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VIRTUAL SCHOOL LITERACY COACHES IN FLORIDA: A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY AND TIME INVESTED IN LITERACY COACHING ACTIVITIES

Thania J. Oller

Southeastern University - Lakeland

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VIRTUAL SCHOOL LITERACY COACHES IN FLORIDA:
A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY AND
TIME INVESTED IN LITERACY COACHING ACTIVITIES

By

THANIA J. OLLER

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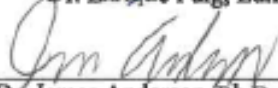
Dissertation Approved:


Dr. Susan Stanley, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair


Dr. Thomas Gelfery, Ph.D., Methodologist


Dr. Janet Deck, Ed. D., Methodologist


Dr. Enrique Puig, Ed.D., Committee Member


Dr. James Anderson, Ph.D., Dean, Doctor of Education

DEDICATION

Throughout this doctoral journey, I have looked upon this scripture to take courage “and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14, King James Version). This scripture speaks to me about God’s design. The Lord knows the end from the beginning. Nothing in this journey has been a surprise to Him. He designed this path for me, and it has been my responsibility to be accountable for that calling.

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Finally, here at the end, because you are so important, to the literacy coaches who became friends. Amanda Griner, Meghan Flores, and Briann Peterson, you are true to “you are a friend and a confidant.” Thank you for picking up my pieces, patching me back together, and boosting me up. Thank you for believing in me, for seeing the best in me when I cannot see it.

ABSTRACT

The focus of this research was to investigate the perceptions of efficacy and time invested in literacy coaching activities of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches. The study followed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design which included quantitative and qualitative data. The responses of eight Florida Virtual School literacy coaches to an online survey were used to investigate how virtual literacy coaches invest their time and the perceived area of expertise. The researcher delved into five quantitative research questions. For the qualitative part of the study, the responses of four virtual literacy coaches to five interview questions were used to identify common themes regarding the perceptions of efficacy and success in virtual literacy coaching. The findings of the study were compared to the findings of previous studies of literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in Florida. The conclusions showed that virtual literacy coaches perceive themselves as experts and invest most of their time in literacy coaching activities that include coaching and coaching conversations with teachers. Implications for practice and further research into the role of virtual literacy coaches were made.

Keywords: literacy, literacy coach, virtual school, virtual literacy coach, virtual literacy coaching, literacy coaching efficacy, mixed methods, Florida Virtual School

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I. INTRODUCTION

Instructional coaching is the art and craft of assisting teachers in improving the quality of their instructional practice to improve student learning. In general, literacy coaching refers to the instructional coaching that focuses on the job-embedded professional development of teachers in the areas of reading and writing with the goal of improving student learning. A literacy coach is an instructional coach whose training and expertise allows for the enhancement of instructional practice in the areas of literacy acquisition.

To succeed in the coaching role, literacy coaches must meet the qualifications, skills, knowledge, and experiences outlined in the International Reading Association's (2010) position statement. The absence of these competencies creates difficulty for the literacy coaches to adequately support the practice of teachers (International Reading Association, 2010). The engagement of qualified professionals to fill the position of literacy coach is important for the professional growth of teachers.

Although the process of literacy coaching is similar in elementary and secondary schools, the roles and scope of the work of literacy coaches in these school levels differ (Ippolito & Lieberman, 2012). For the past decade, in the state of Florida, research has focused on coaching experiences at the elementary and secondary level (Boulware, 2006; Bowman, 2011; Zugelder, 2012). Research related to the educational backgrounds, instructional experiences, and coaching activities of the literacy coaches have not been conducted in the virtual school setting.

Florida Virtual School is the result of a pioneering grant legislated in 1997 through the Florida State Legislature. This initiative “helped pave the way for Florida to become the first statewide Internet-based public high school” (Findley, 2009, p. 45). What began as a pilot project of an Internet-based high school has become the largest virtual school in America. Florida Virtual School offers virtual school opportunities for K-12 students in the state of Florida, in other states, and countries (Mackey & Horn, 2009). The successes and challenges of Florida Virtual School “must be examined to improve the implementation of future instruction and curriculum design” (Findley, 2009, p. 45). The magnitude of the instructional work that Florida Virtual School provides makes studying the practice of its literacy coaches relevant to the development of the profession.

Background of the Study

Literacy coaching can be traced back to Bean’s (2015) description regarding the appearance of the reading specialist as a form of instructional support in schools. Historically, skilled literacy educators have been part of education since the 1930s, but it was in the 1960s when selected reading teachers were called to take on a resource role to support literacy instruction (May, 2010). Through the 1990s, there was a gradual change which allowed the literacy resource teacher to become a literacy coach (Hall, 2011).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001-2002 advocated for literacy coaches to be engaged in the implementation of research-based practices in the instruction of literacy. (International Literacy Association, 2015). As a result, starting in 2002, the Florida K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan opened the door for literacy coaches to become an integral part of the schools (Florida Department of Education, 2018). The No Child Left Behind Act launched the *Reading First* and *Just Read, Florida!* initiatives which focused on providing students with

the resources necessary for literacy success. This movement “changed the face of reading instruction and emphasized the need for qualified” literacy coaches (Dean, Dyal, Carpenter Bowden, & Austin, 2012, p. 75).

Approved yearly, the Florida K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan delineates the model for districts to implement reading instruction in the schools. This plan encourages school districts to allocate the needed funding for the employment of literacy coaches in the schools with the highest need based on assessment data (Zugelder, 2012). The plan also outlines the “criteria for supporting and on-going professional development along with criteria for additional activities, requirements for reading coaches, and qualifications” (Zugelder, 2012, p. 2) for employing literacy coaches.

The Florida Department of Education recommends that literacy coaches have the state’s reading endorsement. The endorsement consists of the completion of six professional courses that allow for an add-on to the teacher certification. To obtain a reading endorsement, the teacher must meet the competencies delineated by the state in 2011. A master’s degree is not required, although preferred, for the position of literacy coach. In addition, the Florida Department of Education has also developed seven training modules known as the Literacy Coach Academy to assist in the professional development of middle school reading coaches. The completion of these training modules is recommended, but not required (Florida Department of Education, 2018).

As literacy coaches have become more common in the K-12 school setting, there has been an increase in the research of the professional practice. Research has noted key elements in the role of literacy coaches, which include job-embedded professional development and learning and leadership (International Literacy Association, 2015; Toll, 2014). Researchers have stated

that communication and empathy, planning and organizing, and trustworthiness in collaboration are among the skills needed for literacy coaches to be successful (Toll, 2014). The International Literacy Association (2015) expects literacy coaches to have the “knowledge, understanding, skills, and dispositions” (p. 9) necessary to be effective in their roles. According to Sturtevant (2012), “coaches must have or develop a very strong knowledge base in literacy theories and appropriate reading strategies in order to serve as models and curriculum leaders” (p. 17).

To avoid confusion in the role and expectations of literacy coaches, the International Literacy Association (formerly known as the International Reading Association) (2015) developed an explanation of terms to describe the literacy professionals involved in the school setting. The document classifies literacy professionals into three groups: reading/literacy specialists, literacy coaches, and literacy coordinators/supervisors. Each of the roles involves particular tasks, “some of which are obtained through formal education, on-the-job-mentoring, and/or experience” (Toll, 2014, p. 7).

The literacy coach is described as the one who improves “classroom instruction by supporting teacher learning” (International Literacy Association, 2015, p. 7). The literacy coach is actively engaged in professional development, on-the-job training, and support of teachers at the school level. Additionally, Toll (2014) presented five categories of knowledge that literacy coaches should have. These five areas are “adult learning theory; effective coaching processes; reading and writing processes; literacy assessment, and effective instructional strategies” (Toll, 2014, p. 30).

Literacy coaches are important to the professional growth of teachers. Literacy coaches increase teachers’ understanding of how to teach reading skills and on how to differentiate instruction. These professionals are also important in moving teachers from novice to expert

(Bean & Isler, 2008; Sturtevant, 2012; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). Research has shown that teachers who have benefitted from the support of literacy coaches reported “increased levels of student engagement and improved teaching” (Bean & Isler, 2008, p. 3). Additional research has shown evidence regarding “the power of coaching” (Bean & Isler, 2008, p. 3). Literacy coaching improves teacher collaboration, provides diverse supports and scaffolding for teachers, and improves the teachers’ instructional craft.

Recent research in K-12 Florida schools looked into the activities in which literacy coaches were involved in and how they spend their time (Boulware, 2006; Bowman, 2011; Zugelder, 2012). Literacy coaches reported responsibilities that included coach-teacher conferences, student assessment, coaching, data analysis, professional development, planning, knowledge building, lesson modeling, the gathering of materials, meetings, data reporting, and other duties.

Research concerning Florida school-based literacy coaches also studied the academic and background experiences of the professionals in this role (Boulware, 2006; Bowman, 2011; Zugelder, 2012). The academic background and experiences self-reported by the literacy coaches were diverse. Boulware (2006) described literacy coaches as “an experienced group in the field of education” with “rich training experiences” (p. 58).

Florida Virtual School literacy coaches have yet to be studied. With one of the lowest teacher turnover rates (3%) in the nation, Florida Virtual School is an instructional leader (Findley, 2009). How the literacy coach’s role in this setting is different from that of brick-and-mortar school-based coach is important to understanding the success of Florida Virtual School teachers.

Problem Statement

According to current literature, the “role of the literacy coach is highly complex” (May, 2010, p. 29). Hasbrouck and Denton (2007) determined that “coaching is quickly becoming a popular model in schools for providing job-embedded, individualized, and sustained professional development of teachers” (p. 1). May (2010) discussed how “the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches vary across educational settings” and how studies which focus on the practices of literacy coaches is needful for “informing the evolving literacy coach position” (p. 30).

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the specific aspects of literacy coaching in the virtual school setting. Aspects studied included (a) the academic background and professional experiences of virtual school literacy coaches, and (b) the time virtual school literacy coaches spend in specific coaching activities.

Significance of the Study

Although considered a new trend in the virtual school setting, as part of the Florida K-12 Comprehensive-Research-Based Reading Plan, just like any other state of Florida public school, Florida Virtual School literacy coaches have been part of the literacy coaching scene since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Research in this area adds to the growing literature regarding the practice of virtual literacy coaches in K-12 public schools to instruction and student learning. The results of the study provide an understanding regarding the value, effectiveness, and relevance of the literacy coach’s role. Research in this area is timely, as the availability of virtual school opportunities has increased for students, teachers, and instructional coaches. “Though the effects of coaching are varied, coaching can positively impact teachers’ practice” (Hathaway, Martin, & Marz, 2016, p. 231). Through the study of the practice of

virtual school literacy coaching, applications have been made regarding the vitality of the profession, and its relevance to the teaching practice.

Overview of Methodology

Methodology

The study followed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design which included quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed-methods sequential explanatory design consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Each of the approaches are described in this section. The study is descriptive, nonexperimental by design. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was chosen in order to “build on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods” (Gay, Mills, & Airisian, 2012, p. 483). This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher chose a QUAN-qual model and collected the quantitative data first and weighted it more heavily than the qualitative data (Gay et al., 2012). The data collected in the quantitative survey determined the questions asked in the second part of the study.

The researcher in this study has worked as a literacy coach at Florida Virtual School for over a year and a half. The researcher knows the participants in the study. The researcher’s experiences at Florida Virtual School and the practice of virtual literacy coaches offered additional insights that may have been unavailable if an outside researcher had conducted the research (Blythe, Wükes, Jackson, & Halcomb, 2013; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The research conducted by Blythe et al. (2013) reported that participants in a study are more likely to respond to questions honestly with an internal researcher.

The quantitative part of the study relied on the implementation of survey methodology which compared the activities of the current Florida Virtual School literacy coaches to those of

literacy coaches in traditional school settings (see Appendix B). The inferences drawn from this data provided information regarding the background, experiences, and coaching activities of virtual school literacy coaches. Descriptive statistics were used to measure the time invested by coaches in the 13 activity domains of the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) system (Florida Department of Education, 2011).

Participants in the study were limited to eight practicing Florida Virtual School literacy coaches. The expectation of 100% of the selected target population completing the online survey was met. Survey participants completed a survey sent through the SurveyMonkey platform. Authorization was gathered by the researcher from Zugelder (2012) to modify the Florida elementary school reading coach survey for use in this research (see Appendix A). Zugelder's survey was originally developed to gather information regarding the coaching activities of coaches in particular state of Florida elementary school districts (see Appendix C). This study extends Zugelder's research to investigate virtual school coaches. The survey instrument collected time-on-activity data, as well as open-ended responses. The limited accessibility to pragmatic studies related to the practice of literacy coaches was key to conducting this research.

The qualitative part study relied on face-to-face interviews which were conducted through the Blackboard Collaborate interface portal. The participants of the online survey were invited, via email, to participate in an interview session (see Appendix F and Appendix G). The purpose of this method of research was to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and trends of virtual literacy coaches in their viewpoints regarding literacy coaching success and efficacy. Participants who agreed to be interviewed scheduled an appointment with the researcher for a virtual interview.

Quantitative Research Questions

The research questions focused on the analysis of (a) the academic background and professional experiences of virtual school literacy coaches, and (b) the time virtual school literacy coaches invest in specific coaching activities. The following questions were addressed in the study:

1. To what degree do Florida Virtual School literacy coaches perceive themselves as attaining “Expert” status?
2. Considering instructional skills associated with literacy coaching, which instructional skill is perceived to be manifested at the highest level of expertise?
3. Considering the frequency of time invested in specific literacy coaching activities, to which activity do Florida Virtual School literacy coaches devote the greatest frequency of time?
4. Of the instructional skills associated with literacy coaching, which represents the most robust correlate of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches’ overall perceived expertise?
5. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the time invested by Florida Virtual School literacy coaches and the time invested by literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida?

Qualitative Research Questions

The research questions for the qualitative piece of the study focused on the areas of background experiences, perceived success, evidence of expertise, and allocation of time. The following descriptive questions were addressed in the study:

1. How do virtual school literacy coaches perceive expertise?
2. How do virtual school literacy coaches invest their coaching time?

Hypotheses

Null hypothesis (H_0^1). The distribution of data by expertise level of participant will not manifest at a statistically significant level.

Alternative hypothesis 1 (H_A^2). The distribution of data by expertise level of participant instructional skills associated with the literacy coaching process will not manifest at a statistically significant level.

Alternative hypothesis 2 (H_A^3). Considering the frequency of time investment in specified literacy coaching activities, no single activity that Florida Virtual School literacy coaches devote time to will be manifested at a statistically significant level.

Alternative hypothesis 3 (H_A^4). Of the instructional skills associated with literacy coaching, none represent robust, statistically significant correlates of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches overall perceived expertise.

Alternative hypothesis 4 (H_A^5). There is not a statistically significant relationship between the time invested by Florida Virtual School coaches and the time invested by literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida.

Analyses

Preliminary Quantitative Analysis

Before addressing the formally stated research questions, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis of the collected data. Specifically, the researcher conducted evaluations of missing data, internal reliability of participant response, and essential demographic information.

Analysis by Quantitative Research Question

Research Question 1 was addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. For this question, the researcher used the one sample chi-square test to assess the statistical significance of the distribution of participant expertise level.

Research Question 2 was addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. For this question, a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used to assess the normality of the distribution of participant-perceived expertise percentages.

Research Question 3 was predictive in nature, comprising several independent predictor variables. As such, the multiple linear regression test statistic was used to evaluate the predictive robustness of independent variables in the model. The predictive effect size was evaluated using the following formula: $R^2/1-R^2$. Values of .35 or greater were considered large predictive effect sizes.

Research Questions 4 and 5 were addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The chi square goodness of fit (GOF) test was used to assess the statistical significance of difference in time spent by Florida Virtual Schools coaches and Florida literacy coaches in traditional K-12 school.

Analysis by Qualitative Research Questions

Before addressing the formally stated research questions, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis of the collected data. The researcher transcribed the participants' responses. Each transcript was sent to the corresponding interviewee. Interviewees had an opportunity to correct and to make additions or deletions to the information. Once the interview period concluded, the researcher analyzed the data for similarities and differences. Themes were determined by selecting key words and phrases from the interviews. (See Appendix H).

Participant confidentiality was kept by creating participant profiles which assigned each respondent a participant reference number (such as Literacy Coach 1) to ensure anonymity.

Limitations

The research assumptions considered that virtual school literacy coaches knew the time they invested on diverse literacy coaching activities. Assumptions took into account the knowledge that a literacy coach's academic and professional background provides regarding the activities and manner in which literacy coaches spend their time. Another assumption was that virtual literacy coaches would complete the survey with fidelity and reliability.

Limitations found in the research included the small number of coaches practicing in Florida Virtual School. Since the study was limited to the state of Florida, only literacy coaches currently active in Florida Virtual School participated in the study. The study was also limited to self-reported data. This study could be limited by the turnover of literacy coaches and the addition or reduction of literacy coaches after the online survey was completed.

Generalizations were limited to the sample itself. Since the data was collected at one point in time, the study did not consider changes that may occur over time. Since the data was collected from Florida Virtual School literacy coaches, it is not representative of all K-12 virtual schools.

Definition of Key Terms

Literacy Coach

The literature often uses the terms "literacy coach" and "reading coach" interchangeably to describe the instructional coach whose primary purpose is that of providing school-based support and job-embedded professional development to teachers in the area of literacy (Moxley

& Taylor, 2006). For this research, the researcher used the term “literacy coach” to describe this school-based professional.

Summary

The study of the perceptions of efficacy and time invested in literacy coaching activities by virtual school coaches in the state of Florida is essential to the understanding of the practice of virtual literacy coaches. Virtual literacy coaches have a unique work environment which impacts the manner of work and the ability to work and support teachers daily. This study sheds light on the occupation of virtual school coaches and allows a comparison between the practice of literacy coaches in a virtual school and that of literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Specialized literacy professionals are the heartbeat of a successful literacy program in K-12 schools. The essential expertise that specialized professionals provide in the areas of literacy is influential in the success of students, teachers, and the school as a whole. Careful study of the impact of the roles and the manner of work of specialized literacy professionals is imperative for understanding the relationships between their expertise and student achievement, teacher growth, and school-based and district-wide literacy success. A study conducted in 2015 with over 2,500 participants showed the need for research regarding the specific activities of each of the roles of specialized literacy professionals (Bean et al., 2015), their expertise, their job descriptions, and the expectations that school administrators place on them.

The International Literacy Association (formerly known as the International Reading Association) categorized specialized literacy professionals into three distinct roles. These three roles are literacy specialists, literacy coaches, and literacy coordinators (International Literacy Association, 2015). As important members of the school community, specialized literacy professionals serve in the capacity of “building leaders in literacy instruction” as they “support the goal of improving student achievement” (Toll, 2014, p. 11). However, each one of these roles has specific tasks and responsibilities that make the impact of each in the school setting different.

Jay and Strong (2008) researched the nature of literacy coaching in America's schools. As part of their findings, the researchers explained the difference between the work of a literacy coach and a literacy specialist. The researchers delineated the tasks of each by explaining that for the literacy coach, “the direct recipient of services is the teacher; for the [literacy] specialist, the direct recipient of services is the student” (Jay & Strong, 2008, p. 7). Identifying the roles of these two literacy professionals is essential for understanding the manner in which each one impacts the work of teachers and students at school each day.

Roles in Literacy

Literacy Specialists

Literacy specialists work with students who need intervention in the area of literacy. The work literacy specialists perform with students involves direct instruction that is relevant to the proper placement of students with reading difficulties. Literacy specialists also provide support for curriculum development and implementation. They plan, teach, and evaluate instruction for students who show difficulty acquiring literacy skills. At times, the literacy specialists also work as interventionists who provide additional literacy support for students from that which is available in the classroom (Bean et al., 2015).

The instruction of literacy specialists is centered on student growth and tailored to support the needs of struggling students. Although the International Literacy Association (2015) described this role mainly as an instructional one, in some cases literacy specialists may have some basic coaching responsibilities, “such as modeling lessons, problem-solving with teachers, or facilitating group discussions” (p. 7). Educators interested in becoming a literacy specialist can enroll in higher education courses, leading to a degree as a specialist in reading and literacy (Bean, 2015; Bean et al., 2015).

Literacy Coaches

Literacy coaches have a different role than literacy specialists in that literacy coaches support teacher learning and professional development. They also facilitate collaboration among teachers which impacts students, classrooms, grade levels, scholastic departments, and school-wide literacy. Coskie, Robinson, Riddle Buly, and Egawa (2005) described literacy coaches as professionals who engage in providing teacher support, developing content knowledge in literacy, developing skill in literacy teaching, and foster a professional learning community. Additionally, literacy coaches serve as a “resource to teachers,” and they lead teachers “through observation–feedback cycles as a means of providing suggestions for changes in instructional practice” (International Literacy Association, 2015, p. 9). Essentially, literacy coaches “are ones that assist with shifting classroom teachers to understand better critical pedagogy and the need for change based on evidence” (Puig & Froelich, 2011, p. 8).

At times, the roles of literacy specialists and literacy coaches overlap. The overlapping of the roles may confuse the lay observer. For this literature review, the focus is on literacy coaches as specialized literacy professionals who support teacher growth. Literacy coaches model expertise, monitor, serve, and collaborate with teachers with the objective of improving instructional practice (Bowman, 2011).

A literacy coach’s focus is on teacher professional growth and building instructional capacity. Usually, literacy coaches are “skilled teachers who step out of their classrooms to help other teachers become more thoughtful and more effective in their instruction” (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007, p. 1). A literacy coach “partners with teachers for job-embedded professional learning that enhances teachers’ reflection on students, the curriculum, and

pedagogy for the purpose of more effective decision making” (Toll, 2014, p. 10). This description of literacy coaching denotes a positive viewpoint of the profession.

Toll (2005) suggested that the most important purpose of literacy coaching is that of encouraging teacher growth. The literacy coach is one who undertakes the process of working with teachers towards a common goal. Literacy coaching promotes “inquiry-based learning characterized by collaboration between individuals or groups of teachers and more accomplished peers” (Zugelder, 2012, p. 31). Job-embedded literacy coaching involves working to support the skills that actively matter to teachers. This kind of coaching provides the professional learning that is needed for teachers to engage in effective instructional practices.

Literacy coaching “builds on the tenet of coaching as a professional development model” (Zugelder, 2012, p. 28). Morrow (2003) described how literacy coaches are called to model “teaching strategies within classrooms, and they discuss with teachers issues of concern and successful experiences” (p. 6). Additionally, literacy coaches observe teachers’ practice and provide reflective feedback.

A literacy coach’s primary goal is to support the “professional learning of teachers so that they may be better able to increase student learning in literacy” (Puig & Froelich, 2011, p. 104). A literacy coach’s expertise positions the role as that of the lead learner in the school setting and plays an “important role in realizing the literacy vision of a school through its actual implementation” (Shanklin, 2006, p. 3). Thus the role of a literacy coach is supportive and non-evaluative (International Literacy Association, 2015; Puig & Froelich, 2011; Shanklin, 2006).

As master teachers and lead learners, literacy coaches “play a key role in developing ongoing support for literacy instruction and an opportunity for teachers to reflect on and discuss their instruction” (Zugelder, 2012, p. 29). Effective literacy coaching “involves professional,

ongoing classroom modeling, supportive critiques of practice, and specific observations” (Poglinco et al., 2003, p. 6). As a job-embedded form of support, literacy coaching embeds professional growth and learning that provides sustainable opportunities that impact instructional practices. Thus, literacy coaching is an adaptable, versatile, and appropriate form of school-based support.

Literacy coaches “create an environment through rapport building and professional development where teachers are willing to try new approaches” (Zugelder, 2012, p. 29). Lyons and Pinnell (2001) recognized that by promoting active participation from teachers, literacy coaches can create a safe environment that uses their expertise to “construct new knowledge, and introduces new concepts in the context in order to engage teachers in professional development” (Zugelder, 2012, p. 29). Literacy coaches provide the in-house professional development that enhances instructional practice and curricular applications. The goal is the development and improvement of instructional craft (Knight & Cornett, 2009).

Building personal relationships with teachers is a key element in literacy coaching. Effective collegial relationships allow literacy coaches to “interact with teachers about the very important work of school improvement” (Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2013, p. 10). Literacy coaches work to “establish trust, open lines of communication, and cultivate an atmosphere of collegial collaboration and problem-solving with their teachers” (Casey, 2006, p. 5). Relationship building activities are important for the success of literacy coaches and the teachers and staff they impact throughout each school year (Knight & Cornett, 2009; Lowenhaupt et al., 2013). A coach’s work is “inextricably connected to the concept of a team” (Jay & Strong, 2008, p. 3).

Literacy Coordinators

Another opportunity available for literacy professionals is that of literacy coordinator. Literacy coordinators serve in district-level positions that undertake the process of developing, leading, and collaborating with educational groups to lead a district's literacy program. In many cases, literacy coordinators evaluate programs, facilitate district-wide professional development and training, and choose literacy resources and materials. They also visit schools to monitor the correct usage of programs, ascertain the adequate implementation of state and nation-wide initiatives, and monitor district-wide literacy data (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011).

A study by Bean et al. (2015) concluded that the "roles of specialized literacy professionals are complex and require individuals serving in those roles have multiple skills, knowledge, and dispositions" (p. 20). The research also found that there were significant distinctions in the daily tasks and activities of literacy specialists and literacy coaches. Nevertheless, they share the responsibility of literacy success in schools. The researchers recommended that professionals in each of the roles receive adequate training, mentoring opportunities, and in-depth experiences to be successful in the role. On the job training was reported as an integral component of successful literacy coaching.

Literacy Leadership Team

All of these specialized literacy professional roles are an important element of an effective literacy leadership team both at the school-based and district level. Each level of expertise brings a different viewpoint that allows the literacy leadership team to have a tapestry of ideas as it pursues the efficacy of literacy programs. According to the literature, all of these literacy professionals work together toward improving student achievement and teacher growth across schools and districts (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011).

A literacy leadership team establishes a literacy vision for a school. Its members develop the plan for the professional development opportunities that match the school's literacy vision; its goals and needs. The team members meet regularly to provide a voice to the multiple stakeholders which allow for the creation of structures that provide a cohesive purpose to the literacy curriculum. The team also studies relevant student and school data to make data-centered decisions that affect teaching practices and student achievement. Literacy coaches are important members of this collaborative group. They are often responsible for providing relevant information and ensuring that the decisions made by the team transfer into instructional practices (Froelich & Puig, 2010; Frost, Buhle, & Blachowicz, 2009).

Ogle (2007) suggested ideal conditions for growing strong literacy leadership teams. The suggestions came from the protocols published by the International Literacy Association (International Reading Association, 2000). This document formulated a guide for policy-making and improving literacy practices. Although each literacy leadership team reflects the characteristics of the individual school, successful teams perform the same responsibilities. According to research, literacy leadership teams diagnose a school's reading culture and climate to assess the shared attitudes towards literacy, select the instructional tools, and initiate positive change (Ogle, 2007).

As important members of the literacy leadership team, literacy coaches initiate shared discussions and study, they bring the teachers together to work on a common vision, engaged in identifying priorities, and share best practices. Froelich and Puig (2010) explained the importance of the role of literacy coaches and how they should be lead learners. Their leadership and literacy guidance is important for the literacy leadership team members to understand a school's ethnography. The literacy coach is the one who understands and speaks the common

language of the school and serves as a bridge between the instructional staff and the administration. The personalized knowledge and expertise that literacy coaches possess regarding students, teachers, and school teams adds a wealth of important ideas to the literacy leadership team. A literacy coach's experiences allow the literacy leadership team to support the learning and growth of students (Froelich & Puig, 2010).

Qualifications of Literacy Coaches

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 was pivotal in transforming the school environment as *Reading First* schools were required to provide their teachers with ongoing, job-embedded professional development and support. Schools across the nation rushed to fill vacancies with experienced teachers, and, in some cases, literacy specialists were asked to step in as literacy coaches. States and professional associations sought to assist schools in the hiring of highly qualified professionals by suggesting guidelines to ensure candidates with extensive knowledge of "literacy processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction" (Bean et al., 2015, p. 3) filled the openings.

Initially, the expectation was for literacy coaches to have classroom experience, as well as leadership and coaching skills, and possess a reading specialist certificate. Candidates fulfilling these qualifications were considered the gold standard for literacy coaching (Frost & Bean, 2006). However, in a rush to fill the vacancies, professionals were hired into the role while there still was limited evidence as to the qualifications needed to perform the role effectively. Numerous studies followed the initiative of 2002 in an attempt to understand the roles of literacy coaches in schools (Bean et al., 2015; Frost & Bean, 2006; Ippolito & Lieberman, 2012).

Understanding that the professional background of literacy coaches is essential for success in the field, in 2004 the International Literacy Association (formerly known as the International Reading Association) presented a position statement titled “The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States”. This document defined literacy coaching and explained the governmental initiatives that allowed for literacy coaching to become widespread in K-12 schools across America. The position statement (International Reading Association, 2010) also described the work literacy coaches were expected to do in schools, from the formal to the informal.

In 2010, the International Literacy Association revised its position statement. This revised document clarified the differences between literacy specialists and literacy coaches. Most importantly, the document described five requirements towards qualifying teaching professionals as literacy coaches. These five requirements are:

1. Primarily, literacy coaches should have successful teaching experiences in the areas of literacy. Literacy coaches should have taught the educational level of the teachers they coach. Ideally, the teaching experience also documents positive results in the academic achievement of the students taught.
2. Literacy coaches must be subject-matter experts in the areas of literacy instruction, including process and acquisition, assessment techniques, and instructional practice.
3. Literacy coaches should have expertise in supporting teacher growth and professional development.
4. Literacy coaches should be able to facilitate adult learning through conferences and presentations. Skills in leading and facilitating professional learning communities are

essential. Literacy coaches should actively engage in professional development themselves.

5. Finally, literacy coaches must have the significant technical skills necessary to perform coaching tasks, engage in collegial relationships, and in building trusting relationships with teachers. (International Reading Association, 2010).

The International Literacy Association recommended that “only teachers who meet these five criteria” act as literacy coaches (International Reading Association, 2010, p. 4). The 2015 position statement “The Multiple Roles of School-Based Specialized Literacy Professionals” did not change any of the previous requirements. Instead, it brought to light the expectations for the training and education of literacy coaches.

Following the recommendations of the International Literacy Association, Dole, Liang, Watkins, and Wiggins (2006) researched the roles and qualifications of literacy coaches across America. The results of 48 states surveyed showed that there were four main components when employing literacy coaches. These four components are graduate-level coursework, exit exams, teaching experience, and reading practicum. However, not all states required literacy coaches to have experience in all components, but, instead, would accept a combination of these. The one component required in each state studied was graduate-level coursework in reading. The researchers explained that, although the numbers and type of courses varied by state, most led to a state-issued reading endorsement or certificate. Some states required a graduate degree, preferably in reading, for professionals to become literacy coaches. The research also demonstrated that most states expected a “two- to five-year teaching experience pre-requisite to becoming” (Dole et al., 2006, p. 195) a literacy coach. The requirement of exit exams and reading practicums was not evident in most states studied.

Research conducted by Deussen et al. (2007) of 185 literacy coaches found that 38% of these professionals had “advanced training in literacy (a reading certification or a masters’ degree in reading)” (p. 10). Nevertheless, the graduate education of half of the literacy coach population studied was in an area other than literacy. About 22% of the literacy coaches only held a bachelor’s degree. Most literacy coaches tended to move into the position at the school they taught (Deussen et al., 2007).

In 2010, Bright and Hensley researched the roles of literacy coaches in 11 states and found that, even though literacy coaches reported vast teaching experience and many possessed graduate degrees, there were significant variations in their literacy training. Most literacy coaches surveyed reported advanced degrees outside of the area of literacy. Literacy coaches reported learning how to function as coaches as they performed the role (Bright & Hensley, 2010). The results of the report matched those previously presented by Ippolito (2009).

However, in their study, Bean et al. (2015) reported that 53% of literacy coaches had earned a degree in literacy. The study found that rather than requiring literacy coaches to have reading specialist degrees, the school districts were providing literacy-based professional development for training literacy coaches. The researchers recommended a professional development continuum to build the capacity of candidates interested in literacy coaching roles based on the recommendations of the International Literacy Association. Bean et al. (2015) also provided strong evidence regarding the need for on-the-job training, mentoring, networking, and collegiality.

Standards for Literacy Coaches

In 2018, the International Literacy Association published their revised *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals*, which set the criteria for developing and evaluating

programs for literacy professionals. The purpose of these standards is to provide guidance, a shared vision, and a common language with the goal of assisting the development of high-quality literacy coaches (International Literacy Association, 2018). The standards provide a framework for all areas of literacy, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visual representation.

The focus of the standards is on the development of high-level skills that are critical for the success and effective practice of specialized literacy professionals. The International Literacy Association created standards for literacy specialists, literacy coaches, and literacy coordinators. The criteria for each professional are distinct. There are seven standards for the development of effective literacy coaches. These seven standards are:

1. Foundational knowledge which looks at the preparation of coaches in the “major theories, concepts, research, and practice” (International Literacy Association, 2018, p. 10).
2. Curriculum and instruction which expects literacy coaches to have the capacity of implementing a curriculum that aligns with the instructional standards and can be differentiated to meet the needs of each student.
3. Assessment and evaluation which recognizes that literacy professionals must have the tools necessary to evaluate literacy instruction.
4. Diversity and equity which values the principles of respect towards all components of a democratic society.
5. Learners and the literacy environment which acknowledges that literacy is continually changing and encourages positive learning climates that pay “consideration of both physical components and nonphysical components” and promote safe spaces for

“collaborative learning, positive social interactions, and challenging and engaging learning experiences” (International Literacy Association, 2018, p. 17).

6. Professional learning and leadership which commits to the development of lifelong learners and leaders. It expects literacy coaches to provide adequate professional development, to lead reflection and change, and to focus on growth.
7. Practicum/clinical experience which values the expertise of peers, on the job-embedded training and support. This standard involves ongoing learning and reflection on practice. (International Literacy Association, 2018).

Each standard requires evidence to support its applications in practice. These standards are “intended to strengthen the field by providing a well-organized, comprehensive and specific set of performance criteria to guide literacy professionals” (International Literacy Association, 2018, p. 7). The use of these standards by districts and higher education agencies in the education and training of literacy coaches would allow for literacy coaches to develop the skills necessary to perform their roles effectively. The adequate preparation of literacy coaches and other specialized literacy professionals is essential to adequate literacy leadership in schools (Sharp, Piper, & Raymond, 2018).

The Practice of Literacy Coaches

In 2006, the Advisory Board of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse suggested six characteristics of effective literacy coaching (Shanklin, 2006). These six points described literacy coaches as professionals who:

1. Engage in collaborative conversations with teachers at all levels of experience and knowledge.

2. Enable the development of a school-based literacy vision that communicates the views of the administration and the school district.
3. Utilize data to enhance the learning of students and teachers.
4. Facilitate on-going professional development that is job-embedded with the purpose of increasing teacher capacity.
5. Participate in a cycle of classroom observations that allow for knowledge building.
6. Operate from a supportive role rather than an evaluative one. (Shanklin, 2006).

Jay and Strong (2008) found that literacy coaching is labeled in different ways, according to the undertaking the literacy coach is involved in. These six terms are those of peer, technical, team, collegial, cognitive, and challenge. In each of these roles, the literacy coach is involved in different activities.

A peer coach is a master teacher who individually supports a less-skilled teacher. In this framework, the literacy coach models teaching and instruction, demonstrates the teaching of lessons, and provides adequate feedback. As a technical coach, the literacy coach comes in as an expert in skill, technique, or curriculum that engages with an individual teacher or a team of teachers. A team coach assists a group of teachers in planning and engages in co-teaching activities. The collegial coach leads a team in the professional development and professional learning communities. As a cognitive coach, the literacy coach observes and confers with the teacher to attain set goals that assist a teacher in enhancing the instructional practice. As a challenge coach, a literacy coach's role provides direction and works to solve specific curriculum issues. As a skilled instructional coach, the literacy coach operates in all these areas at different times (Shanklin, 2006).

Mraz, Salas, Mercado, and Dikolta (2016) described literacy coaches as content experts, promoters of reflective instructions, professional development facilitators, and builders of a schoolwide learning community. These researchers noted that literacy coaching is multifaceted and has “long-lasting influence on teacher practice” (Mraz et al., 2016, p. 27). Thus, the researchers found that literacy coaches needed to engage in master teacher and formative observations of classroom teachers, hold teacher-coach conferences, and lead professional development and literacy groups. Most importantly, literacy coaches are key to sustaining teacher collaboration (Mraz et al., 2016).

In their 2007 study, Deussen et al. utilized the way literacy coaches reported their coaching time to categorize the practice of literacy coaches. The researchers defined the categories as data-oriented coaches, student-oriented coaches, teacher-oriented coaches, and managerial coaches. The study found that literacy coaches spent about 28% of their time in coaching activities that involved one-on-one coaching and group coaching. The finding implied that coaches spent 72% of the coaching time on data and assessments, planning and providing instructional interventions, and other completing work. This data came short of the expectations of state departments of education which delineate the expectation “that coaches should spend 60–80 percent of their time working directly with teachers” (Deussen, et al., 2007, p. 10).

The researchers concluded that teacher-oriented coaches were the ones who actively worked with “teachers to develop teacher understanding of literacy development and skill in delivering instruction” (Deussen et al., 2007, p. 18). These literacy coaches were the ones who engaged with teachers in implementing the core curriculum, observed classrooms and provided feedback, conducted instructional demonstrations, provided professional development training,

facilitated teacher meetings, assisted teachers with data and instructional improvement, and acted as a resource (Deussen et al., 2007).

Puig and Froelich (2011) described coaching as a multifaceted “continuum that spans and overlaps from overt modeling to self-selected action research” that allows for the differentiation of professional learning (p. 63). This continuum of coaching is described as a “landscape of support for professional development” (p. 64). In this landscape, literacy coaches are engaged in facilitating workshops, observing lessons, co-teaching, conferring, observing, debriefing, facilitating study groups, and facilitating action research. Depending on the needs of teachers, the effective literacy coach fluctuates from one form of coaching to the other. The forms of coaching “usually do overlap, depending on the coach’s experiences, the teacher’s experiences, and ultimately the students’ experiences” (p. 79).

Knight (2017) described three approaches that literacy coaches used when working with teachers. Literacy coaches must select the appropriate approach to engage in conversations with teachers. These three approaches are facilitative, dialogical, and directive. In the facilitative approach, the coach is not the expert, rather the coach allows the teacher to come up with their solutions to work on teacher-focused goals. The dialogical approach involves a conversation where the literacy coach shares expertise and works through a thought process together with the teacher to reach a student-focused goal. In the directive approach, the literacy coach’s expertise guides the coaching session to reach a strategy focused goal.

With the many approaches to literacy coaching found in the current literature, one can see why the assumptions and expectations of the work of literacy coaches vary according to location and leadership style. “Different models of literacy coaching reflect different beliefs, values, and perspectives about teachers, teaching, and teacher change” (Buly, Coskie, Robinson, & Egawa,

2006, p. 27). Literacy coaches may work in the manner that they find most beneficial and best showcases their expertise. Thus, the job description of coaches is important to ensure coaching efficacy (Dole & Donaldson, 2006; Dole et al., 2006).

School Leadership and the Literacy Coach

With the increase in literacy coaches in the schools, “one can assume educational administrators view reading coaches as being a necessary part of a school’s faculty” (Dean et al., 2012, p. 77). Research has shown that the literacy coach and the principal must be partners as they work towards the goal of increased student achievement. There needs to be a “strong and viable collaboration” (Hall & Simeral, 2008, p. 21) between the two. In a partnership, the principal and the literacy coach have defined roles. Clear job descriptions for literacy coaches are important for the coach-principal partnership to be effective. When the principal does not understand the role and responsibilities of the literacy coach it leads “to an environment that makes it difficult for the reading coach to work effectively with teachers” (Dean et al., 2012, p. 78).

Studies of the roles of literacy coaches have noted that “literacy coaches are often hired without a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities or specific goals” (Calo et al., 2015, p. 1). Hall and Simeral (2008) studied the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach and the principal. They determined that there are common, distinct and overlapping responsibilities: developing relationships with stakeholders, observing teachers, analyzing assessment data, providing resources, mentoring and challenging teachers, and strengthening the school community. The distinct responsibilities for the literacy coach are being a peer instead of a supervisor, providing constructive feedback, and modeling lessons. For the principal, the distinct responsibilities include that of administrator and supervisor, providing summative

feedback, and evaluating lessons. Overlapping responsibilities for the literacy coach and the principal are servant leadership, collaborative goal setting, providing professional development, counseling, and motivating teachers (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

The key component of the role of a literacy coach is working with teachers to improve instructional practice. Some of the tasks associated with this role include “model of instructional strategies, observing teachers during classroom instruction, and providing feedback to teachers” (Massey, 2012, p. 66). Other tasks may include data analysis. The effectiveness of the coach does rely on open communication and trust relationships. Research has found that “effective instructional coaching requires a collegial relationship built around trust and mutual respect” (Buly et al., 2006, p. 24).

Researchers have stated that “leadership by a principal profoundly affects what is accomplished at a school” (Kral, 2012, p. 1). The relationship between the principal and the literacy coach is essential for the success of the program. The actions of the principal “can greatly impact both the relationship the reading coach has with the faculty and the effectiveness” (Dean et al., 2012, p. 79) of the literacy coach in working with teachers to promote instructional change. Research has shown that the literacy coach “is only as effective as the leadership will allow him/her to be” (Dean et al., 2012, p. 80).

To have successful literacy coaching programs at the school level, the principal must build a positive relationship with the literacy coach. This relationship “is a key factor that determines the efficacy of the coaching” (Kral, 2012, p. 2). In essence, “if coaching is really going to succeed in a school, it is the principal who is going to make it happen” (Kral, 2012, p. 3). The principal’s leadership is a major component in results-driven coaching. The principal should help staff members in understanding the role of the coach. The principal should also

support the coach's role and encourage the stakeholders to "build positive relationships, and encourage teachers, both new and veteran, to open their doors to the coach" (Calo et al., 2015, p. 10). Principals must be highly involved in the literacy momentum at the school by partnering with the literacy coach. The connection between the two roles is vital to the success of the literacy program at the school.

Ippolito (2009) reflected on ways in which the principal and the literacy coach can build strong connections. In the conclusions of the study, Ippolito (2009) discussed ways to make the partnership strong. First, the principal and the coach need to meet frequently to discuss observations, reflect on current literacy practices at the school, set goals, and make needed adjustments for achieving expected results. The principal should also attend coaching sessions to demonstrate a willingness to learn, as well as support the coach's role. Constant communication is vital among these roles. For the partnerships to be productive, the principal and the coach "must find ways to talk to one another about their shared vision for literacy instruction and professional development" (Ippolito, 2009, p. 5).

The principal and the literacy coach are partners in the endeavor of promoting academic achievement in literacy for the students and the use of research-based instructional practices by the teachers. The two are teammates. As such, they work together for the good of the entire school. They "share the ultimate goal of effecting positive change" (Hall & Simeral, 2008, p. 25). To this end, both need to work on building strong relationships, increasing teacher capacity, and strengthening teams and professional learning communities (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

The principal and the coach, as partners, "have the potential to share their expertise for setting school direction; providing necessary professional development; changing the school structure to promote literacy success for diverse learners" (Massey, 2012, p. 68). They also are

responsible for “managing the literacy program through the effective use of data, routines, and instructional approaches” (Massey, 2012, p. 68). Principals should be seen “modeling continuous learning, by walking the talk and by spreading enthusiasm” (Kral, 2012, p. 2). Principals particularly benefit from the expertise of a literacy coach “when the principal’s background is not in the field of literacy” (Kral, 2012, p. 2). By supporting the role of the coach, principals can build the trust of the teachers.

The way principals perceive the role of the coach is “important because they play a pivotal role in actualizing the role of the reading coach in ways that will support the advancement of teachers and, in turn, the quality of educational opportunities offered to students” (Dean et al., 2012, p. 80). As more coaches become a part of the school leadership, emphasis on the appropriate relationship between the principal and the coach is important for success. As the leader of the school, the principal must rely on the strengths of the literacy coach. The literacy coach should be able to showcase the areas of expertise to promote learning. Adequate support from the principal is necessary for success, growth, and change (Hall & Simeral, 2008; Ippolito, 2009; Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012).

The Digital Age and the Literacy Coach

The literacy coach, as an expert in the literacy field, has expertise in the areas of phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing. Traditionally, these skills are considered the fundamental basics of literacy instruction. Starting in kindergarten, the level of mastery required from students in these areas progresses for the student to become an apt reader and writer by the end of high school. For centuries, these fundamentals were taught by teachers in varied brick-and-mortar classroom settings. Most information came from books, and teachers delivered instruction while the

students listened and participated in rigid classes. With the advent of technological devices and their increased availability in school and virtual settings, now students, teachers, and the literacy coaches must navigate a new way of literacy instruction. This digital age has brought with it technology tools that seek to support and complement literacy instruction. Technology has become a part of literacy. Thus, literacy coaching also encompasses the development of “proficiency and fluency in the tools of technology” (Affinito, 2018, p. 9).

According to experts in the field of literacy acquisition, “these technological advances have created high hopes” (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012, p. 140) for literacy instruction as many experts trust these new tools to improve the way in which literacy education takes place. In recent years, researchers have studied technology tools in literacy instruction. Some of these studies suggest that there is no significant difference in achievement between students who received traditional instruction and those who had access to technology tools. The studies determined that this may be due to the way teachers and literacy coaches implement the technology programs and the lack of training and ability for teachers to use the tools appropriately. Thus, literacy coaches must take on the role of providing professional development in this area. It is suggested that “coaching models in literacy instruction more broadly improve literacy outcomes for students” when appropriately utilized by the instructional team (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012, p. 151).

In an instructional setting that requires mastery of 21st-century skills from both teachers and students, the literacy coach’s role serves to “support professionalism, minimize a sense of isolation, help develop content knowledge” (Moran, 2009, p. 1) among other responsibilities. Moran also suggests that part of the literacy coach’s responsibility is to learn technological literacy to “better prepare teachers and students to navigate successfully in our connected world”

(Moran, 2009, p. 1). Literacy coaches should engage with the technological tools to mentor teachers appropriately, which involves taking risks. Literacy coaches must reach outside of their comfort zones to be able to advise teachers properly and be proactive in their desire to understand the technology. As models of lifelong learning, literacy coaches should master the skills they seek to teach to the teachers they coach.

Experts encourage literacy coaches to spend time in classrooms where the teachers and the students are involved with technology tools. The active engagement of these participants with the technology tools makes for a great learning springboard for all stakeholders. Literacy coaches must become knowledgeable of the technology the teachers and students are using. Authenticity in the alignment of literacy coaching and the technology in use is dependent on an apprenticeship model where literacy coaches model the literacy applications of the technology for teachers and students. Literacy coaches must be involved in practicing with the tools to foster engagement and best practices (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012; Moran, 2009).

In virtual schools and the virtual literacy coaching practice, it is essential for educators to be “able to effectively use technology as they design, implement, and assess learning experiences” (Shettel & Bower, 2013, p. 4) in the classroom. Presently, technology in the classroom is no longer a novelty, but a necessity. In virtual schooling, technology is the conduit for the teaching and learning process. It is essential for educators to understand that “the learning that must come first, and that the tools are just one possible way to achieve the learning” (Shettel & Bower, 2013, p. 7). The technology is not what drives instruction, but rather aids in supporting the literacy instruction that takes place.

For the effectiveness of literacy coaching in a virtual setting, responsiveness to the needs of teachers and students, as well as cultivating a shared sense of participatory literacy, is

important (Affinito, 2018). Virtual literacy coaches should “observe student engagement and response to instruction, collaborate to teach lessons and try new instructional techniques with teachers, and ensure that the support is varied and relevant for each” (Affinito, 2018, p. 7) of the teachers supported. Since literacy coaches grow in expertise alongside the teachers they support, literacy coaches in a virtual setting must be as collaborative in their practice as literacy coaches in traditional learning settings (Affinito, 2018; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Virtual instructional settings call for increased flexibility in the work of literacy coaches. In many cases, literacy coaches in this setting support teachers one-on-one and through small groups rather than in a school-wide manner. The individual support for the teachers is varied to meet needs and increase capacity. Affinito (2018) described this form of literacy coaching as mindful and intentional practice. As literacy coaches act as models and facilitators of a personalized learning process for the teachers, they must engage in “modeling minilessons, conferences, and share time; and giving teachers time to explore, ask questions, and collaborate with others” (Affinito, 2018, p. 8).

Virtually, literacy coaches must ensure that their practice aligns with the best pedagogical practices, plan training and instructional activities according to the needs of the teachers, ask appropriate questions regarding the impact of the training and coaching on the teachers’ instructional practice, be supportive, celebrate and share continued learning (Affinito, 2018; Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012). Literacy coaches must be creative in finding ways to support reading, writing, and the use of virtual technologies in a manner that is relevant, authentic and engaging. A virtual platform provides a space where literacy coaches can engage in digital conversations without time and space restraints. In this platform, collaborative work can occur anytime and through varied mechanisms. The platform provides opportunities where the literacy

coaches can create on-demand resources and tutorials that allow the teachers are in control of their learning (Affinito, 2018).

Digital and virtual tools also change the experience of literacy leadership teams as the network of team members can be expanded to include experts beyond the local instructional framework. This ability is transformational for engagement and resource sharing. The literacy leadership team can collaborate and share databases rather than be dependent on paper-based documentation and localized meetings. Meetings can take place with members in distinct virtual spaces at common times chosen by the teams. Virtual spaces allow for the sharing of digital technologies with little effort, which makes meeting times efficient and purpose-driven (Affinito, 2018; Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012; Moran, 2009; Shettel & Bower, 2013).

Literacy Coaches in Florida

Boulware (2006), Bowman (2011), and Zugelder (2012) researched K-12 literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida. The combined studies of these researchers reported on the background, experiences, and the time the state of Florida literacy coaches spent on coaching activities. The research found that most of the state of Florida's literacy coaches held a master's degree (72% in high school positions and 55% in elementary positions). Also, most literacy coaches came into their roles after receiving district training (74% in high school positions and 77% in elementary positions) for the role and completing the state's reading endorsement (68% in high school positions and 58% in elementary positions).

For high school literacy coaches, Boulware (2006) and Bowman (2011) researched the time devoted by coaches to coaching activities. The researchers found that literacy coaches spent 28% of the time on coaching activities. The professional development of teachers took

10% of the literacy coaches' time. Coaches spent the remaining 62% of the time on other activities including meetings, data analysis, data reporting, planning, and knowledge building.

The study of elementary literacy coaches yielded similar results to that of high school literacy coaches. Zugelder (2012) found that literacy coaches spent 27% of the time on coaching activities (reported as coaching, coach-teacher conferences, and modeling of lessons).

Engagement in professional development took 12% of the literacy coaches' time. Activities such as student assessment and other duties (not identified) accounted for 20% of the coaches' time.

Other activities included data analysis and reporting, planning, and knowledge building. The research did not find a statistically significant difference between the backgrounds and the way literacy coaches spend their time across the state of Florida.

Florida Center for Reading Research

The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) is a multidisciplinary research center at Florida State University that was established in 2002 by the Governor's office in conjunction with the Florida State Legislature (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2018a). The entity conducts research in the areas of reading, reading growth, reading assessment, and reading instruction. FCRR has researched the time spent by the state of Florida literacy coaches in coaching activities.

Each month, literacy coaches across the state of Florida report the time spent in coaching activities to the FCRR through the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN). This web-based management system records and reports student data from the Florida Assessments for Reading Instruction (FAIR). Since 2015, some school districts may opt to use in-house programs to record the time invested by literacy coaches in literacy coaching activities, this data is then reported to the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR). These thirteen domains are

whole faculty professional development, small group professional development, planning, modeling lessons, coaching, coach-teacher conferences, student assessment, data reporting, data analysis, meetings, knowledge-building, managing reading materials, and other (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2018b). The definition for each of these domains is found on Chapter IV.

Research conducted by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) and RAND Education showed a spike in the number of literacy coaches from 318 in 2002, the year the literacy coach initiative began, to 2441 in 2010, the last year when FCRR presented data on literacy coaching. The FCRR presented data obtained through the RAND study (Miller, 2010) on literacy coaching in the state of Florida at the 2010 Florida Reading Association Conference. The report showed that, although the recommended time for literacy coaches to spend on coaching activities was 75%, the state average came at 39%. The coaching activities defined were small group professional development, modeling lessons, coach-teacher conferences, coaching, and data analysis.

The Florida Department of Education does provide free on-demand, online training to literacy coaches and teachers interested in becoming coaches. There are seven professional development modules. The modules include training in building knowledge of adult learners, building knowledge of standards, coaching content area teachers, building expertise in coaching, coaching conversations, principal/coach relationships, and data review. The completion of the training modules does not lead to certification as a literacy coach (Florida Department of Education, 2011).

Florida Virtual School

Founded in 1997 as Florida High School, Florida Virtual School (FLVS) has evolved to become one of the largest public school districts in the state of Florida. FLVS is “comprised of

five schools serving all Florida school districts” (Florida Virtual School, 2017a, p. 4) and is “recognized as the leader in content development and delivery for online courses in grades 6-12 in Florida” (Florida Virtual School, 2017a, p. 11). FLVS offers courses to both full-time, students enrolled in credits to obtain their full academic year, and part-time students, the students who take as few or as many credits as they need per semester. Since 1997, 3.6 million semester hours have been completed by FLVS full-time and Flex (part-time) students. In the 2016-2017 school year, FLVS offered over 150 courses and served 206,041 students who completed 471,332 semester hours. The data showed a growth of 6% in semester completions from the previous year (Florida Virtual School, 2017a)

Statewide data showed that “FLVS students outperformed overall state averages by 9.4 percent in comparing the 15 advanced placement (AP) courses offered by FLVS and scored above those state qualifying AP averages in 12 of the 15 courses” (Florida Virtual School, 2017a, p. 6). FLVS students also outperformed the overall national average for all 15 AP courses. For the End-of-Course exams, which are the state exams students need to pass to receive subject credit hours, FLVS students “outperformed state averages on the Algebra 1, Biology 1, Civics, Geometry, and U.S. History” (Florida Virtual School, 2017a, p. 6).

Florida Virtual School’s goals include that of collaborating in leading research to advance online learning opportunities, strengthening core educational programs, expanding national and global partnerships, and developing a platform for learning solutions for all stakeholders (Florida Virtual School, 2017a). Mackey and Horn (2009) found that “FLVS is structured around the idea that every student is unique, and that learning must be flexible, engaging, and dynamic” (p. 42). To meet the needs of each student, FLVS teachers “are certified in the subject they teach and possess a valid Florida teaching certificate” (Mackey & Horn, 2009, p. 43). New teachers

are supported by certified support personnel, which includes curriculum specialists, professional development specialists, and literacy coaches. FLVS leadership is interested in the “research areas of interest for professional development involve examination of teacher training and support or finding techniques that work best with” students (Mackey & Horn, 2009, p. 43).

Florida Virtual School believes that the success of students and virtual education is the responsibility of teachers. Thus, it is “critical to provide the accountability and support that is needed to ensure outstanding instruction” (Florida Virtual School, 2013, p. 9). Instructional leaders utilize student progress and school progress data to “tailor training and mentoring opportunities for the teachers” (Florida Virtual School, 2013, p. 9). The instructional leaders at Florida Virtual School ensure that the teachers receive “the training and ongoing coaching they need to keep their skill levels in check” (Florida Virtual School, 2013, p. 5). Florida Virtual School focuses on encouraging an environment where teachers are focused on improvement, are motivated, and excited to work with students each day. Florida Virtual School’s “staff is required to consistently find ways to prove the validity of online education” (Florida Virtual School, 2013, p. 6) and focuses on hiring teachers who are committed to the success of students.

The Florida Virtual School elementary school department offers creative and engaging courses by incorporating best practices for online learning of students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The curriculum includes courses in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and electives, including art, physical education, world languages, and technology. Students may also choose to join a diverse variety of clubs and activities and participate in meetups and field trips throughout the school year. Elementary school opportunities are available to students in two options (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

The Florida Virtual School middle school department is available for students seeking to complete individual and homeschool courses, which are available year-round, as well as to those students who opt to take courses full-time. Course opportunities include core subject areas, world languages, electives, and advanced courses. AdvancED fully accredits FLVS middle school courses. AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that conducts rigorous, on-site reviews of a variety of educational institutions and systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential (Florida Virtual School, 2018b). FLVS offers over 20 middle school clubs and organized student activities. Middle school opportunities are available to students in two options (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

The Florida Virtual School high school department is available for students seeking to complete individual and homeschool courses, which are available year-round, as well as to those students who opt to take courses full-time. The full-time high school program leads to a diploma. Course opportunities include core subject areas approved by The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which is a member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes. Other courses include world languages, electives, honors, and advanced placement (AP). AdvancED fully accredits FLVS high school courses. There are over 20 high school clubs and organized student activities. High school opportunities are available to students in two options (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

Each of the K-12 virtual schools at Florida Virtual School have a Flex (flexible calendar) and a Full-Time (structured calendar) option. Each of these opportunities has different descriptors that allow students flexibility and options for enrollment. These options demonstrate the versatility of Florida Virtual School to meet the needs of students across the state. (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

The Flex school option is an option for families with students who desire to follow a flexible schedule. The student may work year-round in as few or as many courses as they like. The student may engage in courses that are additional to their traditional school courses, or be registered as homeschoolers. The student enrolled in this academic option participate in teacher-led directed instruction (class time). In this type of enrollment, the student transcripts are managed by a traditional school or the homeschool parent. Depending on the enrollment, the student may or may not participate in state testing. Students enrolled in the Flex option do not receive a state issued high school diploma. (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

The Full-Time school option operates as a full-time online public elementary school. The academic calendar follows a fixed school year schedule from August to June and requires daily attendance to class. The students enroll in all of their academic courses at Florida Virtual School and participate in teacher-led directed instruction (class time). In this type of enrollment, the student transcripts are managed by Florida Virtual School. The student participates in all state-mandated testing for all course enrollments. (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

Florida Virtual School also has a global branch. This digital learning opportunity is available to schools, districts, students and families outside the state of Florida, including students worldwide. FLVS Global School charges tuition and does not operate as a public school. Courses are available to students in grades six to twelve. Credits completed by students at the FLVS Global School generally transfer back to the student's local school (Florida Virtual School, 2018b).

Florida Virtual School Literacy Plan

In literacy, FLVS “is committed to assisting all school personnel in the appropriate identification, placement, and interventions for struggling students” (Mackey & Horn, 2009, p.

43). FLVS's literacy team is composed of one district literacy coach, one literacy coordinator, and eight literacy coaches who offer support to teachers in all Flex, full-time, and global schoolhouses. There are one elementary, two middle, and five high school literacy coaches. The literacy team also offers schoolwide and small-group professional development, including the five courses that lead to reading endorsement. The literacy team leads FLVS's literacy leadership team. The literacy leadership team holds monthly meetings to share best practices and research-based literacy strategies (Florida Virtual School, 2017b).

Florida Virtual School's literacy coaches must hold a bachelor's degree with a concentration in education, including a reading certification or endorsement. A minimum of three years of teaching experience is required. FLVS requires literacy coaches who have "strong interpersonal skills, leadership, communication skills, motivational skills, in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, instructional reading strategies, online design theories, and learning style theories" (Florida Virtual School, 2017b). Evidence of the work of literacy coaches is self-reported by coaches monthly.

The effectiveness of a literacy coach's support and professional development is established through monthly walk-throughs by instructional leaders and the literacy coordinator. A modified Danielson Framework that utilizes student achievement measurement (SAM) data is also used to measure a coach's effectiveness (Florida Virtual School, 2018a). The Danielson Framework is a research-based set of components of instruction, aligned to teaching standards, and grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching (Florida Virtual School, 2017a). All positions are subject to a yearly performance-based contract (Findley, 2009).

The performance of FLVS literacy coaches is measured using the FLVS Student Services Personnel Evaluation Rubric. This document evaluates student services personnel in five

domains. These five domains are 1) data-based decision making and evaluation of practices; 2) instruction/intervention planning and design; 3) instruction/intervention delivery and facilitation; 4) learning environment; and 5) professional learning, responsibility, and ethical practice (Florida Virtual School, 2018c). Currently, there is not an evaluation tool designed to measure the performance of instructional or literacy coaches.

Each Florida Virtual School schoolhouse has an assigned literacy coach that works with the instructional leaders (principals), teachers, and members of the specialized teams (English for students of other languages – ESOL, Specialized education – ESE, Guidance, and Response to Intervention - RtI) to foster the academic achievement of the students. The literacy coach “provides professional development and coaching on research-based literacy strategies to increase student achievement in the students’ areas of need” (Florida Virtual School, 2018, p. 4). Literacy coaches and administrators meet monthly to discuss areas of need that allow them to make decisions regarding interventions and best practices to support students and teachers. The literacy coaches provide one-on-one support, small group, and school-wide professional development. They also assist with lesson planning and model lessons.

Presently, Florida Virtual School employs eight literacy coaches. One literacy coach supports ten elementary schoolhouses that serve eight FLVS Flex and 2 FLVS full-time (FT) elementary schoolhouses. The elementary schoolhouses offer students courses in all content areas, including elective courses.

One literacy coach supports all content areas for the five full-time (FT) middle school and offers professional development for the full-time (FT) high school teachers. A third coach supports all five full-time (FT) high school schoolhouses. All other literacy coaches support all instructional area coaches, with each coach averaging between five and seven schoolhouses. The

number of teachers and students supported by each literacy coach varies (Florida Virtual School, 2018a). (See Table 1).

Table 1

<i>FLVS Literacy Coaches Schoolhouse Support 2018</i>		
Coach	Number	Subject area
1	10	Flex elementary and full-time elementary
2	5	Full-time (FT) middle school & high school professional development
3	5	Full time (FT) high school, ELL schoolwide coordinator
4	6	Advance Math, Algebra 1 & 2, Geometry
5	7	World Languages (and labs): French, Chinese & Spanish, Peer Counseling, Parenting, Finance, MAWI electives
6	5	English, Physics, Chemistry
7	6	Flex middle school English, Social Studies, Math, HOPE, PE electives
8	6	Economics, Anatomy and Physiology, Biology, World History, Government, Psychology, American History, Technology

(Florida Virtual School, 2018a).

Each schoolhouse is managed by an instructional leader (IL). Schoolhouses are divided into groups of teachers referred to as pods. Each schoolhouse's pod has the support of a lead teacher who has previous FLVS teaching experience in the content area and has been ranked as a highly effective teacher. The lead teacher serves as a liaison, provides instructional support, and facilitates and coordinates training for the pods' teachers. The lead teacher also engages in parent and student contacts, monitors day-to-day data for the pod teachers, and provides modeling of lessons. Lead teachers are considered part of the instructional staff, not administrators (Florida Virtual School, 2018a).

The literacy coaches are led by a district literacy coordinator who does not directly support schoolhouses. The district literacy coordinator, along with the director for staff development, ensure that appropriate professional development activities take place throughout the school district. Together, they design a district master in-service professional development plan. The district literacy coordinator meets monthly with the school-based literacy coaches to

provide ongoing training and support. Each literacy coach meets monthly or bi-weekly with the district literacy coordinator to discuss day-to-day school-based support and needs (Florida Virtual School, 2018a).

Florida Virtual School's literacy coaches facilitate the literacy leadership team. The team is composed of literacy coaches and teachers from all schoolhouses/subject areas. Throughout the school year, the literacy leadership team works to strategize ways to incorporate research-based literacy strategies into the virtual learning environment successfully. The schoolhouse representatives and literacy coaches present the ideas, tools, and strategies to the schoolhouse teachers and assist with implementation (Florida Virtual School, 2018a).

Florida Virtual School literacy coaches report the time invested on literacy coaching activities monthly using an in-house survey document. This survey document is hosted through Google Drive. The virtual literacy coaches are required to document the time invested in each of the thirteen domains determined by the Florida Center for Reading Research's (FCCR) Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN). Upon submission of the report, the data is documented by Florida Virtual School's district literacy coordinator. This data is utilized as a tool to measure the literacy coaches' effectiveness and performance and is also used to guide the instructional decision-making process (Florida Virtual School, 2017a).

Summary

The presented study of the literature provided information on the essential differences between specialized literacy professionals, as well as an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches in traditional and virtual K-12 instructional settings. The art and craft of literacy coaches are essential for the professional growth of teachers, and it directly

impacts the instruction of students. A role that made its way to the state of Florida schools as a governmental mandate has grown in scope and practice to be an essential component of literacy leadership.

A literacy coach engages in professional learning by providing coaching activities that promote the engagement of teachers in researched-based literacy practices. As a goal, the work of a literacy coach ripples into the classrooms to enrich the content and day-to-day instructional experiences (Zugelder, 2012). Thus, appropriate hiring procedures for these literacy professionals are essential for the adequate support of a school's literacy vision (Knight, 2006). The International Literacy Association has provided key requirements and standards for literacy coaches that describe the components of an effective literacy coach and how their time should be invested (International Literacy Association, 2018). Experts agree that adequate training and experience is necessary for literacy coaches to succeed in their role. Literacy coaches need clear expectations, professional learning expertise, education, and opportunities, as well as a clear vision of the school's literacy goal (Boulware, 2006; Bowman, 2011; Zugelder, 2012).

Florida Virtual School's literacy coaches have a unique perspective on coaching. Housed at times miles away from the teachers they support, these literacy coaches engage in the use of digital and technology tools to provide appropriate instructional coaching. Serving teachers across the state in diverse content areas, the roles and responsibilities of Florida Virtual School's literacy coaches expand to meet the expectations of literacy coaching from Florida Department of Education (2005) as well as those that are exclusive to the virtual instructional setting.

Just like literacy coaches in traditional instructional settings, monthly, Florida Virtual School's literacy coaches are required to submit a log regarding how they invest their coaching time. This information, recorded by the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN),

focuses on 13 coaching domains. The expectation from the Florida Department of Education is that literacy coaches engage 50% of their time working directly with teachers (Florida Department of Education, 2011). Appropriate use of a literacy coach's time directly impacts teacher growth and success.

The investment of time by literacy coaches varies by location and has a direct relationship to how the administration views the work of the literacy coach (Deussen et al., 2007). Instructional settings that have a system in place for and an understanding of the work of literacy coaches that is supported by the district and the school administration have literacy coaches who are more apt to have time to work with the professional development of teachers and model research-based literacy practices (Boulware, 2006; Bowman, 2011; Deussen et al., 2007; Zugelder, 2012).

Chapter II analyzed the existing research and literature appropriate to the subject of this study. The next chapter, Chapter III, describes the methodology for this research study. Chapter III describes the population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis contained in the study.

III. METHODOLOGY

Chapter III of the study features a description of the procedures for data collection and analysis of study data from literacy coaches working at Florida Virtual School that were used for the study. The study followed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design which included quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher chose a QUAN-qual model where the quantitative data collected through a survey became the basis for the qualitative part of the study. The qualitative data were collected to give a better understanding of the phenomenon regarding the experiences of virtual school literacy coaches. The qualitative data were collected using a narrative approach to document the presence of patterns using the language and concepts of the participants (Gay et al., 2012).

Included are a description of the study's sample, research questions, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and the analysis employed for each of the respective research questions posed. The focus of the survey was to elicit the perceptions of efficacy and time invested in literacy coaching activities by virtual school literacy coaches. The study also featured a comparison between the time invested in literacy coaching activities by virtual school literacy coaches and traditional K-12 school literacy coaches. Prior studies by Boulware (2007), Bowman (2011), and Zugelder (2012) focused on researching the work of literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida. Missing from these prior studies was attention to the work of virtual literacy coaches.

Description of the Methodology

Design

The study followed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design which included quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher chose a QUAN-qual model. A survey research methodology was utilized to address the study's quantitative research problem and subsequent research questions and hypotheses.

The qualitative data were collected to give a better understanding of the phenomenon regarding the experiences of virtual school literacy coaches. The qualitative data were collected using a narrative approach to document the presence of patterns using the language and concepts of the participants (Gay et al., 2012). Participants engaged in an interview protocol which consisted of five questions.

Participants

This study provided K-12 representation of the research by focusing on virtual school literacy coaches who support teachers in K-12 virtual classrooms in the state of Florida. The sample was both convenient and purposive, including all literacy professionals working as literacy coaches at Florida Virtual School within the state of Florida at the time of the survey. The study's sample, in essence, was the population of the study comprised of eight virtual school literacy coaches.

At the time the researcher started the qualitative part of the study, the population of virtual literacy coaches had changed at Florida Virtual School. One virtual literacy coach was no longer in the position, making the population that of seven virtual literacy coaches. All seven virtual school literacy coaches were invited to participate in the qualitative interview process. A

total of four virtual school literacy coaches participated in the qualitative interview process, representing 57% of the virtual school coach population.

Instrumentation

Quantitative Instrument

Data were collected from the population using an online survey hosted on the SurveyMonkey website. The survey mirrored the survey used by Zugelder (2012) titled Florida Elementary Coach Reading Survey and was used with permission (Appendix A). Zugelder's survey was essentially replicated for the virtual school literacy coaches. However, minor adjustments were made to the online survey to account for timely information and to meet the criteria for virtual school literacy coaches.

The current study used the Virtual School Literacy Coach Survey (Appendix B), which follows a three-part organization:

- Part 1 (Literacy coach demographics, academic, and professional background): Included questions pertaining to demographical data, level of education and experience, preparation for the role of literacy coach, and overall perception of efficacy as a literacy coach.
- Part 2 (Coaching activities and time): Included questions pertaining to coaching activities and time invested in literacy coaching activities.
- Part 3 (Coaching activities and time reported to PMRN): Highlighted the 13 activity domains of the Florida Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) coach log. Virtual literacy coaches were asked to provide a percentage of time engaged in each of the domains.

The Virtual School Literacy Coach Survey was used to gather data through a web-designed format. SurveyMonkey was the Internet-based survey platform used to administer and gather data for the study. This survey platform provides a forum for survey creation, collection of responses, and analysis of data. A custom link and response reminders were provided.

All virtual school literacy coaches at Florida Virtual School were given the opportunity to participate in the Virtual School Literacy Coach Survey (Appendix B). The researcher expected and received 100% of the surveys. There was no missing or incomplete data. 100% of the survey participants responded to 100% of the questions. A number (such as Literacy Coach 1) was used to reference participants to assure anonymity.

Qualitative Instrument

Virtual literacy coaches who agreed to participate in the qualitative interview process scheduled a virtual appointment with the researcher. The interview was conducted by appointment in the researcher's virtual office. Participants were asked to respond to five questions regarding their viewpoints on virtual literacy coaching success and efficacy (Appendix G). Participants responded to 100% of the questions asked. A number (such as Literacy Coach 1) was used to reference participants to assure anonymity. The researcher expected 40% of the virtual literacy coaches to participate in the interview process. A total of four virtual school literacy coaches participated in the qualitative interview process, which represents 57% of the virtual school coach population.

Data Collection

Authorization to proceed with the study was obtained from Florida Virtual School after receiving approval from the Instructional Review Board (IRB) at the sponsoring university. Surveys were sent out electronically November 2018 after the researcher received approval from

Florida Virtual School. The survey was sent with contact information from the researcher if further instructions were needed about participation. Within ten days, all needed surveys were collected, and the online survey access link was closed.

The virtual literacy coaches who participated in the survey followed the online SurveyMonkey link to access the Virtual School Literacy Coach Survey (Appendix B). Formal consent was requested to participate in the study. SurveyMonkey maintained the data collected from the surveys, provided basic summary statistics, and allowed for eventual export of the raw data for further analysis by the researcher. At the conclusion of the data collection period, 100% of the virtual school literacy coaches who were given the opportunity to participate in the survey submitted a complete response. Data from eight surveys comprised the data set available for quantitative analysis of the research, with an univariable number (*N*).

During the first week of January 2019, an email invitation to participate in the qualitative piece of the study was sent to the seven Florida Virtual School literacy coaches. One of the initial eight virtual literacy coaches who participated in the initial quantitative study was not invited to participate in the qualitative part of the study as her role had changed. Only the seven virtual literacy coaches that remained received the invitation to participate in the qualitative part of the study.

The invitation sent requested participants to respond to the email and set an interview time within eight days of the email receipt. At the conclusion of the data collection period, 57% of the virtual school literacy coaches who were given the opportunity to participate in the survey submitted a complete response. The interviews were recorded using Blackboard Collaborate technology. The researcher transcribed the data (Appendix H). Data from four interviews

comprised the data set available for qualitative analysis of the research, with an univariable number (N).

Data Analysis

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to addressing the formally stated research questions, preliminary analyses were conducted. Specifically, evaluations of missing data, internal reliability of participant response, and essential demographic information were conducted.

Analysis by Quantitative Research Question

Research Question One was addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n), percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations represented the primary descriptive techniques used. To assess the statistical significance in research question one, a single sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding.

Research Question Two was addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n), percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations represented the primary descriptive techniques used. To assess the statistical significance in Research Question Two, a single sample t -test was conducted. The magnitude of effect (effect size) was assessed using the Cohen's d statistic test. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding.

Research Question Three was predictive in nature comprising several independent predictor variables. As such, the multiple linear regression test statistic was used to evaluate the predictive robustness of independent variables in the model. Predictive effect size (f^2) was evaluated and converted to Cohen's d for interpretive purposes.

Literacy coaching activities addressed in the analysis of Research Question Three were defined as follows:

1. Vocabulary: All word learning strategies from selecting words to teach to analysis.
2. Fluency: Strategies to increase the ability to read with speed, accuracy and proper expression to increase understanding of the text.
3. Reading Comprehension: Strategies to increase comprehension of the text.
4. Lesson Study: Collaboration to review and construct lessons with a focus on continuous improvement.
5. Book Study: Working through a professional development book with a focus on professional and instructional growth.
6. Action Research: The research conducted by literacy coaches and teachers to diagnose and find solutions to instructional problems.
7. Leadership Team: The work performed with the literacy leadership team. The focus of the work may vary depending on the school setting.
8. Walkthroughs/Feedback: Classroom visits and observations, pre- and post-observation meetings, and the feedback provided to the teacher as a result of the observation.

Research Question Four was addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The statistical significance of difference in time spent by Florida Virtual School coaches and the standards for time spent in activities was assessed using the χ^2 goodness of fit (GOF) test statistic. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding.

Research Question Five was addressed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to assess the degree of mathematical relationship and Fisher's r to z transformation to evaluate the statistical significance of the mathematical relationship between percentage of time engaged in literacy coaching activity between the study's sample of Florida Virtual Literacy Coaches, and literacy coaches serving in traditional elementary and middle schools. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding.

Following is the definition of each of the domains used by the Florida Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) in Research Question Five. The researcher defined the terms as applied to traditional elementary and middle schools and Florida Virtual School.

1. Whole Faculty Professional Development

PMRN: Providing or facilitating professional development sessions such as faculty seminars, action research, and/or study groups designated to increase the knowledge of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) for administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals.

FLVS: This type of professional development occurs through virtual meetings hosted by one or more FLVS literacy coaches including facilitating the Literacy Leadership Team and speaking at monthly schoolhouse meetings hosted by instructional leaders throughout the organization. Activities may also include

2. Small Group Professional Development

PMRN: Providing or facilitating small group professional development sessions such as faculty seminars, action research, and/or study groups designed to increase the knowledge of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) for administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals.

FLVS: This type of professional development includes facilitating and participating in professional development communities, working with groups of two or more teachers to create instructional materials using research-based practices and materials, and working with groups of teachers to discuss instructional literacy practices. The groups meet in virtual rooms.

3. Planning

PMRN: Planning, developing, and/or preparing professional development, including surveying teachers for professional development (PD) needs; preparing content for PD for teachers, parents, and others; planning a schedule of PD delivery, gathering PD materials; preparing a lesson for modeling and planning a coaching session with a teacher.

FLVS: Planning refers to the time invested by literacy coaches in designing content, planning a schedule of professional development delivery; gathering professional development materials; preparing a lesson for modeling and planning a coaching session with a teacher. Literacy coaches work independently or together from their virtual offices and communicate via phone or utilizing virtual applications or meet in virtual conference rooms. Literacy coaches may meet virtually or via phone with one or more teachers to plan for instruction.

4. Modeling Lessons

PMRN: Demonstrating lessons while teachers observe or co-teaching lessons in classrooms.

FLVS: Literacy coaches attend virtual live lessons to model research-based instructional practices. Live lessons may last between half an hour and an hour depending on the content area.

5. Coaching

PMRN: Coaching (initial conversations, observation, and reflecting conversation) teachers in classrooms which includes observing teachers, formulating feedback regarding lessons, discussing feedback with teachers, and reflecting with teachers relating to reading or content area lessons.

FLVS: Literacy coaches meet in virtual rooms or via phone conference with one or more teachers to plan instruction using research-based literacy practices to boost student achievement and engagement in activities. Literacy coaches also review lesson plans and resources. Coaching includes planning for instruction, observations of virtual live lessons and discussion-based assessments and engaging in reflective conversations. Literacy coaches provide instructional feedback and support.

6. Coach-Teacher Conferences

PMRN: Conferencing with teachers regarding lesson planning, grouping for instruction, intervention strategies, and other topics related to reading. Informally conversing with teachers in a variety of ways (phone, E-mail or face-to-face) on topics concerning reading such as fluency building, organizing literacy centers, students in need of intervention, etc.

FLVS: Literacy coaches meet in virtual rooms and via phone to discuss instructional practice applications with teachers lesson planning, provide instructional support, and assist with resources for literacy instruction.

7. Student Assessment

PMRN: Facilitating and coordinating student assessments, including scheduling the time and place for assessments, and notifying teachers of the assessment schedule.

FLVS: Facilitating and coordinating student assessments, including scheduling the time and place for assessments, and notifying teachers of the assessment schedule.

Student assessment also involves the proctoring of exams either virtually or face-to-face.

8. Data Reporting

PMRN: Entering assessment data into any data management system.

FLVS: Entering assessment data into any data management system.

9. Data Analysis

PMRN: Analyzing student data to assist teachers in informing instruction based on student needs. This includes the personal study of data reports, principal/coach 168 data sessions, and teacher/coach data sessions.

FLVS: Literacy coaches work within the literacy team, with instructional coaches, individual teachers and group of teachers to analyze data to inform practice and focus the professional development.

10. Meetings

PMRN: Attending meetings in my school, district or region regarding reading issues.

FLVS: Literacy coaches attend meetings in virtual conference rooms and face-to-face meetings throughout the year at the Virtual Learning Center (VLC), or other selected location, to discuss literacy and instructional practices.

11. Knowledge-Building

PMRN: Attending meetings in the school, district, or region regarding reading issues.

Examples include meeting with school/district administrators or coaches, school/community groups, curriculum teams, Reading Leadership Teams, School Improvement Plan Teams, etc.

FLVS: FLVS literacy coaches meet to work on their professional growth in virtual conference rooms. They also engage with cross-curricular teams to foster literacy and create schoolwide materials and resources. Knowledge-building also refers to developing the schoolwide K-12 Reading Plan.

12. Managing Reading Materials

PMRN: Preparing the budget for reading materials, reviewing and/or purchasing the materials, maintaining inventory, and delivering reading materials. Also included are duties such as gathering teacher resources and organizing leveled books for classroom libraries in collaboration with school staff.

FLVS: Preparing the budget for reading materials, reviewing and/or purchasing the materials, maintaining inventory, and delivering reading materials. Also included are duties such as gathering teacher resources, organizing, and collaboration with the school personnel.

13. Other

PMRN: Time spent on other duties assigned.

FLVS: Time spent on other duties assigned.

Analysis of Qualitative Research Questions

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher using Blackboard Collaborate technology. The researcher verified the accuracy of the transcriptions against the audio recordings. Opportunity was given to the interviewees to review the transcripts as a form of member-checking. The purpose of member-checking is to form a checks-and-balances to ensure that the material gathered from each interview is the research participants' words and thoughts instead of the subjective interpretations and perspectives of the researcher (Ivankova et al., 2006).

Significant statements and phrases from the participants' responses to the interview questions and the research questions were identified in the interviews. Meanings were formed from significant statements and sorted into themes. Then, the themes were organized into clusters and categorized.

A preliminary analysis of the interview data was conducted by the coding of specific themes by color. The researcher addressed each of the qualitative research questions as part of the coding. Conclusions derived from the research were discussed, and recommendations for future research were proposed. The results of the qualitative research study are presented in Chapter IV.

Summary

The research methodology used in this study were described in this chapter. The methodological framework was described by the included information on population, instrumentation, data collection and analysis. Results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter IV and the final summary. Implications for practice and recommendations are outlined in Chapter V.

IV. RESULTS

The purpose of using a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design study was to determine the perceptions of efficacy and time invested in literacy coaching activities by virtual school literacy coaches. Chapter IV is organized to address the findings to the research questions presented in Chapter I of the study. A total of eight Florida Virtual School literacy coaches were surveyed, which represents 100% of the total population of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches working at the time of the survey. Initially, the perceptions of efficacy and expertise of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches were analyzed. The research also delved into the coaching activities where virtual literacy coaches invested their time. Comparisons of the time invested in coaching activities by virtual literacy coaches and literacy coaches serving in traditional K-12 schools in Florida as reported in previous studies of K-12 literacy coaches in Florida were presented.

Following the quantitative part of the study, a qualitative interview protocol was designed to address the questions: How do virtual school literacy coaches perceive expertise? And how do virtual school literacy coaches invest their coaching time? The purpose on this part of the study was to obtain narratives from the participants regarding their experiences as virtual school literacy coaches. The interview process sought to identify patterns revealed by the narratives using the language and concepts of the participants (Gay et.al, 2012).

Preliminary Analyses

In advance of the formal analysis and reporting of study finding by research question posed, two specific preliminary analyses were conducted: missing data; and essential demographics. Regarding missing data, the study's data set of essential arrays was completely intact. Therefore, considerations of data imputation techniques were not necessary.

Regarding essential demographic identifier information, all study participants have served up to 10 years as a Florida Virtual School literacy coach. 62.5% virtual literacy coaches have served in this capacity for up to five years. Table 2 contains the data for length of time (experience) as a virtual literacy coach.

Table 2

Length of Time as a Literacy Coach (N = 8)

Length of Time	N	%
0 – 5 Years	5	62.5
6 – 11 Years	3	37.5

Three in four study participants (75%) possessed graduate degrees, with 62.5% identified as earning a master's degree. Half of the study participants (50%) identified themselves as having taught formally in traditional K-12 public schools for 11 years or more. Table 3 contains the data for educational level of virtual literacy coaches.

Table 3

Educational Background of Virtual Literacy Coach – Educational Degree (N = 8)

Educational Degree	N	%
Bachelor's	2	25
Master's	5	62.50
Specialist's	1	12.50

Regarding their training, 100% of participants stated that they had achieved reading endorsement certification with the state of Florida. Other forms of preparation for the role of literacy coach included college coursework (75%), district training (75%), a degree in reading (50%), online training in coaching (37.50%), school site training (50%), and independent study (62.50%). Other responses included English for Students of Other Languages (ESOL) and Gifted Endorsement. Table 4 depicts the types of preparation of virtual literacy coaches.

Table 4

Types of Preparation for Literacy Coach Role (N = 8)

Training	N	%
Reading Endorsement	8	100
College Coursework	6	75
District Training	6	75
Reading Degree	4	50
Online Training in Coaching	3	37.50
School Site Training	5	50
Independent Study	5	62.50
Other (ESOL, Gifted Endorsement)	1	12.50

Nearly 90% of study participants (87.5%) stated that they support up to 10 schools in their role as literacy coaches. Half (50%) of the participants serve six to 10 Florida Virtual School schoolhouses. Table 5 depicts the data for number of schoolhouses supported by each virtual literacy coach.

Table 5

Number of Schoolhouses Supported by the Virtual Literacy Coach (N = 8)

Number of schoolhouses	N	%
0 to 5 schoolhouses	3	37.50
6 to 10 schoolhouses	4	50
10 or more schoolhouses	1	12.50

Results by Quantitative Research Question

Five formal research questions were posed in the study to address the stated research problem. The questions posed and subsequent findings are as follows:

Quantitative Research Question 1: To what degree do Florida Virtual School Literacy Coaches perceive themselves as attaining “Expert” status? And, is the distribution of data by expertise level of participant statistically significant? Within the study’s sample, 62.5% of participants perceived their efficacy at Florida Virtual School Literacy Coaches at an “Expert” level. Using the one sample chi-square test to assess the statistical significance of the distribution of participant expertise level, the distribution was found to be non-statistically significant ($\chi^2_{(2)} = 3.25; p = .20$). Table 6 depicts the data for perception of efficacy as a virtual literacy coach.

Table 6

Perception of Efficacy as a Virtual Literacy Coach

Level	Description	N	%
Expert	Comprehensive and authoritative knowledge of literacy coaching activities.	5	62.50
Advanced	Great level of skill, can model and mentor others in literacy coaching activities.	1	12.50
Intermediate	Good level of skill or knowledge in literacy coaching activities	2	25
Novice	New or inexperienced at literacy coaching activities	0	0
Fundamental awareness	Rudimentary knowledge of literacy coaching activities.	0	0

H_A¹: The distribution of data by expertise level of participant will not be manifested at a statistically significant level. In light of the non-statistically significant finding ($p = .20$) for expertise level of study participant in research question one, the Null Hypothesis (H_A^1) for research question one was retained.

Quantitative Research Question 2: Considering instructional skills associated with the literacy coaching process, which instructional skill area was perceived to be manifested at the highest level of expertise? Is the distribution of perceived expertise data normally distributed? The instructional skill area of Reading Comprehension was perceived to be manifested at the “Expert” level by 62.5% of study participants, closely followed by Fluency at 57.1%. The instructional skill areas manifesting the lowest perceived level of participant perceived expertise were the Essay Writing (12.5%) and Essay Scoring (12.5%) areas.

Using the one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test to assess the normality of the distribution of participant perceived expertise percentages, the distribution was manifested to a relatively normal degree ($K-S = 0.14$; $p = .20$). Table 7 contains a complete summary of

participant perceived level of expertise within instructional skill categories associated with literacy coaching.

Table 7

Participant Perceived Expertise Level by Instructional Skill Area

Instructional Skill Area	Participant Perception “Expert”
Reading Comprehension	62.5%
Literature Circles	25.0%
Phonics/Word Recognition	37.5%
Fluency	57.1%
Essay Writing	12.5%
Essay Scoring	12.5%
Speaking/Listening	37.5%
Language Arts	25.0%
Vocabulary Development	50.0%
Guided Reading	50.0%
Common Core Standards	37.5%

H_A²: The distribution of data by expertise level of participant instructional skills associated with the literacy coaching process will not be manifested at a statistically significant level. In light of the non-statistically significant finding ($p = .20$) for expertise level of study participant in research question two for study participant skill level associated with the literacy coaching process, the Null Hypothesis (H_A^2) for research question two was retained.

Quantitative Research Question 3: Considering the frequency of time investment in specified literacy coaching activities, to which activity do Florida Virtual School literacy coaches devote the greatest frequency of time? The area of Reading Comprehension Teacher Conferences reflected the greatest frequency of participant-perceived devotion of time (Mean = 1.63; SD = 0.92), equating to a daily to weekly basis on average. The areas of Book Study Conferences (Mean = 3.00; SD = 1.31) and Action Research Conferences with teachers (Mean = 3.00; SD = 1.41) represented the lowest perceived frequencies of perceived devotion of time, equating to a monthly basis on average.

Using the single sample *t*-test to assess the statistical significance time frequency of devotion within respective literacy activity areas, the area of reading comprehension teacher conferences represented the only area statistically different than the universal scale value of 2.5 (an average frequency between weekly and monthly). Moreover, using the Cohen's *d* statistic for effect size evaluation, the magnitude of effect for reading comprehension conferencing with teachers is considered large ($d = .93$).

Table 8 contains a summary of participant perceived frequency of time devoted to the specific activities associated with literacy coaching. Participants in the study were able to identify how often they engage in literacy coaching activities. Frequency of engagement was categorized as occurring never, daily, weekly, monthly, or other, basis. (See Table 8).

The researcher defined the literacy coaching activities as follows:

1. Vocabulary: Includes all word learning strategies, from selecting words to teach to analysis.
2. Fluency: Includes strategies to increase the ability to read with speed, accuracy and proper expression to increase understanding of the text.

3. Reading comprehension: Includes strategies to increase comprehension of the text.
4. Lesson Study: Includes collaboration to review and construct lessons with a focus on continuous improvement.
5. Book study: Is working through a professional development book with a focus on professional and instructional growth.
6. Action Research: Involves the research conducted by literacy coaches and teachers to diagnose and find solutions to instructional problems.
7. Leadership Team: Involves the work performed with the literacy leadership team. The focus of the work may vary depending on the school setting.
8. Walkthroughs/Feedback: Involves classroom visits and observations, pre and post observation meetings, and the feedback provided to the teacher as a result of the observation.

Table 8

Statistical Significance Evaluation of Literacy Activities

Literacy Activity Area	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Vocabulary	2.25	0.71	1.00
Fluency	2.50	1.07	0.00
Reading Comprehension	1.63	0.92	2.70*
Lesson Study	2.50	1.20	0.00
Book Study	3.00	1.31	1.08
Action Research	3.00	1.41	1.00
Leadership Team	2.38	0.74	0.48
Walkthroughs/Feedback	2.00	1.20	1.18

* $p = .03$

H_A³: Considering the frequency of time investment in specified literacy coaching activities, no single activity that Florida Virtual School literacy coaches devote time to will be manifested at a statistically significant level. In light of the statistically significant finding for the activity of “reading comprehension” ($p = .03$), the Null Hypothesis (H_A^3) for research question three was rejected.

Table 9 contains a summary of the actual responses of the participants regarding time invest in literacy coaching activities. Responses suggest that virtual literacy coaches invest most of their time in the activities of reading comprehension (62.50% daily) and walkthroughs/feedback (50%).

Table 9

Time Invested by Virtual Literacy Coaches in Literacy Coaching Activities

Literacy Activity Area	<i>Never</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Other</i>
Vocabulary	0	12.50	50	37.50	0
Fluency	12.50	0	12.50	75	0
Reading Comprehension	0	62.50	12.50	25	0
Lesson Study	0	25	25	25	25
Book Study	12.50	0	0	50	37.50
Action Research	12.50	0	12.50	25	50
Leadership Team	0	12.50	37.50	50	0
Walkthroughs/Feedback	0	50	12.50	25	12.50

Quantitative Research Question 4: Of the instructional skills associated with literacy coaching, which represents the most robust correlate of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches' overall perceived expertise? Using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to assess the mathematical relationship between participant frequencies of engagement in specific areas of instruction associated with literacy coaching and their perceived level of expertise as a literacy coach, the area of classroom walkthroughs and provision of feedback to teachers represented the most robust correlate at $r = .65$ ($p = .04$). Moreover, the magnitude of associative effect between classroom walkthroughs and provision of feedback to teachers and participant-perceived level of expertise as a literacy coach is considered large ($d = 1.71$). The areas of Reading Comprehension and Fluency manifested a more liberally interpreted statistically significant mathematical relationship ($p > .10$), with concomitant large magnitudes of associative effects ($d = 1.25$ and 1.19 respectively).

Table 10 contains a complete summary of the mathematical relationship between perceived frequencies of engagement in activities associated with literacy coaching and participant perceived level of expertise as a literacy coach.

Table 10

Mathematical Relationships: Literacy Activity Areas and Expertise Level

Literacy Activity Area	<i>r</i>
Vocabulary	.28
Fluency	.51 ^t
Reading Comprehension	.53 ^t
Lesson Study	.46
Book Study	-.12
Action Research	-.11
Leadership Team	-.24
Walkthroughs/Feedback	.65*

* $p = .04$ ^t $p < .10$

H_A⁴: Of the instructional skills associated with literacy coaching, none will represent robust, statistically significant correlates of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches overall perceived expertise. In light of the statistically significant finding for the activity of Walkthroughs/Feedback ($p = .04$), the null hypothesis (H_A^4) for Research Question Four was rejected.

Quantitative Research Question 5: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the time invested by Florida Virtual School coaches and the time invested by literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida? Using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to assess the degree of mathematical relationship and Fisher's r to z transformation to evaluate the statistical significance of the mathematical relationship between percentage of time engaged in literacy coaching activity between the study's sample of Florida Virtual Literacy Coaches and literacy coaches serving in traditional

elementary and middle schools, the degree of relationship was greatest in the comparison of the study's sample and general education middle school literacy coaches ($r = .69$; $p = .009$).

Moreover, the magnitude of associative effect in the comparison is considered very large ($d = 1.91$).

Table 11 contains a summary of finding for the associative comparison between the study's sample (Florida Virtual School Literacy Coaches) and literacy coaches serving in general education elementary and middle schools.

Table 11

<i>Relationship of Study Sample and Literacy Coaches in Traditional Schools by Activities</i>		
Comparison	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>
Study Sample/Elementary School Traditional Schools	.51	1.19 ^b
Study Sample/Middle School Traditional Schools	.69**	1.91 ^a
* $p = .009$ ^a Very Large Effect Size ($d \geq 1.30$) ^b Large Effect Size ($d \geq .80$)		

H_A⁵: There is not a statistically significant relationship between the time invested by Florida Virtual School coaches and the time invested by literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida. In light of the statistically significant finding for the comparison in Research Question Five ($p = .009$), the null hypothesis (H_A^5) for research question five was rejected. (See Table 12.)

Table 12

Relationship of Study Sample and Literacy Coaches in Traditional Schools by Activities

Comparison	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>
Study Sample/Elementary Traditional Schools	.51	1.19 ^b
Study Sample/Middle School Traditional Schools	.69**	1.91 ^a

* $p = .009$ ^a Very Large Effect Size ($d \geq 1.30$) ^b Large Effect Size ($d \geq .80$)

Table 13 contains a summary of the trend data for time invested in literacy coaching activities by the Florida Virtual School literacy coaches.

Table 13

Percentage on time invested in literacy activities as measured by PMRN

Coaching Activity	Mean score
Whole Faculty Professional Development	10%
Small Group Professional Development	10%
Planning	10%
Modeling Lessons	5%
Coaching	20%
Coach-Teacher Conferences	20%
Student Assessment	0%
Data Reporting	0%
Data Analysis	5%
Meetings	10%
Knowledge-Building	10%
Managing Reading Materials	0%
Other	0%

Results by Qualitative Research Question

After the quantitative part of the study, the virtual literacy coaches were given the opportunity to participate in the qualitative interview process. Fifty-seven percent of the population invited to participate in the interview process met with the researcher to complete an interview. The participants' responses were coded to identify common themes. Transcripts of the interviews are found on Appendix H.

Qualitative Interview Question 1: Why did you decide to become a literacy coach?

All the participants reported entering the field of literacy coaching in a traditional school setting prior to moving into a virtual literacy coaching role. All interviewees worked at least five years as reading teachers in traditional school settings before becoming literacy coaches. All participants reported completing state of Florida reading endorsement before becoming literacy coaches. The participants' responses noted the common theme of deciding to become literacy coaches because they desired to support teachers in their instructional practice and students become better readers.

Literacy Coach 1 – “I wanted to be able to educate others about teaching students that process of reading and writing.”

Literacy Coach 2 – [literacy coaching would] “allow me the time to work with teachers where then I could then share that knowledge and passing it on.”

Literacy Coach 3 – “I got to the point where my planning period before and after school were spent in teacher's classrooms, you know, just like working with them or helping them put up a board, or you know, going over test results with them. So, I was kind of already doing it, so I figured, why not make a full-time job out of it?”

Literacy Coach 4 – “I wanted to be a literacy coach because I felt like I had the knowledge of reading, especially having taught young readers up unto middle school and I always felt that I was a life-long learner and wanted to learn brand-new things to help kids want to read and love to read and learn how to read; and become better readers.”

Qualitative Interview Question 2: What has contributed to your success as a virtual literacy coach? In this research question, the researcher looked at common themes regarding the characteristics virtual school literacy coaches identified as key to their success in the role.

The common themes identified were the concept of support from the other coaches and the teachers, and independence or creative freedom. Other themes included ability to learn, previous experience, and opportunity for collaboration.

Literacy Coach 1 – [We can] “write our own prescription and bring in our own creativity. So, I think that has added to my success. Having that creative freedom and having the support to do what we see is needed.”

Literacy Coach 2 – “I would say here at the virtual school is that there is so much support.”

Literacy Coach 3 – “I would say that what’s contributed to my success is definitely the flexibility that FLVS gives us to go into live lessons and the teachers’ openness and receptiveness of that.”

Literacy Coach 4 – “I would probably say collaboration, asking questions of other literacy coaches”.

Qualitative Interview Question 3: What has limited your success as a virtual literacy coach? The purpose of this question was to identify the common trends in the areas the virtual literacy coaches perceive as limits to their success as literacy coaches. Throughout the interviews, the coaches were quick to note that they did not perceive limits to their success, but rather they perceived challenges that allowed them to grow as literacy coaches. Common themes identified were the concepts of movement and building relationships.

Literacy Coach 1 – “I think sometimes the frequent movement in the virtual environment, and I don’t know if that is specific to FLVS or if other virtual schools have the same, you know, like with us being reassigned.”

Literacy Coach 2 – “the idea of not being quote-on-quote face-to-face with the teachers each and every day would probably be the only limit; because they don’t see me.”

Literacy Coach 3 – “So, we have had to change content areas sometimes to kind of acclimate to people leaving or, you know, just kind of restructuring within our literacy team.”

Qualitative Interview Question 4: What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach? With this question, the researcher sought to delve deeper into the perception of expertise of the virtual literacy coaches. This question was chosen to gather additional data to that which was originally analyzed after the quantitative survey. In the quantitative part of the research, 62.5% of the virtual literacy coaches identified themselves at the level of expert. This question asked the virtual literacy coaches to determine which evidence they used to measure their level of expertise. The themes identified were observational and survey data as well as feedback from instructional leaders (IL). Another area that stood out was that of the evaluations of the literacy coaches.

Literacy Coach 1 – “I use a lot of observational data” and “feedback from ILs.”

Literacy Coach 2 – “I always have the informal and formal evaluations that the ILs do. But, in addition to that, I like to send out a survey to the teachers that I work with.”

Literacy Coach 3 – “I send out a survey to teachers that I’ve coached and schoolhouses just for them to give me feedback” and “I gather feedback from my ILs.”

Literacy Coach 4 – “I would say that the evaluation rubric would be how I measure my expertise as a literacy coach. I would also say teacher feedback from sessions that I’ve done, or I’ve co-facilitated.”

Qualitative Interview Question 5: How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities? The quantitative part of this research identified the areas in which the

virtual school literacy coaches invest their time. This question delved into the data and the manner in which the virtual literacy coaches determine how to invest their time. The themes identified throughout the interviews were guidance from the instructional leader (IL) and teacher feedback.

Literacy Coach 1 – “I think my number one priority, if I get any opportunity to work one-on-one with a teacher or in a small group with a teacher, that’s what I prioritize.” And, “I certainly use the guidance of my IL.”

Literacy Coach 2 – “That teacher survey, the IL feedback, meeting with ILs, meeting with our lead teachers, and determining what the needs of maybe their pod might be.”

Literacy Coach 3 – “Whether a bunch of teachers asked about it or an IL has asked me to specifically address something, that’s definitely a place that I invest my time on.”

Literacy Coach 4 – “When full-time admin asked me to use specific things with respect to reading, those are the things that I’m also putting time in.”

Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of efficacy and time invested in literacy coaching activities by virtual school coaches. Five quantitative research questions and two qualitative research questions (addressed through an interview protocol) were posed to address the stated research problem. One hundred percent of the study participants were Florida Virtual School literacy coaches, representing the entire population of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches working at the time of the study. The data set was completely intact thereby eliminating the possibility of statistical imputation procedures being used for analytic purposes. Nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of study participants have been literacy coaches at Florida Virtual School for five years or less, and three in four study participants (75%) of the participants

identified as possessing graduate degrees. All study participants attained reading endorsement certification through the state of Florida. At least 50% of the participants identified as having served in the classroom instructional environment over 11 years. At the time of the study, 50% of the Florida Virtual School literacy coaches were serving six to 10 FLVS schoolhouses.

The perception of participants regarding their level of expertise as literacy coaches was not statistically significant. Nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of the study participants perceived their efficacy as literacy coaches at an expert level. On the survey, the term *expert* was defined as having a comprehensive and authoritative knowledge of literacy coaching. The data were evenly distributed. Nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of the study participants perceived their expertise at the expert level in the instructional skill area of reading comprehension. The area of reading comprehension teacher conferences reflected the greatest level of frequency and a statistically significant difference.

The areas that represented the most robust correlation of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches' overall perceived expertise were the areas of classroom walkthroughs and provision of feedback to teachers. The instructional skills of reading comprehension and fluency showed a statistically significant correlation with the level of expertise of the literacy coaches. The mathematical relationships of literacy activity areas and expertise level provided evidence that the areas of book study and action research reflected the least perceived frequencies of engagement.

When compared to traditional K-12 schools, there was a very large associative effect in the comparison between Florida Virtual School literacy coaches and traditional middle school literacy coaches. Florida Virtual School literacy coaches invested most of their time each month in coaching and coach-teacher conference activities. Only 37.5% of Florida Virtual School

literacy coaches did not report time spent in (other) activities not categorized by the Florida Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN). 100% of Florida Virtual School literacy coaches reported time invested in eight of the 13 domain areas by the Florida Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN).

The qualitative part of the research identified common themes in the previous work experiences virtual literacy coaches. Other common themes were found in the perceptions of success and limitations, expertise, and how the virtual literacy coaches determine how to invest their time. The interviews revealed the impact of the instructional leaders (IL) in the perception of success and determination of how the virtual literacy coaches invest their time.

Chapter IV discussed the initial results of the research. Chapter V provides a more detailed discussion of the results along with a thorough discussion of the findings related to the study's formally posed research questions, implications for professional practice, study limitations, and recommendations for future research on the topic.

V. DISCUSSION

This chapter was organized to provide a review of the study. Presented are the statement of the problem, a review of the methodology, a summary of the results, a discussion of the results, the implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. As stated in Chapter I, this study followed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design which included quantitative and qualitative data to address the perceptions of efficacy and time.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design study was to provide an understanding of the specific aspects of literacy coaching in the virtual school setting. This study fills the gap in the research regarding virtual school literacy coaches and explores the scope of their work. Aspects studied included: (a) the academic background and professional experiences of virtual school literacy coaches, and (b) the time virtual school literacy coaches spend in specific coaching activities.

Review of the Methodology

Quantitative Research

Each participant in the study was a virtual literacy coach working at Florida Virtual School at the time of the study. One hundred percent of the targeted population (a total of eight virtual school literacy coaches) responded to the online survey sent out in November 2018. The

participating virtual school literacy coaches self-reported their time in relation to the literacy coaching activities.

Prior to the formal analysis and reporting of study finding by research question posed, two specific preliminary analyses were conducted: missing data; and essential demographics. The study's data set of essential arrays was completely intact, there was no missing data. Therefore, considerations of data imputation techniques were not necessary.

All study participants have served up to five years as a Florida Virtual School literacy coach, with 37.5% serving in this capacity for up to ten years. Three in four study participants (75%) possessed graduate degrees, with 62.5% identified as earning a master's degree. All study participants (100%) stated that they had achieved reading endorsement certification with the state of Florida. Half of the study participants (50%) identified themselves as having taught formally in traditional K-12 public schools for 11 years or more. Eighty-seven-point five percent (87.5%) of study participants stated that they support up to 10 schools in their role as literacy coaches, with half (50%) serving six to 10 Florida Virtual School schoolhouses.

In order to address the first research question, the researcher used the one sample chi-square test to assess the statistical significance of the distribution of participant expertise level. The second research question was addressed using the one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S test to assess the normality of the distribution of participant-perceived expertise percentage; the distribution was manifested to a relatively normal degree ($K-S = 0.14$; $p = .20$). To address the third research question, the researcher used the single sample t test to assess the statistical

significance time frequency of devotion within respective literacy activity areas, and Cohen's d statistic was used for effect size evaluation. Research Question 4 was addressed using the product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to assess the mathematical relationship between participant frequencies of engagement in specific areas of instruction associated with literacy coaching and their perceived level of expertise as a literacy coach. The fifth research question was addressed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to assess the degree of mathematical relationship between percentage of time engaged in literacy coaching activity between the study's sample of Florida Virtual Literacy Coaches, and literacy coaches serving in traditional K-12 schools in the state of Florida.

Qualitative Research

Each participant in the study was a virtual literacy coach working at Florida Virtual School at the time of the study. At the time the invitation for the qualitative part of the study was sent, the population had changed from eight to seven virtual literacy coaches. Fifty-seven percent of the targeted population (a total of four virtual school literacy coaches) agreed to participate in the qualitative part of the study. The participating virtual school literacy coaches met virtually with the researcher using Blackboard Collaborate technology. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and reviewed by the interviewee. The researcher coded the data according to current themes and trends in the responses. The qualitative part of the research intended to gather details regarding the perceptions of expertise, success, limitations, and investment of time from the virtual literacy coaches to support the quantitative part of the study.

Discussion of the Results

Discussion of the Quantitative Results

Comparisons across studies: Elementary, middle, high, and virtual school literacy coaches. This study investigated the relationship between time invested in literacy coaching activities and the level of perceived expertise in those areas by virtual literacy coaches. This study contributed to virtual school literacy coach research by examining and analyzing the background experiences, coaching activities, and time invested in literacy coaching activities. Perceptions about the level of expertise in literacy coaching activities and success within the coaching role were studied.

This study's foundation was the work of Boulware (2007), Bowman (2011), and Zugelder (2012) whose research delved into the practice of literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools. These studies investigated the time invested by literacy coaches in literacy coaching activities in traditional elementary, middle, and high schools in the state of Florida. This study varied from the three as it focused on virtual school literacy coaches, a previously unstudied population.

The study also varied in the size of the population studied. Boulware's (2007) sample was comprised of 25 traditional high school literacy coaches in four state of Florida school districts, which was a 69% usable response rate. Bowman's (2011) sample was comprised of 44 traditional middle school coaches in four state of Florida school districts, which was a 72% response rate. Zugelder's (2012) sample was comprised of 96 out of 212 traditional elementary school literacy coaches in Central Florida, which was a 45.2% response rate. The current study had a 100% response rate from virtual school literacy coaches which serve all state of Florida

school districts. The sample varied due to the number of literacy coaches in each of the populations studied.

Similar to previous studies, this study utilized the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network's (PMRN) 13 domains for literacy coaching activities to identify how virtual school literacy coaches invest their time. These 13 literacy coaching domains provide a context for the daily work of literacy coaches, and the 13 domains for both the virtual and traditional school settings are discussed in Chapter IV.

Since the first research involving literacy coaches in the state of Florida, the literature on the topic has expanded. Nevertheless, data indicates that continued and further research into the role of literacy coaches is necessary to further the understanding of the literacy coach's role and the impact of literacy coaching upon the teaching practice. Understanding how literacy coaches invest their time is crucial to enhancing the practice and to determine ways of assisting school administrators in selecting how to allocate the time of literacy coaches.

The expectation of the Florida Department of Education is that literacy coaches spend 50% of their time working with teachers in the activities related to literacy coaching (Zugelder, 2012). However, the data from the studies of literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools did not show that goal as being met (Boulware, 2007, Bowman, 2010, Zugelder, 2012). Nevertheless, this goal was exceeded by virtual school literacy coaches. Virtual school coaches spent 75% of their time in direct contact with teachers in the domains of whole faculty professional development, small group professional development, planning, modeling lessons, coaching, and coach-teacher conferences. In fact, 40% of the virtual literacy coaching time was found to be invested in coaching and coach-teacher conferences.

Boulware (2007), Bowman (2010, and Zugelder (2012) found that the time invested by traditional K-12 literacy coaches in the area of other activities was significant. At the time of Zugelder's (2012) study, the researcher found that the amount of time invested in other activities had a "noticeable increase" (p. 140). However, time invested in other activities was not a trend for virtual school literacy coaches. The literacy coaches in the virtual school setting invested less than 25% of their time in activities not directly related to coaching teachers. (See Table 15).

Quantitative Research Question 1: Perception of expertise by Florida Virtual School literacy coaches. The perception of expertise of virtual school literacy coaches was ranked in five levels. These levels were fundamental awareness, novice, intermediate, advanced, and expert. Virtual literacy coaches self-reported their perception of expertise. The level of expert, described as having a comprehensive and authoritative knowledge of literacy coaching activities, received the highest response rate with 62.50% of virtual school literacy coaches selecting this rating. Only a 12.50% of the population reported an advanced level of expertise, described as having a great level of skill and able to model and mentor others in literacy coaching activities. Twenty-five percent of the population of virtual school literacy coaches selected an intermediate level of expertise, which was described as having a good level of skill or knowledge in literacy coaching activities. None of the study participants described themselves as having a novice or fundamental awareness level of expertise. (See Table 10).

The level of expertise is congruent with the educational background of the virtual literacy coaches. In this category, seventy-five percent of the participants reported having a graduate degree. This data matches the data for traditional elementary school coaches, where 86.6% of the participants reported holding a master's degree (Zugelder, 2012). In the study of middle

school coaches, 93.8% held a master's degree (Bowman, 2010). For high school coaches, 29.6% reported holding a master's degree (Boulware, 2007).

All virtual literacy coaches (100%) reported holding their reading endorsement from the Florida Department of Education. However, only 59.3% of high school coaches and only 67.6% of middle school coaches held this endorsement in their respective studies (Boulware, 2007, Bowman, 2010). For elementary school coaches, 58.1% of literacy coaches had completed the reading endorsement (Zugelder, 2012). To hold this endorsement, teachers receive training in five reading competencies. These competencies are foundations of reading instruction, application of research-based instructional practice, foundations of assessment, foundations and applications of differentiated instruction, and demonstration of accomplishment (culminating practicum). These competencies comply with State Board Rule 6A-4.0163 titled Specialization Requirements for the reading endorsement (Florida Department of Education, 2014).

Quantitative Research Question 2: Expertise of virtual literacy coaches in instructional skills. The studies of traditional K-12 literacy coaches in the state of Florida by Boulware (2007), Bowman (2010), and Zugelder (2012) did not delve into each of the instructional areas traditionally associated with the teaching of literacy. For the purposes of the current research, this question was added to delve into which areas the virtual literacy coaches perceived to be most fluent in. The data allows for the consideration of how virtual school coaches choose to invest their time.

Considering instructional literacy skills, the study found that virtual literacy coaches perceive themselves as having the most expertise in the area of reading comprehension (62.5%) and fluency (57.1%). Fifty percent of virtual literacy coaches perceive themselves as experts in the areas of vocabulary development and guided reading. Thirty-seven-point five percent of

virtual literacy coaches perceived themselves as experts in the areas of phonics/word recognition, speaking/listening skills, and common core standards. The instructional literacy skill areas manifesting the lowest perceived level of perceived expertise for the virtual literacy coaches were literacy circles (25%), language arts (25%), essay writing (12.5%) and essay scoring (12.5%). (See Table 11).

Quantitative Research Question 3: Time investment of virtual literacy coaches.

Concerning the frequency of time invested in literacy coaching activities, virtual school literacy coaches invest most of their time in reading comprehension (Mean = 1.63; SD = 0.92). Sixty-two-point five percent of virtual school literacy coaches reported investing time daily in the area of reading comprehension. Twelve-point five percent of the virtual literacy coaches invested time in this area on a weekly basis, while 25% invested time in this area monthly.

This question was addressed by Zugelder (2012) in the research of Florida elementary school coaches. In the area of reading comprehension, the researcher found that 24.5% of traditional school elementary literacy coaches invested time in the area of reading comprehension in a daily basis while 50% of them engaged in this activity on a weekly basis. Thus, virtual school literacy coaches exceeded elementary school literacy coaches in the daily investment of time in this literacy coaching area by 38%.

Bowman's (2011) research also addressed this question for middle school coaches in Florida. This researcher asked participants to identify the time spent in this literacy coaching activity for both reading and content area teachers. For non-reading teachers, the research found that only 12.5% of middle school coaches invested time in this area in a daily basis. Thirty-seven-point five percent of the participants invested time in this area in a weekly basis, and 40%

of them did so on a monthly basis. In this case, virtual school literacy coaches exceeded the investment of time of middle school literacy coaches in this area daily by 50%.

For reading teachers, Bowman's (2011) research found that 29.3% of middle school literacy coaches invest time daily in the area of reading comprehension. Fifty-three-point seven percent of the participants invest time in this area on a weekly basis. For this area, virtual school literacy coaches exceeded the time invested by 33.2%. Table 14 shows the comparison of time invested in the literacy coaching activity for reading comprehension for the three studies.

Table 14

Comparison of Rank Order of Time Invested in Reading Comprehension Coaching

Reading comprehension coaching	Virtual School Coaches	Elementary Literacy Coaches	Middle School Literacy Coaches Reading teachers	Middle School Literacy Coaches Non-reading teachers
	N = 8	N = 94	N=41	N=41
Never	0	5.3	0	2.50
Daily	62.50	24.50	29.3	12.50
Weekly	12.50	53.2	53.7	37.50
Monthly	25	14.9	17.1	40
Yearly	0	2.1	0	7.5

Note. Data retrieved from Bowman (2011), Middle school literacy coaches in Florida: A study of the relationship among experience, coaching activities, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida, and Zugelder (2012), Elementary reading coaches in Florida: A study of their background, experiences, coaching activities, time, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida.

Concerning the frequency of time invested in literacy coaching activities, the second activity where virtual school literacy coaches invest most of their daily literacy coaching time was in the area of conducting walkthroughs and providing feedback to teachers (Mean = 2.00; SD = 1.20). Fifty percent of the population reported spending time daily in the areas of

walkthroughs and feedback. Twelve-point five percent of the virtual literacy coaches invested time in this area on a weekly basis, while 25% invested time in this area monthly.

This question was addressed by Zugelder (2012) in the research of Florida elementary school coaches. In the area of walkthroughs and feedback, the researcher found that 19.8% of traditional school elementary literacy coaches rarely invested time in the area of walkthroughs and providing feedback. Only eight percent of the participants engaged in this literacy coaching activity on a daily basis. Forty-two-point seven percent of them engaged in this activity on a weekly basis. Thus, virtual school literacy coaches exceeded elementary school literacy coaches in the daily investment of time in this literacy coaching area by 41.7%.

Bowman's (2011) research also addressed this question for middle school coaches in Florida. The research found that only 21.4% of middle school coaches invested time in this area in a daily basis. Fifty-two-point four percent of the participants invested time in this area in a weekly basis, and two point four percent of them did so on a monthly basis. In this case, virtual school literacy coaches exceeded the investment of time of middle school literacy coaches in this area daily by 28.6%.

Table 15 shows the comparison of time invested in the literacy coaching activity for reading comprehension for the three studies.

Table 15

Comparison of Rank Order of Time Invested in Walkthroughs/Feedback Coaching

Reading comprehension coaching	Virtual School Coaches N = 8	Elementary Literacy Coaches N = 96	Middle School Literacy Coaches N=41
Rarely	0	19.8	4.8
Never	0	0	0
Daily	50	8.3	21.4
Weekly	12.50	42.7	52.4
Bi-monthly	0	12.5	11.9
Monthly	25	14.6	2.4
Quarterly	0	2.1	7.1
Yearly	0	0	0
Other	12.50	0	0

Note. Data retrieved from Bowman (2011), Middle school literacy coaches in Florida: A study of the relationship among experience, coaching activities, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida, and Zugelder (2012), Elementary reading coaches in Florida: A study of their background, experiences, coaching activities, time, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida.

Half (50%) of virtual literacy coaches reported spending much of the day working with teachers on reading comprehension tasks. The other 50% of the virtual school literacy coach population invested time in this task at least once a week. This data varies from that of elementary school literacy coaches, where only 15.7% of the population reported investing much of the day in this task, and 33.7% engaging in this task at least once a week (Zugelder, 2012). In the middle school literacy coaching realm, 22% of the participants reported investing most of the day working with teachers in reading comprehension tasks, and 34% engaged in the activity at least once a week (Bowman, 2011). Virtual school literacy coaches invested 34% more time

than elementary school literacy coaches and 28% more time than middle school literacy coaches in this literacy coaching activities.

Boulware's (2007) study of high school literacy coaches in Florida did not address the area of investment of time in literacy coaching activities apart of those reported to Florida's Progress and Monitoring Network. Survey questions addressing the investment of time were added by Bowman (2011) and replicated by Zugelder (2012). Thus, comparisons between the time invested in literacy coaching activities by virtual school and traditional high school literacy coaches to address this question could not be made by the researcher.

Quantitative Research Question 4: Correlation of expertise in instructional skills associated with literacy coaching. The data showed correlation between the investment of time in specific literacy coaching activities and the level of perceived expertise the virtual literacy coaches have. Sixty-two-point five percent of virtual school literacy coaches ranked expert as their level of expertise in reading comprehension. The virtual school literacy coaches invested most of their time in the same literacy skill area. (See Table 13).

The strongest correlation was found in the area of walkthroughs and feedback. In this area, the magnitude of associative effect between classroom walkthroughs and provision of feedback to teachers and participant-perceived level of expertise as a literacy coach is considered large. This correlation ($r = .65$; $p = .04$) between expertise and daily amount of time invested (50%) is robust.

None of the three studies conducted regarding the work of literacy coaches in the state of Florida addressed this question (Boulware, 2010; Bowman, 2011; Zugelder, 2012). Thus, there is no available data for comparison in this area.

Quantitative Research Question 5: Relationship between the time invested by Florida Virtual School coaches and the time invested by literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools. The data revealed that virtual literacy coaches invest most of their time in the domains of coaching (20%) and coach-teacher (20%) conferences. These are followed by whole faculty professional development (10%), small group professional development (10%), planning (10%), and modeling lessons (10%) which are considered as teacher contact. Virtual literacy coaches also invest 10% of their time in the domains of meetings and knowledge-building.

The data varies from that of traditional K-12 schools literacy coaches. Boulware (2007), Bowman (2011), and Zugelder (2012) found that K-12 literacy coaches ranked other activities as one of the top domains for time invested. Displayed in Table 16 is a comparison of rank order of time invested in the coaching activities researched in all four studies. Although there are 13 domains reported to the Florida Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN), Boulware's (2007) study only had valid responses in ten areas. These ten domains were also reported for Bowman's (2011) and Zugelder's (2012) research. The ten domains selected for comparison among the four studies are: coaching, coach-teacher conference, professional development (whole and small group), knowledge-building, planning, meetings, modeling lessons, data analysis, student assessment, and other activities. (see Table 16). The description of each domain for traditional and virtual school is found in Chapter IV.

Table 16

Comparison of Rank Order of Time Invested in Coaching Activities

Key Coaching Activity	Virtual School Coaches N = 8	Elementary Literacy Coaches N = 67	Middle School Literacy Coaches N=29	High School Literacy Coaches N = 28
Coaching	1	4	2	10
Coach-Teacher Conference	1	1	1	6
Professional Development	2	5	8	5
Knowledge- building	2	8	10	3
Planning	2	7	4	4
Meetings	2	9	5	7
Modeling Lessons	3	10	6	9
Data Analysis	3	5	9	8
Student Assessment	0	3	3	2
Other	0	2	7	1

*Note. Data retrieved from Boulware (2007), High school literacy coaches in Florida: A study of background, time, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida, Bowman (2011), Middle school literacy coaches in Florida: A study of the relationship among experience, coaching activities, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida, and Zugelder (2012), Elementary reading coaches in Florida: A study of their background, experiences, coaching activities, time, and other factors related to reading achievement. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida. *Boulware's study (2007) reported on 10 coaching activities. The three studies cited utilized the same central Florida school districts to obtain their sample population. The current study reported on virtual school coaches for Florida Virtual School, which serves the entire state of Florida.*

Qualitative Research

Qualitative Research

Each participant in the study was a virtual literacy coach working at Florida Virtual School at the time of the study. At the time the invitation for the qualitative part of the study was

sent, the population had changed from eight to seven virtual literacy coaches. Fifty-seven percent of the targeted population (a total of four virtual school literacy coaches) agreed to participate in the qualitative part of the study. The participating virtual school literacy coaches met virtually with the researcher using Blackboard Collaborate technology. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and reviewed by the interviewee. The researcher coded the data according to current themes and trends in the responses. The qualitative part of the research intended to gather details regarding the perceptions of expertise, success, limitations, and investment of time from the virtual literacy coaches to support the quantitative part of the study. This part of the study focused on answering two qualitative questions: how do virtual school literacy coaches perceive expertise? And how do virtual school literacy coaches invest their coaching time?

The narratives of the virtual school literacy coaches throughout the interview process revealed five common patterns or themes. These themes were discovered by using the language and the concepts of the respondents throughout the interviews. These themes supported the data found during the quantitative part of the study and provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The interpretation of the qualitative data allowed for the elaboration on the data gathered in the quantitative survey.

Theme 1: Becoming a literacy coach. Florida Virtual School literacy coaches come into the role with experience as traditional school reading teachers and literacy coaches. The teaching experience of the teachers is varied, with the interviewees having worked in the elementary and middle school level. The virtual literacy coaches reported experience working in Florida school districts. All of the virtual school coaches have completed their reading endorsement certification from the state of Florida.

Each one of the participants reported going into the field of literacy coaching with the intent of supporting teachers in their instructional practice and students in learning how to use reading skills and strategies. The participants also spoke of enjoying the work they did with teachers prior to becoming literacy coaches. These experiences allowed the literacy coaches to enter virtual literacy coaching with the needed skills to succeed in the role.

One participant stated, “I think having the background in brick-and-mortar was really important” and “having that toolbox in brick-and-mortar to bring to virtual was very helpful.” Another participant noted that in moving into the role of a literacy coach “the defining factor, (was) just being able to help teachers and also help students become better readers.” A coach reported going into the position as a chance that would “allow me the time to work with teachers where then I could then share that knowledge and passing it on.”

Theme 2: Perceptions of success. The common themes Florida Virtual School literacy coaches had regarding their perception of success were the concept of support from the other coaches and the teachers, and independence or creative freedom. Other themes included ability to learn, previous experience, and opportunity for collaboration. The virtual literacy coaches also noted that their previous experiences as literacy coaches in traditional schools allowed them to take on the role of virtual coaches more easily.

The virtual literacy coaches discussed the importance of collaborating with the teachers and each other. The virtual literacy coaches perceive this collaboration as support. One coach mentioned “having the support to do what we see is needed”. Another noted, “definitely the success I would say here at the virtual school is that there is so much support.”. One coach identified collaboration as pillars of success by stating “that my crew of my coaches that I bounce things off of and in our team, is definitely our team is definitely a part of that huge

success.” The literacy coach also added, “It’s nice to be able to chat with people who are going through the same thing as you, or may not be, so you can bounce things off of them as it comes.”

The virtual literacy coaches also mentioned the support they receive from their instructional leaders (IL). One coach mentioned the relevance of learning alongside the instructional leader by stating, “the ILs that we have are very willing to, kind of, learn right alongside us. I feel like the virtual option is one of those that is always changing and evolving so we are always learning together.” A virtual literacy coach enhanced the importance of collaboration by stating, “collaboration, asking questions of other literacy coaches, going to the literacy coordinator and making sure, I guess using her as a sound board.”

The virtual literacy coaches consistently discussed the opportunity to be creative and make decisions. A coach mentioned “having the opportunity to be creative and not be boxed in has really contributed to my success from the standpoint of, you know, seeing a need and being able to meet that need vs., like in my previous district.” Another stated “I would say that what’s contributed to my success is definitely the flexibility that FLVS gives us to go into live lessons and the teachers’ openness and receptiveness of that.”

Theme 3: Perceptions on limitations. The virtual literacy coaches discussed limitations as opportunities for growth rather than as hindrances. The common themes on this topic were the concepts of movement and building relationships. Movement, in this case, is defined as change in the schoolhouses and teachers supported, and not being able to provide support to the same schoolhouses and teachers for a prolonged length of time. This topic merged with that of building relationships, as change in the schoolhouses and teachers supported as well as not being able to see the teachers face-to-face regularly, disrupts the ability of the virtual literacy coaches to form lasting connections.

One of the virtual literacy coaches cited research on the topic as she mentioned “I remember reading research when I was in my master’s program, and I want to say that it takes two years, possibly three, to see the school-wide impact of an instructional coach or a literacy coach.” The literacy coach went ahead to add “I think sometimes the frequent movement in the virtual environment, and I don’t know if that is specific to FLVS or if other virtual schools have the same, you know, like with us being reassigned.”

Another literacy coach discussed “we have had to change content areas sometimes to kind of acclimate to people leaving or, you know, just kind of restructuring within our literacy team.” This statement was connected to making connections by saying, “I spend a lot of time working with building relationships with the teachers that I support because it is a little bit harder in our world, because we don’t see them face-to-face.” Thus, the change in the supporting role affects the relationships built with teachers.

Theme 4: Evidence of expertise as a literacy coach. In the quantitative part of the survey, 62.5% of the virtual literacy coaches identified themselves as expert coaches. This question was meant to delve deeper into the subject of expertise by asking the virtual literacy coaches to discuss which evidence they use to determine their level of expertise in literacy coaching. The common themes identified were observational and survey data as well as feedback from instructional leaders (IL). Regarding feedback from the instructional leader (IL), the virtual literacy coaches mentioned using the evaluations of both their practice and the teachers.

Two virtual literacy coaches mentioned surveying the teachers they support to obtain feedback on their practice. One coach stated, “I like to send out a survey to the teachers that I work with,” adding “I always like to get that true data and really see from those that have worked

with me what they feel I can work on.” The coach reported using the feedback as reflection pieces which provided the “information to then continue to keep that evidence of my growth.”

Most of the virtual literacy coaches reported using feedback from the instructional leader (IL) as evidence of their expertise in literacy coaching practices. A coach stated, “feedback from ILs, you know when they come back at the end of the year with the evaluations and can give me some data regarding how many teachers are hitting highly effective in the area using of literacy.” Another discussed “as far as that evidence of my level of expertise is really that feedback from the teachers and the ILs that I work with directly.” A third one concurred with the others in stating, “I gather feedback from my ILs as far as, you know, what they feel that I am being successful on or where they see a need for improvement.” However, only one of the virtual literacy coaches mentioned the evaluation of literacy coaches as a point of evidence gathering.

Theme 5: Investment of time. Throughout the course of the quantitative research, it was found that virtual literacy coaches invest most of their time in the domains of coaching (20%) and coach-teacher (20%) conferences. This qualitative question was meant to assist the researcher in understanding how the virtual literacy coaches select the time they invest in these activities. The common themes in this area were guidance from the instructional leader (IL) and teacher feedback. The responses of this question tied in with those of qualitative questions two and four.

Consistently, the virtual literacy coaches mentioned feedback as the way of knowing what kind of support the teachers needed. This feedback came from both the instructional leader (IL) and the teachers, as well as from observational data gathered while attending live lessons and professional learning communities (PLC). The common goal of the virtual literacy coaches was to provide teachers with adequate and long-lasting support in instructional practices.

One virtual literacy coach identified coaching conversations as a “number one priority, if I get any opportunity to work one-on-one with a teacher or in a small group with a teacher, that’s what I prioritize.” This coaching opportunity opened the door for “working one-on-one with teachers to help them be excited about what they are doing and try a literacy strategy and have success with that literacy strategy.” This virtual literacy coach utilized the data gathered from the coaching opportunities with the teachers to design the professional development delivered to small groups of teachers and professional learning communities.

One coach referred to “that teacher survey, the IL feedback, meeting with ILs, meeting with our lead teachers, and determining what the needs of maybe their pod might be” as the sources of data to determine how to invest the coaching time. These sources allowed the virtual school literacy coach to determine the needs of the teachers and to gather needed resources. The coach was particular in describing the importance of gathering the “information that they are specifically looking for.”

Another virtual literacy coach reflected on using observational data from the work of professional learning communities. The coach stated, “I see a need for something in a schoolhouse, whether a bunch of teachers asked about it or an IL has asked me to specifically address something, that’s definitely a place that I invest my time on.” The coach mentioned observing the “trends come and go and, you know FLVS, and seeing what the teachers are looking for each year.” Having the freedom to create and attend to the area of perceived need became important in this process.

None of the coaches reported having to follow a specific calendar or being asked to spend a percentage of time in a certain activity. The virtual literacy coaches relished the ability to work and support the teachers in the instructional areas that they saw as important. Even though the

feedback of the instructional leader was used as a point of reference, feedback was not what led the calendar of the virtual literacy coaches.

Implications for Future Research

The research was limited to the responses of the eight literacy coaches who were in the role at Florida Virtual School at the time of the study. The data's validity is limited to the responses given by the virtual coaches who participated in the study. Any given change in the number of literacy coaches or roles could change the data. The validity of the study is dependent on the literacy coaches' honesty at the time they provided the responses. The study was limited by the lack of comparable data for high school coaches for Research Questions 3 and 4.

This study was different from previous studies of literacy coaches in the state of Florida. Whereas Boulware (2007), Bowman (2011), and Zugelder (2012) studied the impact of literacy coaching in student assessment data from the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), this study did not address student data. Further research into the impact of virtual literacy coaches on student achievement could discover possible relationships. However, since the state of Florida is currently administering a different achievement test, the data collected may not be comparable to that of previous studies.

Much is yet to be discovered regarding the work of virtual school literacy coaches. Relevant questions remain regarding their daily roles, their interaction with teachers, and the impact of their practice on teacher growth and students' academic achievement. Another area that could provide interesting data is that of coach-administrator and coach-teacher relationships. Further studies may delve into the area of on-boarding training and the preparation literacy coaches receive to enter the role of virtual literacy coaches. Another area of note to study would

be to examine the data for literacy coaches in the elementary, middle, high, and virtual school levels in one sample to document the comparisons across levels.

Conclusion

The research conducted in the current study intended to clarify the role of virtual school literacy coaches in the state of Florida. The research delved into the perceptions of efficacy of virtual school literacy coaches and how these professionals invest their time. The timeliness of this research is evident as virtual educational opportunities continue to grow.

The research found the virtual school literacy coaches come into the role with a solid background in instructional practices, with experience in teaching and literacy coaching in traditional school settings. The environment and setting allow for virtual school coaches to collaborate with each other, teachers, and instructional leaders (IL). The virtual school coaches perceive that they have the freedom to work with teachers in the areas they identify as need throughout the use of feedback, which comes in diverse ways. The virtual literacy coaches understand that they can be creative in the role. However, the virtual school literacy coaches perceive change and movement between the schoolhouses and teachers supported as an area that limits their ability to know the long-term impact of their practice.

The current research is relevant for the practice of literacy coaches. The current research allows for further understanding of the activities that virtual school coaches perform throughout the school year. The research also compares the practice of virtual school literacy coaches in Florida to that of literacy coaches in traditional K-12 schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Request for authorization to use/modify survey instrument

July 19, 2018

Greetings Dr. Fugnitto,

I am a doctoral student at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. I am researching the subject of virtual literacy coaches. I intend to replicate the study you conducted with elementary reading coaches, and Dr. Donald Boulware and Dr. Patricia Bowman conducted with high school and middle school literacy coaches. I anticipate that the benefits of this study would add to the contributions to research on literacy coaches and allow for the work of virtual school literacy coaches in Florida to be included in the professional discussion of the work and relevance of literacy coaches.

As I seek to replicate the study, I request your permission to modify for virtual school literacy coaches your web-based survey and interview questions. If you grant your permission, please respond to me by email indicating your permission to modify your survey for virtual school literacy coaches.

Gratefully,

Ms. Thania J. Oller, M.Ed.

Doctoral Candidate - Curriculum & Instruction

Southeastern University - College of Education

Response from Dr. G. Fugnitto (Zugelder)

Hello Thania,

Yes, I grant you permission to modify the elementary reading coaches survey for virtual school literacy coaches your web-based survey and interview questions.

Wishing you the best of luck on your doctoral journey!

Gina Fugnitto, EdD – gfugnitto@collaborativeclassroom.org

Appendix B

Virtual School Literacy Coach Survey Questions

Text Copy of the Web-Based Survey 2017-2018 School Year

Link to online survey: <https://bit.ly/2R0vUMG>

Opening Page

Informed Consent Page

1. Do you consent to the terms of this survey?

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree

Part 1: Literacy Coach Demographics, Academic, & Professional Background

2. How long have you worked at FLVS?

- a. 0-5
- b. 6-10
- c. 11+

3. What is your highest level of education?

- a. Bachelors
- b. Masters
- c. Specialist
- d. Doctorate

4. What is (are) your academic major(s) for each degree?

5. Do you have the Florida Reading Endorsement/Certification?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. How many years were you a classroom teacher?
- a. 0-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11+
7. What preparation have you experienced for the role of literacy coach? (select all that apply)
- a. Reading endorsement
 - b. College coursework
 - c. District training
 - d. Degree in reading
 - e. Online training in coaching
 - f. School site training
 - g. Independent study
 - h. Other (Explain: _____)
8. Rate your level of expertise in coaching the following instructional skills (Rating: expert, advanced, intermediate, novice, fundamental awareness).
- a. Reading comprehension
 - b. Literature circles
 - c. Foundational skills – phonics and word recognition
 - d. Foundational skills – fluency
 - e. Essay writing
 - f. Essay scoring
 - g. Speaking and listening skills

- h. Language Arts skills
 - i. Vocabulary development
 - j. Guided reading
 - k. Common Core Standards
9. Please rate your overall perception of efficacy as a Florida Virtual School literacy coach?
- (Rating: expert, advanced, intermediate, novice, fundamental awareness).
10. How many schoolhouses do you currently support?
- a. 0-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11+
11. How many teachers do you support? (open-ended)

Part 2: Coaching Activities – Matrix

(If rating question use: never, daily, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)

12. How often do you conduct virtual literacy walkthroughs and provide teachers with feedback?
13. How often do you spend time conferring with teachers about improving vocabulary?
14. How often do you spend time conferring with teachers about improving fluency?
15. How often do you spend time conferring with teachers about improving reading comprehension?
16. How much time do you spend with teachers in lesson study?
17. How much time do you spend with teachers in book study?
18. How much time do you spend with teachers in action research?
19. How often do you meet with teachers as part of the literacy leadership team activities?

20. How often do you spend time coaching teachers on reading strategies?

- a. Much of the day
- b. When I can make time
- c. At least once a week
- d. Many times during the month

Part 3: Coaching Activities and Time - Matrix

21. In the last semester of the 2017-2018 school year (January to May), how have you spent your time as a literacy coach? Please indicate the percentages (%) of time engaged in the activities listed below.

Item	Description	Time
<i>Whole Faculty Professional Development</i>	Providing or facilitating professional development sessions such as faculty seminars, schoolhouse meetings, action research, and/or study groups designated to increase the knowledge of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) for administrators, teachers, and/or support personnel.	
<i>Small Group Professional Development</i>	Providing or facilitating small group professional development sessions such as faculty seminars, action research, and/or study groups designated to increase the knowledge of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) for administrators, teachers, and/or support personnel.	
<i>Planning</i>	Planning, developing, and/or preparing professional development including: surveying teachers for professional development needs; preparing content for professional development for teachers, parents, or others; planning a schedule of professional development delivery; gathering professional development materials; preparing a lesson for modeling and planning a coaching session with a teacher.	
<i>Modeling Lessons</i>	Demonstrating lessons while teachers observe, or co-teaching lessons in classrooms.	
<i>Coaching</i>	Coaching (initial conversations, observation, and reflecting conversation) teachers in classrooms which includes observing teachers, formulating feedback regarding lessons, discussing feedback with teachers, and reflecting with teachers relating to reading or content area lessons.	
<i>Coach-Teacher Conferences</i>	Conferencing with teachers regarding lesson planning, grouping for instruction, intervention strategies, and other	

	topics related to reading. Informally conversing with teachers in a variety of ways (phone, e-mail, face-to-face) on topics concerning reading such as fluency building, organizing literacy centers, students in need of intervention, incorporating literacy strategies, or other.	
<i>Student Assessment</i>	Facilitating and coordinating student assessments, including scheduling the time and place for assessments, and notifying teachers of the assessment schedule.	
<i>Data Reporting</i>	Entering assessment data into any data management system.	
<i>Data Analysis</i>	Analyzing student data to assist teachers with informing instruction based on student needs. This includes the study of data reports, principal/coach data sessions, and teacher/coach data sessions.	
<i>Meetings</i>	Attending meetings (at the school, district or region) regarding reading issues.	
<i>Knowledge-Building</i>	Attending meetings (at the school, district or region) regarding reading issues such as: meeting with school administrators or literacy coaches, school/community groups, curriculum teams, Literacy Leadership Teams, School Improvement Teams, or professional development.	
<i>Managing Reading Materials</i>	Preparing the budget for reading materials, reviewing and/or purchasing the materials, maintaining inventory, and delivering reading materials. Also included are duties such as gathering teacher resources, organizing, and collaboration with the school personnel.	
<i>Other</i>	Time spent on other duties as assigned. Please list.	

Appendix C

Florida Elementary School Reading Coach Survey Text Copy of the Web-Based Survey based on the 2007-2011 school years Gina M. Zugelder

Opening Page

Informed Consent Page

School Code Number Entry

Part 1: Coaching Activities

1. How often do you conduct reading/literacy walkthroughs and provide teachers with feedback? Rarely Daily Weekly Bi-Monthly Monthly Quarterly Yearly
2. How often do you spend time conferring with teachers about improving vocabulary? Never Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly
3. How often do you spend time conferring with teachers about improving fluency? Never Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly
4. How often do you spend time conferring with teachers about improving reading comprehension? Never Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly
5. How much time do you spend with teachers in lesson study? Never Monthly Regularly Yearly Other
6. How much time do you spend with teachers in book study? Never Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly
7. How much time do you spend with teachers in action research? Never Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly
8. How often do you spend time coaching teachers on reading strategies?

Much of the Day - When I can Make Time - At Least Once a Week - Many Times during the Month - I Struggle with Making Time for This

9. When does the coaching of teachers take place?

Before School - After School - During Planning Periods - In-service Days - Early Release Days - Other

10. What support have you received from others in providing reading/literacy-coaching services?

11. What hindrances and challenges have you encountered in providing reading/literacy coaching services? Please provide as much information as you believe will be helpful in understanding reading/literacy coaching.

12. Do you have an office? Yes/No

13. Do you have a dedicated professional development room? Yes/No

14. Do you have a classroom library to use for demonstration and teacher checkout? Yes/No

15. What is your approximate budget for purchasing books, attending conferences, and professional development? \$0-100 - \$101-250 - \$251-500 - \$501-1000 - \$1001-2000 - \$2001-5000 – More than \$5,001

16. List professional conferences you have attended in the last 12 months. National? State? Local?

17. Which coaching activities seem to have the most effect on students' reading achievement in your school?

18. What measures do you use to determine the effect of the coaching activities on the students' reading achievement in... K-2 - 3-5

19. List duties as assigned to you which may be important, but not directly related to improving student literacy.
20. Successes: Please describe some coaching successes you have had in the last 18 months, in terms of effect on teacher changes that will improve student achievement?
21. What is the greatest concern you have about being an elementary school reading/literacy coach?
22. Did anything happen at your school from 2010 to present 2011 that may have affected the overall reading results? Please describe.
23. Did your school undergo any major restructuring or school-wide reforms in the school year 2010-2011 to present that may have benefitted the overall reading results? If yes, then please describe.

Part 2: 2011 Coaching Activities and Time

24. In the first semester of the 2011-2012 school year, what have you spent your time doing in your role of reading/literacy coach?

Please indicate percentages (%) of time engaged in the activities listed below.

- Whole Faculty Professional Development: Providing or facilitating professional development sessions such as faculty seminars, action research, and/or study groups designated to increase the knowledge of Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) for administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals. _____%
- Small Group Professional Development: Providing or facilitating small group professional development sessions such as faculty seminars, action research, and/or study groups designed to increase the knowledge of Scientifically Based

Reading Research (SBRR) for administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals.

_____ %

- Planning: Planning, developing, and/or preparing professional development, including: surveying teachers for PD needs; preparing content for PD for teachers, parents, and others; planning a schedule of PD delivery, gathering PD materials; preparing a lesson for modeling and planning a coaching session with a teacher.

_____ %

- Modeling Lessons: Demonstrating lessons while teachers observe or co-teaching lessons in classrooms. _____ %

- Coaching: Coaching (initial conversations, observation, and reflecting conversation) teachers in classrooms which includes observing teachers, formulating feedback regarding lessons, discussing feedback with teachers, and reflecting with teachers relating to reading or content area lessons. _____ %

- Coach-Teacher Conferences: Conferencing with teachers regarding lesson planning, grouping for instruction, intervention strategies, and other topics related to reading. Informally conversing with teachers in a variety of ways (phone, E-mail or fact-to-face) on topics concerning reading such as fluency building, organizing literacy centers, students in need of intervention, etc. _____ %

- Student Assessment: Facilitating and coordinating student assessments, including scheduling the time and place for assessments, and notifying teachers of the assessment schedule. _____ %

- Data Reporting. Entering assessment data into any data management system.

_____ %

- Data Analysis: Analyzing student data to assist teachers with informing instruction based on student needs. This includes personal study of data reports, data sessions, and teacher/coach data sessions. _____%
- Meetings: Attending meetings in my school, district or region regarding reading issues _____%
- Knowledge-Building: Attending meetings in the school, district, or region regarding reading issues. Examples include meeting with school/district administrators or coaches, school/community groups, curriculum teams, Reading Leadership Teams, School Improvement Plan Teams, etc. _____%
- Managing Reading Materials. Preparing the budget for reading materials, reviewing and/or purchasing the materials, maintaining inventory, and delivering reading materials. Also included are duties such as gathering teacher resources and organizing leveled books for classroom libraries in collaboration with school staff. _____%
- Other: Time spent on other duties assigned: Please list. _____%

Part 3: Reading/Literacy Coach Demographics/Academic and Professional Background

25. In what year did you begin the role of reading/literacy coach at your school?

Before 2007 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011

26. What was your primary teaching or work assignment prior to taking on the role of reading/literacy coach?

- Reading intervention teacher
- Reading teacher ESE teacher
- ESOL teacher Elementary school teacher

- English/language arts teacher
- Social Studies teacher
- Mathematics teacher
- Science teacher Elective teacher
- Curriculum resource teacher
- Other: please identify

27. How many years were you a classroom teacher?

28. How long have you worked at your present school?

29. What was your undergraduate major?

30. Please list degrees earned or in progress and subject focus.

31. What preparation have you experienced for the role of reading/literacy coach? Select all that apply.

- Reading Endorsement
- College Coursework
- District Training
- Graduate Coursework as part of non-reading degree
- Master's, Ed. S., or doctorate degree in Reading
- Online Training School Site Training
- Vendor Training
- Independent Study
- Other (please specify)

32. What factors impact the way you report your time? Consider how you officially report your time versus how you actually spend your time in the role of reading/literacy coach.

33. Are you willing to participate in a short interview? If so, please provide your name, email, and phone number where you can be reached. Yes/No

Appendix D

FLVS Research Request Proposal

Research Request Proposal Florida Virtual School's (FLVS) Research Committee reviews each proposal in great detail; proposals that do not receive a minimum score on the research rubric will not be approved. Proposals are considered for acceptance based on the clarity of the proposal, agreement to the terms and conditions outlined below, completion of a Non-Disclosure Agreement, and ability of FLVS to provide the necessary data and/or resources needed to complete the project. Due to privacy and confidentiality issues, research requests that include face-to-face contact or video recording will most likely be denied.

Please answer the following questions completely and thoroughly; if a proposal is partially completed, questions are not answered, or survey/interview questions are not provided, your proposal will be returned for revision prior to review by the FLVS Research Committee. You may be asked to provide further details about your project prior to and after the Research Committee Meeting before a final decision can be made.

1. Date – October 18, 2018
2. Name - Thania J. Oller
3. Telephone Number - 407-506-3874
4. Email Address – tjoller@seu.edu; toller@flvs.net
5. Title of Research Project - *Virtual School Literacy Coaches in Florida: A study of perceptions of efficacy and time invested in literacy coaching activities*
6. University/College Affiliation – Southeastern University
7. Company/Organization Affiliation – Florida Virtual School

8. Name and Title of Dissertation Chairperson – Dr. Susan Stanley

9. Telephone Number of Dissertation Chairperson – 352-516-8439; 706-745-8460

10. Email Address of Dissertation Chairperson – skstanley1@seu.edu

11. Are you a current or former employee of Florida Virtual School? – Yes

a. If you are a current employee, what is your position? – Literacy Coach

b. If you are a former employee, did you leave FLVS in good standing? – N/A

12. What is the overall purpose of your study?

The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the specific aspects of literacy coaching in the virtual school setting. Aspects to be studied include (a) the academic background and professional experiences of virtual school literacy coaches, (b) the time virtual school literacy coaches spend in specific coaching activities.

13. Who is the intended audience of your research?

The intended audience are masters and doctoral students who are interested in the area of literacy coaches, researchers interested in virtual and distance learning, and current literacy coaches.

14. What are your intentions for publication of your findings?

I intend to publish my study through Southeastern University Fire Scholars at:

<http://firescholars.seu.edu/coe>

15. What are your intentions for presentation of your findings?

I intend to present my findings at my doctoral defense, at the FLVS Literacy Leadership Team Meeting, and at the Florida Literacy Association conference. I plan on submitting an article regarding the findings to Southeastern University's professional journal.

16. When is your desired start date? – October 2018

17. When is your desired completion date? – May 2019

18. List your research questions.

- a. Which demographic, professional, and academic background information describes Florida Virtual School literacy coaches?
- b. How do Florida Virtual School literacy coaches spend their time?
- c. Which virtual school coaching activities meet the expectations of the International Literacy Association for school-based coaches?

19. List your hypotheses. The committee has agreed that no hypothesis are being proposed at this time.

20. What do you intend to measure?

The proposed research questions will focus on the analysis of (a) the academic background and professional experiences of virtual school literacy coaches, (b) the time virtual school literacy coaches spend in specific coaching activities.

21. Explain your research design.

This quantitative study will rely on the implementation of survey methodology which will compare the activities of the current Florida Virtual School literacy coaches. The inferences drawn from this data will provide information regarding the background, experiences, and coaching activities of virtual school literacy coaches. Descriptive statistics will be used to measure the time spent by coaches in the 13 activity domains of the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) system (Florida Department of Education, 2011).

Participants in the study will be limited to that of eight practicing Florida Virtual School literacy coaches. For accurate data, the expectation is that 100% of the selected target population will complete the online survey. Survey participants will complete a survey

sent through the SurveyMonkey platform. Authorization has been gathered by the researcher from Zugelder (2012) to modify the Florida elementary school reading coach survey for use in this research. Zugelder's survey was originally developed to gather information regarding the coaching activities of coaches in particular Florida elementary school districts. This study extends Zugelder's research to investigate virtual school coaches. The survey instrument will collect time-on-activity data as well as open-ended responses. The limited accessibility to pragmatic studies related to the practice of literacy coaches is key to conducting this research.

The study is descriptive, nonexperimental by design, and solely reliant on a survey research method. The researcher in this study has worked as a literacy coach at Florida Virtual School for eighteen months. The researcher knows the participants in the study. The researcher's experiences at Florida Virtual School and the practice of virtual literacy coaches might offer additional understanding that may be unavailable if an outside researcher conducted the research (Blythe et al., 2013; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The research conducted by Blythe et al., (2013) reported that participants in a study are more likely to respond to questions honestly with an internal researcher.

Link to the survey: <https://bit.ly/2R0vUMG>

22. Explain your intended method of data analysis.

Research question 1 will be addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n), percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations will represent the primary descriptive techniques used. To assess the statistical significance in question 1, a single sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test will be conducted.

Research question 2 will be addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n), percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations will represent the primary descriptive techniques used. To assess the statistical significance in question 2, a single sample t-test will be conducted. The magnitude of effect (effect size) will be assessed using the Cohen *d* statistic test.

Research question 3 is predictive in nature comprising several independent predictor variables. As such, the multiple linear regression test statistic will be used to evaluate the predictive robustness of independent variables in the model. Predictive effect size will be evaluated using the following formula: $R^2/1-R^2$. Values of .35 or greater will be considered large predictive effect sizes.

Research question 4 will be addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. To assess the statistical significance of difference in time spent by Florida Virtual School coaches and the standards for time spent in activities will be the Chi² goodness of fit (GOF).

23. How many participants do you anticipate are necessary to complete your research project? – Full participation of the eight literacy coaches at FLVS is expected. The researcher will not participate in the survey.

24. What are the risks in this study for the participants? Keep anonymity is the greater risk/concern of this study.

25. Are there any monetary or other compensation or inducements for taking part in this study? - None

26. What are the financial costs to FLVS or participants to take part in the study? - None

27. What are participant's rights if they take part in the study? Participants have the right to consent to the study and to abstain from any questions in the survey.

28. What will be done to assure the confidentiality of participants? To assure the confidentiality of the participants, the investigator will code the data (particularly for demographic identifiers). Data will be retained for three months, then deleted.

29. Do you intend to use audio recordings? No

30. If you intend to use audio recordings, please answer the following questions:

a. Where will the information be stored during the study? - N/A

b. Who will review audio recordings besides the researcher? – N/A

c. Who will have access to the recordings? – N/A

d. When will the recordings be destroyed? – N/A

31. What is the significance of your research to the field of literature regarding this topic?

Although literacy coaching is considered a new trend in the virtual school setting, as part of the Florida K-12 Comprehensive-Research-Based Reading Plan, just like any other Florida public school, Florida Virtual School literacy coaches have been part of the literacy coaching scene since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Research in this area will add to the growing literature regarding the practice of virtual literacy coaches in K-12 public schools. The results of the study will provide an understanding regarding the value, effectiveness, and relevance of the literacy coach's role. Research in this area is timely as the availability of virtual school opportunities increase for students, teachers, and instructional coaches. "Though the effects of coaching are varied, coaching can positively impact teachers' practice" (Hathaway et al., 2016, p. 231). Through the study of the practice of virtual school literacy coaching,

applications can be made regarding the vitality of the profession, and its relevance to the teaching practice.

32. What are the anticipated benefits and significance of this research to FLVS?

This research will allow Florida Virtual School further understanding of the role and scope of work of its literacy coaches. The research will also provide knowledge on the instructional practices at Florida Virtual School.

33. Attach a copy of your literature review.

34. Attach a copy of your dissertation proposal/prospectus.

35. Attach a copy of your reference/bibliography page.

36. Attach a copy of your survey instrument(s) or list the survey questions you intend to ask participants. Link to the online survey: <https://bit.ly/2R0vUMG>

37. Attach a copy of your interview questions or list the interview questions you intend to ask participants. – N/A

38. Attach a copy of your IRB approval – See attached.

39. Remember to have this form notarized before submission – See form.

Submitting a research proposal to FLVS indicates that you agree to the following statements and will adhere to the guidelines accordingly, and you understand that failure to comply may result in withdrawal of your research approval.

1. I understand that throughout the duration of my project, I will update the Research and Evaluation Administrator through email, phone calls, or survey responses as to the progress and status of my project.

2. I understand that of any and all data collected and/or given to me must remain confidential and/or anonymous at all times before, during, and after the research is completed.

3. I understand it is not permitted to contact FLVS personnel directly and that I must contact the FLVS Research and Evaluation Administrator for all data, interview, or other research needs from FLVS.

4. I understand that FLVS will review my research findings prior to dissertation or prospectus defense, publication, presentation, and/or any and all correspondence regarding this research project.

5. I understand that FLVS reserves the right to remove its name from my research findings prior to dissertation or prospectus defense, publication, presentation, and/or any and all correspondence regarding this research project.

6. Any data or information gathered for this research project will be used solely for the project outlined above; I understand that additional research projects using this data and/or information will need to be approved in advance by the FLVS Research Committee.

7. I understand that I will have 18 months from the date of approval to complete this research project; if additional time is needed, I will need to submit a request to the FLVS Research Committee for an extension with an explanation as to why an extension is needed and the new anticipated completion date.

8. I understand that FLVS will post a minimum of the abstract of my manuscript, and possibly the entire manuscript, on their research website at the following address:

<http://www.flvs.net/educators/Pages/ResearchOpportunities.aspx>

9. I understand that I will be asked to complete fingerprinting and a background check prior to the release of data and/or access to faculty/staff or students. (Fingerprinting can be done at our contracted provider with locations nationwide at a cost to the researcher.)

10. I understand that I need to have my completed research request proposal notarized for consideration. The notary can be completed on the final page of this document.

11. I understand that I will need to complete a Non-Disclosure Agreement prior to dissemination of data and/or information.

12. I understand that I must submit IRB approval prior to dissemination of data and/or information.

13. Rubric – Research Request Proposals Florida Virtual School Research Committee

Area	Ranking (1-5)	Comments
IRB approval is provided.	Yes/No (If no, the committee will not review the proposal.)	
The overall purpose of the study is clear.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The intended audience is identified.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The timeline of the project is clear and feasible.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The research questions are relevant and clear, in general and as they are associated with FLVS.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
FLVS is able to provide the data requested.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The financial costs (including human resources) to FLVS are minimal.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
Issues of confidentiality are sufficiently addressed, providing specific information about how data will be secured.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The literature review and/or dissertation prospectus demonstrates a need for the research to be conducted using FLVS students/employee data.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The survey/interview questions were included, support the research, and indicate a clear relationship with FLVS. (enter "5" if this is N/A to the study).	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
The perceived benefits from the research to FLVS are clear and appreciable.	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Undecided 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree	
Total Score	0	
Percentage	0.00%	

14. Please have your completed Research Request Proposal notarized below.

I, **Thania J. Oller**, being duly sworn, have carefully read this application in its entirety and certify the information herein is true or true to the best of my knowledge and belief I fully understand failure to make a truthful disclosure of any fact or item of information required may result in the denial of my application, revocation of my Board Certification if granted, or disciplinary action by Florida Virtual School.

STATE OF _____

Signature of Applicant _____

COUNTY OF _____

The forgoing instrument was sworn to and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____, 20_____, by _____, who personally appeared before me at the time of notarization, and who is personally known to me or who has produced as identification.

NOTARY PUBLIC

Signature: _____

Seal:

Print: _____

Appendix E

Positionality Statement

Early in my doctoral journey, I decided to study literacy coaches. Throughout my courses, I researched different aspects regarding the scope of work of coaches the K-12 setting and even designed a proposal for founding a literacy coach academy. Aspects studied included the relationship between literacy coaches and the school administrator, the educational background of literacy coaches, and the impact of literacy coaches in student achievement.

At the time I began the doctoral work I was serving in the capacity of district regional literacy coach for turn-around schools in Polk County Schools, Florida. I served in this role for two years before I moved to Florida Virtual School as a literacy coach. The change from a traditional setting to a virtual setting had implications for my practice. I had to change the way I approached teachers for coaching, modeling lessons, lesson planning, and to provide professional development opportunities. The number of teachers I coached also grew exponentially and my work hours became different as I worked with teachers across the state.

One thing that proved significant in the transition was the level of on-the-job on-boarding training received throughout the first six weeks on the position. The on-boarding process included meeting with each of the literacy coaches to discuss how they scheduled their work. By sharing their expertise, each literacy coach was celebrated for their creativity, innovation, and ability to connect with teachers to impact instruction using best practices. The training included becoming familiar with the FLVS K-12 reading plan, engaging in discussions about research-based practices, and building my instructional coaching capacity. This time bonded me with the literacy team as a whole, and I knew who to contact for additional support. It became clear to

me that literacy coaching for FLVS was an experience different than the one I had practiced in the traditional school setting.

Simultaneously, as part of my research work, I came across three distinct studies regarding the work of coaches in the state of Florida. These three studies became the basis for my study as I realized that the roles of virtual school coaches needed to be studied. Florida Virtual School, described as one of the largest school districts in Florida, impacts hundreds of thousands of students annually. However, it has the least amount of literacy coaches in any of Florida school districts.

Nevertheless, Florida Virtual School continually ranks at the top in student achievement. I wanted to explore how the scope of work of virtual literacy coaches varies from that of brick and mortar literacy coaches. I also wanted to discover how virtual literacy coaches invest their time, how they perceive their connections with teachers, and how they view their efficacy (impact on teacher practice).

Taking my research idea to paper, meeting with my committee to discuss possible research scenarios, and ensuring the commitment of my peers to the research has been a rewarding experience. I have learned much about the role of literacy coaches in both the traditional and virtual setting. I have also discovered many facets of instructional innovation at Florida Virtual School of which I was unaware. This research is fundamental in exploring the scope of impact of literacy coaches in the virtual setting and how the role is both similar and varied from that of literacy coaches in the traditional school setting.

Appendix F

Invitation to Participate in Qualitative Interview & Study Extension

Greetings and welcome back from winter break!

This winter break I spent my time working on my dissertation. The data from the quantitative study is remarkable, and my dissertation committee is impressed. I have been asked to add some qualitative pieces into my study to analyze the data more deeply and broadly. I am reaching out to ask for volunteers to meet with me for a short (about 15 minutes) interview regarding your coaching. My target is to complete an interview with at least three of you between January 7-11, if that is possible. The more interviews completed, the better, but three is the minimum number. The questions are:

1. Why did you decide to become a literacy coach?
2. What has contributed to your success as a virtual literacy coach?
3. What has limited your success as a virtual literacy coach?
4. What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach?
5. How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities?

If you have 15 minutes this week that you can invest in my study, I would be most grateful. Please respond to this email or find me on Skype to schedule an appointment on Blackboard. Following is the formal request:

Title: VIRTUAL SCHOOL LITERACY COACHES IN FLORIDA: A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY AND TIME INVESTED IN LITERACY COACHING ACTIVITIES

Investigator(s):

Dr. Susan Stanley, Research Chair
Ms. Thania J. Oller, M.Ed.
Dr. Thomas Gollery, Methodologist

FLVS Contact:

April Fleetwood,
Ed.D.
Research and Evaluation Administrator – Analysis, Assessment, and Accountability

Purpose:

The purpose of the research study is to provide an understanding of the specific aspects of literacy coaching in the virtual school setting. Aspects to be studied include (a) the academic background and professional experiences of virtual school literacy coaches, and (b) the time virtual school literacy coaches spend in specific coaching activities.

What to Expect:

Participants will set an appointment with the researcher to meet in the researcher's Blackboard office address: <http://bit.ly/TheLiteracyCornerFLVS> . The interview will be completed one time and should last approximately 15 minutes. Time for the interview will be selected by the interviewee and researcher and will be booked via Outlook email calendar.

Participation will involve orally responding to 5 interview questions. The interview will be recorded on Blackboard Collaborate and transcribed by the researcher.

Participants must be 18 years or older to participate.

Participants may skip any question they do not want to answer.

Participants will be sent a transcript of their interview and given 48 hours to make any changes to their responses.

Risks:

There are no risks associated with this project which are expected to be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to the participants in the study. However, participants may gain appreciation and understanding of how research is conducted.

Compensation:

Participants in the study will not receive any form of compensation.

Your Rights and Confidentiality:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. Participants may request a copy of their interview recording and transcript.

Confidentiality:

Your survey data will be protected through the coding of demographic information. All interview responses are subject to the Blackboard Collaborate confidentiality agreement with FLVS. Data will be stored through Blackboard Collaborate recordings and in the investigator's primary files. There are no foreseeable risks to maintaining the confidentiality of the data. The data will be reported using charts and graphics and will not include any identifiable information.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office, and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. Data will be destroyed five years after the study has been completed.

Contacts:

You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and email addresses:

April Fleetwood, Ed.D.

Research and Evaluation Administrator – Analysis, Assessment, and Accountability

Phone: 352.219.0494

Email: afleetwood@flvs.net

Dr. Susan Stanley, Research Chair
Southeastern University
College of Education
1000 Longfellow Blvd.
Lakeland, FL 33801
Email: skstanley1@seu.edu

Ms. Thania J. Oller, M.Ed.
6833 Eagle Ridge Loop
Lakeland, FL 33813
Email: tjoller@seu.edu

Dr. Thomas Gollery, Methodologist
Southeastern University
College of Education
1000 Longfellow Blvd.
Lakeland, FL 33801
Email: tjgollery@seu.edu

Should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study:

Ms. Thania J. Oller, M.Ed.
6833 Eagle Ridge Loop
Lakeland, FL 33813
Email: tjoller@seu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office IRB@seu.edu

If you chose to participate:

Please select Yes as your voting option on this email.

Please respond to this email or contact the researcher via Skype by January 11 to schedule an interview appointment.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix G

Interview Guide Slideshow Used During Interview

Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. Participants may request a copy of their interview recording and transcript.

[Participant Confidentiality](#)

Thank you for your participation in the study: VIRTUAL SCHOOL LITERACY COACHES IN FLORIDA: A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF EFFICACY AND TIME INVESTED IN LITERACY COACHING ACTIVITIES

[A copy of all confidentiality practices is being sent to you as a document.](#)

Do you agree to
participate in
this interview
process?

Participant Confidentiality

Why did you decide to
become a literacy coach?

Question One

What has contributed to your
success as a virtual literacy
coach?

Question Two

What has limited your success
as a virtual literacy coach?

Question Three

What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach?

Question Four

How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities?

Question Five

Participant Input

Thank you for participating in the
interview process.

A copy of the interview transcript will
be sent to you. You will have until 4:00
PM on Friday, January 11, 2019 to make
corrections, additions, or deletions to
the transcript.

Do you have any questions?

Appendix H

Interview Transcripts

Literacy Coach 1

1. Why did you decide to become a literacy coach?

So, when I first started teaching, I was a career changer; and I walked right into a reading classroom and I had never been a classroom teacher before. And, long story short, in order to continue teaching reading, I had to do the reading endorsement at that time. So, I started that reading endorsement process, but I wanted to do it through the university so that it would go towards my master's degree in reading. So, once I jumped in and started taking those courses, I realized that I had been doing my students a serious disservice because I was just teaching them the stories. I wasn't teaching them that process of learning to, you know, break down a text and those strategies that could really help a struggling reader. So, once I realized that I didn't know what I didn't know when I was teaching, I became fascinated by the process of learning to decode, break down (and) analyze text. And I just feel in love with it. So, from there I finished my master's degree, and at the time I was teaching intensive reading as well as gifted. And, I saw my colleagues doing the same things that I'd been doing, and I wanted to be able to educate others about teaching students that process of reading and writing rather than teaching them, you know, definitions of concepts. Like I saw, I saw other colleagues who were really good at teaching, umm what is the main idea? What is plot? And students could define that, but they didn't know how to find it. So, that was what initially fascinated me about the role of the literacy coach. And then it just kind of evolved from there. And I

just fell in love with the PD aspect of it, and the creative aspect. Yes, that was my beginning, though.

2. What has contributed to your success as a virtual literacy coach?

I think having the background in brick-and-mortar was really important. And, like I said, I became consumed by strategy and learning more about strategies. So, having that toolbox in brick-and-mortar to bring to virtual was very helpful. I also think that having the opportunity to be creative and not be boxed in has really contributed to my success from the standpoint of, you know, seeing a need and being able to meet that need vs., like in my previous district. You know, we would roll out almost like a specific formula. Here is what we are going to do this year. Here is a strategy we are going to focus on, and we are going to travel around the district and we are going to educate others on this. And, then you know, it would switch gears the following year, so we never got to build, and we never got to write our own prescription. You know, if, we would do what we were told whereas here in the virtual environment if feel like we are given a lot more, you know, freedom to look at what the instructors need. Look at how the strategies transfer from brick-and-mortar to virtual, and then write our own prescription and bring in our own creativity. So, I think that has added to my success. Having that creative freedom and having the support to do what we see is needed.

3. What has limited your success as a virtual literacy coach?

You know, really, I think that in the same way that we are given this freedom. Which is wonderful. I think, the one thing I would say that has been limiting is the system. The

way, you know, particularly in this lay side, the way the organization is set up. From the standpoint that teachers may get a student, that may not even be their student, in the live lesson and then they may not see that student again. So, that inability to see that follow through. To work with, say, “Johnny is struggling with, you know, comprehension”. So, you teach Johnny a strategy during the live lesson, but you don’t have that opportunity to follow-through with Johnny because Johnny might not ever come back, or Johnny might not ever have to come period. You know, the kids who really need the help might not show. So, that system, that piece has been a little limiting. I think there are creative ways to get around that, by working one-on-one with teachers, and having teachers work one-on-one with students, or even working one-on-one with students who have been struggling and setting up, like, tutoring sessions. Or, like with the Strategy in Action series. I would really like to set up something for students where once a month they get to learn a strategy and I can teach the teachers that same strategy so there’s more follow through. But I think, I think the systems piece has been a little limiting. And I would also say, I can’t remember where I heard this research, but I remember reading research when I was in my master’s program, and I want to say that it takes two years, possibly three, to see the school-wide impact of an instructional coach or a literacy coach. So, I think sometimes the frequent movement in the virtual environment, and I don’t know if that is specific to FLVS or if other virtual schools have the same, you know, like with us being reassigned. I think that can be limiting too.

4. What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach?

I think I use a lot of observational data. You know getting, once I work with teachers on the Strategy in Action, and then I meet one-on-one for that coaching conversation regarding implementation of that strategy, then getting in their live lesson and seeing them use that strategy and see the kids have success with that strategy. I think that is probably my best measure, that observation. Also, feedback from ILs, you know when they come back at the end of the year with the evaluations and can give me some data regarding how many teachers are hitting highly effective in the area using of literacy. I think that helps me measure my success. I would to get better about data virtually as a literacy coach to be able to pinpoint that. You know and being on the full-time side I think I have seen some of that and being able to do that, but you know it's slow going since I just joined full-time. Hopefully, I'll get to stay put for a couple of years and I'll be able to see that measure through the data, that evidence through the data.

5. How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities?

That is a tough one because it varies. But I think my number one priority, if I get any opportunity to work one-on-one with a teacher or in a small group with a teacher, that's what I prioritize. Because I think that coaching conversation, and once you get the coaching cycle going, and then they come back, I think that's where I get the most bang for my buck because then, when they are team teaching other teachers see that and then they reach out. And then other teachers see that, and they reach out. So, then really it becomes like this snowball effect. So that's always my priority, working one-on-one with teachers to help them be excited about what they are doing, and try a literacy strategy and have success with that literacy strategy. I also find that I, I certainly use the guidance of

my IL. And I am fortunate that the IL I report to was a literacy coach, and she gives me creativity but she gets it, so she's very supportive. So, I definitely take her feedback. So, even just, like I mentioned before, I am very passionate about finding those strategies and then designing that PD. So, I think I prioritize the small group PD and the Strategy In Action sessions.

Literacy Coach 2

1. Why did you decide to become a literacy coach?

My story was probably a little bit different. I was not an education major when I started my college degree. I was a sociology major. And, I got into a Title I school as the first school that I started teaching in. And, luckily, I had of my courses completed that I needed in order to be considered highly qualified. So, I did those while I was in school whereas most who complete their degree outside of the education realm will do those once they start teaching. I had, at the time, a very involved at the time the title was a reading coach at my school, who was working a lot with the newer teachers making sure that we had the skills that we needed. So, I got to work very closely with the reading coach at the time. And she would come and do, you know visit the classrooms, nothing as far as observations. I was teaching language arts at the time. She asked if I would be interested in getting my reading endorsement. I started on that actually my first-year teaching. Actually, it did take a couple of years and I taught in the reading classroom for three years once I had my reading endorsement. And, from there, that same coach that I had worked with for almost five years was moving into our magnet coordinator position, and the literacy coach position was open for interviews. And, so, I decided to go ahead and try that because I had worked so closely with her and getting the reading

endorsement. And, because a lot of teachers at the time saw the reading endorsement as “Oh, I’m going to be working with level 1 and 2 students and that’s all I’m going to see all day”. But, to me, it was the classes that I liked, because I enjoyed my intensive reading classes. So, I figured, if I could kind of continue with the idea that my reading coach at the time instilled in me as far as showing you (that) getting this information is not only going to help you with your students and finding out where their areas of weakness and areas of strength are, it was also going to hopefully, allow me the time to work with teachers where then I could then share that knowledge and passing it on.

2. What has contributed to your success as a virtual literacy coach?

It was definitely a big change coming from brick-and-mortar. Again, a lot of our roles were different. So, definitely the success I would say here at the virtual school is that there is so much support. And, the ILs that we have are very willing to, kind of, learn right alongside us. I feel like the virtual option is one of those that is always changing and evolving so we are always learning together. I get to work side-by-side with teachers who teach these amazing content areas, that I might not necessarily have worked with in a brick-and-mortar school. For example, like AP computer science, and how we can incorporate literacy into their subject area. And almost looking at the language of computer science as almost like a foreign language. So, not only am I able to help the teachers that I work with, the teachers are able to help me to see their content area and really dive a little bit deeper and help them to see what strategies are going to help them. It’s not just to see the blanket approach anymore. I’m kind of getting to see and learn all of these different content areas that I might not have had the opportunity to work with in

a traditional brick-and-mortar school. I've also seen myself working more with higher-level students, so being able to learn a little bit more about the AP strategies that work. So, I would say, definitely in the virtual world it is all about the support and the interest in learning what I do as well. Instead of me always having the presentations and stuff like that, the teachers really get involved because working with the literacy coach, I would say, in the virtual world is not looked upon as what some might have said in the traditional world as a negative. You know, like if you saw your literacy coach coming into your room a teacher might wonder "what am I doing wrong?". And I would say in the virtual world, it's kind of looked upon as "I worked with my literacy coach and this is what we did together, and it was a great experience." So, definitely support.

3. What has limited your success as a virtual literacy coach?

I don't think anything has limited. I would say that, again, it goes back to that idea that a lot of teachers come from that brick-and-mortar. So, sometimes just getting their buy-in would probably be what has limited my success. But then, again, it's one of those, I look at that limit as something that I can turn into a challenge for myself of "how can I get these teachers to work with me?" So, as far as limiting, I would say that. And, the idea of not being quote-on-quote face-to-face with the teachers each and every day would probably be the only limit; because they don't see me, you know, physically walking down the hall, or saying "hi" to them in the cafeteria.

4. What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach?

I always have the informal and formal evaluations that the ILs do. But, in addition to that, I like to send out a survey to the teachers that I work with. And I send it specifically to

the ones that I work with. Because, I have, specifically in the schoolhouses that I work with over 300 plus teachers. So, I always like to get that true data and really see from those that have worked with me what they feel I can work on. Because the same think that I talk to them about being reflective on their practices, I also want to know exactly what they feel, you know from their perspective, what I could have done differently or what I can do to continue to help the teachers who are in this virtual world. And, a lot of them, again, are coming in new, and they are looking for guidance, and they are looking for support. And sometimes those teachers that have gone through their first year have one year to say “this would work” as far as, you know, maybe having an open office hour vs. some teachers that I have worked with that say, you know, providing video tutorials of the strategies and having them in one location. So, I like to use that information to then continue to keep that evidence of my growth. And, then at the end of the year, anything that I implement I always like to reflect on how the teachers are using it. For example, with some of the videos, I put them on the YouTube, so it tells me how many views. And then, in speaking with teachers, I’ll also collect some data as far as what they are using. If I’m in live lessons and I see a strategy being used, I’ll always make sure to reach out to that teacher and see how they feel things went. As far as that evidence of my level of expertise is really that feedback from the teachers and the ILs that I work with directly.

5. How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities?

I would same that same thing, teacher feedback. And, making sure that I meet their needs. And that same aspect of how they are meeting their students’ needs. So, again, that teacher survey, the IL feedback, meeting with ILs, meeting with our lead teachers, and

determining what the needs of maybe their pod might be. I also am a facilitator for PLC in one of my schoolhouses regarding progress monitoring so it's a great time to also, you know, talk a little bit deeper with those teachers that are in there and really hearing what they need. So, depending on the teachers' need is what I then take out chunks of time in order to schedule important meetings with teachers, or looking at research for things that they might not quote-on-quote not have time to do because their schedules not allow for it. I can then go on and gather some information that they are specifically looking for that then will hopefully free up some time and allow us to then have a little bit longer when we have our coaching session. So determining it is definitely on feedback from those surveys.

Literacy Coach 3

1. Why did you decide to become a literacy coach?

So, I had been teaching in brick-and-mortar various grade levels for about 15 years and I had gotten to the point where I was a lead teacher in various grade levels. And I was doing a lot of what I would consider coaching anyways just being a lead teacher, plus all the procedures and expectations of running your own classroom. So, I decided that I had had my master's (degree) in reading, so why not try to become a reading coach. The school that I was currently working at did not have a reading coach. So, I had to go to my principal and, it was a charter school, and when I first applied with her, I had said that I didn't know how long I would want to be in the classroom vs. maybe going into some administrative pieces; and she said at that point she didn't have any money to do that so to just start in it as a classroom teacher, and you know, kind of grow from there. But, I had to go to her with kind of a plan, and what my job as a reading coach would do for her

school, not just the usual stuff so far as, you know, increasing student achievement scores and engagement. But I just talked to her about how some of the teachers that were coming there were new to Florida, or new to just teaching in general, or career changers, so they need a lot of, kind of, hand holding or coaching. So, I was already doing, so just talking to her about what it would look like if I came totally out of the classroom. So, I guess what kind of made me or pushed me into becoming a literacy coach was I got to the point where I was enjoying spending time coaching and working with the teachers more than I was necessarily being in my old classroom. I got to the point where my planning period before and after school were spent in teacher's classrooms, you know, just like working with them or helping them put up a board, or you know, going over test results with them. So, I was kind of already doing it, so I figured, why not make a full-time job out of it? And that's where that journey started.

2. What has contributed to your success as a virtual literacy coach?

I would definitely say coming in with a toolbox was helpful, being a coach in brick-and-mortar was definitely helpful coming into our atmosphere here at FLVS. But I do think, and I've had a conversation with some of the coaches and teachers about this, is I was at a disadvantage not having taught virtually. So, I spend a lot of time talking to teachers and joining live lessons and trying to kind of understand their world so that when they come to us for help, or when I, you know, suggest something is not so out-of-the-box or unreachable because I don't have an idea. So, I would say that what's contributed to my success is definitely the flexibility that FLVS gives us to go into live lessons and the teachers' openness and receptiveness of that. Because I needed to learn what it looked

like on the other side. I would definitely say that my crew of my coaches that I bounce things off of and in our team, is definitely our team is definitely a part of that huge success. It's nice to be able to chat with people who are going through the same thing as you, or may not be, so you can bounce things off of them as it comes. But that would be, probably, some of my pillars for success.

3. What has limited your success as a virtual literacy coach?

Limited. So, we have had to change content areas sometimes to kind of acclimate to people leaving or, you know, just kind of restructuring within our literacy team. So, I spend a lot of time working with building relationships with the teachers that I support because it is a little bit harder in our world, because we don't see them face-to-face. So, when we don't have those constant communications with every single one of them, you know that we would maybe in a brick-and-mortar atmosphere of 50 teachers or around a smaller group of them, since we do support so many. So, I would say that moving or supporting one content area for a period of time and then moving to a different content area is definitely something that's a struggle, I wouldn't say that's limited my success, but I would say it's a struggle because then you have to start all over again forming those relationships. You know, it takes about six months to get solid and know, and make these teachers feel, you know, that they can come to you no matter what, for anything that they need assistance on. You are not there if they are in trouble or if they are doing something wrong. So, I think keeping us where we are for a length of time would be a good kind of recipe for success just because a lot of the success of being a literacy coach does depend on those relationships we build with the teachers that we have. But I feel, I do love

stretching and the challenges. And I do love learning the new concepts and new content areas and meeting new teachers. So, it does have its upside.

4. What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach?

So, I send out surveys at the beginning, so like in June, at the end of the school year, excuse me. I send out a survey to teachers that I've coached and schoolhouses just for them to give me feedback on what they liked, what I can do better, what they are looking for the next year and I used that in, Kind of, my thought process in planning out what my year will look like. I know that we talk about what the coaching evaluation looks like and how there are some pieces on there that maybe don't apply to us, or there are some pieces on there that maybe are missing that would apply to us. But definitely as far as I know ILs give me feedback as pertaining to the teacher's evaluation, saying that when they meet the teachers, the teachers have said "oh, yeah that's an area where I met with () o". So, you know, things like that. Again, I gather feedback from my ILs as far as, you know, what they feel that I am being successful on or where they see a need for improvement. But, I'm never an expert and that's why you have the expertise. And, I love the difference between those two words because I am constantly learning, always trying to better my craft, so that I can help the teachers. So, it's kind of, if my IL is happy and I'm doing what they asked, if my teachers are happy, I kind of feel like I'm ahead of the game.

5. How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities?

So, I would definitely say that if I see a need for something in a schoolhouse, whether a bunch of teachers asked about it or an IL has asked me to specifically address something, that's definitely a place that I invest my time on. I also try to attend as many PLCs as I

can and pod meetings as I possibly can so that I can see what their, where their need is, so if I come across something I can, you know, shoot it their way or help them with something that I find that they need. I kind of made a schedule for myself at the beginning of the school year based off, kind of, ebbs and flows of last year. You know, which like what teachers are usually looking for in January, February time let's say for example; which is usually like getting prepped for their formal eval. So, you know, I spend some time creating some things that have to do with their evaluations' domains or things like that. So, I kind of see trends come and go and, you know FLVS, and seeing what the teachers are looking for each year. But that can always change, you know, you never know with certainty what is going to happen next year at this time, but I would say that I kind of feed off of them. I rarely, rarely, just in my mind come up with something and say "oh, now would be a good time for some vocabulary instruction" 'cause I don't. If they are not seeing it as a need or a desire right then and there, they are going to file it away and never come back to it. So, that's kind of how I spread out my thought process as far as what my time or calendar looks like.

Literacy Coach 4

1. Why did you decide to become a literacy coach?

Well, I guess that I would have to say that as a student in reading I always struggled. And, it wasn't until I was in second grade that I had a teacher when we moved to Florida that worked with me and helped me to learn how to read and love how to read. And, so, when I became a teacher, I became an elementary teacher, and I taught kindergarten. I really enjoyed watching kindergarten students become readers and love reading and that's what they wanted to learn. And, as my career progressed, teaching third grade, first

grade and third grade, and then middle school, I had always taught reading. So, when the literacy coach position started in Lake County, I was not the literacy coach, but I was the reading grade level chair. And I wanted to be a literacy coach because I felt like I had the knowledge of reading, especially having taught young readers up unto middle school and I always felt that I was a life-long learner and wanted to learn brand-new things to help kids want to read and love to read and learn how to read; and become better readers. So, that would probably be why I decided to become a literacy coach. And, then when I did become one in the middle school level, I really realized the true scope of what it is to be a literacy coach and knew that I wanted to help teachers. So, I would probably say that was the defining factor, just being able to help teachers and also help students become better readers.

2. What has contributed to your success as a virtual literacy coach?

I would probably say collaboration, asking questions of other literacy coaches, going to the literacy coordinator and making sure, I guess using her as a sound board to, not make sure, but to make sure that what I am sharing with teachers will be helpful. I would also say that researching online, going to teachers' lessons to see what they are doing. And, using the strategies and resources that I've found and that I've used and just thinking of a way to make them virtual so that they are able to be shared with other teachers at FLVS. And, also, I think working with students as well in the small group setting has helped me be I think successful as a virtual school literacy coach because I am actually, kind of in the trenches with the teachers. And, making sure that the standards are taught and that kids are engaging in the activities and the resources that I am sharing with teachers. So, I

would say that working with students and working closely with the teachers has also contributed to the successes of a virtual literacy coach.

3. What has limited your success as a virtual literacy coach?

I would say maybe my, I don't want to say lack of knowledge because I do know technology. But I would say maybe keeping up with the latest technology that might contribute or help me take and virtualize some of the literacy strategies and resources. That would be, maybe, the limitations of a virtual literacy coach because I don't feel like lack of communication is part of that, being virtual I think there's good communication. So, if there's anything I would just say maybe the technology portion.

4. What measure do you use as evidence of your level of expertise as a literacy coach?

I would probably, not probably, I would say that the evaluation rubric would be how I measure my expertise as a literacy coach. I would also say teacher feedback from sessions that I've done, or I've co-facilitated. And then, also, just by measure of like our coaching books that we use and modeling myself after some of the things that I felt were important as a literacy coach. But I would say probably the greatest measure would be our evaluation rubric.

5. How do you determine how to invest your time in coaching activities?

Well, this year as the full-time Flex and elementary coach, my time invested this year is more so in coming up with the resources and strategies for the teachers. And that's been determined because I've been asked at this point not to really reach out to teachers

because the new full-time elementary teachers are all brand-new and they are learning how to do everything. And, then of course with the curriculum issues with elementary. So, the way I determine how I'm using my time is making sure that I understand the new curriculum. And then I'm spending time with my small group teaching and coming up with that. And also, when full-time admin asked me to use specific things with respect to reading, those are the things that I'm also putting time in. And then, of course our projects for LLT, and then, also, like the dyslexia. So, this year has been more project-based things that I've been doing and when things come up with teachers requesting help or admin requesting help. That will be how I'm determining how I'm spending my time with the coaching things that I'm expected to do.

