Enacted Literacy Coach Roles
• Demonstration teaching, classroom modeling, and collaborative teaching • Delivering professional development including facilitating study and/or action research groups • Conferencing with teachers in regard to goal setting, observation and reflective feedback • Strategic planning around student data • Serving on the school learning team • Maintaining an ongoing weekly summary report • Attending summer training and weekly training during the school year	• Demonstration teaching, classroom modeling, and collaborative teaching • Organize professional development provided by others, deliver professional development and facilitate action research • Key participant on school learning teams • Promote and monitor use of comprehensive literacy framework • Attend training as schedule permits and/or principal allows • Monitor literacy research across grade levels and provide research based information to teachers as requested • *Coordinate Reading First grant* • *School grant writer* • *Develop and monitor Education Plan, including school assessment analysis, strategic planning, curriculum alignment, and writing Learning Targets* • *School assessment coordinator for all content areas* • *Order text books and other instructional materials for all content areas* • *Coordinate Direct Instruction curriculum, assessments, and student placements* • *School program implementer* • *Supervise parent newsletter* • *District writing assessment scoring*

2. Literacy Coaches function as key members of school Learning Teams and help to focus administrators and teachers on literacy. As well as being the 'go to' people in the school for literacy, they are also key links with the District office on literacy matters.

3. Coaches' impact on instruction is on average not likely to be deep. If the premise that instructional improvement requires sustained stretching of practice supported by expert Coaches working directly with teachers is correct, then in many schools the key ingredient is weak or missing. It seems especially telling that few teachers we interviewed mentioned deep instructional work with Coaches, and that on the Teacher Survey, teachers did not, on average, perceive that their interactions with Coaches resulted in major changes in teaching.

    It should be noted that other activities of Coaches may help teachers improve practice. For example, Coaches may arrange effective professional development sessions and by providing materials and information, allow teachers more time to teach. But in these cases practice improvement would come through a different mechanism than that which the coaching literature portrays.

4. Given the measures we were able to use, many Coaches do not appear to be literacy experts, and some may benefit from professional development in coaching and adult learning. However, they appear to be credible to teachers. Given the reduction in emphasis on working one-on-one to improve literacy instruction, Coaches appear, for the most part, to have the skills they need for their coordinative and administrative responsibilities. However, new Coaches likely need some additional introductory training, as was provided in the initial year of the initiative.

5. Most Coaches perceive support from leaders and teachers at their schools, have positive attitudes toward the Comprehensive Literacy Framework, and understand the expectations of the initiative. This suggests that the District has met some of the key conditions for motivating (or avoiding de-motivating) Coaches to persist with their many-faceted activities, in the face of increased demands from the District and school.

6. Coaches' interactions with Literacy Specialists appear less frequent and less focused on the techniques of literacy instruction than indicated in the original program design, and than suggested by the two stage model of how the initiative would affect instruction. Factors such as Specialist turnover, the fewer number of Specialist and high school/Specialist ratio, and increased emphasis on using the Specialists to communicate District-level priorities have limited the scope for one-on-one interaction between Coaches and Specialists around literacy instructional practices. The transition of Specialists to a more coordinative role parallels the evolution of the Coach role within the schools.

7. Measures of school level coaching implementation quality derived from teacher and principal surveys did not have the positive and significant relationships with the value-added outcomes that would be expected if better implementation was producing increased student achievement. As detailed in this report, there are a number of factors that raise cautions about how this finding is interpreted.

The District may want to consider several questions based on the results of our study:

1. What is the intended primary purpose of Coaches? To what extent should Coaches be one-on-one providers of embedded professional development, and coordinators and facilitators of literacy programs in schools?

2. How much flexibility in the use of the Coach positions should schools be allowed? A high flexibility approach provides the ability to use the Coaches as needed for local priorities, but it appears to facilitate using Coaches in ways not intended by the original program design or suggested by the literature on coaching. It may be that using Coaches primarily in coordinative activities is the most productive. Especially in K-5 schools, principals may have no one else to help with coordinative activities. However, in some schools it appeared that Coaches performed tasks more characteristic of principals, assistant principals, or Implementers, even when these other positions were present.

3. Should schools and especially principals be held accountable for how coaches are used? Currently, there is no specific accountability for how Coaches are used, which in turn contributes to Coaches taking on coordinative or administrative roles. If the District wants to encourage a more focused use of Coaches it may need a mechanism to ensure that principals understand what the District's expectations are and to ensure that Coaches are used in the manner and for the amount of time for which they were funded.

4. What activities would be most valuable for Literacy Specialists to undertake that could help Literacy Coaches improve literacy instruction within their schools? The District should consider the amount of emphasis Literacy Specialists should place on providing expertise to Coaches on literacy instructional practice verses being a conduit for communication between District and schools about District programs and requirements (e.g., Learning Targets).

5. If the District decides to use Specialists more as literacy experts, it might want to provide them with more professional development resources and resolve issues around the underfilling of these positions. A full compliment of six Specialists (versus two permanent and 2 temporary appointments) is likely to be more conducive to developing and communicating a core of literacy instructional expertise.

6. The District should consider aligning other parts of its human resource system to support coaching. Aspects of human resource systems that could improve the strategic value of the Literacy Coach and Literacy Specialist position include performance evaluation, selection, and pay. It might be easier to support and hold Literacy Coaches accountable if there was an evaluation tool specific to their role. Currently, Coaches are evaluated using the general teacher evaluation system, which does not appear to be very relevant to specific Coaching duties. The recently introduced Literacy Logs provide a more focused look at coaching activities, but these provide information to District office staff rather than principals, who are the Coaches' direct supervisors. An evaluation specific to Coaches (and perhaps math lead teachers) could be developed and principals trained in their use. Similarly, it is unclear how Literacy Specialists are evaluated. Competencies for their positions may need to be further developed and an evaluation instrument designed specifically for their function. Literacy Specialists could benefit from feedback on how well they are working with Coaches and schools and developing competencies needed for effective coaching in literacy. Coaches could be selected with more attention to literacy instruction and coaching competencies. Finally, the District

could work with the MTEA to develop differentiated pay commensurate with the role Coaches play and assess whether the pay add-on provided to Specialists is commensurate with their role.

7. The District should consider looking across all of the coaching initiatives in operation, including the Math Lead Teacher and Principal Coach programs. Such an examination could help to identify the conditions under which effective coaching is most likely to occur, and allow the cross fertilization of best practices between programs.

V. Plans for Follow-Up Study and Longer Term Research

Because of the short time frame in which this study was conducted, we have not addressed all important questions about the Literacy Coaching initiative. We intend to widen the range of school types from which we gather interview data. The first phase study included school interviews only at K-5 and K-8 schools, even though middle and high schools use Coaches as well. We intend to interview in 4-5 middle and high schools in the spring of 2006, in order to find out more about how Coaches are used in these types of schools.

For the longer term, we propose to integrate further work on assessing the impact of this initiative with a study of all literacy initiatives within MPS. This would allow the District to see how Literacy Coaching aligns with or compliments (or does not) other initiatives. It would also allow examination of two key issues that the current study has not had the time to explore in much depth: 1) the actual (versus perceived) impact of coaching on teachers' instructional practice; 2) the content and effect of the professional development in literacy teachers actually receive from Coaches and other sources.   In the context of this broader research, two additional avenues of research on Coaching could also be opened. One would be to study the conditions under which Literacy Coaches are likely to be effective in doing the kind of one-on-one work with teachers that the coaching literature emphasizes. Our interviews suggested that this happens when the principal supports this kind of work, if the Coach has the expertise and credibility with teachers, and teachers have the time and interest. However, this suggestion comes from a very small sample and needs further testing. This could be done by getting more quantitative information on coaching practices, instructional change, and student achievement, then doing interview and observational research at schools where it appears that high intensity coaching is occurring and leading to instructional change. A second avenue would be to explore the relative effectiveness of the original coaching model compared to the current practice. This could be done by having some Coaches concentrate on one-on-one and small group interactions with teachers, while others take a more coordinative and administrative role. After a year or two, improvements in student achievement could be compared.

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Appendix A Tables

Table A1: Level of experience of MPS Literacy Coaches

	Mean Years	Std. Deviation
Lit Coach at school	3.2	1.1
Lit Coach other school	(only n=5)	
Total teaching experience	18.3	11.3
Taught reading	15.9	9.9
Taught writing	14.6	10.6
Provided PD	5.6	5.3

Table A2: Certification of MPS Literacy Coaches

Area	% with Certification
Elementary Education	73%
Early Childhood	12%
Special Education	16%
Reading Teacher	39%
Reading Specialist	19%
English or Language Arts	13%
Remedial Reading	1%
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards	1%
Alternative education	3%
Other content area	28%
Any reading or ELA	53%
Reading Specialist, Teacher, Remedial	46%
Elementary or Early Childhood Only	28%
Other Content Only	4%

Table A3: Postsecondary Coursework of MPS Literacy Coaches

Area	None	1-3	4-6	7 or more
English/LA	2%	29%	20%	49%
Methods for teaching reading/LA	2%	18%	25%	55%
Reading	0%	18%	17%	65%
Counseling	64%	25%	8%	3%
Coaching/Mentoring	43%	37%	12%	8%

Appendix B: Coaching Implementation Scales Constructed from the 2005 Teacher Survey

Scale Name/Content	Construction
Exposure 1: Whether teacher has worked with coach this year or in the past	0= Q49 and Q52 = No 1= Q49 = Yes & Q52= No 2= Q52 = Yes Calculate mean for school
Exposure 2: Frequency of meeting with coach	Q53: Reported number of times met with Literacy Coach; Calculate mean for school
Exposure 3: Working with coach alone or in small group	Sum Q54i: The Literacy Coach and I work alone without any other teachers, and Q54ii: Usually the Literacy Coach and I work with 1-3 other teachers Calculate mean for school
Content 1: Number of reading topics covered in work with coach	Score 1 for each of Q55i-v where response =1 • Phonemic awareness • Phonics • Fluency • Vocabulary • Comprehension Calculate mean for school
Content 2: Working with coach on instructional preparation activities	Sum q56 i, vi, vii, & viii • The Literacy Coach gives a presentation on a teaching strategy • The Literacy Coach helps me plan lessons • The Literacy Coach explains a teaching strategy • The Literacy Coach and I work with reading curriculum materials Calculate mean for school
Content 3: Observation, modeling, feedback provided by coach	Sum Q56 ii, iii, iv, & v • The Literacy Coach observes my teaching • The Literacy Coach gives me feedback after observing me • I observe the Literacy Coach model a lesson • The Literacy Coach and I analyze work my students have done Calculate mean for school
Effect: perception of impact on practice in 5 areas	Sum Q57 i to v; Since working with my Literacy Coach: • I have made major changes in my reading teaching • I feel more capable of helping my students read • I have a better understanding of common errors students make when reading • I have a better understanding of how to assess my students' reading ability • I feel that the way I teach reading has a greater impact on my students Calculate mean for school

Appendix C: Coaching Implementation Scales Constructed from the 2005 Principal Survey

Scale Name/Content	Construction
Teacher Time: principal perception of whether teachers have time to work with coach	1= Q41 is yes, else 0 Do teachers at your school have sufficient time to work with the Literacy Coach?
Coaching-PD Alignment: principal perception of alignment of coaching with reading professional development	0= Q38 & Q40 = 0 1= Q38 or Q40 = 1 2= Q38 and Q40 = 1 Q38. Does the Literacy Coach provide professional development on the reading programs used at your school? Q.40. Is the professional development provided by the Literacy Coach aligned with the reading programs you use at your school?
Coaching Core: whether coach engages in core coaching activities at school	Sum Q42 i, ii, iii, iv, vi; Which of the following does the Literacy Coach do at your school? (indicate all that apply): • Coach individual teachers • Provide workshops or programs for groups of teachers • Analyze and interpret reading assessment data • Run study groups on literacy • Model literacy instruction for teachers
Core/Non-core: emphasis on core versus non-core activities	(Coaching Core) - (Sum of Q42 v, vii, viii, ix) Which of the following does the Literacy Coach do at your school? (Indicate all that apply): • Substitute for absent teachers • Instruct students in literacy • Help with student discipline • Support parent literacy or parent involvement programs
Coach Expertise: principal rating of coach expertise in literacy instruction and assessment	Sum of Q44 i and ii: How would you rate the expertise of your current Literacy Coach (or the last one if the position is now vacant) in: • Literacy instruction • Literacy assessment
Effect: principal perception of coach effectiveness in 7 areas	Sum Q45 i – vii: How effective do you think the Literacy Coach has been in helping your school? • Understand and use student assessment data • Develop a school-wide literacy strategy • Develop collaboration among teachers on literacy • Develop family literacy programs • Improve teachers' literacy instruction • Improve students' test scores in reading • Improve students' reading proficiency

Appendix D: Analyses applied to Value-Added Study

In this appendix, we provide more detailed information about the analyses conducted for the value-added portion of the study. These analyses were based on the assumption that if the Literacy Coach program impacts student learning, those schools that implement coaching activities as intended would show a greater effect. Evidence of program effectiveness would thus be shown if there was a positive relationship between the implementation measures and the school level value-added data.

In order to see if there was evidence for this relationship, we regressed the value-added measures on the control variables and the implementation measures. The control variables included: school level percent low income, percent non-white, percent English language learners, percent disabled, percent proficient or above on the 2004 WKCE reading test, and whether the school participated in the SAGE (class size reduction) program. We performed several variations of this basic analysis, including: 1) using the implementation measures separately; 2) creating three combined measures by grouping related scales together; and 3) creating one overall measure of implementation. We did this because some of the individual implementation measures tended to be fairly highly correlated with each other.

We did analyses using the implementation measures based on teachers' survey responses only, based on the principals' responses only, and based on both sets of responses. Using only teacher responses allowed us to include 96 schools in the analysis, while using only principal responses allowed inclusion of 63 schools. Using both, we were able to include 61 schools. The differences in the number of schools in the analyses are due to the fact that the response rate from the principal survey was relatively low, so fewer schools had both complete principal responses and a sufficient number of teacher responses to construct reliable school averages. Schools with less than 5 teacher responses were not included.

The first set of analyses measured whether or not school-level controls (i.e., percent low income, percent non-white, percent English language learners, percent disabled, percent proficient or above on the 2004 WKCE grade 4 reading test, and SAGE participation) as a group, explained a significant amount of the variance in value-added. When using this analysis with the teacher responses we found that these measures did increase the variance explained for all three value-added versions (elementary grade average, grade 3-4 average and the two year elementary grade average) but ultimately, the additional amounts of explained variance were not statistically significant. The coefficients representing the effects of the individual implementation measures were also not statistically significant. When doing this same analysis with the principal responses, the increases in the amount of variance in value-added obtained from adding the implementation measures was again not statistically significant.

Because many of the coaching implementation measures were inter-correlated, which makes it hard to estimate the importance of any one measure, a second set of analyses was done by combining the implementation measures into composites. The results of these analyses also failed to show a statistically significant relationship between implementation indicators and value-added, in any of the various models we estimated using either teacher or principal responses.

As a final step, we used the composite implementation indicators derived from both the teacher and principal responses in one model. For two of the value-added outcomes, the elementary average and the 2 year elementary average, adding the implementation indicators did not result in a statistically significant increase in the variance explained. When working with the grade 3-4

value-added, adding the two indicators did produce a statistically significant increase in the variance explained, and the teacher-based indicator had a statistically significant coefficient. However, the coefficient was negative, implying that better implementation was associated with lower value-added.