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Leadership for Literacy Coaching: The Principal's Role in Launching a New Coaching Program

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the relationship between principal leadership and variation in teachers' participation in a new literacy coaching program: Content-Focused Coaching® (CFC). *Research design:* Twenty-nine schools were randomly assigned to participate in the CFC program or to serve as a comparison. Interviews were conducted with elementary school principals and coaches, and teachers completed surveys describing their experiences with their new coach. Correlation analyses investigated the relationship between the categories of principal support and the frequency of teachers' participation in individual coaching activities. Principals' actions and beliefs were also compared across schools, with teachers' relatively high and low participation in coaching, to identify patterns in principal leadership. *Findings:* Principal leadership was significantly associated with the frequency with which teachers conferred with their new CFC coach and were observed by their new coach as teaching reading comprehension lessons. Principal behaviors associated with teachers' increased engagement with coaches included actively participating in the CFC program and publicly endorsing the coach as a source of literacy expertise to teachers. Principal beliefs

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regarding a literacy coach's role and responsibilities were associated with the frequency with which teachers opened their classrooms to the new coaches. *Implications:* This study provides insight into the features of principal leadership that may support coaches in engaging with teachers and gaining access to their classrooms. Observing teachers' lessons is a critical dimension of effective coaching and a difficult task for coaches to accomplish. Learning how principals can positively contribute to this process could help schools and districts make more effective use of their literacy coaching resources.

Keywords

beliefs, coaching, elementary schools, literacy coaching, principals, qualitative analysis

School district leaders and principals in nearly every urban district in the country are hiring coaches to help meet ambitious reform goals for instruction and learning. Instructional coaching, in its idealized form, intends to create the types of sustained, instructionally focused, collaborative interactions in schools that research and theory suggest are most effective for improving instructional quality (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Lieberman, 1995; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2006; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). Despite the promise of coaching for engendering and supporting new forms of teaching, relatively few studies have directly assessed the influence of instructional coaching on instruction and learning, and results from these studies have yielded mixed results (Garet et al., 2008; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Marsh, McCombs, et al., 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Ross, 1992).

Variable implementation is one reason why the research evidence is mixed with regard to the influence of coaching on instruction and student learning; that is, the amount and type of coaching that teachers receive is substantively different across schools. In this regard, coaching policies and programs appear to be vulnerable to the same contextual complexities as other educational reforms (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Coburn, 2001, 2006; Coburn & Stein, 2006; Honig, 2006; McLaughlin, 1990; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). Specifically, researchers and practitioners have found that the enactment of instructional coaching in schools is influenced by variation in organizational and social factors, such as a district's policy for determining who is qualified to serve as a coach (Allington, 2006;

Frost & Bean, 2006; Roller, 2006), the way that the coaching job is interpreted (Duessen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Rivera, Burley, & Sass, 2004), the existing norms for teachers' professional community (Stoelinga, 2008), and the principals' leadership (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Mangin, 2007, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role that one of these factors—principal leadership—plays in the implementation of a new literacy coaching program. We compare interviews with principals and coaches to teachers' reports of the frequency of their engagement in different coaching activities, to identify the dimensions of principal leadership that supported or constrained coaches' beginning work with teachers in the program's first year.

Roots and Effectiveness of Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching as a practice emerged in the 1980s in response to the need for new models of clinical supervision and teachers' professional development. Before the 1980s, behaviorist psychology informed the models for clinical supervision and professional development prevalent in many schools (Nelson & Sassi, 2000). Teachers' evaluations were often based on checklists of discrete observed behaviors identified in research as being correlated with student achievement gains. Attendant opportunities for teachers' learning largely consisted of participation in stand-alone institutes or workshops, separate from the contexts in which teachers' worked, and were characterized by didactic instruction. However, as districts struggled to meet new and challenging standards for learning, it became apparent that many teachers lacked the knowledge and skills necessary to meet reform goals for instruction (Cohen, 1990; Cohen & Ball, 1990; Cuban, 1993). New models of supervision and professional development were needed to bring about the transformations in teachers' thinking and practice needed to substantively improve student achievement (Garman, Glickman, Hunter, & Haggerson, 1987; Gusky, 1986; Kennedy, 1987; Lieberman, 1987; Schon, 1987; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

The models that emerged—among them instructional coaching—were highly influenced by the cognitive and situative learning theories that had come into prominence in the education community (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Spillane et al., 2002; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985). These theories frame learners as co-constructors of knowledge, and learning as occurring through social interaction and participation in authentic activities with more expert others who model and assist performance (e.g., an

adult, a more knowledgeable peer). These theories for teachers' learning had various implications: first, that professional development should be authentic, that is, based in the contexts in which teachers work (schools and classrooms) and focused on the specifics of teachers' everyday practice (e.g., the curricula being taught); second, that it should support teachers to become more reflective; third, that it should foster social interaction and collaboration between teachers; and, fourth, that it should provide teachers with the opportunity to see practices modeled and to receive assistance and feedback on their enactment of these practices. Instructional coaching was seen as a way to create these types of authentic, reflective, collaborative, and assisted learning opportunities for teachers.

Over time, different coaching models and philosophies have developed (e.g., Costa & Garmston, 1994; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003). For example, Costa and Garmson's model of cognitive coaching (1994) focuses attention on eliciting and examining teachers' decisions and beliefs in the context of teaching to effect change in instruction. Veenman and Denessen (2001) describe an alternative model of coaching based on the assumption that long-term changes in instructional practice occur in response to change in students' learning outcomes; this model focuses on directly enhancing aspects of practice that are likely to have the greatest near-term impact on student achievement. Models of coaching differ with regard to the degree to which coaches adopt an expert-versus-coequal-collaborator stance with teachers (Borman & Feger, 2006). Across models and approaches, however, coaches' intended work with teachers share many common characteristics. These include (but are not limited to) modeling instructional practices, reflecting on observed instruction, studying student work with teachers, lesson planning, and leading study groups.

Research on the Effectiveness of Coaching

Although the popularity of coaching has steadily increased over the past two decades, evidence is scant that coaching is an effective strategy for improving instruction and learning. Relatively few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of coaching, and the research that does exist on this topic has been mostly based on observational (as opposed to controlled) designs that limit the inferences that can be drawn from the results. With this caveat in mind, most research has found positive results for the influence of coaching on teachers' practice. For example, Joyce and Showers (1996) conducted a series of studies in the 1980s investigating the influence of their peer-coaching model on teachers' instruction. They found that teachers who

participated in peer coaching were more likely to apply new strategies in their teaching. Neufeld and Roper (2003) and Knight (2004) similarly found that teachers who participated in coaching were more likely to try out new instructional practices learned in traditional workshops than were teachers who did not participate in coaching.

In contrast, research on the effectiveness of coaching for improving student achievement has yielded mixed results. Ross (1992) found that middle school students whose history teachers had greater contact with their coaches showed greater gains in achievement than did those students whose teachers had less frequent contact with their coaches. More recently, Marsh, McCombs, and colleagues (2008), in study of a statewide reading coach program in middle schools, found that coaching appeared to have a small but positive effect on reading achievement in two of the four cohorts of students included in the study. The researchers also found a small and significant relationship between students' achievement and the frequency with which coaches reviewed assessment data with teachers. However, a national evaluation of the Reading First initiative, which includes a substantial focus on coaching, found no effects for student achievement (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). A recent study conducted by Garet et al. (2008), one of the few to employ a controlled designed, likewise did not find a positive effect of coaching on student learning. In this study, elementary schools were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: to participate in professional development institutes aimed at increasing primary grade teachers' knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction, to participate in those same institutes but also receive coaching, or to serve as a control sample. Results indicated a positive effect of both professional development interventions on teachers' knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction and their observed instruction. Neither intervention, however, resulted in higher student achievement, and no added effect was detected from the coaching intervention for teachers' instructional practice or for student achievement.

Instructional Leadership and Education Reform

Dating back to RAND'S Change Agent Study (1973–1978), researchers have taken seriously the role that principal leadership plays in mediating the implementation and effectiveness of education reform programs and policies (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, 1990). Principals have many duties, among which is their contribution to determining a school's schedule, their evaluation of teachers, and their allocation of discretionary funds. They thus exert a substantial influence on teachers' opportunity to collaborate and plan lessons together, on the expectations communicated to teachers for

acceptable and good instructional practice, and on the type and focus of teachers' professional development—that is, school-level conditions that research indicates are critical to the teachers' successful implementation of reform-oriented instructional strategies (e.g., Goldenberg, 2004).

Numerous research studies show a relationship between the quality of principal leadership and improved outcomes for student learning. Specifically, student achievement gains have been associated with a principal's ability to communicate a clear vision for desired instructional practice and to actively support teachers to improve their instruction—for example, by regularly spending time in teachers' classrooms, creating school-based opportunities for teachers' learning, and seeking out professional development opportunities that are aligned with individual teachers' needs (Dinham, 2005; Kurki, Boyle, & Aladjem, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Marsh, Hamilton, & Gill, 2008; Quint, Akey, Rappaport, & Willner, 2007; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). For instance, research conducted by the Consortium for Chicago School Reform indicates that principals in schools that showed greater-than-expected improvements in student achievement made a major commitment to professional development targeted to individual teachers' needs. These principals allocated not only time in the school day for this to occur but also the discretionary resources to support it. More important, the professional development provided to teachers in these schools was clearly tied to an overarching plan for school improvement (Sebring & Bryk, 2000). In their study of instructional leadership in three urban school districts, Quint, Akey, Rappaport, and Willner (2007) found that greater principal involvement in professional development for teachers, focused directly on instructional practice, was associated with its higher implementation in practice, which was in turn associated with higher student reading and math achievement. Marsh et al. (2008) similarly found that students in schools where the principals received high ratings for instructional leadership scored 0.7 and 0.6 standard deviations higher in reading and math, respectively, than did students in schools where principals received lower ratings.

Research also shows a link between student achievement gains and principals' ability to foster strong social ties among school staff and the community (studies reviewed in Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Riehl, 2000; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). Sebring and Bryk (2000), for example, found that principals of schools in which students made greater-than-expected achievement gains created the conditions for greater collaboration and trust among teachers and more successfully engaged members of the community in helping their schools reach reform goals. Students in these schools were also more likely to report that their teachers cared about them and that they felt safe in their schools.

Finally, studies of school leadership have focused on principals' cognitions, their mental models or internal schemas (e.g., Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Specifically, researchers have investigated the relationship between variability in principals' values, beliefs, and problem-solving processes and school outcomes (Begley & Leithwood, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Leithwood & Stager, 1989). For example, Begley and Leithwood (1990) found that the values held by principals played a significant role in their decision to adopt an educational innovation. Leithwood and Stager (1989) found that more effective principals had more flexible problem-solving processes.

Principals' Role in Supporting Instructional Coaching

As with other educational reforms, practitioners engaged in designing and implementing instructional coaching programs (see sources summarized in Shanklin, 2006), along with some research, suggest that principals' actions and their beliefs regarding the roles and responsibilities of a coach play an important role in the implementation of coaching in schools (Camburn, Kimball, & Lowenhaupt, 2008; Garmston, 1987; Mangin, 2007, 2008). In an evaluation of a districtwide literacy coach initiative, for example, Camburn et al. (2008) found that coaches and the district administrators overseeing their work reported that principals' demands on coaches to perform administrative and managerial tasks was a significant impediment to their work with teachers. Practitioners and researchers have also proposed that the criteria used by principals (or districts) for determining who is qualified to serve as a coach influence the quality of coaching available to teachers in schools (Allington, 2006; Frost & Bean, 2006; Mangin, 2007, 2008). Mangin (2008), for example, found that districts and principals often showed a preference for hiring coaches internally and for reasons other than their pedagogical content knowledge and expertise (e.g., to avoid having to lay off a teacher). Not surprisingly, teachers and coaches reported that lack of content expertise on the part of coaches made teachers less likely to participate in coaching. To our knowledge, no studies have directly linked or examined the relation between principal leadership and the successful implementation of a coaching program, as measured by teachers' participation in specific coaching activities.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to address existing gaps in the research on instructional leadership as well as the contextual factors contributing to variable implementation of instructional coaching programs in schools. Specifically, we investigate the relationship between principals' leadership (their

actions and beliefs) and the nature and frequency of teachers' interactions with their new literacy coaches. The research questions that we address in this study are as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between principal leadership and the frequency of teacher participation in specific coaching activities?

Research Question 2: What principal actions most support teacher participation in specific coaching activities?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between a principal's conception of the role and duties of a literacy coach and teachers' participation in specific coaching activities?

Research Question 4: What dimensions of principal leadership do coaches perceive as being supportive of their work with teachers?

Context for the Study

This study is situated within a larger randomized controlled trial investigating the effectiveness of a literacy coach professional development program, Content-Focused Coaching® (CFC), on reading comprehension instruction and students' reading achievement in the upper elementary grades. Twenty-nine schools serving the lowest-achieving students in a medium-sized urban district in the Southwest were randomly assigned to receive a CFC-trained coach ($n = 15$) or continue with the professional development resources that were standard for the district ($n = 14$). Here we present data from the first year of the study, when CFC-trained coaches began working with teachers in the treatment schools.

Previous analyses of our data indicated that a principal's willingness to share leadership, as assessed on teacher surveys administered before launching the CFC program, predicted greater teacher participation in coaching at the end of the first year of the program—specifically, coaching that focused on planning for and enacting instruction as well as studying the theory underlying effective reading comprehension instruction. Our survey was limited, however, in that it assessed only two dimensions of a principal's instructional leadership—participation in past literacy reform activities and willingness to share leadership—and that the items that composed these constructs were defined a priori. In other words, these analyses did not allow for the possibility that other important aspects of principal leadership might influence teachers' engagement with their new CFC coach.

Understanding the limited vision of instructional leadership in our survey, we undertook the study reported here to develop, first, a more nuanced view

of how principals might support or constrain the efforts of new literacy coaches and, second, a set of working hypotheses regarding the characteristics of effective instructional leadership for launching a literacy coaching initiative that could be tested in larger samples of schools. We used an inductive approach to categorize how principals supported the work of their new CFC coaches (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We used the same approach to categorize principals' beliefs (internal schema or mental models; see D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Ruff & Shoho, 2005) regarding the roles and responsibilities of a literacy coach and to analyze the congruence of these beliefs with the vision of coaching promoted by the CFC program. Correlation analyses were employed to evaluate the relation between the categories of principal support and principal beliefs about literacy coaching and the frequency of teachers' participation in specific coaching activities within a school. Further analyses were then conducted to identify principal actions and beliefs that appeared to discriminate between schools that showed relatively high and low levels of teacher participation in specific coaching activities.

Content-Focused Coaching

CFC is an intensive professional development program that aims to ameliorate the problems of implementing effective coaching in schools by, first, providing coaches with the knowledge and skills they need to work effectively with teachers and, second, helping to create the organizational conditions in schools and districts that are posited to support effective coaching. The program was originally developed for mathematics (West & Staub, 2003) but was adapted by fellows from the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning to support literacy instruction in elementary schools (Staub & Bickel, 2003; Staub, West, & Bickel, 2003).

For the purpose of the study, school district leaders and fellows from the Institute for Learning collaborated to hire the CFC coaches. Together, they created a hiring procedure that included coach candidates' bringing in samples of lesson plans they had created and their commenting on a videotaped reading comprehension lesson. CFC coach candidates were also required to create discussion questions they might use with teachers in leading a study group of a professional text.

CFC coaches engaged in 3 days of professional development per month over the course of the academic year as led by fellows from the Institute for Learning. Given that larger systems as well as policies at the district level influence the interactions between coaches and teachers (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Glennan & Resnick, 2004; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Resnick &

Spillane, 2006; Stein, Smith, & Silver, 1999), principals and central office leaders participated in CFC coach training 1 day a month. The primary reason for engaging district administrators and principals was to establish a common vision of good literacy coaching and reading comprehension instruction that is supported across the levels of the school system. An additional purpose of including principals in the sessions was to support them and their coaches in working together to plan for the instructional needs of the teachers.

The sequence of the CFC professional development is designed to increase knowledge of the theory and research underlying effective reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing instruction (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Block & Pressley, 2002; Hirsch, 2003, 2006; New Standards, 1999; Resnick, 1995; Resnick & Hall, 2001; Sinatra, Brown, & Reynolds, 2002; Willingham, 2006), with an emphasis on the role of classroom talk in supporting students' understanding of texts—specifically, techniques from *Questioning the Author* (Beck & McKeown, 2006) and *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (Beck et al., 2002). The sessions also focus on building coaches' pedagogical skills as well as their expertise at working effectively with teachers (e.g., techniques for approaching teachers, leading grade-level team meetings, conferring with teachers about their practice, planning lessons with teachers). Over the course of the year, all coaches are provided with the opportunity to observe other coaches, to be observed, and to receive feedback on their enactment of *Questioning the Author* lesson and the coaching of teachers.

CFC coaches, in turn, are expected to implement what they learn from professional development in their work with teachers. CFC coaches are to meet with teachers individually and in weekly grade-level team meetings to study the theory underlying effective reading comprehension instruction and to plan rigorous reading comprehension lessons. CFC coaches are also to model lessons, coteach, observe reading comprehension lessons in teachers' classrooms on a regular basis, and reflect on the effectiveness of these lessons with teachers in postlesson conferences (including what students seemed to understand, what they seemed to have difficulty comprehending, etc.). As such, improved quality of reading comprehension instruction is posited to lead to improved student learning.

Method

Setting and Participants

The district in which the study is located serves large numbers of English-language-learning students from low-income families. The 29 schools that

participated in the larger study (the randomized controlled trial) were chosen from 32 schools serving the lowest-achieving and poorest students in the district. Nearly all the students in the study schools are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and the majority are of minority ethnic origin (80% Latino and 14% African American). More than a third of the students (36%) are classified as *limited-English proficient*, and 2% are immigrants from a non-English-speaking country. As described earlier, the findings presented in this study are from the 15 treatment schools only.

Principals. The principals in the CFC schools ($n = 15$)[1] had been working as principals for an average of 7 years ($SD = 4$ years; range, 4 to 16 years). They had been serving as principals at their current schools for an average of 3 years ($SD = 1.3$; range, 1 to 4 years). All the principals had master's degrees, and one had a doctorate.

Coaches. The CFC coaches ($n = 11$) reported having worked as literacy coaches for an average of 3 years ($SD = 3.6$ years; range, 1 to 10 years). More than half the coaches (60%) held postgraduate degrees. Five coaches divided their time between two schools (the smaller of the lot); the remaining coaches worked in a single school.

Teachers. Nearly all of the eligible fourth- and fifth-grade teachers in the CFC schools agreed to participate in the study (95%; $n = 106$).[2] Teachers had been teaching reading for an average of 8 years (range, 0 to 32 years). English was the language of instruction for 65% of the teachers; the remaining teachers taught in English and Spanish. Nearly a third of the teachers (30%) had master's degrees, and 7% had temporary, provisional, or emergency certification. At the end of the year, 90% of the original 106 teachers ($n = 95$) remained in their schools and were still teaching language arts. Maternity leave was the most frequent reason for their not teaching in their schools in the spring. Additional explanations included personal leave for other reasons and departmentalization (i.e., some teachers started the year teaching reading but switched to teaching another subject midway through the year). Teachers who were not present in the study at the end of the year did not differ from the teachers who remained.

Procedures and Measures

Principal and coach interviews. CFC principals ($n = 15$) and coaches ($n = 11$) were separately interviewed about the CFC program at their school. Five coaches were assigned to two schools, and they were asked about the program at each school. Principals and coaches were each interviewed once toward the end of the school year, using a structured protocol. The length of the interviews ranged from 1 to 3 hours, depending on the responder.

The protocol used for the principal interviews included a number of questions related to actions that the principal had taken to support the work of his or her literacy coach. Rather than ask principals to describe the general support they provided to their coaches, interview questions focused on specific support activities. Sample questions included the following: "How often do you meet with your coach?" "What do you meet about?" "Have you taken any special steps to find time for the coach to work with teachers?" "Have you observed the coach modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms?" The protocol also contained two questions focused on the principal's conceptualization of the literacy coaching job: "How would you describe the role of a literacy coach?" "What kinds of things does your coach do at your school?"

The structured protocol used in the coach interviews included two questions concerning principal support: "What specific actions has your principal taken to support your work?" "What was the most supportive step taken by your principal to assist you?"

A single researcher coded transcripts of the principals' and coaches' interviews. A second researcher coded approximately a third of the principal interviews ($n = 6$) and coach interviews ($n = 6$) to check the reliability of the codes. Agreement was defined as the researchers' assigning the same code or codes to the same response. As such, the level of agreement between researchers was 88%, both for codes describing principal support and for codes describing the role of a literacy coach.

Teacher surveys. In fall (before the assignment of CFC coaches to schools) and again at the end of the first year of the program, teachers completed surveys that included items focused on their work with coaches. Eighty-two percent of the teachers who remained in the study ($n = 78$) completed the survey at the end of the year. Among the topics assessed in the survey were items that measured how often teachers

- met with their CFC coach in grade-level team meetings,
- met with their CFC coach individually,
- taught reading while being observed by their CFC coach (for at least 30 minutes),
- observed a model reading lesson taught by their CFC coach, and
- cotaught a reading lesson with their CFC coach.

Teachers rated the frequency of their participation in these activities on a 5-point scale (5 = *weekly*, 4 = *monthly*, 3 = *four to six times a year*, 2 = *once or twice a year*, 1 = *never*). The average frequency of teachers' participation

in these five coaching activities was calculated for each school at the end of the year (see Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, the most frequent coaching activity in which teachers participated was that of conferring with the coach in grade-level teams. Averaged across all schools, teachers reported attending such meetings almost monthly. The second-most frequent activity was that of conferring with the coach individually, which teachers said they had done approximately four to six times during the year. The three classroom-based activities—being observed by the coach for at least 30 minutes, observing a model lesson taught by the coach, and coteaching a lesson with the coach—all occurred less frequently. It is notable that the frequency of teachers' participation in the coaching activities by the end of the first year was well short of the program's goals (described earlier). Moreover, individual schools showed significant variation in the frequency of teachers' participation in coaching. Looking at the averages for individual schools, School H scored below average across the different coaching activities while School J scored above average for every activity except co-teaching a lesson. Most schools were much less consistent, with scores varying considerably across individual activities.

Analyses

Coach and principal interviews were transcribed and analyzed using QSR N6 (QSR International, Cambridge, MA), the sixth version of a product once known as NUD*IST (Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing). Released by QSR International in 2002, N6 is a qualitative research toolkit for coding and analyzing text documents. Three types of coding procedures were employed to analyze the interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, a process of open coding identified the major ideas contained within each response from each principal or coach to each question. An inductive process then assigned labels (codes) to the different ideas. Second, through a process of axial coding, individual codes and associated text passages were reexamined and compared, and codes were refined or combined as appropriate to characterize a particular action or idea. Finally, the codes were organized into larger categories, each reflecting a dimension of principal support. Table 2 lists the four dimensions and the behaviors included within each.

In the first dimension, treating the coach as a valued professional, principals demonstrate support for coaches by granting them professional autonomy. It includes such behaviors as talking with coaches about their

Table 1. Frequency of Teachers' Participation in Each Coaching Activity Averaged Within School (n = 78 teachers)

School, n = teachers	Met With Coach in Team Meetings	Met With Coach Individually	Observed by Coach in Classroom	Observed Coach Model a Lesson	Cotaught a Lesson With Coach
A, n = 3	4.00	3.67	3.00	2.33	2.33
B, n = 4	2.25	3.25	2.75	1.75	1.25
C, n = 7	3.71	2.57	1.43	2.14	1.71
D, n = 4	3.25	4.00	2.50	2.75	1.00
E, n = 4	4.50	3.50	3.25	2.00	1.75
F, n = 10	4.20	3.00	2.70	2.10	1.30
G, n = 3	3.33	3.00	2.33	2.33	2.67
H, n = 3	2.67	2.33	1.33	1.67	1.33
I, n = 6	2.17	2.33	1.67	1.67	1.50
J, n = 8	5.00	4.38	3.71	2.88	2.13
K, n = 5	4.60	4.00	3.20	2.20	1.50
L, n = 7	3.43	2.86	2.29	2.71	1.86
M, n = 3	3.00	3.33	2.00	3.33	2.33
N, n = 6	4.67	3.83	2.83	2.67	2.33
O, n = 5	4.40	2.60	3.20	2.20	1.60
Average	3.68	3.24	2.55	2.32	1.77

5 = *weekly*, 4 = *monthly*, 3 = *four to six times a year*, 2 = *once or twice a year*, 1 = *never*.

work with teachers, consulting with coaches about schoolwide matters, and trusting coaches to manage their own schedules. In the second dimension, principals show support by publicly endorsing their coach as a source of literacy expertise. For example, the principal might introduce the coach to teachers and actively encourage them to work with him or her. The principal might also include the coach on a schoolwide leadership team or arrange for the coach to lead an in-service session for the whole faculty. The third dimension of principal support for coaching is to provide direct, instrumental assistance. This might involve such actions as arranging time for teachers to meet with the coach, providing the coach with an appropriate office or meeting room, and helping the coach deal with reluctant teachers. In the last dimension, principals show support by actively participating in the CFC program. This could include such actions as sitting in when the coach meets with individual teachers or grade-level teams, observing when the coach models a lesson in a teacher's classroom, or regularly attending CFC training sessions for principals.

Table 2. Codes for Principal Support

The Principal . . .
Treats the coach as a valued professional:
• Lets coach know that he or she values the coach's work with teachers
• Talks with coach about his or her work with teachers (e.g., goals for teacher learning, how these goals will be met)
• Consults with coach about important matters related to schoolwide issues
• Trusts coach to manage his or her own time
Publicly endorses the coach as a source of literacy expertise to teachers:
• Introduced coach to teachers
• Publicly identifies coach as a resource
• Includes coach in schoolwide leadership activities (e.g., serving on curricula committees)
• Lets teachers know that they are expected to work with coach
• Publicly explains or endorses CFC
• Arranges for coach to lead training or in-service sessions for the whole faculty
Directly supports the coach's work with teachers:
• Arranges time for coaches to meet with teachers
• Provides substitutes so that teachers can meet with coaches
• Provides coach with an appropriate office or meeting room
• Provides coach with books or other materials
• Gives coach time to attend coach training
• Gives coach time to meet with other coaches
• Helps coach deal with reluctant teachers
Actively participates in the CFC program:
• Attends team meetings with CFC coach
• Attends meetings between individual teachers and CFC coach
• Observes coach modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms
• Attends book studies or other coach-led training sessions
• Attends all or most CFC training sessions for principals
• States that CFC training enables principals to support coaches
• States that his or her teachers need instructional support

CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.

A similar coding procedure analyzed principals' views of literacy coaching. Codes pertaining to the responsibilities of a literacy coach were inductively derived from the interview transcripts and organized into two categories: consistent or not consistent with CFC's vision of coaching. CFC documents, including the school district's job description for the CFC coach, were used to determine whether a coach's responsibility at a school was consistent with the CFC program. Table 3 lists the codes that pertain to the principals' view of coaching. Responsibilities that are aligned with CFC's

vision of coaching include conferring with individual teachers and with teachers in grade-level teams, conducting model lessons in teachers' classrooms, establishing collaborative relationships with teachers, observing teachers, and helping teachers identify areas of their practice that need improvement. Responsibilities or duties that are not aligned with CFC's vision of coaching include working directly with students or student groups and working with teachers in content areas other than reading.

Correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the association between the frequency of teachers' participation in each coaching activity (averaged at the school level) and each dimension of principal support (as reported by principals). Correlation coefficients were also computed to investigate the association between the frequency of teachers' participation in each coaching activity (averaged at the school level) and the congruence between the principals' views of the roles and responsibilities of a literacy coach and the vision of coaching promoted by the CFC program.

To investigate whether specific principal actions or views distinguish between schools with differential levels of teacher participation in coaching, each category of response that was significantly associated with increased teacher participation in coaching was subjected to further analysis. Schools were divided into three groups—high, medium, and low—based on the average frequency with which teachers at a school reported engaging with their coach in a given activity. Codes were depicted in a set of matrices segmented according to the frequency of teacher participation in each coaching activity. The high- and low-implementing schools were then compared to identify response patterns that discriminate between schools with high and low teacher participation in individual coaching activities.

Results

The results presented in the following sections are organized by research question.

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between principal leadership and the frequency of teacher participation in specific coaching activities?

To answer this question, we looked at the relationship between principal leadership and teachers' participation in the different coaching activities. Table 4 shows the correlations between the five sets of implementation scores and the dimensions of principal leadership that focused on supporting the new coach ($n = 15$).

Table 3. Codes for Principals' Views of the Responsibilities of a Literacy Coach

Responsibilities Aligned With CFC Program Goals
A coach . . .
• Works with fourth- and fifth-grade reading teachers
• Meets with grade-level teams
• Meets with individual teachers
• Conducts model lessons in teachers' classrooms
• Observes teachers in their classrooms
• Helps teachers design lessons
• Helps design or deliver professional development
• Attends administrative and support staff meetings
• Helps teachers improve the quality of their teaching
• Promotes reflection
• Promotes quality questioning
• Promotes teaching strategies that help students understand text
• Designs or provides lessons for teachers to implement
• Provides teachers with books, materials, research articles, and so on
• Source of knowledge or expertise in literacy
• Establishes collaborative relationships with teachers
• Is nonevaluative, not judgmental
• Helps teachers identify areas of practice that need improvement
• Uses data to help teachers identify needs and plan instruction
• Does not do administrative tasks
• Does not work directly with students or student groups
• Attends professional development for coaches
• Meets with other literacy coaches
• Collects or organizes materials for a literacy library or center
Responsibilities Not Aligned With CFC Program Goals
A coach . . .
• Works directly with students or student groups
• Works with grade levels other than Grades 4 and 5
• Works with subjects other than reading
• Helps organize or administer state or district assessments
• Evaluates teachers or students
• Organizes or analyzes test data for principal or school

CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.

Significant correlations were found between principal support and teacher participation in two coaching activities: conferring with the coach in grade-level teams and being observed by the coach teaching a reading lesson. Specifically, teachers conferred more frequently with their coach in team meetings in schools where the principal treated the coach as a valued

Table 4. Correlations Between Principal Support for Coaching and Level of Teacher Participation in Each Coaching Activity

The Principal . . .	Met With Coach in Team Meetings	Met With Coach Individually	Observed by Coach in Classroom	Observed Coach Model a Lesson	Cotaught a Lesson With Coach
Treats the coach as a valued professional	.53*	.29	.62*	–.07	–.33
Publicly endorses the coach as a source of literacy expertise to teachers	.46	.28	.60*	–.08	–.10
Directly supports the coach's work with teachers	.30	.46	.37	.04	–.12
Actively participates in the CFC program	.70**	.25	.56*	.08	.05
Overall support (sum of categories)	.76**	.41	.69**	–.07	–.15

n = 15 principals and schools. CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

professional ($r = .53$, $p < .05$) and where the principal actively participated in the CFC program ($r = .70$, $p < .01$). Teachers taught a reading lesson observed by the coach more frequently in schools where the principal treated the coach as a valued professional ($r = .62$, $p < .05$) publicly acknowledged the coach as a source of literacy expertise to teachers ($r = .60$, $p < .05$), and actively participated in the CFC program ($r = .56$, $p < .05$).

Research Question 2

What principal actions most support teacher participation in specific coaching activities?

To answer this question, behaviors were identified within each dimension of principal support that discriminated between high- and low-implementing schools for each coaching activity. This analysis considered only those dimensions of principal support that exhibited a significant association with teacher participation.

Coaches meeting with teachers in grade-level teams. Table 5 shows principal behaviors within each dimension of support that were associated with CFC coaches meeting more frequently with teachers in grade-level teams. Also shown is the number of principals in high- and low-implementing schools who reported engaging in each behavior. Schools in which teachers reported

Table 5. Principal Support and Teachers' Participation in Grade-Level Team Meetings With Their CFC Coach in High- and Low-Implementing Schools

The Principal . . .	High ($n = 4$)	Low ($n = 2$)
Treats the coach as a valued professional:		
• Lets coach know he or she values the coach's work with teachers	0	0
• Talks with coach about coach's work with teachers (e.g., goals for teacher learning, how these goals will be met)	4	2
• Consults with coach about important matters related to schoolwide issues	2	1
• Trusts coach to manage his or her time	3	0
Actively participates in the CFC program:		
• Attends team meetings with CFC coach	3	1
• Attends meetings between individual teachers and CFC coach	3	0
• Observes coach modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms	2	0
• Attends book studies or other coach-led training sessions	0	0
• Attends all or most CFC training sessions for principals	4	0
• States that CFC training enables principals to support coaches	1	0
• States that their teachers need instructional support	4	2

$n = 15$ principals and schools. High = weekly, low = once or twice a year. CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.

attending such meetings an average of once a week were considered to be high implementers of this activity ($n = 4$). Schools in which teachers reported attending such meetings an average of only once or twice a year were considered to be low implementers of this activity ($n = 2$).

As shown in Table 5, a principal's trusting the coach to manage his or her own time (under the dimension of treating the coach as a valued professional) discriminated between schools with more and less frequent teacher participation in team meetings with coaches. Three of the four principals of schools with high teacher participation in these meetings indicated that they trusted their CFC coaches to manage their time. For example, when asked how often the coach met with individual teachers, the principal of one high-implementing school responded, "I don't have [the coach] turn in a schedule, so I don't know factually, but I would imagine every day she's here, she's meeting with at least one, if not, more [teachers]." The principal of another

high-implementing school reported, "I don't know if she meets [with the fifth-grade reading teacher] twice a week or not. She doesn't document her time. I don't document every minute that she spends." In contrast, none of the principals of schools in which coaches met infrequently with teachers in team meetings reported providing their coaches with this level of autonomy.

Table 5 also describes principals' engagement in the CFC program. Principals of schools where coaches conferred weekly with teachers in grade-level teams (versus once or twice a year) were more likely to describe themselves as active participants. Three areas of principal participation discriminated between high- and low-implementing schools for this activity: attending meetings between teachers and their CFC coach, observing the coach modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms, and attending all or nearly all of the professional development sessions for principals. For example, a principal at a school with relatively high implementation of team meetings reported that she had observed the coach model lessons in five classrooms. When asked if modeling got teachers interested in working with the coach, she described sitting in on the postmodel conference between one of the teachers and the CFC coach. She reported that the teacher was impressed by the fact that children who did not usually respond in class were able to answer when the coach called on them: "She also noticed the wait time. [The coach] gave [students] time to respond and didn't just skip over them. . . . She liked the way [the coach] did that." Another principal at a school with high implementation of team meetings said that she observed the coach model in three classrooms and that the postmodel conferences were very beneficial to teachers because they allowed the teachers to evaluate and talk about instruction in a nonthreatening situation. Finally, although most principals did not know exactly how many professional development sessions they attended, two principals in high-implementing schools reported that they attended at least five of the monthly sessions; a third attended all but one; and a fourth attended "all the ones they've had." In contrast, a principal in a low-implementing school attended only one monthly session.

Coaches observing teachers in their classrooms. Table 6 shows the behaviors within each category of principal support that were associated with CFC coaches more frequently observing teachers in their classrooms. Also shown is the number of principals who reported engaging in these behaviors in high- and low-implementing schools. Schools in which teachers reported being observed an average of four to six times a year were considered to be high implementers ($n = 9$). Schools in which teachers reported that they were never observed by their CFC coach were considered to be low implementers ($n = 2$).

As shown in Table 6, three dimensions of principal leadership were significantly associated with teachers' participation in classroom observations:

Table 6. Principal Support and Teachers' Participation in Classroom Observations by Their CFC Coach in High-and Low-Implementing Schools

The Principal . . .	High ($n = 9$)	Low ($n = 2$)
Treats the coach as a valued professional:		
• Lets coach know they value the coach's work with teachers	0	0
• Talks with coach about coach's work with teachers (e.g., goals for teacher learning, how these goals will be met, etc.).	8	2
• Consults with coach about important matters related to school-wide issues	5	1
• Trusts coach to manage their own time	6	0
Publicly endorses the coach as a source of literacy expertise to teachers:		
• Introduced coach to teachers	1	0
• Publicly identifies coach as a resource	1	0
• Includes coach in schoolwide leadership activities (e.g., serving on curricula committees)	5	0
• Lets teachers know they're expected to work with coach	0	0
• Publicly explains or endorses CFC	1	0
• Arranges for coach to lead training or in-service sessions for the whole faculty	5	0
Actively participates in the CFC program:		
• Attends team meetings with CFC coach	5	2
• Attends meetings between individual teachers and CFC coach	6	1
• Observes coach modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms	5	2
• Attends book studies or other coach-led training sessions	1	0
• Attends all or most CFC training sessions for principals	8	1
• States that CFC training enables principals to support coaches	3	0
• States that their teachers need instructional support	7	0

$n = 15$ principals and schools. High = four to six times a year, low = never. CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.

treating the coach as a valued professional, publicly endorsing the coach's literacy expertise, and actively participating in the CFC program. Again, trusting the coach to manage his or her own time (under the dimension of treating the coach as a valued profession) discriminated between high- and

low-implementing schools. Six of the nine principals in schools where teachers were observed regularly indicated that their coaches managed their own schedules—in contrast to neither principal in the two schools where teachers reported that they never were observed by their coach.

Under the second dimension, publicly endorsing the coach as a source of literacy expertise, two behaviors discriminated between schools where teachers were more and less frequently (never) observed by their coach. The first is that of principals' including their coach in schoolwide leadership functions. Five principals of high-implementing schools reported that their coach was included in such functions, in contrast to none of the principals in the low-implementing schools. For example, the principal of one high-implementing school reported,

> [My coach is] included in my cabinet [along with] counselors, assistant principals, a parent support specialist, instructional coaches and literacy coaches. . . . Our total meeting is about instructional focus, instructional activities taking place at school, reporting about our professional learning communities. . . . We plan for staff development as well.

Another principal described her coach as one of the resources on the school's Impact Team, in which the principal meets with counselors and teachers to "look at student needs and kind of bring a new plan of action for them."

The second behavior under public endorsement that discriminated between high- and low-implementing schools for this activity was that of inviting the coach to lead a professional development session for multiple grade levels or the school's entire faculty. Five principals of the schools where teachers were regularly observed by their coach had done this, in contrast to none of the principals of schools where coaches never observed their teachers. As one principal of a high-implementing school reported, "I've used [the coach] as a deliverer of professional development on this campus. So she's been able to deliver professional development to the campus as a whole, so [the teachers] can see her in that light." Another principal at a high-implementing school reported that for an in-service day in early January, her CFC coach "did mini-sessions for [teachers of] younger grades on how to do a read-aloud using the *Questioning the Author* techniques. So that really kind of helped, I think, to make her more of a person that the whole faculty knew."

Under the last dimension, actively participating in the CFC program, one factor discriminated between schools where teachers were regularly observed by coaches and schools where teachers were never observed—namely, the principal's recognizing and explicitly stating that his or her teachers needed

instructional support. Seven principals of high-implementing schools expressed this, compared to none of the principals of the low-implementing schools. For example, the principal of one high-implementing school said that teachers need guidance to help them figure out "what their strengths are and what areas of best practice they need to develop more." Another principal expressed that teachers need help evaluating student learning and designing rigorous lessons. A third principal described, "The hard part is that you can sit down with a teacher a hundred times, you can model for a teacher a hundred times, but they don't always turn it around themselves."

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between a principal's conception of the role and duties of a literacy coach and teachers' participation in specific coaching activities?

The structured protocol used in the principal interviews included two questions to elicit the principal's conception of the literacy coach's job: "How would you describe the role of a literacy coach?" "What kinds of things does the CFC coach do at your school?" Table 7 shows the relationship between the principal's description of literacy coaching and the teachers' participation in coaching activities.

As shown in Table 7, there is a significant correlation between a principal's view of literacy coaching (as aligned with the CFC program's vision of coaching) and the frequency of teachers' teaching a reading lesson while being observed by their literacy coach for at least 30 minutes ($r = .56$, $p < .05$).

Table 8 shows the individual responsibilities that principals described as being aligned and not aligned with the goals of the CFC program. Principals' responses in schools that received high or low scores for frequency of coaches observing teachers were compared to identify principal beliefs that discriminated between high and low implementation of this activity.

As shown in Table 8, under responsibilities aligned with CFC program goals, three beliefs distinguished between schools where teachers were more and less frequently observed by their coaches. Seven principals of high-implementing schools described a literacy coach as someone who helps teachers improve the quality of their teaching, in contrast to none of the principals of low-implementing schools for this activity. As one principal of a high-implementing school described, "I think a literacy coach is somebody that can go in and work alongside the teacher to help them to improve what they do as a reading teacher." A second described a literacy coach as "a one-on-one staff developer." A third said, "The role of the literacy coach is to

Table 7. Principals' Description of the Literacy Coach's Job and Teachers' Participation in Literacy Coaching

	Met With Coach in Team Meetings	Met With Coach Individually	Observed by Coach in Classroom	Observed Coach Model a Lesson	Cotaught a Lesson With Coach
View of literacy coaching aligned with CFC	.41	.25	.56*	–.15	.01
View of literacy coaching *not* aligned with CFC	.19	.31	–.34	.13	.18

$n = 15$ principals and schools. CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.
*$p < .05$.

assist the teacher in a classroom with the work that they're doing and help them deliver the instruction in a deeper way." The principal of a fourth high-implementing school described the role of a literacy coach as

> somebody that sits down with the teachers, helps design lessons, thinking through the questioning, thinking through the vocabulary, thinking through exactly what they want each and every student to know when they've ended that lesson. And helping the teachers through that process. . . . Really working with teachers and helping them design rigorous lessons, I think, is the most valuable thing.

Two other principal beliefs discriminated between schools with more and less frequent observation of teachers—namely, that a role of the CFC coach is to work with fourth- and fifth-grade reading teachers (as opposed to working with teachers at other grade levels and in other subjects) and that a responsibility is to meet with teachers in grade-level teams. Both were mentioned by five principals of high-implementing schools and by none of the principals of the low-implementing schools.

Under responsibilities that are not aligned with the CFC program, two beliefs about coaching discriminated between schools where there was more and less frequent observation of teachers. Both the principals of schools in which teachers reported that they had never been observed by their coach described organizing or analyzing schoolwide test data among the duties of their literacy coach. One principal reported, "She [the coach] also helps with data analysis and how we deal with the data from TAKS, benchmarks, DRAs, all that." The other principal reported that her coach analyzes "all that data that we have to gather" to help teachers decide which students are ready to

Table 8. Principals' View of the Responsibilities of a Literacy Coach and Teachers' Participation in Classroom Observations by Their CFC Coach

Responsibilities Aligned With CFC Program Goals	High ($n = 9$)	Low ($n = 2$)
A coach . . .		
• Works with fourth- and fifth-grade reading teachers	5	0
• Meets with grade-level teams	5	0
• Meets with individual teachers	8	1
• Conducts model lessons in teachers' classrooms	8	2
• Observes teachers in their classrooms	5	1
• Helps teachers design lessons	5	1
• Helps design or deliver professional development	2	0
• Attends administrative/support staff meetings	2	0
• Helps teachers improve the quality of their teaching	7	0
• Promotes reflection	3	0
• Promotes quality questioning	3	1
• Promotes teaching strategies that help students understand text	1	1
• Designs or provides lessons for teachers to implement	2	1
• Provides books, materials, research articles, etc. to teachers	6	1
• Source of knowledge or expertise in literacy	3	2
• Establishes collaborative relationships with teachers	5	1
• Is non-evaluative; not judgmental	2	1
• Helps teachers identify areas of practice that need improvement	3	0
• Uses data to help teachers identify needs and plan instruction	1	0
• Does not do administrative tasks	2	0
• Does not work directly with students or student groups	3	0
• Attends professional development for coaches	2	1
• Meets with other literacy coaches	3	1
• Collects or organizes materials for a literacy library or center	2	1
Responsibilities Not Aligned With CFC Program Goals		
A coach . . .		
• Works directly with students or student groups	4	1
• Works with grade levels other than Grades 4 and 5	1	1
• Works with subjects other than reading	2	1
• Helps organize or administer state or district assessments	2	2
• Evaluates teachers or students	0	1
• Organizes or analyzes test data for principal or school	0	2

$n = 15$ principals and schools. High = four to six times a year, low = never. CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.

transition to English. None of the principals of the high-implementing schools for this activity reported that their coaches organized or analyzed schoolwide data. Similarly, both principals of low-implementing schools and only two of nine principals of high-implementing schools reported that their coach was involved in organizing or administering state or district assessments. For example, the principal of one of the low-implementing schools described her coach's role as follows: "She has the testing. She has a little bit of everything." Another principal of a low-implementing school included a similar description in her description of her coach's role: "She will be helping us with testing—not so much administering the test but overseeing and helping us prepare the tests for the administration and gathering all the information, data, and things of that nature."

Research Question 4

What dimensions of principal leadership do coaches perceive as being supportive of their work with teachers?

The structured protocol used in the coach interviews included two questions concerning principal support: "What specific actions has your principal taken to support your work?" "What was the most supportive step taken by your principal to assist you?" As shown in Table 9, coaches were quite diverse in their response to this question.

Although a majority of the coaches mentioned no specific action or belief, three of the five most frequently mentioned supportive actions fell under the dimension of publicly endorsing the coach as a literacy expert. Coaches in six schools reported that their principal supported their work by publicly identifying them as a resource for teachers. For example, one coach described the steps that her principal had taken to support her work:

> He's always been supportive of me verbally. I know he's told me, in other meetings he goes to, he speaks highly of me. He speaks highly of me in front of other teachers so, you know, he recognizes me in front of other people.

Responding to the same question, another coach reported,

> [My principal] has included me in different meetings and asked for my opinion on certain things that go on in the school. She used me as a resource, and so that's helped the other teachers kind of see me as a resource.

Table 9. Actions Taken by Principals That Coaches Described as Being Supportive of Their Work With Teachers

My Principal . . .	*n*
Treats me as a valued professional:	
• Lets me know that he or she values my work with teachers	4
• Talks with me about my work, goals, training	3
• Consults me about important matters apart from coaching	1
• Trusts me to manage my own work	2
Publicly endorses me as a literacy expert:	
• Introduced me to teachers	3
• Publicly identifies me as a resource	6
• Includes me in important activities apart from coaching	2
• Encourages teachers to work with me	4
• Publicly explained or endorsed CFC	5
• Arranged for me to lead training or in-service session at my school	3
Provides the time and materials I need to work with teachers:	
• Arranges time for teachers to meet with me	1
• Provides substitutes so teachers can meet with me	1
• Provides me with an appropriate office or meeting room	1
• Provides me with books or other materials	1
• Gives me time to attend coach training	2
• Gives me time to meet with other coaches	2
• Helps me deal with reluctant teachers	3
Actively participates in the CFC program:	
• Attends grade-level team meetings I lead	3
• Attends meetings between individual teachers and me	1
• Observes me modeling lessons in teachers' classrooms	4
• Attends book studies or professional development sessions I lead	1
• Attends all or most CFC training sessions for principals	1
• States that CFC training helps principals support coaches	0
• States the need to provide support for teachers	0

n = 11 coaches, *n* = 15 schools. CFC = Content-Focused Coaching.

The second-most frequently mentioned supportive action taken by principals, also under the dimension of public endorsement, was to publicly explain or endorse the CFC coaching program to the teachers at their school. Coaches in five schools mentioned this action. For example, when asked to describe how the principal had supported her work, one coach reported,

> I think just by making her feelings known that [CFC coaching] is what the district wants and that . . . she has seen it work in the classroom.

> She's seen the children comprehend in a different way than what we were taught, so the modeling itself has sold her.

In a similar vein, another coach described her principal's support by saying, "She has told [the teachers] that she supports [CFC] and that she, you know, embraces the concepts and everything." A third coach described her principal as "the other cheerleader," adding,

> Oftentimes, I hear her explain CFC. And so she sort of takes the lead on it. Like when we were having our interviews with the teachers, she started explaining what's it all about, and then she asked if I had anything to add to that. So it's almost like we're a tag team kind of thing. But she's still taking a leadership role in terms of promoting it. And it's very positive, and she's knowledgeable about it.

The third supportive action under public endorsement, as mentioned by coaches in four schools, was that of principals' actively encouraging teachers to work with the coach and following up with them about their coaching participation. For example, one coach reported,

> The day I came, [the principal] introduced me to the faculty. She told them that this was vital for us to change our way of thinking, and that it was going to take some time, and that she was very supportive. She understood that it was going to take time and that we would be very patient, but not to despair, they would get it. And that everybody was learning. She was learning. She was in a learner–student role, and I was in a learner–student role, and that the teachers were gonna be in that same role, and change is needed.

Another coach reported,

> [The principal] paves the way for everything I do. She talks to the teachers and says, essentially, "I've been talking with [the coach] about this, and I think this is really good for our kids and I want [the coach] to talk to you." And then she comes around and she talks to me and she says, "This is what I told the teachers. Get in there." She'll follow up when I do a lesson in a classroom. She'll go and she'll talk to the teacher about, "What did you see? What did you think?"

Coaches in four schools mentioned two additional supportive actions. One action, under the dimension of treating the coach as a valued professional,

involved principals letting coaches know that they value their work. For example, a coach who reported that her principal spoke highly of her in meetings and in front of other teachers reported that he also offered direct support in one-on-one conversations, saying things like, "Thank you for this. I appreciate what you do." Principals communicated their regard for their coaches' work in more subtle ways as well. One coach reported that time was the most supportive action taken to support the coach's work: "Giving me time that she doesn't have. I think that's valuable and [demonstrates] an interest. And it validates who I am and what I contribute."

The final supportive action mentioned by coaches in four schools involved the principal's observing the coach modeling lessons in the teacher's classroom. As part of the CFC professional development, principals were asked to observe a complete lesson cycle, consisting of a preconference between the coach and an individual teacher, a model lesson, and a postconference. One coach described her principal's support:

> She was participating in the CFC cycle with me before it was given to us as an assignment. I had invited her to come into classrooms to observe me teach a lesson—a read-aloud lesson and *Questioning the Author*—so she would understand how it looked in its application. So she had already arranged her schedule to come and observe a few lessons.

Asked about the most supportive step taken by her principal, a coach reported,

> Coming to the assignments [given by the CFC program] because there were a lot of questions about whether she would actually show up. She's a very busy, very involved principal. That's one of the best things about her. She's superinvolved. But that also means that she does not often have large chunks of time. So to come to an assignment that's going to take 2 hours is a big step for her. And to me, it says that there's a big commitment. And it says to the teacher who is there, "Oh, [the principal] sees this as important." So, that's been absolutely supportive.

Summary and Conclusions

In this study, we investigated the relationship between principal leadership and variation in teachers' participation in a literacy coaching initiative (CFC) in its first year of implementation. Our goal in doing this was to unpack the dimensions of instructional leadership to generate hypotheses for future

study regarding what it might mean for a principal to be an instructional leader in the context of launching a new literacy coaching program.

This study extends the research on principal leadership by considering what it means to be an instructional leader in the context of a reform initiative—in this case, a new literacy coaching program. Most studies have defined principals' instructional leadership in terms of general behaviors and characteristics—for example, a principal's ability to create and sustain learning opportunities for teachers, to foster trust in schools, to get teachers and students the resources they need in an efficient manner (Hallinger, 2003). Few studies have investigated the characteristics of instructional leadership in the context of specific reforms and programs.[3]

This study also contributes to our understanding of the factors in schools that might influence teachers' participation in coaching, specifically with regard to identifying principals' behaviors and beliefs that support coaches in gaining access to teachers' classrooms. The opportunity to model instructional practices in teachers' classrooms is critical to effective coaching. Observing in classrooms is also critical because it offers coaches the opportunity to understand teachers' instructional needs and to provide feedback to teachers that is tailored to the specifics of their instructional practice. Gaining access to teachers' classrooms is difficult for many coaches, however. As noted by Bean (2004), teaching while being observed can be emotionally threatening, and it is often accomplished after the coach and the teacher have established considerable trust. Schools and districts could make more effective use of their coaching resources by identifying ways that principals could help new coaches more quickly establish trust and develop routines of working with teachers in their classrooms.

The study has many limitations. Principals are not the only contributing factors that explain variation in the amount and type of coaching received by teachers. For example, although the CFC coaches were hired using similar criteria and placed within the same intensive professional development program, it is possible that they were not equally skilled at persuading teachers to work with them. In other words, some amount of variation in teacher participation is likely explained by the qualities of the coaches themselves (e.g., level of self-confidence, communication skills, personality, charm). Other factors at the school and district level that likely contribute to variation in teachers' participation in coaching activities include the preexisting culture of teacher collaboration within a school (Stoelinga, 2008), the teachers' experience level and competing demands for teachers' time as a result of other district reform initiatives. Our analyses do not take into account the potentially confounding effects of these other factors. Moreover, we cannot

infer causality between principal leadership and teacher participation in the new coaching program from the correlation analyses. Our results are exploratory, undertaken with the intent of revealing aspects of principal leadership for supporting the work of new literacy coaches that could be tested in future studies with larger samples of schools.

That said, what working hypotheses might our study generate? What do our results possibly reveal about the characteristics of principal leadership that support literacy coaches who are new to a school?

First, publicly identifying the coach as a source of literacy expertise for teachers appeared to be a critical dimension of principal leadership for launching coaches' work with teachers, especially with regard to helping coaches gain access to teachers' classrooms. Principals communicated their endorsement of a coach—the idea that the coach is a literacy expert—in explicit ways, for example, by directly identifying their coach as a resource for teachers, publicly endorsing the CFC program, and actively encouraging teachers to work with their coaches. Principals communicated their endorsement of their coach's expertise in other, more subtle ways, for instance, by including their coach in schoolwide leadership activities and by having their coach conduct professional development sessions for the entire faculty.

A principal's granting a coach professional autonomy also appeared to be an important dimension of principal leadership for supporting literacy coaching. We categorized this behavior in our analyses as "treating the coach as a valued professional." However, granting professional autonomy to coaches can also be considered part of an overall constellation of behaviors that publicly identify the coach as an expert. In other words, treating coaches as fellow professionals with their own set of important responsibilities—in contrast to an extra pair of hands to carry out tasks at a principal's bidding—could be another subtle way that principals signal to teachers that the coach has special expertise and so merits respect.

Principals' active participation in the CFC program also emerged as a potentially important dimension of instructional leadership for supporting coaches in their beginning work with teachers. These results are not surprising and are commensurate with other research (e.g., Burch & Spillane, 2003) indicating that principals who more actively participate in literacy reform activities at their school tend to be more supportive of their coaches. Active participation may be yet another way that principals signal to teachers that coaching is a worthy use of the teachers' professional time.

We also looked at principals' conception of the literacy coaching job—what a literacy coach is and what he or she is supposed to do—based on the premise that mental models (internal schema) play a role in guiding behavior.

A principal's conception of what a literacy coach does was significantly associated with the frequency with which teachers were observed in their classroom by their literacy coach. Specifically, coaches observed teachers more frequently when principals explicitly stated that a literacy coach was someone who helped teachers improve their instruction. In contrast, principals of schools where none of their teachers were observed by the coach in the first year of the CFC program conceptualized a literacy coach's job as including other tasks besides working with teachers to improve their practice, such as administering student assessments and organizing assessment data.

A surprising finding was that greater teacher participation in coaching was not associated with reports that principals set time aside time for coaches to meet with teachers and that they helped coaches deal with reluctant teachers (although the magnitude of the association was fairly strong for coaches observing teachers, $r = .46$). One explanation is that some principals of schools with relatively low teacher participation in coaching reported that they engaged in these activities. We therefore cannot necessarily conclude from these results that principals' instrumental support does not matter in the implementation of coaching. However, because teachers are generally the ultimate decision makers regarding whether they will work with a coach or not, other principal leadership behaviors (such as public endorsement and active participation in the coaching program) may play a stronger role in persuading teachers to engage with coaches. Further research is needed to determine if this is indeed the case.

Finally, a principal cannot be expected to publicly endorse a coach's literacy expertise if the coach is, in fact, not a literacy expert or does not have coaching skills. Standards for the role and qualifications of literacy coaches have only recently been developed (see, e.g., International Reading Association, 2004). It makes sense that a principal might assign other jobs to a coach besides working intensively with teachers to improve their practice (e.g., organize test data, oversee after-school programs) if the coach whom the principal or district hired lacked significant expertise in literacy instruction. Whereas these other jobs may provide a useful service to the schools, this use of coaching resources will not achieve its intended goal of improving the quality of teaching and learning. For this goal to be met, districts must ensure that schools have access to well-qualified and well-trained coaches that principals can support and promote to their teachers with confidence.

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Notes

1. These data are based on 14 principals who completed a survey or for whom we were able to obtain this information.
2. We focused our study on fourth- and fifth-grade teachers who taught reading and who were not special education teachers.
3. An exception is that of Bays and Crockett (2007), who investigated the characteristics of instructional leadership for implementing special education policies in elementary schools.

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