An Investigation of a Peer Coaching Model on the Professional Learning and Teacher Self-Efficacy of Elementary Literacy Teachers

Amy M. Dellapenna

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AN INVESTIGATION OF A PEER COACHING MODEL ON THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY OF ELEMENTARY LITERACY TEACHERS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Amy M. Dellapenna

August 2017
AN INVESTIGATION OF A PEER COACHING MODEL ON THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY OF ELEMENTARY LITERACY TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF A PEER COACHING MODEL ON THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY OF ELEMENTARY LITERACY TEACHERS

By

Amy M. Dellapenna

August 2017

Dissertation supervised by Deborah Scigliano, Ed.D.

Reading is one of the most important foundational skills for academic success, yet the teaching of reading is very complex. There is a need to support teachers with ongoing professional learning for quality literacy instruction. Peer coaching can be a meaningful, personalized, job-embedded form of professional learning for teachers (Robbins, 2015). The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate the effects of a professional learning series about peer coaching on teachers’ individual self-efficacy for teaching literacy, teachers’ perceptions of collective efficacy, and teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning. The participants involved were elementary reading teachers who volunteered to learn about and practice peer coaching. This work details a summary of what was learned about the teachers who
participated along with implications for the pursuit of a learning agenda focused on improving professional learning opportunities for teachers of reading.

Key findings from the study revealed that peer coaching provided teachers with mastery and vicarious experiences which may have influenced their teaching self-efficacy. Teachers reported that peer coaching increased opportunities to collaborate with peers resulting in stronger collective efficacy. Peer coaching was found to be a valuable use of professional learning time with many benefits described by the participants in this study. This investigation provided evidence to support the claim that a voluntary peer coaching model is a powerful professional learning opportunity that creates an improvement culture within a school. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research were provided.
DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family. Most importantly to my husband Rich, your support, love, and encouragement mean the world to me. To my parents, Kathleen and the late Donald Kerlin, you were my first teachers. Your words of praise and belief in my pursuit of academic excellence have made me who I am today. To my sisters Jenny and Katie, you have always been my cheerleaders and I cherish the bond we have. To my late grandparents, Ann Marie and Thomas Holtz, your love and care for me set me on the path for the blessings in my life today. To my godmother, Aunt Susan, you helped me to navigate the process to begin my college career. To my late mother and father-in-law, Arlene and Richard, you taught me so many things and I know you would be proud of me. I also dedicate this dissertation to my fellow teachers and students who have provided the inspiration for my work.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I extend my sincerest gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Deborah Scigliano. Dr. Scigliano’s patience and encouragement helped me to grow and learn as a scholar and as an educational leader. Her knowledge of self-efficacy and peer coaching were invaluable as I embarked on this journey to learn about peer coaching as a model to support teacher professional learning. I have learned so much over the past few years from Dr. Scigliano and I am so honored to have Dr. Scigliano as my chair.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. McCown and Dr. Olson. I was so fortunate to have them as professors during my doctoral program. Their knowledge of methodology, teacher learning, and improvement research supported my learning and my dissertation work. Their questions and thoughtful comments challenged my thinking and helped me to improve my work. I am grateful for all of my instructors at Duquesne University.

A special thank you to my supportive colleagues and to the teachers who participated in the peer coaching study. Their willingness to learn and share along with me made this experience so much more meaningful and memorable.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Roadmap

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of peer coaching as a means of professional development to study its effects on teachers’ self-efficacy for teaching literacy. Additionally, the study sought to collect data about these teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy and their beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model of professional development. The specific context for the study was an elementary school in a district in Pennsylvania. Interested teachers and principals of kindergarten through fifth grades in the school were invited to participate in a professional learning opportunity as part of the study. Eight individuals volunteered to participate which included four teachers working in the primary school with students in grades K-2 and four teachers working in the intermediate school with students in grades 3-5. This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the problem of practice and the need for the study. Chapter two includes a review of the literature, the theoretical framework from which the problem of practice was understood, and a context review. Chapter three discusses the design for the study including how data were collected. Chapter four provides the results of the study and an analysis of the data. Chapter five discusses the findings and shares limitations and implications from the study.

This chapter presents the problem of practice and social justice implications leading to the development of my study on peer coaching. A brief overview of the study is shared along with the importance of the study, the need for improvement, the context for the study, and a background of my expertise. The chapter concludes with the research questions for the study.
General Overview

Too many children, especially children from low-income families attending high poverty schools, are failing to meet grade-level benchmarks in reading (Fiester, 2010, 2013). Third grade has been proven to be a critical benchmark for reading proficiency (Hernandez, 2011). After third grade, teaching of reading changes to focus much more heavily on comprehension of text (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009), yet there are many children who lack the necessary foundational skills to independently read and comprehend grade-level text (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Children must have a solid foundation in early literacy skills to become proficient readers by third grade; their teachers must have strong knowledge on the foundations in reading, reading development, and reading assessment (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Teachers must be supported to develop deep reading content knowledge and effective pedagogical practices for teaching reading (Moats, 2009). The beliefs teachers hold about their teaching capabilities, often referred to as teachers’ sense of self-efficacy, have also been found to influence teaching effectiveness (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). Ongoing, purposeful, and supportive professional development have been closely linked to improvements in teacher content knowledge (Foorman & Moats, 2004) and teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Peer coaching can be a meaningful, personalized, job-embedded form of professional learning for teachers (Robbins, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to investigate a professional development series about peer coaching to study its effects on teacher self-efficacy for teaching literacy. After presenting an introductory session of the peer coaching model, interested teachers and principals of kindergarten through fifth grades in my district were invited to participate in a professional learning opportunity as part of my research study. I chose the K-5 grade span for this study
because my work as the Elementary Reading Coordinator is focused on providing professional development and support for teachers of kindergarten through fifth grade. As students move up the grades, the complexity of text increases and they are expected to independently read and comprehend on and above grade-level text in various content areas (Hiebert & Mesmer, 2013; Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012). High stakes state assessments begin in third grade across the nation, thus elementary teachers need ongoing professional learning and support to prepare students with the critical literacy skills needed for success (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004; Moats, 2001).

The participants involved in the study were engaged in a series of sessions to learn about and practice peer coaching. Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and their sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy was quantitatively measured through a survey which participants were given before and after participation in a peer coaching model. In addition, qualitative data about teacher beliefs and attitudes about professional learning, which includes peer coaching, were gathered during a participant focus group session. In an effort to positively impact student literacy learning in our district, I worked alongside teachers as the facilitator for the professional learning series on peer coaching. I aimed to support teachers in the work to investigate their self-efficacy for teaching literacy and their beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model of professional learning.

**Problem of Practice**

Schools, especially those with high levels of poverty, face many challenges in supporting the literacy needs of children from diverse backgrounds (Lesaux, 2012; Snow et al., 1998; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006). There is persistent concern that an alarming number of children are not learning to read by third grade, a critical benchmark for future
reading and academic success (Fiester, 2010, 2013; Hernandez, 2011). Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 increased accountability for states and school districts to ensure that all children would learn to read by third grade, too many children continue to fail to meet grade-level benchmarks (Hewitt, 2015; J. Lee & Reeves, 2012). Too many children continue to be left behind (Meier, 2004).

It is essential to understand that this problem continues to disproportionately affect children from homes with lower socioeconomic status, especially those children who attend high poverty schools (V. E. Lee & Burkam, 2002; Lesaux, 2012; Snow et al., 1998). “Of the fourth-graders who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test in 2009, 83% of children from low-income families—and 85% of low-income students who attend high-poverty schools—failed to reach the “proficient” level in reading” (Fiester, 2010, p. 7). This is of grave concern because reading is one of the most important skills for academic and future life success. Children need a strong foundation in early literacy skills so they can become fluent readers who are able to make meaning from their reading (Duke & Block, 2012; Snow et al., 1998). Reading helps students to improve their language and writing skills and provides the path to building background knowledge in math, science, and history (Murnane et al., 2012). Reading is the foundation on which all future learning is built.

Many elementary teachers of reading have not had sufficient preparation or in-service support for learning about the science behind learning to read (Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Moats & Foorman, 2003). They often lack strong content knowledge for teaching reading to struggling readers (Moats, 2001; Moats & Foorman, 2003). This lack of teacher preparation, combined with an unsupportive or negative school culture, may lead to a lowered sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson,
2011), which could negatively affect a teacher’s motivation to persist when faced with the challenges of teaching struggling readers and diverse groups of students (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2006).

Year after year, despite district and school improvement efforts, we are seeing over 50% of the students in the district in which I work who fail to reach proficiency in reading in third grade and up, according to local and state reading assessments. Furthermore, this is a problem that is disproportionately impacting our students from lower SES backgrounds. Our district classrooms are comprised of a range of learners with many diverse learning needs. At times, teachers may feel that they aren’t adequately prepared to teach reading to all students, including struggling readers. Despite numerous district and school improvement efforts, student achievement results have remained stagnant.

I believe that if all K-5 teachers were supported through a strong system of professional learning to improve their reading content knowledge, self-efficacy for teaching reading, and instructional literacy practices, this would have a significantly positive impact on reading instruction. Ultimately, this could lead to improved student reading outcomes.

**Importance of Study**

In the literature on prevention of reading difficulties, it is reported that children in America are not prepared to compete in a global economy and technological society because they lack the higher levels of literacy skills that are required (Fiester, 2010; Snow et al., 1998). Students entering the world of work today are required to read and write more than at any other time in history (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999). They need complex levels of literacy to be self-sufficient and adapt to the changing demands of the workplace (Murnane et al., 2012).
Teachers and schools must work to prepare students with the literacy skills needed, including creative and critical thinking, the ability to communicate effectively through speaking and writing, and the ability to collaborate strategically. Winn and Behizadeh (2011) argued that low-achieving students are often not taught critical skills such as persuasive writing and analytical reading; yet, these higher level skills are the tools necessary for academic and life success. Literacy, more specifically critical literacy, is a civil right of all children and youth (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011). The research has revealed that there are many school policies and practices that work to deny this right to many poor students and students of color (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011).

Research has proven that teachers can make the greatest difference to student achievement and that classroom instruction is one of the most critical factors for student success (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). However, teachers must be supported to develop specialized content knowledge and strong pedagogical practices to provide excellent reading instruction to all students (Moats, 2009). For student learning to improve, teacher learning must also improve. Teacher quality has been found to be a critical factor for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). A culture of learning must be modeled throughout a school so that everyone in the building is a member of a community of learners (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

Social Justice Implications

Social justice in terms of education translates to every child, regardless of their economic situation, disability status, race, religion, gender, or cultural background. All children deserve an excellent education that provides supportive, well-prepared teachers and principals, and high-quality schools. All students should receive effective, high-quality literacy instruction to
develop a strong foundation on which to build critical literacy skills they will need for success in school and life. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many high-poverty communities. Many inequities exist between affluent and middle-class schools, compared to schools with high levels of poverty. A child from a low socioeconomic status home attending a high poverty school in a low-income community is more susceptible to experience reading difficulties than is the same child attending and living in a higher income school and community (Goldenberg, 2001). Research also showed that failure to learn to read adequately for school success is much more likely among poor children, among non-white children, and among nonnative speakers of English (Lesaux, 2012; Snow et al., 1998).

As schools across the nation continue to become more diverse, (Murnane et al., 2012), disparities in educational access are becoming more and more apparent (Darling-Hammond, 2004, 2006, 2015). Inequalities in educational resources and funding along with unequal access to highly qualified teachers and challenging curriculum have contributed to an ever-widening achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 2004, 2006, 2015). V. E. Lee and Burkam (2002) reviewed existing longitudinal data to identify how children’s social background is related to their educational success. The research included an analysis of test scores with regard to race and ethnicity, home demographics, family activities, and socioeconomic status of children entering kindergarten (V. E. Lee & Burkham, 2002). Findings indicated that children from low SES backgrounds score significantly lower in math and reading achievement tests given at the beginning of kindergarten (V. E. Lee & Burkham, 2002). They were also less likely than those from higher SES backgrounds to have participated in child care or preschool centers (V. E. Lee & Burkham, 2002). Low SES families owned fewer books, read to their children less frequently, and reported visiting the library less often than higher SES families (V. E. Lee & Burkham,
all factors associated with early literacy experiences. Talking with children and reading to them at home helps to build their vocabularies and early literacy skills. In a 2 ½ year study of the verbal exchanges between parents and children, Hart and Risley (1995) noted striking differences in the spoken words for affluent families versus low-income families, leading to a verbal gap that predicted achievement differences by age 9 or 10. These factors, along with the lack of equal learning opportunities for children who may already be considered to be “at-risk” for reading difficulties, explain why we continue to see growing gaps in literacy skills and poor literacy outcomes for these children (Murnane et al., 2012).

In her book, *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy*, Purcell-Gates (1997) presented a case study of a non-literate Urban Appalachian mother and son to examine how cultural differences between the world of home and school affect children’s literacy development. This groundbreaking case study documented evidence that access to literacy is blocked for those children who are not perceived to be a part of the mainstream culture of the school (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Students’ experiences or lack of experiences with print, books, and language at home more often than not predict their educational outcomes (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Both entering knowledge and in-school experiences were reported to affect low-SES students’ literacy attainment; thus, these factors must be accounted for when studying ways to improve literacy outcomes for these children (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Lowered expectations based on negative assumptions and lack of understanding of cultural differences are perpetuating the cycle of low literacy for children from low-SES backgrounds (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Furthermore, when children are perceived as lacking early quality literacy experiences, they begin school on a low trajectory for future reading success, which more often than not
translates to negative consequences in terms of future reading acquisition. According to V. E. Lee and Burkham (2002):

Social inequalities in school increase as children advance through school mainly because of differentiation in educational experiences that begin as early as first grade (with reading groups, special education placement, and retention), extend through elementary school (as ability grouping, special education, and gifted and talented programs continue), and are well recognized by high school (with formal and informal tracking, advanced placement, and the like) (p. 7).

There has been intense research on reading over the past several years, and we know what science tells us about how children learn to read from the National Reading Panel (Moats, 2015). However, we are still failing to implement research-based instruction in reading consistently across all schools and classrooms (Lesaux, 2012). To address this problem, teachers must be supported with intensive, focused, long-term, job-embedded professional learning (Carroll, Fulton, & Doerr, 2010; Wei et al., 2009). Moats (1999), a leading expert in the field of reading, claimed that “teaching reading is rocket science” (p. 1). We know what expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do; we must work to empower them with the scientifically-based reading research to ensure all children are provided with a solid foundation for learning to read (Moats, 2009). Teachers of reading need specialized knowledge to understand the processes involved in learning to read and how to best meet the individual literacy needs of each of their students (Snow et al., 1998). It is very disheartening to think that many children may be receiving inadequate instruction because teachers are not well-prepared with the foundational knowledge that is necessary to be an effective teacher of reading.
The Need for Improvement

There are many serious implications for reading failure. Darling-Hammond (2006) argued that unequal access to qualified teachers along with the continued underinvestment in central city and poor rural schools is contributing to a school-to-prison pipeline while at the same time leading to a declined competitive status for America. There is a need to get more students to read proficiently to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty (Fiester, 2013). The report, “Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third Grade Reading” provides evidence to support the claims that (a) more children from low socioeconomic status (SES) groups compared to children from higher SES groups are failing to read on grade-level by third grade; (b) these children are less likely to have academic success, leading to high school graduation and readiness for entering a college or career path; and (c) they will be less likely to be successful productive adults and more likely to fall into poverty (Fiester, 2013). The authors of the report hypothesized that getting children to read by third grade is a crucial factor in solving the problem of intergenerational poverty (Fiester, 2013).

Although there are many challenges involved in supporting the literacy needs of students from high poverty communities, children from low SES backgrounds can become proficient readers if they are provided effective instruction (Bitter et al., 2009; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003, 2005). To increase the reading achievement for all of our students, efforts to investigate the practices that are most critical to improving classroom instruction and school climate are essential. There are many common characteristics in high achieving, high-poverty schools that can be examined and potentially replicated to improve literacy achievement for our students (Carter, 2000). Research studies showed that in the most effective schools, reading is the priority, and building communication and collaboration to support teachers to be successful is evident (Taylor et al., 2000). An effective teacher of
reading is able to go beyond simply following instructions in a prescribed teacher’s manual to individualizing instruction to meet each student’s needs.

Working to improve the system of professional learning through an improvement research inquiry can have positive impacts on the system as a whole and can increase the system capacity to improve (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015). Schools are learning organizations, and if there is a commitment to support the professional learning of all members of the school community (including the teachers), this can ultimately improve the capacity for continued improvement. By building capacity within teachers and empowering more stakeholders with knowledge of the system gained through attempting improvements to the system, they may feel more empowered and have the tools to improve other areas of the system. The benefits to students and their school success, their college and career readiness, and ultimately to society as a whole would outweigh any costs associated with supporting teachers to be well prepared and adequately resourcing schools for all students (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

I believe that educators and district leaders strive to provide an excellent education for all students. My goal for this study is to investigate a professional development design to study the effects on teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction, teacher collective efficacy, and teacher beliefs and attitudes about professional learning. Our district needs (a) improved student literacy outcomes, (b) effective literacy instruction, (c) enhanced teacher efficacy and collective efficacy.

**Context for the Study**

Many of the students in my district have not been afforded the opportunity for high quality early learning experiences. According to the 2014-2015 Reach & Risk Report from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in PA, only 38.2% of preschool age children in our county participated in publically-funded quality early education programs. On the beginning
of the year DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment, many of our students are often not able to name any letters or demonstrate understanding of beginning sounds of words. The data from 2014 show that over 65% of our students were well below DIBELS benchmarks. This places them on a low trajectory for future reading success (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Tardiness, poor attendance, lack of parental involvement, transience, poor reading instruction, and lack of resources and intervention for struggling students are some of the challenges that keep children on the low trajectory (Fiester, 2013). Through my own experiences as a teacher and a literacy coach, I know that teachers are often not prepared to handle the diverse learning needs and challenges associated with teaching in a high-poverty school (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

There has been a significant amount of research, federal policies, and school improvement efforts aimed at improving reading proficiency rates and reducing the achievement gap across the nation and here in Pennsylvania; yet, we continue to see high numbers of children, especially those from lower socioeconomic status, who struggle to obtain basic reading skills. Year after year, despite district and school improvement efforts, we are seeing over 50% of the students in the district in which I work who fail to reach proficiency in reading in third grade and up, according to local and state reading assessments. Furthermore, this is a problem that is disproportionately impacting our students from lower SES backgrounds. This has an impact on these students’ ability to learn information in any other content area (math, social studies, science) and a greater impact on their future academic success and success in life (Murnane et al., 2012). It is an injustice that so many of our students are being labeled as learning disabled, retained, dropping out, or being socially promoted because they did not receive proper instruction and/or intervention as a struggling reader.
As a school district dedicated to the life-long success of our students, we should strive to create an environment that enables teachers to provide high-quality, research-based, rigorous literacy instruction to all children in all content areas. All students must have access to a challenging, rigorous, and culturally relevant curriculum which provides them with the critical literacy skills they need to become successful and productive citizens. To improve literacy outcomes for all students, there is a need to address gaps in literacy instruction through professional development, professional learning communities, data-driven practices and a focus on systematic explicit instruction. It is important for teachers to receive ongoing, purposeful professional development and support in order to improve instruction and be more effective to help their students become life-long learners (Wei et al., 2009).

**Background and Areas of Expertise**

My role as an educator, working with students from diverse backgrounds for the past fifteen years, has provided me with an inside perspective about some of the factors that impede academic success for our children from high-poverty communities. I have taught kindergarten, second, and fifth grade students; supported teachers as a literacy coach for grades kindergarten through sixth; and I am currently serving as the District Elementary Reading Coordinator. In some of the schools in my school district, over 80% of the students are considered economically-disadvantaged, up to 25% receive special education services, and there are high student mobility rates.

As the Elementary Reading Coordinator for my school district, my primary responsibility is to support the professional learning of elementary reading teachers. The professional development calendar is developed each year with four or five teacher in-service days set aside throughout the year. Often, these days are designated for district-mandated training, such as
state and district policy updates, training on new attendance tracking, or student computer programs. There is often little input from teachers on their needs for professional learning. During the school year, elementary teachers are required to attend morning meetings within their buildings. Some teachers have expressed frustration with a sense of rushing to a meeting every morning. However, there is no other time in the school day that teachers have common planning time. This time is considered “contracted time,” and teachers’ attendance is mandated at each meeting. I work together with the building principals, reading specialists, and literacy coaches to plan and facilitate these meetings around student reading data, the PA Core Standards for English Language Arts, and effective instructional practices for literacy. I have often used these meetings as springboards for literacy coaching opportunities, strengthening my relationships with teachers to support them in identifying areas for improvement in their instruction, and setting up co-planning and co-teaching opportunities. The meetings also help to further the development of common assessments, align intervention programs with our core reading program, and plan family literacy events.

My school district was awarded a five-year Keystones to Opportunity (KtO) grant in August, 2012 to improve literacy outcomes for all students from birth through grade 12. The funding and support was targeted for grades K-5. One requirement was to develop a local literacy plan (birth – grade 12) aligned with the PA Comprehensive Literacy Plan. As a member of our district literacy team, I have worked with various stakeholders to assess our local literacy strengths and needs and develop and assess annual literacy goals. I have been assigned the role of data liaison for the grant project which requires me to gather data from various program sources, ensure student data are accurately collected and maintained, submit state reports, and support teachers and school leaders in using educational data for data-driven decision making.
Research Questions

This study used a mixed-methods case study design to explore teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching and its effects on teachers’ sense of efficacy and collective efficacy for teaching literacy. The findings from the quantitative and qualitative data collected inform the three research questions of the study:

- What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy?
- What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy?
- What are teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning?

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced a problem of practice with significant social justice implications. The need for the study was recognized and the research questions were introduced. An introduction of the context for the study and information about my background as the researcher were also provided. Chapter two will explore the literature underlying the problem of practice and research that further establishes the need for this study.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Roadmap

Chapter two will provide a review of the literature that underlies the problem of practice. This chapter begins with a statement of the problem and the significance of the problem. Research about teacher content knowledge, effective instructional practices, teacher self-efficacy, and models for professional development for teaching reading will be explored. A background of the theoretical framework that was used to better understand the problem is shared as well as a discussion of the context for the study.

Statement of the Problem

A review of the literature has revealed that teachers are often inadequately prepared or continually supported to be effective teachers of reading, especially when it comes to teaching vastly diverse groups of students in high-poverty schools (Bitter et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Moats & Foorman, 2003). In addition, many high-poverty schools lack a supportive school culture encompassing the resources and literacy leadership skills necessary to meet students’ and teachers’ needs (Snow et al., 1998; Taylor et al., 2000). There is growing concern that many teachers have received inadequate preparation in their postsecondary programs to work with increasingly diverse and high-need student populations (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Furthermore, classroom teachers are often not prepared with a solid understanding of the scientifically-based research on reading and how to effectively engage students in high quality reading instruction. Teacher preparation programs vary greatly and many do not prepare teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide effective literacy instruction to a highly diverse population of students (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2015; Smartt & Reschly, 2007).
Significance of the Problem

We must do a better job of providing the proper coursework and training to those preparing to be teachers, as well as provide ongoing, purposeful, and supportive job-embedded training, literacy coaching, and mentoring to all classroom teachers so that they can be effective teachers of reading. Most children, including those from diverse backgrounds, can become proficient readers (Moats, 1999). Policymakers, teacher educators, and school leaders must make a commitment to support the professional learning of teachers. To increase the reading achievement for all of our students, efforts to investigate the practices that are most critical to improving classroom instruction and providing a supportive school climate for students, families, and teachers are needed.

One of the most widely reported and well-known symptoms associated with this problem is the achievement gap, which is also referred to as an education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) or opportunity gap. The achievement gap is defined as the inequality of educational achievement that crosses racial and ethnic groups, and is often linked to performance on standardized achievement tests in reading and math (Harris & Herrington, 2006). Although test scores for 4th and 8th graders have increased for both black and white students, the achievement gap persists with white students scoring at least 26 points higher than black students in all subjects tested on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). Another more recent study showed that the black-white achievement gap is decreasing while the income-achievement gap (a reading achievement gap between students from high and low-income families) has increased (Reardon, 2013). The achievement gap was also linked with differences in grade-point averages, enrollment in advanced placement and honors classes, and placement in special education and gifted-and-talented programs (Noguera, 2013) Public schools have a responsibility to
educate all students. It seems though that they have always been more successful with higher-SES and middle income students than low-SES students and those from diverse backgrounds (Kannapel, Clements, Taylor, & Hibpshman, 2005).

Another symptom that is linked to low reading proficiency is the identification of students for intensive intervention and increased referrals for special education testing. Children of poverty are referred more than other student groups for remedial and special education programs, often because they have not met reading proficiency or have not met reading benchmarks according to set school schedules (Allington & Walmsley, 1995). There is an extensive body of research on this issue suggesting that reading difficulty is often connected to decisions about special education placements. As many as 80% of the children referred for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) are referred because of reading problems (Snow et al., 1998). There have also been suggestions of reading difficulties being related to Mental Retardation (MR) and Emotional Disturbance (ED) placements. This calls to question if the increasing rates of discipline referrals, suspensions, and school expulsions, which some refer to as the “school to prison pipeline” are related to reading difficulties and reading failure. It is reported that up to 85% of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate (National Assessment of Adult Literacy NAAL).

A study of high school dropout rates indicated that one in six children who lack reading proficiency will drop out and those also in poverty are three times more likely to drop out than students who have not been poor (Hernandez, 2011). Poor Black and Hispanic children are twice as likely as white students to drop out (Hernandez, 2011). In addition, reports on the need for remediation coursework for students enrolling in college courses are on the rise. Increased accountability measures, pressure to adopt common standards, the establishment of school
ranking systems, new teacher evaluation systems, and the continued negative perceptions of low
performing schools are other symptoms of the problem that many high-poverty schools are
facing significant challenges in supporting all students to read with proficiency by third grade.

It is well-documented that an alarming number of children are not learning to read by
third grade, a critical benchmark for future reading and academic success (Fiester, 2010, 2013;
Hernandez, 2011) It is essential to understand that this problem continues to disproportionately
affect children from homes with lower socioeconomic status, especially those children who
attend high-poverty schools (V. E. Lee & Burkam, 2002; Lesaux, 2012; Snow et al., 1998).
Some people may believe that the schools and teachers are the reason students are not achieving.
Achievement scores and school ranking reports often show the same low-performing schools
year after year. Schools, especially those with high levels of poverty, face many challenges in
supporting the literacy needs of children with very diverse needs (Lesaux, 2012; Snow et al.,
1998; Valencia et al., 2006). The truth is that teachers are often not adequately prepared or
continually supported to be effective teachers of reading, especially when it comes to teaching
vastly diverse groups of students in high-poverty schools. A commitment to support teachers as
professional learners is needed for improved reading instruction. In this review of the literature,
research about teacher content knowledge, effective instructional practices, teacher self-efficacy,
and models for professional development for teaching reading will be explored.

**Teacher content knowledge.** There is growing concern that many teachers have received
inadequate preparation in their postsecondary programs to work with increasingly diverse and
high-need student populations (Smartt & Reschly, 2007). Classroom teachers often lack the
foundational knowledge that is necessary for effective teaching of reading (Al Otaiba, Hosp,
Smartt, & Dole, 2008; Moats & Foorman, 2003). Effective teaching of reading is essential,
especially in the early years (pre-kindergarten through third grade) to provide children a solid foundation for transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn. Louisa Moats (1999), a leading expert in the field of reading, has compared teaching reading to rocket science. For some children, especially those with rich language and vocabulary backgrounds, reading seems to develop naturally. However, most children, and especially those lacking rich oral language backgrounds, need direct and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness (the ability to hear individual sounds in words), phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds), fluency (the ability to read smoothly and accurately with appropriate expression), vocabulary, and comprehension (Snow et al., 1998).

Researchers who studied preservice and in-service educators’ perceptions and knowledge of early reading instruction found that although more years of teaching correlated with greater knowledge of language structure, overall both preservice and in-service educators had scores falling below two-thirds correct on the Knowledge of Language Structure Assessment (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001). When considering perceptions of explicit and implicit code instruction, the researchers found that preservice teachers who favored explicit approaches reported feeling more prepared to teach phonological awareness and phonics, and thus felt better prepared to teach all children including struggling readers (Bos et al., 2001). The correlation of teacher knowledge of language structure and preparedness to teach has implications suggesting that increased knowledge of language structure may impact teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching struggling readers (Bos et al., 2001).

Findings from a longitudinal, four-year study of reading instruction in low-performing, high-poverty urban schools indicated that many teachers had limited knowledge about reading development and reading assessment as well as misconceptions about sounds, words, and
sentences (Moats & Foorman, 2003). According to teacher knowledge surveys from two recent studies, teachers misidentified the number of phonemes or sounds in words, they did not understand the difference between phonological awareness and phonics, and they showed gaps in knowledge on phonics concepts (Bitter et al., 2009; Moats & Foorman, 2003). Teachers of reading need specialized knowledge to understand the processes involved in learning to read and how to best meet the individual literacy needs of each of their students. It is very disheartening to think that many children may be receiving inadequate instruction because teachers are not well-prepared with the foundational knowledge that is necessary to be an effective teacher of reading.

Moats (2001) stressed the importance of focusing on effective reading principles in an issue brief calling for policymakers and teacher educators to improve reading instruction and improve teacher preparation and professional development. Moats (2001) argued that reading teachers must have specialized knowledge to effectively teach reading to diverse groups of students. In reality though, there is often a gap between research findings and classroom instruction (Moats, 2001). In addition, there is a need for stronger preservice teacher education. According to a 1999 study from Educational Testing Service (ETS), many states only require one three-credit course, while courses in language development, psychology, and research-based practices are usually not required (Moats, 2001). Research has confirmed the fact that many problems with reading and writing can be prevented or limited through effective instruction (Moats, 2001). Professional development on effective reading instruction is needed by in-service teachers so that they may provide effective reading instruction.
Effective instructional practices. An argument for why high-poverty schools are inadequately supporting the literacy needs of children from low-SES backgrounds is that many teachers lack sufficient support, training, and resources to meet the needs of children who begin school behind their middle and higher-SES peers (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Pomerantz & Pierce, 2013). High-quality literacy instruction has the potential to prevent reading difficulties in young children (Snow et al., 1998). The results of a study on effective schools and accomplished teachers indicate that classroom instruction in reading is a critical factor, particularly in the areas of grouping practices, student engagement, and teacher practices (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000, p. 156).

There are many factors that can positively or negatively impact a child’s reading development. An investigation into the multiplicity of these factors revealed that child and family characteristics predict initial reading skills; while these effects decrease after first grade and classroom and school factors more strongly influence children’s reading achievement (Kainz & Vernon-Feagans, 2007). This study also showed positive effects for comprehensive reading instruction; however, these effects become constrained when there is a high percentage of struggling readers in the classroom (Kainz & Vernon-Feagans, 2007).

Teachers who involve students in higher level questioning and engage them in active reading strategies to create meaning from text show higher levels of comprehension and reading achievement (Bitter et al., 2009; Sailors & Price, 2010; Taylor et al., 2003). In addition to teaching students to use comprehension strategies, research supports constructing explanations around how and when to use the strategies to improve student learning (Sailors & Price, 2010). While explicit teaching and use of coaching versus telling practices are favored, routine practice of skills has been found to be ineffective (Taylor et al., 2003).
Scientifically-based reading research and core reading programs. Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 called for the use of scientifically-based reading research for classroom instruction, several studies have shown that teacher beliefs, instruction, and practices, as well as the core reading programs that are used in schools, are often inconsistent with the research on effective reading practices (Al Otaiba et al., 2008; Moats & Foorman, 2003). It is common to believe that a core reading program will standardize reading instruction and improve student reading achievement. However, some schools are still using programs based on a whole-language approach to teach reading which conflicts with research on the need for explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Al Otaiba et al., 2008). Even when scientifically-based core reading programs are used, students in high-poverty schools continue to struggle to meet grade-level benchmarks (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006). The implementation of core reading programs using a one-size-fits-all approach have become problematic due to the heavy emphasis placed on whole-group instruction (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). Efforts to eliminate ability grouping during reading instruction have led to whole-class reading instruction without differentiation and proper instruction and intervention for struggling readers (Allington & Cunningham, 2002).

A reading curriculum providing guidance for what teachers teach is important. How teachers teach reading has been found to be of equal importance (Taylor et al., 2003). In a study on policy mandates of core reading programs and third grade retention rates, the researchers asserted that no matter what program was used, an inverse relation was identified between poverty and achievement (McGill-Franzen et al., 2006). The findings of the study showed that the reading levels of most stories in the core reading program were far above those of struggling readers and that the programs fostered more whole-class instruction versus small group
differentiation (McGill-Franzen et al., 2006). Teachers need proper preparation and support to utilize core reading programs as one part of a balanced literacy approach. Small group instruction has been proven to be beneficial for struggling readers allowing the teacher to differentiate and target instruction to student needs (Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010). However, core reading programs are often interpreted to be used in a one-size fits all manner through whole group instruction (McGill-Franzen et al., 2006).

**Teacher sense of self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy has been defined as the belief in one’s abilities and capabilities to achieve expected outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy beliefs influence one’s course of action, how much effort is exerted to accomplish something, how long one perseveres in the face of an obstacle or failure, resiliency, and one’s level of accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). Teacher sense of efficacy has been referred to as the beliefs that teachers have in their abilities to affect student performance (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1983) or the beliefs that teachers have about their influence on student learning, even on students who may be considered difficult or unmotivated (Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

When teachers believe that their actions positively impact student learning and achievement, they are more persistent in implementing strategies for continued success with students (Bruce & Ross, 2008). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy will persist and put forth extra effort with students who have difficulty learning, seeing these students as reachable and teachable (Bandura, 1997). On the other hand, teachers with a low sense of efficacy tend to blame lack of student progress on the students or other factors such as the home environment, family background, and parental influences (Bandura, 1997; Dembo & Gibson, 1985).
Measuring teacher sense of self-efficacy. Gibson and Dembo (1984) developed an instrument to measure teacher efficacy based on Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy (1977, 1978) and the model of teacher efficacy proposed by Ashton and Webb (1982). Using a three phase study, the researchers sought to investigate the dimensions of teacher efficacy and how they related to Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, as well as examine the relationship between teacher efficacy and observable teacher behaviors (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

During phase one of the study, an analysis of responses from 208 elementary school teachers indicated concurrence with Bandura’s two-factor theoretical model for self-efficacy (1977, 1978) and the multi-dimensional model of teacher efficacy proposed by Ashton and Webb (1982). The responses revealed distinctions between efficacy expectations which represent a teacher’s sense of personal teaching efficacy and that of outcome expectancy or teaching efficacy, a teacher’s beliefs about the relationship between teaching and learning (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Phase two of the study validated that teacher efficacy can be distinguished from other constructs identified in research on effective teachers, such as verbal ability and flexibility (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). During phase three of the study, differences in behaviors of teachers were noted during classroom observations between high and low-efficacy teachers, which may explain differences in student achievement (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Gibson & Dembo (1985) recommended further research on the behaviors of high and low-efficacy teachers in the classroom. Gathering data about teacher behaviors could help to explain differences in student learning (Gibson & Dembo, 1985). These studies suggested that teacher self-efficacy is an important factor to consider when working to understand the challenges faced by teachers in high-poverty schools whose students have many diverse learning needs and outcome.
Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) examined the structure and meaning of teachers’ sense of efficacy in efforts to clarify the concept of efficacy and to explore the relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher beliefs about discipline, order, control, and motivation in schools. Questionnaires containing four instruments measuring (a) teacher efficacy, (b) pupil control ideology, (c) motivational orientation, and (d) bureaucratic orientation were distributed to 182 students enrolled in a teacher-preparation program at a state university (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Findings supported the earlier work of Ashton and Webb (1982) and Gibson and Dembo (1984), suggesting two distinct dimensions of efficacy: teaching efficacy and personal efficacy (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) suggested further dividing personal efficacy into responsibility for positive student outcomes and responsibility for negative outcomes. More research is needed on the relationship between efficacy and other variables. The relationships between teacher-efficacy, teacher beliefs, and school climate are complex and further complicated by the social nature of teaching (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Dembo and Gibson (1985) also noted the relationship between efficacy and other variables found in the literature on efficacy: (a) teacher education, (b) socialization of teachers, (c) individual differences, (d) school organization structure, (e) teacher participation in school decision making, and (f) parent-teacher relations. Several recommendations were given related to those factors that could enhance teachers’ sense of efficacy (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Further studies on efficacy should clearly define what is meant by efficacy for the purpose of the study and how it will be measured (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

In examination of the concept of teacher efficacy, Guskey and Passaro (1994) proposed to clarify interpretation of teacher efficacy measures. An inspection of previous studies revealed that items measuring personal efficacy all used “I,” were positive, and suggested an internal
locus of control, while items measuring teaching efficacy used “teachers,” were negative, and suggested an external locus of control (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). An altered teacher efficacy scale comprised of items from the Gibson and Dembo (1984) and Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) studies was administered to 342 subjects, consisting of 283 experienced classroom teachers and 59 preservice teachers (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Items that had been identified as having a personal-internal orientation or a teaching-external orientation were randomly selected and reworded to reflect either a teaching-internal or a personal-external orientation (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Results from the study showed support for a multi-dimensional view of teacher efficacy, as previously identified in the studies done by Ashton and Webb (1982), Gibson and Dembo (1984), and Woolfolk and Hoy (1990). However, Guskey and Passaro (1994) argued that the difference between dimensions is not related to personal efficacy versus teaching efficacy, but rather internal versus external distinction. The internal factor relates to a teacher’s personal influence, power, or impact on student learning while an external factor relates to the influence of elements outside of the classroom, such as a student’s home life, economic situation, or demographics (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). The authors recognized that these factors were interrelated and that the distinction between these factors had been revealed in previous studies, although they may have been masked by the focus on personal versus teaching efficacy (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). This study provided further support for the need to clearly define the concept of teacher efficacy, how it is measured, and how measures are interpreted (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). In addition, other variables must be considered when studying the implications of teacher efficacy.
Teacher self-efficacy, professional development, and literacy instruction. Studies on self-efficacy beliefs provided evidence to support the idea of a connection between self-efficacy beliefs and effective literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Researchers interested in the antecedents of beliefs for literacy instruction found that the quality of teacher preparation and professional development are important factors and ones that influence teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Significant correlations between professional development and teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction suggested that teachers’ feelings about their abilities to engage students in learning were related to the nature and quality of their own professional learning in literacy (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Future research on efficacy beliefs and their impact on literacy instruction is encouraged (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Using a mixed methods research design, Cantrell and Hughes (2008) sought to investigate the effects of professional development on teachers’ efficacy for teaching literacy and collective efficacy, as well as teachers’ implementation of content literacy practices. Twenty-two sixth- and ninth-grade teachers completed surveys measuring individual and collective efficacy before and after a year-long professional development series (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). After participation in the professional development program, large gains were seen in teachers’ sense of personal efficacy for literacy teaching (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Smaller, but still significant, gains were also noted in general and collective efficacy following the professional development (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). Qualitative findings indicated that coaching and teacher collaboration supported the development of teacher efficacy while time
constraints (time to teach, time to collaborate, and time to learn) were a barrier to teachers’ sense of efficacy with literacy integration (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008).

In a more recent study, Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, and Morrison (2012) investigated the effects of teachers’ self-efficacy, education, and experience on observed classroom practice and literacy outcomes for fifth-grade students. Using existing data from a large longitudinal NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, along with classroom observations and measures of student vocabulary, letter-word identification, and passage comprehension, the researchers completed a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis (Guo et al., 2012). The results showed that teacher self-efficacy had a direct effect on fifth-grade students’ literacy skills (Guo et al., 2012). In addition, teacher self-efficacy was found to influence particular classroom practices, such as teachers’ support for learning (providing supportive and responsive feedback to students, indirectly impacting student achievement) (Guo et al., 2012). This study has strong implications for future research on factors that increase teachers’ self-efficacy as an effort to improve student literary outcomes (Guo et al., 2012).

Tschannen-Moran & McMaster (2009) assigned participants to four different formats of professional development based on Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy studies. A study of the relationship between self-efficacy and professional development was conducted following teachers learning to implement a new skill in teaching reading. The findings indicated correlations between certain formats of professional development and teachers’ implementation of instructional strategies (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Only the addition of a mastery experience, which included follow-up coaching, resulted in the increased implementation of the new strategy (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and a limited mastery experience did not correlate with increased
implementation scores (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). This has implications for professional development, highlighting the need for coaches to provide support as teachers learn new strategies.

Leader-Janssen and Rankin-Erickson (2013) conducted a study of the differences in content knowledge of those preservice teachers involved in a reading clinic practicum compared to those who were not participating in this type of practicum. Quantitative data, including content knowledge surveys and efficacy scales, were collected before and after having a treatment group work with struggling readers in a supervised reading clinic (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and final reflection essays of preservice teachers (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). Findings showed that although the two groups scored similarly on the beginning content measures, the preservice teachers participating in a supervised reading clinic practicum showed more content knowledge at the end of the semester than preservice teachers not participating in the experience (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). The interview data showed that when preservice teachers had opportunities to apply specific skills and strategies they were learning in coursework as they tutored a student, they were more likely to identify these as strengths in their teaching (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). The treatment and control groups both showed relatively high scores on self-efficacy for teaching reading measures at the beginning of the semester (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). Interview data showed that as the preservice teachers participating in the reading clinic experienced difficulty with the complexities of teaching reading, their self-efficacy scores dropped, but scores showed significant increases by the end of the semester for the treatment group (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). This is consistent with the literature about mastery experiences.
Improving self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Themes emerging from interview data showed that as teachers saw students making progress they attributed their progress to certain teaching methods resulting in increases in teacher self-efficacy (Leader-Janssen, 2013). Data also showed a high correlation between content knowledge and self-efficacy at the end of the semester (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013).

Valencia et al. (2006) examined the perceptions, understandings, and use of curriculum materials for teaching reading by four elementary teachers in four different schools. Findings showed that teachers are influenced by the curriculum and the context in which they teach. Teachers who felt most supported with decisions about curricula and access to materials were more flexible and reported that they learned the most throughout the year (Valencia et al., 2006). Teachers’ content knowledge, beliefs about reading instruction, and the school culture each influenced teachers’ literacy instruction. This study validates the belief that teachers need ongoing support to assess their students’ learning needs, identify instructional materials, and make appropriate instructional decisions (Valencia et al., 2006).
**Collective efficacy.** Collective efficacy has also been found to impact an individual teacher’s sense of self-efficacy. In an analysis of existing research on collective efficacy, Goddard et al. (2004) developed a conceptual model to reveal information about how collective efficacy develops and influences staff. Collective efficacy has been found to influence teachers’ sense of efficacy for instruction (Goddard et al., 2004). Measures of perceived collective efficacy have been shown to predict student achievement differences among schools and have been linked to effects of school culture on students and teachers (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 8). School cultures can have many factors that may influence and erode teachers’ sense of efficacy and their workplace satisfaction (Bandura, 1997). Dembo and Gibson (1985) noted that organizational factors, such as teacher participation in decision-making, relationships with principals, and school climate influenced teachers’ sense of efficacy. Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) suggested a closer look at the connection between self-efficacy and collective efficacy, noting the effects of teacher socialization, organizational culture, and school climate.

When there is a high sense of collective efficacy, teachers are more likely to put forth greater effort as they strive to meet expectations for successful teaching (Goddard et al., 2004). On the contrary, when there is a low sense of collective efficacy, it is less likely that teachers will persist in times of struggle or adapt their teaching practices to meet students’ learning needs (Goddard et al., 2004). A school culture that promotes teacher decision-making about instruction was also found to have higher levels of perceived collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). This research had implications for understanding organizational culture and improving school function to impact student achievement and teacher commitment.
**Teacher education and professional development.** Smartt and Reschly (2007) argued that postsecondary teacher education programs have provided inadequate preparation for teacher candidates to develop a solid understanding of the scientifically-based research on reading and how to deliver high quality reading instruction. For teachers to be considered highly-qualified teachers of reading, they need in-depth preparation in scientifically-based reading instructional practices, (i.e., integration of the five essential components of reading, systematic and explicit instruction, universal screening, and progress monitoring) (Smartt & Reschly, 2007). Furthermore, there is also need to support current teachers through continuing education and professional development initiatives to provide them with the appropriate knowledge and skill defined by scientifically-based reading research to reach the goal of assisting all children to become proficient readers (Smartt & Reschly, 2007). Research supports the call for improving professional association standards to address: (a) their lack of alignment with scientifically-based reading research and instruction, (b) improving state standards for program approval and teacher licensure, (c) improving the teacher preparation curriculum; improving implementation of scientifically-based reading instruction using an innovation configuration, and (d) in-service technical assistance for current teachers (Smartt & Reschly, 2007).

Another significant challenge that greatly impacts the literacy levels in high-poverty schools is the school culture. A culture is a group of people with shared beliefs, common rituals, practices, and customs Allington & Cunningham, 2002). A school’s culture can have optimistic or adverse effects on teachers’ beliefs and behaviors, resulting in effects on student perceptions about learning, self-efficacy, and motivation and willingness to learn (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). School cultures can foster positive responses such as: (a) teacher collaboration, (b) supportiveness, and (c) high expectations for student learning or negative responses such as: (a)
competition resulting in resistance to collaboration, (b) isolationism, and (c) negative views of children experiencing reading difficulties (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). Some educators make negative judgments and refuse to step out of their ethnocentric world to consider student perspectives (Purcell-Gates, 1997). These judgments can have significant negative impacts on children, resulting in long lasting effects on their academic achievement (Purcell-Gates, 1997).

In a report on effective schools and accomplished teachers, findings indicated that in the most effective schools, reading was the priority and building communication and collaboration to support classroom teachers to be effective teachers of successful reading was evident (Taylor et al., 2000). Small group instruction, early reading intervention, and supportive ongoing professional development comprised other school factors that contributed to success (Foorman & Moats, 2004; Taylor et al., 2000). It is common to believe that effective professional development can improve teacher knowledge and practice to positively impact student reading achievement. However, professional development models vary greatly and there has been very little empirical evidence about the impact professional development has on enhancing teacher practice and more importantly student learning (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011). Teachers have expressed frustration with “sit- and- get” workshops that have little to do with the context of their school or classrooms or “drive-by” sessions that are disconnected with student needs or district goals. Wei et al. (2009) referred to the support and training teachers receive as episodic, myopic, and often without purpose.

Examining teacher views and beliefs about literacy reforms and professional development initiatives may provide insight to improve teacher practices and student learning. A study on the perceptions of teachers from five high-poverty schools who were participating in a two-year literacy reform project revealed the following important factors for professional growth
and change: (a) professional development should be embedded within school and classroom contexts; (b) professional development should focus on a few clearly defined goals for deep learning; and (c) teachers should have quick access to time and resources to support their learning (Nielsen, Barry, & Staab, 2008).

**Literacy coaching.** Literacy coaches were identified in a number of studies as an important resource to support teacher learning and professional growth (Nielsen et al., 2008; Pomerantz & Pierce, 2013; Stephens et al., 2011; Walpole et al., 2010). However, there was disagreement about the impact of this practice. Biancarosa, Bryk, and Dexter (2010) claimed there have been few empirical studies of coaching and its effects on teaching practice and student literacy achievement. Of the studies that have been done, many were qualitative program evaluations that did not assess the effects of coaching on student achievement.

Walpole et al. (2010) studied 123 coaches in 110 different schools to identify relationships between coaching and teaching factors and to learn more about the use of a Teaching Observation Protocol and a Coaching Observation Protocol. Specifically, the researchers were interested in the aspects of coaching that were linked to teachers’ implementation of an instructional model. Findings showed that when coaches collaborated with teachers frequently through grade-level meetings, teachers were more likely to implement small-group work and had more effective instruction and classroom management (Walpole et al., 2010). In addition, Walpole et al. (2010) found coaching to have more of an impact on teaching when principals supported coaching. On the other hand, research has shown that teachers and administrators often have very different views on the role of a coach.

Mraz, Algozzine, and Watson (2008) explored the perceptions of principals, teachers, and literacy coaches on the role of literacy coaches and the expectation for literacy coaching in six
elementary schools. A mixed methods study was used to collect quantitative data from a survey
given to principals, teachers, and literacy coaches and qualitative data in the form of interviews
and literacy coach schedules. Concerns were raised about lack of clarity about the coach’s role
including daily activities and application and enhancement of coaches’ specialized training
(Mraz et al., 2008). Three implications from this study are: (a) the role of the literacy coach
should be clearly defined, (b) the role and work of the coach should be clearly communicated to
the teachers, and (c) coaches should have support for ongoing professional development and
application of their learning (Mraz et al., 2008).

Other studies have found that it is very difficult for a coach to change teachers’ views
about instruction. Al Otaiba et al. (2008) studied a coaching initiative focused on professional
development in scientifically-based reading research. Quantitative and qualitative data were
collected to document the challenges faced by the reading coach during the course of the study.
The goals for the coaching initiative were to: (a) build teacher knowledge of scientifically-based
reading research, (b) help teachers to apply the research in their teaching of reading, and (c)
 improve student reading achievement. One of the major challenges faced by the coach during
this project was that the district’s core reading program and the teachers’ existing knowledge of
how to teach early reading were in conflict with the scientifically-based reading research
presented to teachers. Limited resources to support teachers in meeting students’ needs further
added to resistance to small group differentiated instruction. Another challenge was the view of
the role of the reading coach. Some teachers expected the coach to work with low-achieving
students and they expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of support from the coach. This
coaching project was designed to be a three-year initiative. Unfortunately, it was terminated
after only one year for unknown reasons. The findings of the study showed that coaching is not
a quick-fix solution and there were many challenges associated with changing teacher beliefs and classroom instruction.

**Peer coaching.** Peer coaching has been identified as a promising approach to professional development in a number of studies (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Licklider, 1995; Slater & Simmons, 2001). Peer coaching is defined as a structure for peers to support each other in improving instruction and student learning (Gottesman, 2000). The most common form of peer coaching is teacher peers working together to solve teacher-identified classroom problems (Gottesman, 2000). Much of the literature is purposeful in making a clear distinction between evaluation and peer coaching, with the primary focus on reflection for continual improvement (Gottesman, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Licklider, 1995). Peer coaching provides opportunities for self-evaluative and non-evaluative feedback, which have been shown to promote reflection and changes to instruction, a drastic shift from other approaches to enhancing teacher performance (Licklider, 1995). Three common characteristics of peer coaching are: (a) it is non-evaluative, (b) it involves inviting a peer to observe a lesson and provide feedback, and (c) it allows teachers to make adjustments to improve their instruction (Swafford, Maltsberger, Button, & Furgerson, 1997).

Ackland (1991) in his review of the peer coaching literature recognized Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1980) as the first authors to focus on coaching as an integral component of staff development. An analysis of over 200 studies led to the identification and continued exploration of five components of staff development: (a) presentation of theory, (b) modeling or demonstration, (c) practice under simulated conditions, (d) feedback, and (e) coaching for application (Joyce & Showers, 1980). One of the major concerns often expressed concerning professional development is the lack of transfer or application back to the classroom. Joyce and
Showers (2002) found that even with staff development that provides theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback, the transfer to being implemented in the classroom is only around 5% (Table 1). However, when peer coaching was added to staff development comprised of theory, demonstration, and practice, a dramatic increase in transfer of learning occurred (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Peer coaching may be an essential element for professional learning transfer to the classroom (Swafford et al., 1997).

Table 1  
Training Components and Attainment of Outcomes in Terms of Percent of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study of Theory</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coaching</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Student Achievement through Staff Development (p. 78), by Joyce, B. & Showers, B. Copyright 2002 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Peer coaching has the potential to be a powerful school-improvement strategy. As more and more schools face budget constraints and limited financial resources, instructional peer coaching may be a great investment to support teacher learning and professional growth (L. Rivera-McCutchen & Scharff Panero, 2014). Gottesman (2000) summarized a report from the Commission of Teaching and America’s Future, noting that many schools did not invest much in professional development for experienced teachers, and most of the money they did spend went to “hit-and-run workshops” (p. 7). Teachers, like any other professionals, must be supported with regular and ongoing job-embedded coaching on their performance. Peer coaching can be a professional learning system that encourages frequent opportunities for daily coaching (Gottesman, 2000). Teachers have reported that peer coaching enhanced their teaching skills and provided them with new teaching ideas which resulted in improved attitudes (Slater & Simmons,
2001). It also improved collaboration and reduced teacher isolation (Robbins, 2015). A peer coaching model offers a way to augment the typical one-shot professional development sessions currently offered by most school districts and bring the focus to improving teaching and learning within schools (Robbins, 2015).

**Theoretical Framework**

The nature of teachers’ self-efficacy and how it is developed through different sources of information (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal) provided the foundation for the purpose of this study (Bandura, 1997). The cyclical nature of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) is the lens with which I studied the problem of practice to better understand and identify potential improvements that could be made to the system of professional development for teachers in my context. A peer coaching model for professional learning (Robbins, 1991, 2015) was explored for connections to the cyclical nature of teacher self-efficacy model (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The literature on peer coaching has been reviewed to describe how a peer coaching model could potentially be used to increase teacher self-efficacy in hopes to positively influence student learning.
Self-efficacy theory & teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) is often credited for his influence on the study of teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. He first explored the construct of self-efficacy in his work on social learning theory, claiming that behavior is determined through one’s life experiences and by observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1977). Bandura proposed that one’s behavior is influenced by one’s beliefs about outcome expectations: belief that a certain behavior will lead to a particular outcome in a particular context and efficacy expectations: the belief that one can achieve a certain level of performance in a particular situation or context (Bandura, 1977).

According to Bandura (1977), outcome expectancies differ from self-efficacy evaluations according to how one’s belief system influences his/her behavior. In other words, even if a person believes that certain actions lead to certain outcomes (outcome expectancy), it is the person’s belief about their own effectiveness to perform the necessary action (self-efficacy) that influences their behavior (Bandura, 1977). Bandura identified four sources of efficacy expectations: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (1977, 1978, 1997).

Mastery experiences are the most powerful sources of efficacy information because they provide the most reliable indication of one’s abilities to succeed at a particular task (Bandura, 1997). If a person perceives that a performance has been successful, their self-efficacy is raised, contributing to the idea that future performance will result in success. This is especially true when success is contributed to the person’s abilities, is considered to be a difficult task, or is achieved early in learning without much difficulty. On the other hand, failures lower self-efficacy, leading to the belief that future performances will result in failure, especially when the failure occurs early in the task and cannot be attributed to the person’s lack of effort.
Vicarious experiences, the observation or visualization of performance of a task by a similar person, can also strengthen or weaken one’s self-efficacy. People often compare themselves to others in similar situations to determine their performance in relation to the performance of others, especially in activities where there is not a true measure of success (Bandura, 1997). The experience of watching someone else successfully perform a task that is perceived to be difficult can create expectations that if one will only persist in their efforts they too can improve (Bandura, 1977). This seems to be especially true when a person has had little prior experience or is uncertain about their own capabilities to perform the task.

Verbal persuasion impacts an individual’s self-efficacy, resulting in increased effort when a person of significance expresses confidence in an individual’s capabilities to perform a task. However, the power of verbal persuasion alone is often limited by a person’s own self-doubts, perceived deficiencies, or history of failure (Bandura, 1977, 1997). When verbal persuasion is used along with performance feedback specific to the individual’s strengths and weaknesses relative to the task at hand, there is greater likelihood for increased self-efficacy and persistence with the task (Bandura, 1997).

Physiological arousal is another source of information affecting one’s self-efficacy. One’s sense of anxiety and aptitude for stress may depend on their state of physiological arousal (Bandura, 1977). Although moderate levels of stress may help to focus one’s attention and persistence with a task, overly heightened states of anxiety can impede performance and result in avoidance behaviors (Bandura, 1977, 1997).
**Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy.** Teacher efficacy has been defined as beliefs that teachers have about their influence on student learning, even on students who may be considered difficult or unmotivated (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Much of the literature on teachers’ sense of self-efficacy aimed to distinguish Bandura’s (1977) two classes of expectations (outcome expectations and efficacy expectations). The literature on teacher efficacy referred to these constructs as teaching efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984), also referred to as general teaching efficacy (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990) and personal teaching efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

An early measure of teacher efficacy was used by RAND researchers in a study of teacher characteristics and student reading achievement (Armor, 1976). This measure was based on Rotter’s (1986) locus of control construct which suggested that teachers attribute their ability to have an impact on student learning as external (outside of their control) or internal (within their control) (Marsh & Richards, 1986). To measure efficacy, teachers were asked about their agreement with two items.

**Rand Item 1:** “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.”

Agreement with this factor suggested that a teacher believed that factors external to the classroom (value placed on education in the home; conflict, violence, or substance abuse in the home or community; social and economic realities of class, race and gender; or psychological, emotional, and cognitive needs of a particular child) had a stronger influence on a student’s performance in school than the influence of teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This was referred to as general teaching efficacy in other studies (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).
Rand Item 2: “If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.”

Agreement with this statement suggested that a teacher believed that they had the capabilities and experience to overcome obstacles to student learning (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This related to an individual’s personal assessment of their teaching efficacy and was labeled personal teaching efficacy in other studies (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

The sum of the scores from these two items was used to represent teacher efficacy (Armor, 1976). Findings from the study indicated that teachers who scored high on teacher efficacy had students who showed the greatest achievement gains in reading (Armor, 1976). Using the research from the RAND studies, Gibson and Dembo (1984) developed a measure of teacher efficacy based on Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy and the model of teacher efficacy proposed by Ashton and Webb (1982). This measure has been used and adapted for use to relate teacher efficacy to: (a) teachers’ classroom behaviors (Ashton & Webb, 1982; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), (b) openness to new ideas (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), (c) level of professional commitment (Coladarci, 1992), and (d) attitudes toward teaching (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teacher efficacy has been shown to influence: (a) student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986), (b) student attitudes toward school, and (c) classroom quality (Guo et al., 2012).

Teacher efficacy has been shown to be both context and subject-matter specific (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This is an important factor to consider when studying the effects of a professional development model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching reading. Some teachers may feel very competent in a particular subject area with a particular group of
students, but feel much less capable in another teaching situation. Measures of teacher efficacy for literacy (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011), science (Enochs & Riggs, 1990), classroom management (Emmer & Hickman, 1990), and special education (Coladarci & Breton, 1997) have emerged in the literature.

Guskey and Passaro (1994) clarified the multi-dimensional construct of teacher efficacy and suggested the need for future research on the construct as well as the tools used to measure it. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) proposed an integrated model of teacher efficacy, one that would weave together the two dimensions (personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy) as well as clarify the relationship between them. According to this model, teachers’ sense of self-efficacy differs based on factors such as the context, subject area, and setting. Hence, teachers may feel more or less efficacious, depending on the circumstance. Two additional dimensions emerged in their work: analysis of the teaching task and self-perceptions of teaching competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).
Figure 1. *The Cyclical Nature of Teacher Efficacy*


The model indicated how the four sources of self-efficacy information (mastery experiences, physiological and emotional arousal, vicarious experience, and social persuasion) were interpreted and weighed to determine their influence on the analysis of the teaching task and the assessment of personal teaching competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teacher efficacy was shaped through a teacher’s analysis of teaching task and assessment of their personal teaching competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). In analyzing a teaching task, teachers considered external factors related to general teaching efficacy (home environment, student motivation, community support) as well as contextual factors (school climate, support from other teachers, resources, instructional strategies, students’ abilities) (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Assessment of personal teaching competence was related to personal teaching efficacy and looked at how a teacher perceives his or her abilities and strategies to meet the
demands of a particular teaching task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The model was enhanced from previous models by directing more attention to the judgment of personal competence dependent upon the particular teaching task and situation (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The cyclical nature of the model demonstrated how judgments of teacher efficacy influenced the teacher’s task performance (goals, efforts, persistence) resulting in new mastery experiences which are processed into future efficacy beliefs. Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy were more likely to persist in efforts to improve their teaching effectiveness (Licklider, 1995).

**Peer coaching model.** Peer coaching, as a form of on-site staff development, first emerged in the research of Joyce and Showers (1980) in their analysis of over 200 studies on teacher training. Interested in which components of training most improved teacher learning, Joyce and Showers (1980) studied the elements and outcomes of teacher training. From an analysis, it was hypothesized that coaching in simulation and in the classroom combined with feedback to the teacher would produce the best results for teacher transfer of new learning to classroom practice (Joyce & Showers, 1980, p. 384). Although reference to the word “peer” was not included in their work until 1984, Joyce and Showers (1982); (1983) suggested that teachers should be organized into coaching teams where they regularly observed one another’s teaching to provide support and feedback.

In a study on the effects of peer coaching on the classroom application of new teaching techniques, Showers trained teachers to be peer coaches (Showers, 1984). Findings showed that teachers who were coached showed greater transfer of newly learned strategies in their teaching than those who did not work with a peer coach (Showers, 1984). In addition, there were positive effects on the achievement of students for teachers who participated in the peer coaching model (Showers, 1984). In the discussion on implications from the study, Showers (1984) claimed that
the implementation of a peer coaching program could have far reaching advantages beyond mere
transfer of new learning to classroom practice. Involving teachers in continuous learning
opportunities to improve teaching builds teacher capacity and can aid in changes to the system
such as: (a) implementation of new curriculum, (b) adoption of school wide behavior programs,
or (c) building teachers’ instructional strategies (Showers, 1984). Peer coaching continues to be
used in schools to: (a) enhance professional development (Showers & Joyce, 1996), (b) reduce
teacher isolationism and encourage collaboration (Slater & Simmons, 2001), (c) provide teacher
support (Swafford et al., 1997), and (d) encourage self-assessment and teacher reflection
(Vidmar, 2005).

Peer coaching allows two or more teachers to work together in a confidential relationship
to (a) share ideas, (b) reflect on and improve instruction, (c) learn from each other, and (d)
participate in action research in the classroom and workplace (Robbins, 1991). Approaches to
peer coaching have varied, although three commonalities exist in the literature about peer
coaching programs: (a) peer coaching is non-evaluative; (b) it involves the observation of
classroom teaching followed by constructive feedback; (c) it is aimed at improving classroom
instruction (Ackland, 1991; Swafford et al., 1997). Peer coaching provides the forum for
teachers to work together to develop, test out, and improve upon practices that benefit student
learning (Kohler, Ezell, & Paluselli, 1999).

Peer coaching has the potential to improve teacher and student learning and to address
problems that teachers face in the classroom (Robbins, 2015). As we are seeing so many new
local, state, and federal initiatives in the form of standards, high-stakes assessments, teacher
evaluation systems, and school improvement strategies, support for teachers’ professional growth
is needed more than ever. Improving the system of professional learning has the potential to
transform schools and positively impact students academic achievement (Wei et al., 2009). Peer coaching can be a meaningful, personalized, job-embedded form of professional learning for all teachers (Robbins, 2015). Professional learning that improves teaching should include opportunities for teachers to collaborate and reflect upon classroom instruction (Licklider, 1995). A review of the literature shows that peer coaching: (a) helped teachers to improve their practice (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995; Gottesman, 2000; Kohler et al., 1999; Phillips & Glickman, 1991; Swafford et al., 1997), (b) increased teacher reflection about teaching and learning, (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995; Licklider, 1995; Swafford et al., 1997; Vidmar, 2005), and (c) resulted in increases in teacher efficacy (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Licklider, 1995).

Ackland (1991), in his review of over 25 peer coaching programs, identified two basic forms of coaching: (a) expert coaching involves coaching by an individual with expertise and includes observation, feedback, and suggestions for change and (b) reciprocal coaching is defined as two teachers working together to observe and coach each other to improve instruction. Expert coaching has also been referred to as cognitive coaching in other studies, while reciprocal coaching is sometimes called reflective coaching (Vidmar, 2005).

For the purposes of this study, reciprocal coaching between pairs of teachers will be explored following a professional development series on peer coaching. In addition, the participants will choose: (a) whether or not they would like to participate in a peer coaching program, (b) their partner for the peer coaching cycle, (c) the focal point for the classroom visit, (d) how data will be collected during the visit, and (e) their own purpose for the peer coaching cycle (Phillips & Glickman, 1991).
The peer coaching process typically includes a pre-conference, classroom visit, and post-conference (Gottesman, 2000; Robbins, 1991, 2015). The peer coaching model I will refer to for this study is the one developed by Robbins (1991, 2015). During the pre-conference, the inviting teacher (coachee) shares with the invited teacher (coach) the focus for the classroom visit. The coachee should provide pertinent information about the lesson and intended goals for student learning. Together the coach and coachee should determine what specific data to collect and how the data will be collected to best provide information about the focus area the coachee has identified. This helps to set limits for the visit and clearly establish the feedback the coachee will be expecting in the post-conference. The coach should ask probing and clarifying questions to guide the coachee in planning and thinking about the lesson and expected student learning (Robbins, 2015) as well as to be sure that he or she understands the focus of the lesson and his or her role during the visit. Once the coachee has shared the focus for the visit, identified the role of the coach for the visit, and determined what and how data will be collected, the visit and post-conference are scheduled.

Robbins (2015) suggested telling the class about the scheduled visit helps to model collaborative learning practices for the students. The main goal for the visit is collect the data on the focus the coachee has specified to prepare for the post-conference following the lesson. Focusing on the students rather than the coachee during the classroom visit has been identified as a way to ease the coachee’s self-consciousness while gathering evidence about the effect of the lesson on student learning (Robbins, 2015). The coach should collect the data that has been agreed upon in the pre-conference without making any judgments or interpretations during or after the visit. Options for collecting data should be discussed during the pre-conference. These may include charting, scripting, video or tape recording. Additionally, the visit and anything
discussed during the pre or post-conference should remain confidential and private between the two parties.

After the visit, the coach and coachee reflect individually about the lesson in preparation for the post-conference. The goal of the post-conference is to engage in dialogue that encourages reflection on the part of the coachee about the data collected during the lesson. As the coach and coachee discuss the data, the focus should be on looking for evidence of the impact of teaching on student learning (Robbins, 2015). The coach should ask open-ended, probing questions, beginning with asking the coachee to reflect about the lesson and the focus for the lesson. This allows the coach and coachee to compare differences and similarities between the coachee’s perceptions and the data collected. It is important to use the evidence to determine if the lesson resulted in producing the student learning that the coachee expected and, if not, what the coachee would change for future lessons.

Research about peer coaching highlighted that when teacher’s received feedback about their teaching that they were able to use in a meaningful context, future performance and student learning improved (Robbins, 2015). By providing feedback on the focus identified by the coachee for the lesson, the coach helps the coachee to reflect on his or her actions relative to the goal for the lesson. Coaches should purposefully develop and pose questions that support teacher reflection and allow for analysis of the teaching task that may lead to new ideas and improvements to teaching and learning (Robbins, 2015). Robbins (2015) also suggested for the coach to ask for feedback on his or her questioning techniques, data collection, and conferencing skills. This will help to further develop coaching skills, while also building trust. Any data collected or notes taken by the coach should be given to the coachee at the conclusion of the post-conference. At the conclusion of the post-conference, the pair may decide to set up another
pre-conference and visit based on what was learned, or they may switch and have the coachee become the coach and the coach become the coachee. Subsequent peer coaching sessions can continue to build the trust and collaboration of the pair as well as provide opportunities for continuous professional growth.

The form of peer coaching that was the focus for this study is often referred to as reflective coaching or reciprocal coaching. The mutual purpose of coaching is to improve teacher reflection and analysis of teaching and learning sessions so one can use their teaching to improve student learning (Robbins, 2015). In this type of peer coaching, the coach acts as a mirror to reflect back to the coachee what is happening in the classroom.

The analysis of efficacy influences. A review of the literature showed that peer coaching has the potential to improve teacher self-efficacy (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Licklider, 1995; Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016), and increases in teacher self-efficacy were shown to positively impact student learning (Ashton & Webb, 1986). This study aimed to investigate the relationship between a peer coaching model of professional development and teacher self-efficacy. In this section, I will explore a link between components of the peer coaching model and Bandura’s (1977, 1978, 1997) sources of efficacy information, as well as the dimensions of efficacy identified by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998).
Figure 1. *The cyclical nature of teacher efficacy*


Bandura (1977, 1997) proposed four sources of self-efficacy information: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Teachers’ beliefs about their influences on student learning can be affected by an interaction between these sources of information as well as their assessment of the teaching task and perceived personal competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The act of teaching before, during, or after a peer coaching cycle can be a mastery experience in which a teacher assesses his or her capabilities and consequences of those capabilities on the learning of the students. Teachers make judgments about their teaching based on student performance (e.g., how students respond in class discussions, student work, and assessments of student performance) (Bruce & Ross, 2008).

Some teachers have reported that they feel inadequately prepared to teach in urban schools (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teacher efficacy can be influenced by one’s analysis of a
teaching task in relation to one’s assessment of their personal teaching competence. For example, a teacher may feel a strong sense of efficacy when it comes to teaching middle-class students in an average performing school or classroom, but experience a lowered sense of efficacy for teaching diverse groups of students with learning differences. Participants of peer coaching cycles receive feedback about their teaching through peer interaction and observing another teacher. These vicarious experiences may encourage risk taking and new mastery experiences. Teachers changed beliefs and persisted in efforts when they had opportunities to see a colleague perform a skill that was previously thought to be difficult or threatening (Licklider, 1995).

Collaboration and discussion during planning in the pre-conference stage are just as important as the observation of classroom teaching. Interactions with a peer during a pre- and post-conference, before and after a classroom visit, provide opportunities for verbal persuasion and physiological arousal. Reflection with a peer during the post-conference provides an opportunity to create new knowledge about one’s teaching practices. Taking this time to analyze specific aspects of teaching can help a teacher to identify sources for their sense of inefficacy (Ashton et al., 1983). Working with a peer to gather evidence of improved student learning can also be a powerful professional learning experience that leads to improved teacher efficacy, resulting in setting new goals and persisting to meet those goals.

Context Review

The community in which the study took place was a once thriving city with steel production and its related industries. In the past two decades, underemployment has become the standard. Census data (2009-2013) shows the median income for a household is $27,120, which reflects 29.6% of the population living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This
percentage is more than double the state average. Employment is a factor in residency. Only 53% of residents own their own home which is far below the state average of 70% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This contributes to a population that is highly transient.

The school district has an enrollment of 3,507 that is ethnically and culturally diverse. According to data reported on the 2013-2014 PA School Performance Profile, 49% of students are White, 42% are Black, 7% are Multiracial, 1% are Hispanic, and less than 1% are Asian. 18% of the students have IEPs, 2% are gifted students, 69% are considered Economically-Disadvantaged, and less than 1% are English Language Learners. The district was granted a free breakfast and lunch program for all students from federal program funding. Some of the schools within the district have over 80% of their population identified as economically-disadvantaged. Within the state of PA, the community ranks in the highest five percent of districts with families in economically depressed classifications.

Family literacy is a challenge. Only 85% of the population in the city are high school graduates and only 10% have achieved advanced degrees, which are well below the state averages of 89% and 28%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Many of the district students are coming from language-impoverished homes. Based on formal and informal assessments, Pre-K students are scoring well below the benchmarks for their age group on Pre Literacy skills. This also translates into poor kindergarten readiness. The most recent Reach and Risk study from The PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning Program Reach and Risk Assessment: State Fiscal Year 2012-13, shows that 42.2% of children living in the county of the district participate in publically funded quality early childhood programs. That trend is evident in the district where only a small number of Pre-K students are served out of the population of children ages 3-5. Pre-K Counts fiscal requirements only benefit families whose
income falls below 300% of the poverty level, contributing to a significant number of families who are not afforded quality early childhood programs.

According to the 2013-14 Pennsylvania School Performance profile for the Reading PSSA, less than 50% of students scored proficient or advanced at the elementary level and just above 50% of students at the middle and high school levels scored proficient or advanced in Reading. Assessments of early literacy skills for kindergarten through third grade students on the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills) also indicate that as many as 55% of students are failing to meet grade-level benchmarks each year.

The district’s overall results in Reading on the 2015 PSSA indicate that only 30-42% of the students are achieving proficiency. This is far below the state’s average proficiency level of 60% proficient/advanced for 2015. Pennsylvania also reports data for historically underperforming students. Historically underperforming students are defined as a non-duplicated count of students with disabilities, economically-disadvantaged students, and English language learners enrolled for a full academic year, taking the PSSA/Keystone Exams. For the 2015 PSSA, less than 30% of our historically underperforming students met proficiency, far below the state average proficiency level of 41%.

Over the past few years, our district has been significantly impacted by budget cuts. Some of the impact has caused an increase in class size, loss of elementary and middle school instructional coaches, limited after school professional development opportunities, and loss of afterschool and summer literacy programs. Although the district has implemented a Response to Intervention and Instruction Model (RtII) for elementary grades, funding and personnel are limited for providing small group intensive intervention beyond the core literacy block. Time
within the school day is also a factor that limits intervention opportunities outside of core instruction.

It has been perceived that many of the families in our community place little value on education. We have a large number of “at risk” students coming from language-impoverished homes. This translates into poor kindergarten readiness and the need for early reading interventions. Many of our parents have left school before receiving a high school diploma (2010 Census) and/or scored far below grade-level and were not on track for traditional high school graduation requirements. Therefore, family literacy is a concern because many of our parents never achieved reading proficiency. Many of our students do not have books to read at home and are not read to by their parents.

Our early childhood community partners, in conjunction with school district personnel, provide opportunities to increase family literacy. However, because only 41.6% of children in the county participate in publically funded quality early childhood programs, many of the families that could benefit are unidentified. Also, the fiscal requirements of early childhood programs only benefit families whose income falls below 300% poverty level. This also contributes to a significant number of families who are not afforded quality early childhood programming and services. We also have a high transient population, which impacts success. In a recent longitudinal study done within the district, it was discovered that only 42% of a graduation class started in their kindergarten cohort.

There is a perception that the schools are safe and welcoming, where teachers and principals genuinely care about the students. Parents who attend family literacy events express that they feel that the schools provide a good learning environment with clear expectations and
are pleased with how they are informed of their child’s progress. However, the challenges associated with poverty continue to exist as students progress through the grade-levels.

In my work as a literacy coach and coordinator, many teachers have expressed a lack of confidence in content knowledge, understanding of the PA Core Standards for English Language Arts, and the ability to use reading assessment data to make instructional decisions for individual students. I believe that most teachers are providing reading instruction to the best of their abilities, although it is clear that many seem to lack knowledge of reading development and assessments to handle the varying needs that our students have in acquiring reading skills. Another structural force at play is the lack of resources, including time and funding, to provide meaningful and sustained professional development that is targeted to teacher and student needs. Professional development sessions are usually limited to “sit and get” style, one-time sessions provided by outside consultants that are sometimes unconnected to what teachers really need (Wei et al., 2009). There is little time (30-minute morning meetings) devoted during the school year, week, or day for teachers to get the continuous ongoing literacy support they need to interpret and make sense of student learning data, plan effective instruction and intervention, or reflect on their teaching. In my experiences, I have found that there is not a commitment to the time and support that is needed for teachers to improve their practice (Wei et al., 2009). Accountability and evaluation measures are placed on teachers without proper support and scaffolding to meet those expectations. How does the zone or proximal development apply to purposeful planning and commitment to supporting teachers to improve their practice? This must go beyond teacher induction, sit-and-get professional development sessions, and required grade-level team meetings.
Engaging Stakeholders

My continued work on this problem of practice in my own district began with gaining the understanding from a variety of key stakeholders, including school staff and school leaders, the school board, community organizations, and student families why too many of our students are struggling to learn to read at proficient levels by third grade, a critical benchmark for future success (Hernandez, 2011). I needed to help them see and understand that the long-term implications of our students leaving school without the literacy skills needed for success in life were too great for our community to ignore. I also needed to continue to work to help key stakeholders realize that there was something that could be done to change this. At times, it seemed as though we were complacent and accepted the fact that year after year we had over 40% of our students in the district fail to reach proficiency in reading in third grade. Despite district and school improvement efforts, student achievement results remained stagnant.

Many of the approaches to dealing with this issue to that point had been reactive in nature. Efforts to remediate and “catch up” students in later grades had not proved successful. As a school district serving a high-poverty community, we knew that many of our students began school with little or no pre-school experience, placing them on a low trajectory for reading success. Research showed that students who began school on a low trajectory for reading, based on benchmark assessments, often continued on that trajectory, getting further and further behind year after year if intervention was not provided in the primary grades (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; V. E. Lee & Burkham, 2002; Snow et al., 1998). It was an injustice that so many of our students were being labeled as learning disabled, or were retained, dropped out, or were socially promoted because they did not have access to high-quality preschool literacy experiences, or they did not receive effective reading instruction and intervention in the primary grades.
My school district was not the only one facing these challenges. After taking a thorough look at the rankings of the school districts in our county on the Pennsylvania School Performance Profiles, it was confirmed that the highest achieving schools have little ethnic diversity, low percentages of students who are economically-disadvantaged, and very few students receiving special education services. Conversely, the lowest achieving schools often had vastly diverse student populations including high percentages of students who were economically-disadvantaged and high numbers of students who received special education services.

A long-term goal, one that was further informed by the learning from this study, was to empower teachers to take more ownership of their professional learning. I wanted to engage a group of interested and committed teachers and school leaders to begin some dialogue about professional learning through a peer coaching model. My aim with this study was to gather the information needed to implement a professional learning plan that was derived from what teachers said about their learning needs.

Over and over throughout the past few years, in different forums, teachers have expressed their dissatisfaction with professional development opportunities. Teachers have asked district leaders for more time to work on some of the concerns they had identified within the data as a grade-level team versus having to sit through outsider-provided professional development that seemed to have little to do with “user-defined” concerns or needs. This was an example highlighting the dissatisfaction with the current system for professional learning that I shared with our district leaders in hopes to cause them to pause and ponder about how this lack of personalized professional learning was contributing to low student achievement results.
Continuing to be open to the perspectives and viewpoints of the teachers “those on the ground” was crucial as I learned how to lead and encourage others to work on the problem of practice that our school district was failing to meet the literacy needs of all students. The stakeholders who I needed to work to engage in this research study included teachers working with kindergarten through fifth grade students, as well as school leaders, school board members, students, families, and community partners. It was important to involve not just one group, because different stakeholders may have different views about the problem. Although our student learning data indicated that a significant number of our students were not meeting critical literacy benchmarks in kindergarten through fifth grade, it was important to work with a variety of stakeholders to investigate how they viewed the problem and what ideas and input they had.

I needed to continue to learn about how I could engage teachers in investigating factors that would contribute to improving their practice (Bryk et al., 2015). I needed to learn how I could engage others in learning and wanting to learn. As I thought about my learning agenda for the next few years, I really wanted to work together with teachers to change the system of professional learning in our district. I wanted to empower teachers to make decisions regarding their professional learning.

My research plan was about engaging others in learning. I believed that through providing time, space, and commitment for professional learning, driven by teacher input and supported by multiple measures of data (student learning data, teacher-content knowledge survey, perceptual data from various stakeholders), the system could become better understood. Hence, a capacity for getting better at learning could begin to develop. Investigating professional learning and how it was operating within the system was one area to begin to understand how the system was producing unintended results. Working with teachers and school
leaders to develop a better system of professional learning could potentially “disrupt” the system and allow for different and hopefully improved results. I believed that if all K-5 teachers were supported through a strong system of professional learning to improve their content knowledge, efficacy for teaching reading, and instructional practices this would have a significantly positive impact on reading instruction and ultimately improve student reading outcomes.

Working together with a group of teachers through a professional learning series as part of my research plan may have helped to create a community of learners within our school that could allow for powerful improvement by individual teachers and by the district as a whole. As we studied and learned together (through success and failures) about a peer coaching model, teacher self-efficacy for teaching reading, effective instructional practices, and professional learning a community of learners began to develop. Moving forward, this group could help to foster the building of a common language, increased capacity for improvement, reflection, and deeper learning about ways to address problems and engage together in continuous learning. As we continue to learn about which practices are most effective for meeting the needs of our students in reading, this community could help to share effective literacy practices sooner and faster (Bryk et al., 2015). We will work together to empower other teachers to take on more responsibility for improving the system. It is important to hold the belief that all teachers in our district want to work together to improve our system of learning and that an improvement culture can take root (Bryk et al., 2015).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature that is related to the problem of practice. Studies on teacher content knowledge, effective literacy instruction, teacher self-efficacy, and peer coaching were included to direct the need for the reported study. A theoretical framework was
discussed to further enhance understanding of sources of efficacy and influences on teacher self-efficacy. Finally, a review of the context and discussions of how to engage stakeholders concluded the chapter. Chapter three will discuss the design and methodology for the study.
Chapter 3: Methods

Roadmap

This chapter begins by detailing previous efforts implemented within the district of study. The design for the study is discussed and research questions are provided. Information about the professional development sessions for the peer coaching model is given. Specifics about the instruments used for data collection are also shared.

Previous Efforts

Over the past decade, numerous initiatives have been implemented in the school district in attempts to improve student achievement. For example, “Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships” focused on increasing student success through expanding teachers’ background knowledge. Several texts were purchased and shared with staff to read over the summers of 2009 and 2010, including (a) Wiggins & McTighe (2005): *Understanding by design*; (b) Jacobs (2010): *Curriculum 21: Essential education for a changing world*; (c) Wagner (2014): *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don’t Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need and What We Can Do About It*; (d) Jackson (2009): *Never work harder than your students & other principles of great teaching*; and (e) Sanchez (2008) *A brain-based approach to closing the achievement gap*. Another initiative called “Move, Engage, Assess” focused on the need for active student and teacher involvement in lessons, more cooperative grouping, and the use of formative assessment.

In addition to supporting teachers’ professional learning, a major district goal has been to align curriculum with PA Standards using the Standards Aligned System Framework developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. More recently, there has been continued work to realign the curriculum to the PA Core Standards. Several years ago, distinguished educators
from the Department of Education were appointed to work with some of the district’s schools due to the lack of improvement in state test scores. The role of the distinguished educator was to work with building administrators to analyze data, align instruction, and identify vertical and horizontal gaps in curriculum and instruction. Literacy and Math coaches were also assigned to all schools in 2010-2011 to support teachers in using data to drive instruction, implement “best practice” instructional strategies, and develop common assessments. In addition, after-school teacher academies were implemented as a form of professional development with the goal to increase teacher content knowledge in one of four content areas (Literacy, Math, Special Education, or Technology). These academies were voluntary and held after school with the incentive for teachers to earn days off at the end of the school year.

In 2011-2012, budget cuts caused an increase in class size, the loss of instructional coaches, limited professional development opportunities, and the loss of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for students. Also during 2011-2012, the Keystones to Opportunity (KtO) grant project, a five-year competitive federal grant program, was announced as part of Pennsylvania’s Striving Readers’ Comprehensive Literacy Project to improve literacy outcomes for all children. Our district put together a team to work on the pre-application process for the grant. The team identified kindergarten through grade five as a priority area to work on improving literacy instruction, after completing the initial local literacy needs assessment as part of the pre-application process. For the 2012-2013 school year, the district was awarded $529,260 to improve reading skills. While grant funding was targeted for the statutory area kindergarten through Grade 5, one important objective was to develop and implement a Local Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LCLP) for birth to Grade 12.
The local comprehensive literacy plan (LCLP) was developed during the 2012-2013 school year by a district literacy leadership team. This team was comprised of various stakeholders, representing each of the identified statutory areas birth to age 5, kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve. Each of the statutory areas also formed subcommittees of stakeholders, including teachers, principals, literacy coaches, school administrators, school board members, parents, early childhood partners, and community members. The literacy plan was completed in February 2013 and has been implemented during the past three school years (2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016).

Funding from the KtO grant was used to hire 3 literacy coaches to support K-5 teachers and to support the development and implementation of the district literacy plan. A project director and data liaison have also been identified within the district. Data are collected and compiled by the state KtO operational team, and a data profile is shared with the district in the fall of each new school year for the previous school year. Due to decreases in funding throughout the grant project, as well as decreases to the overall school budget over the past two school years, there is currently only one remaining literacy coach.

Although the grant project provided funding for professional development, literacy coaches, and summer family literacy programs, there is not much evidence indicating improved literacy outcomes. The district data profile shows that data about teacher instructional practices, gathered from teacher walkthroughs, have not improved, indicating that there has been a lack of professional development application to the classroom. Scores on student literacy assessments for kindergarten through fifth grade, including DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), GRADE (Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation), and the
PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) in Reading and English Language Arts, have also remained stagnant.

At the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year, an Elementary Curriculum Coordinator was appointed. Data indicated the need for a supplemental reading program to strengthen students’ phonemic awareness and phonics skills. Wilson Fundations was purchased and implemented in the Fall of 2016 for students in kindergarten, first, and second grades. Teachers were trained on the program during two in-service days in August, 2016. A literacy specialist from the Wilson Language Company planned for visits with teachers four times throughout the 16-17 school year. Teachers of third, fourth, and fifth grades began work on a new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum framework under the direction of the Elementary Curriculum and Elementary Reading Coordinators in the Summer of 2016. Teachers were involved in professional learning about new ELA curriculum during two in-service days in August. The new curriculum was implemented in the Fall of 2016. In-service days to continue support for teachers implementing the new curriculum were planned monthly throughout the 2016-2017 school year.

**Research Questions**

This study used a mixed-methods case study design to explore teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching and its effects on teachers’ sense of efficacy and collective efficacy for teaching literacy. Participating in the study as a facilitator and observer has allowed me to learn and share with school leaders and teachers about peer coaching as a model for professional development.

Quantitative data about teachers’ individual sense of efficacy for teaching reading and teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy were assessed at the beginning and end of a professional development series on peer coaching. Qualitative data about teachers’ beliefs
and attitudes about peer coaching were gathered through a focus group held during the final session of the series.

The primary research question was: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy? Two secondary research questions were: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy? What are teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning?

Participants

Convenience sampling was used to invite all reading teachers of kindergarten through fifth grades, including special education teachers and reading specialists, from one elementary school to participate in a professional learning series on peer coaching. During an elementary staff meeting, I met with all K-5 teachers to provide information about my research study and the professional learning opportunity on peer coaching. At this meeting, I shared an overview of peer coaching and invited teachers to participate in five additional sessions to be held during morning meeting times. The professional development series was not required for teachers to attend; it was a voluntary offering for interested participants.

Teachers are expected to use the morning meeting time for grade-level collaboration, staff meetings, committee meetings, or parent-support meetings. These meetings are pre-scheduled on a morning meeting calendar each month. As the district Elementary Reading Coordinator, I often facilitate some of the morning meetings to support teacher learning. The morning meeting time is district contracted time and teachers do not have this time for personal planning. I arranged with the school principal ahead of time to set aside one morning meeting time a week for those teachers who wished to participate in this series on peer coaching. There
was no penalty or reward for participating or not participating in these sessions. Participation was voluntary on the part of the participants and anyone could have withdrawn participation at any time.

**Research Design**

The study employed a mixed-methods research design that utilized participant ratings and focus group data. Quantitative data about teachers’ individual sense of efficacy for teaching reading and teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy were collected via a survey distributed to participants at the beginning and end of a voluntary professional development series on peer coaching. The survey took about five to ten minutes to complete. Descriptive statistics were used to examine changes in teachers’ individual sense of efficacy and teacher’s collective efficacy for teaching literacy from the beginning of the professional development series to the end of the project.

Qualitative data were gathered from a thirty-minute focus group session held during the final day of the professional learning session. Participants were asked to discuss their answers to three questions about their beliefs and attitudes regarding peer coaching. These data, which were gathered through an audio recording, were analyzed using a descriptive case study approach.

Student learning data indicate that a significant number of our students are not meeting critical literacy benchmarks in kindergarten through fifth grade, so it was important to work with teachers to investigate their sense of efficacy for teaching reading and their beliefs about peer coaching as a model for professional development. Gathering information about what teachers believe and what they perceive they need in terms of professional learning to improve literacy outcomes for students was a key component of the plan.
Peer Coaching Professional Development Design

I held discussions with the Elementary Curriculum Coordinator and building principals of the two elementary schools I work with to share information about the peer coaching professional learning series. All K-5 teachers participated in district-wide professional development at the start of the school year in August. Teachers of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students attended two days of training on a new supplemental reading program called Wilson Fundations. Teachers of third, fourth, and fifth grade students attended two days of professional learning on a new curriculum framework for English Language Arts. In my discussions with the administrative team, we discussed how the peer coaching model may provide further support for teachers’ personalized professional learning goals as they work to implement these new program approaches for reading.

To facilitate the professional development series and gather my research data, I used a scheduled morning meeting time to meet with all K-5 teachers at one elementary school to provide information about this professional learning opportunity on peer coaching. At this meeting, I gave an overview of peer coaching and invited teachers to participate in five additional sessions that were held during morning meeting times.

The teachers who elected to participate were given the pre-assessment survey to collect data about their self-efficacy and collective efficacy for teaching literacy. Five sessions about peer coaching were held over the course of five weeks (one meeting a week) for the teachers who signed up.

During session one, I described the peer coaching process, how it works, and how it can support the work of teachers. Handouts and additional resources (Gottesman, 2000; Robbins, 2015) were shared and participants were given time for reflection to take notes on ideas they had for engaging in a peer coaching process.
During session two, we worked on how to identify a focus for a classroom visit and we discussed the pre-conference. Participants learned about the roles of the coach and coachee. I shared examples of how the coach can pose clarifying questions to help the teacher to fine-tune his or her thinking about the lesson and desired student outcomes. Handouts with a menu of potential options for a lesson focus were shared as well as ideas for how to pose open-ended, reflective questions during the pre-conference.

Session three focused on the classroom visit and data collection. We began with reviewing how to choose a focus for the classroom visit and the roles of the coach and coachee during the visit. Handouts with various suggestions for collecting data were shared.

During session four, we discussed the post-conference and how to share the data collected during the lesson. Time was aside near the close of each of the sessions for teacher reflection and note-taking on potential ideas.

Session five was a focus group session in which participants discussed their thoughts on three questions:

1. Was peer coaching a valuable use of your professional development time? Why or why not?
2. Would you continue participation in peer coaching? Why or why not?
3. What did you learn by participating in the peer coaching process?

**Instruments & Data Collection**

Quantitative data about teachers’ individual sense of efficacy for teaching literacy were collected at the beginning and end of a professional development series on peer coaching. Two versions of a survey titled “Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction” were created by adapting some items from the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI)*
developed by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011). One was specifically designed by for K-2 teachers and one was for teachers of grades 3-5 (See Appendices A and B). “No single standardized measure of self-efficacy will be appropriate for all studies and researcher may need to develop new or significantly revised measure in each investigation” (Vispoel & Chen, 1990). Teachers recorded a unique code on the initial and final survey so that the data could be analyzed by matching surveys. Both surveys had a total of six questions and asked participants to respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of their current ability, resources, and opportunity. A four-point Likert scale asked participants to indicate how well they could accomplish various reading instructional tasks by choosing (a) 1- Not well at all, (b) 2- Not too well, (c) 3- Pretty well, and (d) 4- Very well. These data were analyzed to answer the primary research question: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy?

Additional quantitative data were collected to address the second research question: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy? A paper-and-pencil survey titled “Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction” was distributed to all eight participants at the beginning and end of the professional development series (See Appendix C). This survey was created by adapting some items from the Collective Efficacy Scale developed by Goddard and Hoy (2003). There were five questions on this survey and participants were asked to use the same Likert scale to indicate how well they thought all teachers in their building, including themselves could accomplish various reading instructional tasks by choosing (a) 1- Not Well at All, (b) 2- Not too Well, (c) 3- Pretty Well, (d) 4- Very Well.
Qualitative data about teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching were gathered through a focus group held during the final session of the series. Participants were asked to discuss their answers to questions about their beliefs and attitudes regarding peer coaching (See Appendix D). These data were gathered through an audio recording to undergo an emergent theme analysis.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed previous efforts to address the problem of practice. Research questions for the study along with information about the research design, participants, and professional learning series design were provided. The chapter concludes with a description of the instruments used to collect data. Chapter four will report the findings from the study.
Chapter 4: Findings

Roadmap

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of peer coaching as a means of professional development. Specifically, I studied the impact of peer coaching on teachers’ individual self-efficacy for teaching literacy. Additionally, I was interested in teachers’ perceptions of collective efficacy for teaching literacy and teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning. The study was conducted at one school in my school district for six weeks during October 2016 and November 2016. This chapter presents an analysis of the data gathered from three sources: a pre- and post-survey of teachers’ individual sense of efficacy, a pre- and post-survey of teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy, and a focus group. The findings from the quantitative and qualitative data collected inform the three research questions of the study:

- What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy?
- What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy?
- What are teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning?

Description of the participants

Eight individuals volunteered to participate in the peer coaching professional development series and study. The group included four teachers working in the primary school with students in grades K-2 and four teachers working in the intermediate school with students in grades 3-5. Although the sample of teachers was small, the group was representative of the
population of elementary reading teachers in the district. There was a blend of expert and novice teachers from each grade span, with a range of experience between five to twenty-five years of service. The teachers in the sample also ranged in educational experience, with at least two of the teachers holding master’s degrees. The teachers were certified in various areas including elementary education, special education, and reading. I also participated in the study as a facilitator for the professional development series on peer coaching.

Data Analysis

Summary tables of the data collected from the surveys and focus group are presented in this section. An analysis using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and an emergent theme analysis for the qualitative data are provided.

Teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. Two surveys; “Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction for K-2 Teachers” and “Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction for Grade 3-5 Teachers” were given to explore teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy. Participants were asked to respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of their current ability, resources, and opportunity using a four-point Likert scale: (a) 1- Not Well at All, (b) 2- Not too Well, (c) 3- Pretty Well, (d) 4- Very Well. Responses were collected before and after participation in the professional development sessions.
**K-2 Teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction.** Phonological awareness is an important component of literacy instruction for students in grades K-2. Question #1 asked participants to consider how well they could teach phonological awareness. Two participants indicated 4- *Very Well* on the pre-survey, and two indicated 3- *Pretty Well*. On the post-survey, one participant indicated 4- *Very Well*, and the other three chose 3- *Pretty Well*. One participant changed her response from 4- *Very Well* on the pre-survey to 3- *Pretty Well* on the post-survey. The responses for question #1 indicate that participants had positive perceptions of their abilities to teach phonological awareness. Teachers of those grade levels participated in professional development with a literacy specialist from Wilson Academy as they implemented a new supplemental reading program called, Fundations, for the 2016-2017 school year. Phonemic awareness is one component of the Fundations program.

Phonics is also a critical component of literacy instruction for students in grades K-2. Question #2 asked participants to consider how well they could teach phonics. All four participants indicated 4- *Very Well* on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, two participants indicated 4- *Very Well*, and two chose 3- *Pretty Well*. Two participants changed their response from pre- to post-survey. Both responses changed from 4- *Very Well* on the pre-survey to 3- *Pretty Well* on the post-survey. Similar to the responses on phonological awareness, participants had positive perceptions of their abilities to teach phonics. Phonics is the main focus of the Wilson Fundations program, and K-2 teachers have participated in professional development and coaching as they learned to implement that program this year.

Reading fluency is an essential component of effective literacy instruction. Fluency is also a part of the Fundations program, and instruction in fluency is provided at the sound, letter, word, and phrase level as part of the program. Professional development on implementing the
program may have provided teachers with increased knowledge in fluency. Question #3 asked participants to consider how well they could get students to read fluently during oral reading. Two participants indicated 4- Very Well on the pre-survey, and two indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, one participant indicated 4- Very Well, and three chose 3- Pretty Well. Only one participant changed her response from pre- to post-survey. The response changed from 4- Very Well on the pre-survey to 3- Pretty Well on the post-survey.

Question #4 asked participants to consider how well they help their students figure out unknown words when they are reading. The Fundations program provided teachers with professional development, which may have supported this component as well. For example, students are taught how to tap out unknown words using their knowledge of letters and sounds. Students are also provided explicit instruction on the six syllable types, prefixes and suffixes, and inflectional endings. For this question, two participants indicated 4- Very Well on the pre-survey, and two indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, all participants answered the same as they had on the pre-survey with two indicating 4- Very Well, and two indicating 3- Pretty Well.

Question #5 asked participants to consider how well they could model effective reading strategies. The Fundations program provides some instruction with comprehension, although it is somewhat limited, and the program specifies that it must be combined with a core literature – based language arts program. For example, students may be asked to retell a passage they have read or to answer questions about a passage, with teachers providing strategies, such as locating text evidence to support their answer. For this question, three participants indicated 4- Very Well on the pre-survey, and one indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, two participants
changed their answers by lowering their response from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well, resulting in overall one 4- Very Well and three 3- Pretty Well.

Question #6 asked participants to consider how well they could use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of their students. Using assessment data to guide future instruction is essential for effective reading instruction. For this question, three participants indicated 3- Pretty Well, and one indicated 4- Very Well on the pre- survey. On the post-survey, one participant indicated 2- Not Too Well two participants indicated 3- Pretty Well, and one indicated 4- Very Well. One participant’s response decreased, and three remained the same.

For almost all of the questions, participants indicated that they could accomplish various instructional tasks as 3- Pretty Well or 4- Very Well. A summary of the survey responses described in the preceding paragraphs is provided in Table 2.
Table 2: Survey Responses for Teacher Self-Efficacy K-2

1. How well can you teach phonological awareness (breaking down spoken language into smaller units, words, syllables, phonemes)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How well can you teach phonics (letter/sound correspondences)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How well can you get students to read fluently during oral reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How well can you help your students figure out unknown words when they are reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How well can you model effective reading strategies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How well can you use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of your students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On all of the pre-survey questions participants rated themselves positively choosing either 3- Pretty Well or 4- Very Well. 4- Very Well was chosen most often on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, the most common response was 3- Pretty Well indicating that there were decreases in participants’ responses from pre- to post-survey. Table 3 shows the total frequencies for each response.
Table 3: Total Responses for Teacher Self-Efficacy K-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean and mode scores for each participant are shown in Table 4. Overall mean scores decreased for three of the four K-2 participants. Mode scores either stayed the same or decreased. Participant 1 most often chose 4- Very Well for pre-survey questions. On the post-survey, she chose 4- Very Well three times and 3- Pretty Well three times. Participant 1 changed one response from pre-to post-survey. On question #5, the participant changed her response from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well when considering how well she could model effective reading strategies. Participant 2 did not change any responses from pre-to post-survey. She most often chose 4- Very Well on both the pre- and post-survey questions. Participant 3 chose 4- Very Well most often on the pre-survey, and 3- Pretty Well most often on the post-survey. She lowered every response from pre- to post-survey except for question #4 which focused on helping students to figure out unknown words while reading on which she indicated 3- Pretty Well on both the pre- and post-survey. On question #6, about assessment strategies, participant 3 indicated negative self-efficacy for the post-survey question. She changed her response from 3- Pretty Well on the pre-survey to 2- Not Too Well on the post-survey. Participant 4 chose 3- Pretty Well most often on the pre- and post-survey. She kept all responses the same pre- and post-survey, except for lowering one response from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well on Question #2 about how well she could teach phonics.
Table 4: Mean and Mode Data Teacher Self-Efficacy K-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3 and 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grades 3-5 Teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction.** Comprehension requires that students apply their prior knowledge to make sense and meaning from the text they are reading. Reading instruction in grades 3-5 focuses on teaching students how to make meaning from text. Question #1 asked participants to consider how well they could provide students with opportunities to apply their prior knowledge to reading tasks. For this question on the pre-survey, one participant indicated 2- Not Too Well two participants indicated 3- Pretty Well and one participant indicated 4- Very Well. On the post-survey, three participants indicated 3- Pretty Well and one chose 4- Very Well. Three participants changed their response from pre- to post-survey; two increased and one decreased. On this question three participants rated themselves positively on the pre-survey for being able to provide students with opportunities to apply their prior knowledge to reading tasks. One participant chose 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey for this question. All responses were positive on the post-survey, with two participants changing their results to show increased teacher efficacy and one participant decreasing their rating for this question.

Instruction in reading strategies is critical to increase students’ reading comprehension. Question #2 asked participants to consider how well they could implement effective reading strategies in their classrooms. One participant indicated 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey, and three indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, three participants indicated 3- Pretty Well,
and one chose 4- Very Well. Two participants changed their responses from pre- to post-survey. The responses changed in a positive direction indicating increased teacher efficacy.

Question #3 asked participants to consider how well they could adjust their reading materials to the proper level for individual students. The reading levels for students in grades 3-5 can be varied in a single classroom and teachers often must adjust materials based on students’ individual needs. For this question, one participant indicated 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey, two indicated 3- Pretty Well, and one indicated 4- Very Well. On the post-survey, two participants indicated 3- Pretty Well, and two indicated 4- Very Well. Two participants chose the same score as on the pre-survey, and two increased their score.

The National Reading Panel identified five essential components of reading: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. Effective reading teachers integrate these components into their daily lessons with students and also provide opportunities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening across all content areas. Question #4 asked participants to consider how well they could integrate the components of language arts. On the pre-survey, three of the participants indicated a score of 3- Pretty Well, and one participant chose 2- Not Too Well. The post-survey results show that all participants rated themselves as doing this 3- Pretty Well. Only one participant changed their response from pre- to post-survey. The response changed from 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey to 3- Pretty Well on the post-survey. All responses were positive on the post-survey, with all of the participants indicating that they could accomplish this task 3- Pretty Well.

Opportunities to write in response to reading can increase student comprehension of text. Writing is a critical skill for college and career readiness. Question #5 asked participants to consider how well they could provide children with writing opportunities in response to reading.
On the pre-survey, three participants indicated 3- *Pretty Well*, and one participant indicated 2- *Not Too Well*. On the post-survey, two participants chose 3- *Pretty Well*, and two participants indicated 4- *Very Well*. For this question, three participants increased their response from the pre- to the post-survey. All responses were positive on the post-survey, with two of the participants indicating that they could accomplish this task 3- *Pretty Well*, and two increasing their rating to 4- *Very Well*.

Question #6 asked participants to consider how well they could use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of their students. Using assessment data to guide future instruction is essential for effective reading instruction. For this question, one participant indicated 2- *Not Too Well* and three participants indicated 3- *Pretty Well* on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, two participants indicated 3- *Pretty Well*, and two indicated 4- *Very Well*. Two participants increased their scores from pre- to post-survey.

Responses for 3-5 teachers varied from 2- *Not Too Well* to 3- *Pretty Well* to 4- *Very Well* for the pre-survey questions. On the post-survey, all participants indicated positive self-efficacy by choosing 3- *Pretty Well* or 4- *Very Well*. A summary of the survey responses described in the preceding paragraphs is provided in Table 5.
Table 5: Survey Responses for Teacher Self-Efficacy Grades 3-5

1. How well can you provide your students with opportunities to apply their prior knowledge to reading tasks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How well can you implement effective reading strategies in your classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How well can you adjust your reading materials to the proper level for individual students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How well can you integrate the components of language arts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How well can you provide children with writing opportunities in response to reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How well can you use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of your students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the pre-survey questions, participants ranged from 2- Not Too Well to 4- Very Well. 3- Pretty Well was chosen most often on the pre-survey questions. 4- Very Well was only chosen two times. On the post-survey, 3- Pretty Well was also the most common response. Table 6 shows the total frequencies for each response.
Table 6: Total Responses for Teacher Self-Efficacy Grades 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</table>

Mean and mode scores for each participant are shown in Table 7. Overall mean scores increased for all four participants from grades 3-5. Mode scores either stayed the same or increased. Participant 5 chose 2- Not Too Well or 3- Pretty Well for all pre-survey questions. On the post-survey, she most often chose 3- Pretty Well. Participant 5 changed her response on three questions (Question 1, 2, and 6) from pre-to post-survey indicating increases. Participant 6 changed responses on four questions (Question 1, 2, 5, and 6) from pre-to post-survey, indicating an increase on each question. She most often chose 3- Pretty Well on pre-survey questions and 4- Very Well on post-survey questions. Participant 7 chose 3- Pretty Well most often on the pre- and post-survey. She lowered her response on one question (Question 1) from pre- to post-survey and raised the answer to three questions (Question 3, 4, and 5) from pre- to post-survey. Participant 8 chose 3- Pretty Well most often on both the pre- and post-survey. She kept all responses the same pre- and post-survey except for increasing two responses (Question 3 and 5) from 3- Pretty Well to 4- Very Well.

Table 7: Mean and Mode Data Teacher Self-Efficacy Grades 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mean Post-Survey</th>
<th>Mode Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mode Post-Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
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<td>3.17</td>
<td>2 and 3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
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<td>3.17</td>
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<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction. The survey “Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction” was given to all participants before and after participation in the professional learning on peer coaching to explore teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy. Participants were asked to use a Likert scale rating to indicate how well they thought all teachers in their building, including themselves, could accomplish various reading instructional tasks by choosing: (a) 1- Not Well at All, (b) 2- Not too Well, (c) 3- Pretty Well, (d) 4- Very Well.

K-2 Teacher collective efficacy for literacy instruction. Question #1 asked participants to consider how well the teachers in the school could motivate the students in reading. All responses for the question were positive and there were no changes from pre- to post-survey. All participants indicated 3- Pretty Well as a response for the pre- and post-survey.

Question #2 asked participants to consider how well the teachers in the school could teach reading. For this question, three participants indicated 3- Pretty Well, and one indicated 4- Very Well on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, all four participants indicated 3- Pretty Well. One participant’s response decreased from pre- to post-survey.

Question #3 on the survey asked participants to consider how well teachers in their school could teach reading to all students, including struggling readers. On the pre-survey, one participant indicated 2- Not Too Well and three participants indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, all four participants indicated 3- Pretty Well. One participant increased their score from pre- to post-survey for this question.

Question #4 on the survey asked participants to consider how well skilled teachers in the school were in various methods of teaching reading. For this question two participants indicated 2- Not Too Well and two participants indicated 3- Pretty Well on the pre survey. On the
post-survey, all four participants indicated 3- *Pretty Well*. Two participants changed their response to be more positive from pre- to post-survey.

Question #5 on the survey asked participants to consider how well teachers in the school could reach their students with their methods of teaching reading. For this question, two participants indicated 2- *Not Too Well* and two participants indicated 3- *Pretty Well* on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, all four participants indicated 3- *Pretty Well*. Two participants improved their response to indicate increased collective efficacy.

Responses on the pre-survey varied from 2- *Not Too Well* to 3- *Pretty Well* to 4- *Very Well*. All responses on the post-survey were 3- *Pretty Well*. A summary of the survey responses described in the preceding paragraphs is provided in Table 8.
Table 8: Survey Responses for Collective Efficacy K-2

1. How well can we motivate our students in reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. How well can we teach reading

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
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<td>Pre-survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</table>

3. How well do we know how to teach reading to all students including struggling readers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How well skilled are we in various methods of teaching reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How well do we reach students with our methods of teaching reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the pre-survey questions, participants ranged from 2- Not Too Well to 4- Very Well.

3- Pretty Well was chosen most often on the pre-survey questions. 4- Very Well was only chosen once. On the post-survey, 3- Pretty Well was the only response. Table 9 shows the total frequencies for each response.
Mean and mode scores for collective efficacy for each participant are shown in Table 10. Mean scores increased for two participants, decreased for one participant, and stayed the same for one participant from pre- to post-survey. Participant 1 responded to all questions indicating 3- Pretty Well on both the pre- and post-survey, resulting in a mean and mode score of 3.

Participant 2 most often chose 2- Not Too Well for pre-survey questions. On the post-survey, she most often chose 3- Pretty Well. She changed a response from 2- Not Too Well to 3- Pretty Well on three questions from pre-to post-survey (Questions 3, 4, and 5). Participant 3 changed her response on two questions (Question 4 and 5) from pre-to post-survey indicating increases from 2- Not Too Well to 3- Pretty Well. Participant 4 changed a response on one question (Question 2) from pre-to post-survey, indicating a decrease from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well.
**Grades 3-5 Teacher collective efficacy for literacy instruction.** The collective efficacy questions were the same for teachers in grades 3-5. Question #1 asked participants to consider how well the teachers in the school could motivate the students in reading. All responses for the question were positive. On the pre-survey, three participants indicated 3- Pretty Well, and one chose 4- Very Well. On the post-survey, two chose 3- Pretty Well, and two chose 4- Very Well. One participant increased their score from pre- to post-survey. Question #2 asked participants to consider how well the teachers in the school could teach reading. For this question, two participants indicated 2- Not Too Well one indicated 3- Pretty Well, and one indicated 4- Very Well on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, two chose 3- Pretty Well, and two chose 4- Very Well. Two participants increased their score from pre- to post-survey for this question. Question #3 on the survey asked participants to consider how well teachers in their school could teach reading to all students including struggling readers. On the pre-survey, three participants indicated 2- Not Too Well and one participant indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, one chose 2- Not Too Well two said 3- Pretty Well, and one chose 4- Very Well. Two participants increased their score from pre- to post-survey for this question. Question #4 on the survey asked participants to consider how well skilled teachers in the school were in various methods of teaching reading. For this question, all four participants indicated 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, all four participants increased their responses. Two participants changed their response to be more positive from pre- to post-survey. One indicated 3- Pretty Well, and three indicated 4- Very Well. Question #5 on the survey asked participants to consider how well teachers in the school could reach their students with their methods of teaching reading. For this question, two participants indicated 2- Not Too Well and two participants indicated 3- Pretty Well on the pre-survey. On the post-survey, all four participants
indicated 3- Pretty Well. Two participants improved their response to indicate increased
collective efficacy. Responses on both the pre-survey and post-survey varied from 2- Not Too
Well to 3- Pretty Well to 4- Very Well. Responses mostly increased from pre- to post-survey. A
summary of the survey responses described in the preceding paragraphs is provided in Table 11.

Table 11: Survey Responses for Collective Efficacy Grade 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. How well can we motivate our students in reading?</th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. How well can we teach reading?</th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. How well do we know how to teach reading to all students including struggling readers?</th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. How well skilled are we in various methods of teaching reading?</th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. How well do we reach students with our methods of teaching reading?</th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the pre-survey questions, participants ranged from 2- Not Too Well to 4- Very Well.
2- Not Too Well was chosen most often on the pre-survey questions. 4- Very Well was only
chosen twice. On the post-survey, 3- Pretty Well was the most common response. 2- Not Too
Well was only chosen once, and responses increased for 4- Very Well. Table 12 shows the total
frequencies for each response.
Table 12: Total Responses for Collective-Efficacy Grades 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean and mode scores for collective efficacy for each participant are shown in Table 13.

Mean scores increased for all four teachers from grades 3-5 from pre- to post-survey. Participant 5 had the largest mean gain from 2.2 on the pre-survey to 3.8 on the post-survey. She most often chose 2- Not Too Well for pre-survey questions. On the post-survey, she most often chose 4- Very Well. She changed her responses on all post-survey questions to show increased collective efficacy from pre- to post-survey. Participant 6 only changed her response on one question (Question 4) from pre-to post-survey, indicating an increase from 2- Not Too Well to 4- Very Well. Participant 7 most often chose 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey and 3- Pretty Well on the post-survey. She changed her responses for three questions (Question 2, 4 and 5) from pre-to post-survey, indicating increases from 2- Not Too Well to 3- Pretty Well. Participant 8 most often chose 3- Pretty Well for pre- and post-survey questions. She changed responses on two questions to show increased collective efficacy (Question 3 and 4).

Table 13: Mean and Mode Data Collective Efficacy Grades 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mean Post-Survey</th>
<th>Mode Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mode Post-Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3 and 4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Peer coaching focus group session.** A focus group session was held on the last session of the professional development series with six participants. Three of the participants were teachers of grades K-2 and three were teachers of grades 3-5. Two participants were absent, one from each grade span. Participants were asked to discuss their answers to three questions about their beliefs and attitudes regarding peer coaching (See Appendix D). These data were gathered through an audio recording of the focus group session (See Table 14).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Question</th>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Was Peer Coaching a valuable use of your professional development time? Why or why not? | - I would say yes because we really don’t have any opportunities to talk with each other, especially, with the teachers that get the students in the following year to see if we are doing anything similar or different and how we can make it an easier transition for students.  
- I was interested to work with a teacher in the grade level below to see what the students are coming with and how the teacher I was observing was preparing the students for what I do in my room and what they needed to know.  
- I think peer coaching helped me to learn something from someone else. Watching Ms. Smith (pseudonym) teach a lesson that we had talked about with her students and knowing that I was getting to that lesson in a few days made me think of my teaching and what I wanted to change in my room.  
- I liked that it made me pay attention to what the students were doing and what they were learning. It gave us ideas about little things to change.  
- I would say that just knowing that a peer was going to come and observe the lesson I was teaching really forced me to think more carefully about what I was teaching. I wanted to do well on what I chose for her to observe so I took more time than I usually would to think through and plan for that lesson.  
- I agree and I think that the more we would do it, the more we could get out of it. |
2. Would you continue participation in peer coaching? Why or why not?

- I would definitely do it again. I don’t see any reason to not do it. Sometimes you think that you are doing something or you think that everything is flowing in your lesson. I definitely cannot see all of the kids’ reactions to what I am doing or how they are following along so it’s nice to have someone else to work with.

- I would say yes also because it’s not demanding. It doesn’t require a lot from you but you get a lot from it.

- I would agree that having an outside perspective really helps you to look at your teaching in a new light. I have been teaching reading for a while, but having the opportunity to see another teacher teach and having another teacher watch me teach and discuss it made me think about how I teach reading and gave me new ideas and insights.

- It was especially helpful for us this year because we were tossed into a new program and it’s so involved and there are so many components to it, and it was nice to see somebody else teach it and to look at what you are missing, what you are doing well, what you need to do.

- It also helped to think about what my students were learning in reading.
3. What did you learn from participating in the peer coaching process?

- It makes me be more reflective on my instruction, what I found to be successful and how I could adjust.
- It helped both teachers involved learn something.
- It helps you to look at yourself and see what can I do better and it helps you to strive to keep growing.
- Even planning for a peer coaching session helps you to be more reflective. It helps you to improve your planning for reading and really think about what you are going to do and what you what students to learn.
- It reminds us that we are never done learning.
- This helped to put a pause on the cycle of planning and teaching to think about what the students are actually learning and doing in reading class.
Any additional comments:

- I want to continue doing it because there is so much you can learn from the process.
- Teachers need to be willing to participate and give up time to work together. Sometimes things don’t work, because people are willing to give up their time.
- It’s important to find someone you are comfortable with and maybe that you are similar to so that you don’t feel inadequate. It might be frustrating if you don’t work with someone with similar styles.
- I think it would be interesting for a primary teacher to learn from an intermediate teacher and vice versa.
- I always appreciated our community learning day because often times we get used to doing things the same way and it’s nice to gain new ideas. It can be intimidating when you have someone watching, you want to be on par with everything. The relationships are important the more often you go in, you become a part of it and it’s not so scary.

Many of the statements made by teachers during the focus group session were consistent with the findings from the literature. An emergent theme analysis was used to identify the themes and related significant quotes found in Table 15.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes from the Literature</th>
<th>Significant Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer coaching increases teacher reflection for continual improvement (Gottesman, 2000; Joyce &amp; Showers, 1980; Licklider, 1995).</td>
<td>“It makes me be more reflective on my instruction, what I found to be successful and how I could adjust.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Even planning for a peer coaching session helps you to be more reflective. It helps you to improve your planning for reading and really think about what you are going to do and what you want students to learn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“This helped to put a pause on the cycle of planning and teaching to think about what the students are actually learning and doing in reading class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It was especially helpful for us this year because we were tossed into a new program, and it’s so involved, and there are so many components to it, and it was nice to see somebody else teach it and to look at what you are missing, what you are doing well, what you need to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It also helped to think about what my students were learning in reading.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I think peer coaching helped me to learn something from someone else. Watching Ms. Smith (pseudonym) teach a lesson that we had talked about with her students and knowing that I was getting to that lesson in a few days made me think of my teaching and what I wanted to change in my room.”

“It helped both teachers involved learn something.”

“It helps you to look at yourself and see what can I do better, and it helps you to strive to keep growing.”

“It reminds us that we are never done learning.”

“I want to continue doing it because there is so much you can learn from the process.”

Peer coaching provides new teaching ideas (Slater & Simmons, 2001).

“…having an outside perspective really helps you to look at your teaching in a new light. I have been teaching reading for a while, but having the opportunity to see another teacher teach and having another teacher watch me teach and discuss it made me think about how I teach reading and gave me new ideas and insights.”
Peer coaching improves teacher collaboration (Robbins, 2015).

“I would say yes because we really don’t have any opportunities to talk with each other, especially with the teachers that get the students in the following year, to see if we are doing anything similar or different and how we can make it an easier transition for students.”

“I was interested to work with a teacher in the grade level below to see what the students are coming with and how the teacher I was observing was preparing the students for what I do in my room and what they needed to know.”

“I definitely cannot see all of the kids’ reactions to what I am doing or how they are following along, so it’s nice to have someone else to work with.”

Peer coaching improves instruction (Gottesman, 2000).

“I liked that it made me pay attention to what the students were doing and what they were learning. It gave us ideas about little things to change.”

“It helps you to improve your planning for reading and really think about what you are going to do and what you want students to learn.”

“This helped to put a pause on the cycle of planning and teaching to think about what the students are actually learning and doing in reading class.”

Chapter Summary

This chapter shared the findings from the study. Summary tables of the data collected from the surveys and focus group were presented. An analysis using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and an emergent theme analysis for the qualitative data were provided. Chapter five will provide a discussion of the findings as well as implications for the learning.
Chapter 5: Implications & Leadership Agenda

Roadmap

Ongoing, purposeful, and supportive professional development have been closely linked to improvements in teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Peer coaching can be a meaningful, personalized, job-embedded form of professional learning for teachers (Robbins, 2015). The purpose of this study was to implement a professional development series about peer coaching to study its effects on teachers’ self-efficacy for teaching literacy within the context of my district. Additionally, the study collected data about these teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy and their beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model of professional development. In an effort to positively impact student literacy learning in our district, I worked alongside teachers as the facilitator for the professional learning series on peer coaching. This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings related to each research question and to the theoretical framework, limitations, implications for educational leadership and my personal leadership agenda, and directions for future research.

Discussion of the Findings

The three research questions followed by specific findings that pertain to each question are presented in this section. Findings are focused on what I learned about the peer coaching practice in this particular context.
Research question one: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy? This question was designed to determine if there was a change in teachers’ sense of self-efficacy for teaching literacy after participation in a professional development series on peer coaching. Teacher efficacy has been defined as “teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4). The primary data sources pertaining to this question were two versions of a survey titled “Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction.” These surveys were created by adapting some items from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI) developed by Tschannen- Moran and Johnson (2011). Specific questions were written to investigate self-efficacy for literacy instruction for the K-2 teachers and the grade 3-5 teachers in this context (See Appendix A and B). Additional data about teachers’ self-efficacy were gathered during the focus group session.

Findings from K-2 teacher self-efficacy survey. K-2 teachers rated themselves positively, indicating that they could accomplish various teaching tasks related to literacy either 3- Pretty Well or 4- Very Well, on all of both the pre- and post-survey questions with the exception of one response. The only negative response was a 2- Not Too Well response from participant 3 on the post-survey question #6: How well can you use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of your students?

Most participant responses remained the same from pre- to post-survey. The only changes noted from pre- to post-survey were decreases; however, overall the responses still indicated positive self-efficacy. On question #1 regarding phonological awareness, participant 1 changed her response from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well. On question #2 about phonics and question #3 about fluency, the same participant changed her response from 4- Very Well to
3- Pretty Well. There were no changes from any participants on question #4 regarding teaching students how to figure out unknown words. On question #5, participant 1 and 3 changed their responses from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well. On question #6 dealing with assessment strategies, participant 3 changed her response from 3- Pretty Well to 2- Not Too Well. The overall mean scores for individual participant responses decreased slightly from the pre- to the post-survey. Pre-survey mean scores ranged from 3.17- 3.83 and post-survey mean scores ranged from 2.83 to 3.83.

Findings from grade 3-5 teacher self-efficacy survey. The survey responses for teachers in grades 3-5 were more varied from question to question with most of the changes showing increases in self-efficacy. There was only one question in which a participant lowered their score from pre- to post-survey. On question #1 about providing students with opportunities to apply prior knowledge to reading tasks, participant 7 indicated decreased self-efficacy changing a response from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well. For all of the other questions on the survey about teacher self-efficacy, teacher responses either increased or remained the same from pre- to post-survey.

Unlike the K-2 results, the pre-survey data for grade 3-5 grade teachers indicate negative self-efficacy for some participants on some questions. There was one 2- Not Too Well response on each pre-survey question (not always from the same participant). On the post-survey, all participants indicated positive self-efficacy by responding either 3- Pretty Well or 4- Very Well. The mean scores for individual participant responses increased slightly from the pre- to the post-survey. Pre-survey mean scores ranged from 2.5 to 3 and post-survey mean scores ranged from 3.17 to 3.67.
Findings from Peer Coaching Focus Group Session. The discussion during the peer coaching focus group session also revealed information about teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Some comments brought to light teachers’ beliefs about their teaching and how those beliefs were being influenced through participation in peer coaching. For example, one participant shared about how peer coaching caused her to be more reflective about her planning:

I would say that just knowing that a peer was going to come and observe the lesson I was teaching really forced me to think more carefully about what I was teaching. I wanted to do well on what I chose for her to observe so I took more time than I usually would to think through and plan for that lesson.

Another participant shared about how the vicarious experience of watching another teach reading and having that teacher then watch her teach brought an outside perspective that led to new discoveries:

I would agree that having an outside perspective really helps you to look at your teaching in a new light. I have been teaching reading for a while, but having the opportunity to see another teacher teach and having another teacher watch me teach and discuss it made me think about how I teach reading and gave me new ideas and insights.

Another comment revealed how peer coaching supported teachers as they learned about implementing a new reading program:

It was especially helpful for us this year because we were tossed into a new program and it’s so involved and there are so many components to it, and it was nice to see somebody else teach it and to look at what you are missing, what you are doing well, what you need to do.
Another comment highlighted self-efficacy evaluations as a teacher talked about how peer coaching helped her to think about how she was preparing her students for the next grade level:

I would say yes because we really don’t have any opportunities to talk with each other, especially, with the teachers that get the students in the following year to see if we are doing anything similar or different and how we can make it an easier transition for students.

Most of the comments about the peer coaching experience were positive and focused on the benefits of participation. However, as noted in the literature vicarious experiences can cause people to compare themselves to others leading to a lowered sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). One participant’s comments revealed that peer coaching has the potential to strengthen or weaken one’s sense of self-efficacy depending on the relationship between coach and coachee:

It’s important to find someone you are comfortable with and maybe that you are similar to so that you don’t feel inadequate. It might be frustrating if you don’t work with someone with similar styles.

Research question two: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy? This question was designed to determine if there was a change in teachers’ collective sense of efficacy for literacy instruction after participation in a professional development series on peer coaching. “Perceived collective efficacy is concerned with the performance capability of a social system as a whole” (Bandura, 1997, p. 469). Measures of perceived collective efficacy have been shown to predict student achievement differences among schools and have been linked to effects of school culture on students and teachers (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 8). The primary data source for this question was the survey
“Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction” (See Appendix C). This survey was created by adapting some items from the Collective Efficacy Scale developed by Goddard and Hoy (2003). Additional data about teachers’ sense of collective efficacy were gathered during the focus group session.

**Findings from collective efficacy survey for K-2 teachers.** Overall, K-2 teachers reported lower scores on the collective efficacy survey than teacher self-efficacy survey. The collective efficacy survey asked teachers to respond to a set of questions while considering all teachers in the school, including themselves. On question #1 about how well teachers could motivate students in reading, all participants were positive on the pre- and post-survey indicating a 3- *Pretty Well* response. Participants were also positive about question #2 which asked how well teachers in the school could teach reading. Three teachers indicated 3- *Pretty Well* and one indicated 4- *Very Well* on the pre-survey. All participants responded 3- *Pretty Well* on the post-survey. One participant reported a low sense of collective efficacy on the pre-survey by responding 2- *Not Too Well* for question #3 about how well teachers at the school could teach reading to all students including struggling readers. Two participants also indicated 2- *Not Too Well* for question #4 about how well skilled teachers were in various methods of teaching reading and question #5 about well teachers could reach students with methods of teaching reading on the pre-survey.

Contrary to the teacher self-efficacy data which decreased overall from pre- to post-survey, participant responses about collective efficacy either remained the same or increased from the pre- to post-survey with the exception of one response. The only response that decreased was on question #2 regarding how well teachers in the building could teach reading. One participant changed her response from 4- *Very Well* to 3- *Pretty Well* from pre- to post-survey. For all of the
other questions, responses indicated no change or a positive change. Each of the participants answered all of the post-survey questions with the response 3- Pretty Well. Pre-survey mean scores for individual participant responses ranged from 2.4 to 3 and post-survey mean scores were all 3.

**Findings from collective efficacy survey for grade 3-5 teachers.** Similar to the findings from the teacher self-efficacy survey for these teachers, responses for teachers in grades 3-5 were much more varied from question to question than K-2 teachers. Any changes in response from pre- to post-survey were positive. Question #1 was the only question in which all responses were positive on both the pre- and post-survey, with participants indicating that teachers could motivate students 3- Pretty Well or “very well.”

Participants indicated a low sense of collective efficacy on several pre-survey questions and one post-survey question. Two participants indicated 2- Not Too Well for question #2 about how well teachers at the school could teach reading. On the post-survey however, the responses increased to 4- Very Well and 3- Pretty Well. Question #3 about teaching reading to all students including struggling readers had the lowest pre- and post-survey mean. Three participants indicated 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey question. One participant kept the response the same 2- Not Too Well on the post-survey, one changed her response to “Pretty well, and one changed to 4- Very Well. On question #4 about how well skilled teachers were in various methods of teaching reading, all participants indicated 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey. However, on the post-survey, all responses increased. One changed to 3- Pretty Well, and three changed to 4- Very Well. For question #5 about how well teachers could reach students with their methods of teaching reading, two participants indicated 2- Not Too Well on the pre-survey, and two indicated 3- Pretty Well. On the post-survey, all participants indicated 3- Pretty Well.
Pre-survey mean scores for individual participant responses ranged from 2.2 to 3.2 and post-survey mean scores ranged from 2.8 to 3.8.

*Findings from peer coaching focus group session.* Data gathered during the focus group session also led to some insight about teachers’ sense of collective efficacy. A commitment to collaborate and work together was highlighted by a comment one participant made as she noted that it is often difficult to gauge student learning on your own: “It’s nice to have someone else to work with.”

Another participant comment indicated that teachers do not have many opportunities to talk with each other, especially teachers in different grade levels. Her comment revealed how peer coaching could help with collaboration between grade levels:

I would say yes because we really don’t have any opportunities to talk with each other, especially with the teachers that get the students in the following year, to see if we are doing anything similar or different and how we can make it an easier transition for students.

Another participant’s comment reflects similar interests about working with a teacher in another grade-level:

I was interested to work with a teacher in the grade level below to see what the students are coming with and how the teacher I was observing was preparing the students for what I do in my room and what they needed to know.
Research question three. What are teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning? This question was designed to gather evidence about teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a form of professional development. The primary data source were responses collected during a 30-minute focus group session held on the last session of the professional development series with six participants. Participants were asked to discuss their answers to three questions about their beliefs and attitudes regarding peer coaching (See Appendix D). These data were gathered through an audio recording of the focus group session. Additional insights were revealed through an analysis of the quantitative data gathered through the teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy surveys.

Findings from Peer Coaching Focus Group Session. All six participants responded positively to the first question posed to the focus group: Was Peer Coaching a valuable use of your professional development time? Responses indicated that peer coaching opened a door for teacher collaboration. Three of the participants mentioned the importance of working with a peer, citing reasons such as “an easier transition for students,” working with a teacher in another grade level “to see what the students are coming with,” and working with another teacher to “learn something from someone else.” Other positive benefits were revealed that are not typical of “traditional” forms of professional development. For example, teachers shared that peer coaching improved their lesson planning and preparation. One teacher said, “…I took more time than I usually would to think through and plan for that lesson.” Participants also noted how peer coaching helped them to identify things they wanted to change in their instruction. “Watching Ms. Smith (pseudonym) teach a lesson…..made me think of my teaching and what I wanted to change in my room” one participant stated. Another teacher said, “It gave us ideas about little things to change.”
Participant responses revealed a willingness to continue participation in peer coaching opportunities. One participant stated, “…the more we would do it, the more we would get out of it.” Another respondent reported that it was not too demanding stating, “It doesn’t require a lot from you, but you get a lot out of it.” Another comment was, “I want to continue doing it because there is so much you can learn from the process.”

The discussion during the focus group session supported and highlighted teacher and student learning benefits of peer coaching. One participant shared how the process supported the learning of a new reading program stating, “It was especially helpful for us this year because we were tossed into a new program, and it’s so involved, and there are so many components to it, and it was nice to see somebody else teach it and to look at what you are missing, what you are doing well, what you need to do.” Others shared that peer coaching brought a focus to student learning. For example, a comment was made about how the experience allowed a teacher to “think about what the students are actually learning and doing in reading class.” Another participant shared that through peer coaching teachers have the opportunity to “really think about what you are going to do and what you what students to learn.”

The major themes that emerged from a study of participant responses are as follows:

1. Peer coaching increased teacher reflection.
2. Peer coaching supported teacher learning.
3. Peer coaching provided teachers with new teaching ideas.
4. Peer coaching improved teacher collaboration.
5. Peer coaching helped teachers to improve instruction.

These findings are consistent with the literature on peer coaching and support the notion that peer coaching can be a powerful school improvement strategy that supports teacher learning and
professional growth (L. Rivera-McCutchen & Scharff Panero, 2014). Teacher responses during the focus group session provide evidence that peer coaching brings the focus to improving teaching and learning (Robbins, 2015). Teachers’ attitudes about peer coaching as a form of professional development were very positive, and their willingness to continue participation indicate that the benefits teachers received outweighed the time constraints and effort required to participate.

Findings from surveys. Although there were not any specific questions about teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model of professional learning on the surveys participants were given, some insights about this research question were revealed. The peer coaching opportunity may have provided teachers a forum and support to focus their attention on student learning which resulted in a change in their beliefs about their teaching self-efficacy and collective efficacy. With the exception of the teacher self-efficacy survey for K-2 teachers which showed a decreased in overall mean scores for individual participants all other survey responses indicated an increase in mean scores from pre- to post-survey. The increase in positive responses about teaching self-efficacy and collective efficacy provide some evidence to support that teachers in this study had positive views of peer coaching as a form of professional development.
Summary of the Findings

Research Question One: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy? Research question one was designed to explore changes in teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching literacy after participation in professional development about peer coaching. Three findings emerged from surveys distributed to participants before and after the professional development experience and from the focus group discussion.

Finding 1: Slight decrease in K-2 teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. K-2 teachers reported generally high self-efficacy on the pre-survey. In most cases, these teachers did not change over the course of the study. Where teachers changed, they decreased in their reported self-efficacy.

The high number of positive responses on both the pre- and post-survey indicate that the K-2 teachers who participated in the study had a high sense of teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. These teachers had been involved in professional learning around the implementation of a new supplemental reading program, Wilson Fundations, in the two months leading up to the study. Teachers participated in one full day of learning about the new program, two study group sessions, and one coaching day. In addition, teachers had opportunities to seek support from a designated “Literacy Specialist” from the Wilson Reading Company who led the in-service training and coaching visit. The new program places a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and decoding which aligned with the questions on the survey. The pre-survey was given in early October, shortly after teacher participation in the professional learning with the new program. The data results are consistent with a review of the literature.
suggesting that participation in professional development leads to gains in teachers’ sense of personal efficacy for literacy teaching (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008).

This finding suggests that as teachers had opportunities to work with peers on self-identified goals, they gained new information through peer feedback that influenced their assessment of the teaching task and their personal competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Most of the teachers who participated only had time for one peer coaching cycle. The decrease in individual participant mean scores from pre- to post-survey suggests opportunities to reflect with a peer led to self-assessment, which resulted in a change in teacher self-efficacy. The influence of the vicarious experience of watching a peer teach may have also had some impact on the post-survey self-efficacy appraisals (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Continued opportunities in peer coaching could perhaps lead to improvements in those self-identified areas of need, which could lead to improved teacher self-efficacy and improved teaching of reading and student learning. Findings from a study on teacher content knowledge and teacher efficacy showed initial high scores on self-efficacy for teaching reading declined with new teaching experiences and then increased again with more mastery experiences (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) developed a model that explains this cyclical nature of teacher efficacy (See Figure 1).
Finding 2: Slight increase in grade 3-5 teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction.

Grade 3-5 teachers reported lower initial self-efficacy. However, from the pre- to post-survey, all four participants showed an increase in individual participant mean scores.

Outside of the peer coaching professional development, teachers of grades 3-5 did not have the same opportunities as the K-2 teachers for other professional learning. There was a beginning of year in-service held on implementing a newly developed English Language Arts program. However, this program was teacher-developed and the professional learning in August was teacher-led. The only follow-up opportunities for support on the new program were monthly grade-level meetings, which were focused on revisions and upcoming units. The professional development on the new ELA program for grade 3-5 teachers was not as intensive.
and focused as the professional development for K-2 teachers. For instance, the teachers of grades 3-5 did not have the support from an outside literacy specialist to provide “expert” coaching and feedback about teachers’ implementation of the new program as K-2 teachers did. The peer coaching opportunity may have offered the teachers of grades 3-5 peer support to investigate self-identified goals for improving their literacy teaching and student learning, leading to the increased self-efficacy scores from pre- to post-survey. It is also possible that the mastery and vicarious experiences resulting from peer coaching cycles contributed to the increase in mean scores from pre- to post-survey for individual participants (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Finding 3: Peer coaching experiences influenced teacher self-efficacy. Peer coaching provided teachers with mastery and vicarious experiences which may have influenced their teaching self-efficacy through an analysis of teaching tasks and assessment of personal teaching competence.

As peers collaborate and plan for peer coaching cycles, they are analyzing the teaching task and assessing their personal teaching competence. After teaching, as they reflect with a peer, they may create new knowledge about their teaching practice and set new goals leading to improved performance and student learning on a future lesson. This continuous cycle of peer coaching can improve teacher self-efficacy as goals are met and new learning occurs (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Licklider, 1995). Peer coaching can provide teachers feedback about their teaching that can help to improve their self-efficacy (Licklider, 1995). It helps to connect teacher actions with student learning and makes teaching and planning for teaching more intentional (Robbins,
Peer coaching cycles can provide teachers with experiences, which can become sources of efficacy information (See Figure 1).

Teachers’ comments during the focus group discussion revealed that they became more reflective about their teaching while participating in peer coaching (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995; Gottesman, 2000; Kohler et al., 1999; Phillips & Glickman, 1991; Swafford et al., 1997). Some examples include: “forced me to think more carefully about what I was teaching”, “made me think about how I teach reading”, and “makes me be more reflective on my instruction.” The statements made indicate that teachers involved in the study believed that they could influence student learning in literacy through their instruction. Peer coaching provided the teachers with mastery experiences and vicarious experiences which seemed to have mostly positive influences on their sense of teaching efficacy based upon their comments during the focus group discussion (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Another comment revealed insight into how teachers may consider their teaching competence during a peer coaching cycle: “It’s important to find someone you are comfortable with and maybe that you are similar to so that you don’t feel inadequate.” This comment highlights the influence of vicarious experiences on teachers’ self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Licklider, 1995). While the teachers of grades K-2 showed a decrease in individual mean scores, the teachers of grades 3-5 showed an increase. Depending on who teachers chose to work with and what specific teaching component they focused on for peer coaching, the vicarious experience could have negatively or positively influenced a participant’s assessment of their self-efficacy (Licklider, 1995).
Research Question Two: What is the impact of a peer coaching model on teachers’ sense of collective efficacy for teaching literacy? Research question two was designed to explore changes in teachers’ collective efficacy for teaching literacy after participation in professional development about peer coaching. Three findings emerged from surveys distributed to participants before and after the professional development experience and from the focus group discussion.

Finding 4: K-2 teachers showed increased collective efficacy. K-2 teachers reported lower scores on the collective efficacy survey than teacher self-efficacy survey. Most responses on the post-survey were the same as on the pre-survey, with almost all changes being positive.

It was interesting to see the difference in scores on the teacher self-efficacy survey and the collective efficacy survey for K-2 teachers. While these teachers rated themselves pretty high when thinking of their own ability, resources, and opportunity to accomplish various tasks related to the teaching of literacy in grades K-2, they rated teachers as a whole in the school much lower on the collective efficacy survey. The mean scores for individual participant responses on the teacher self-efficacy survey decreased for three of the four participants from pre- to post-survey. Participant 2 showed no change in responses from pre-to post-survey. Conversely, the mean for individual participant responses on the collective efficacy survey increased for three of the four participants. Participant 4 showed a slight decrease in collective efficacy from pre- to post, with a pre-survey mean of 3.2 and post-survey mean of 3.

Teachers in grades K-2 participated in training on a new supplemental reading program, Wilson Fundations, for the 2016-2017 school year. Perhaps as teachers learned about how to implement the new program from a literacy specialist and literacy coaches within the school, their ratings of their own self-efficacy for teaching literacy decreased as they analyzed their
teaching competence in light of new teaching tasks. The peer coaching opportunity on the other hand allowed teachers to work with a peer. Most of the K-2 teachers who participated in the study shared that they used their Fundations lessons as the basis for peer coaching opportunities. As teachers visited and observed each other teaching Fundations, their perceptions of collective efficacy seemed to improve during the course of the study based on the survey data.

Possibly as teachers gained more insights through their observations, they were able to reassess their perceptions of the teaching abilities of other teachers in the school. This finding has important implications for my future work with peer coaching and improving the system of professional learning for teachers. Peer coaching has been shown in the literature to improve transfer of newly learned strategies into teaching (Showers, 1984). Research indicates that where there is a high sense of collective efficacy, teachers are more likely to put forth more effort as they strive to meet expectations for successful teaching (Goddard et al., 2004).

Finding 5: Grades 3-5 teachers showed increases in collective efficacy. Grade 3-5 teachers reported much lower levels of collective efficacy than K-2 teachers. However, on the post-survey, all participant responses remained the same or increased.

Similar to the findings from the teacher self-efficacy survey for grade 3-5 teachers, participants were much more varied than K-2 teachers in their responses about collective efficacy. Responses ranged from 2- Not Too Well to 4- Very Well on both the pre- and post-survey questions about collective efficacy. As students move up the grade levels, complexity of text increases, and teachers often report wide ranges of student reading abilities within their classrooms (Hiebert & Mesmer, 2013; Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012). A newly-aligned literacy curriculum was implemented for students in grades 3-5 for the 2016-2017 school year, and teachers may have reported initial low collective efficacy scores as they were
just adapting to the new programs. Through peer coaching opportunities and other professional learning opportunities such as curriculum meetings and department meetings, teachers’ perceptions of collective efficacy increased during the time from the pre-to post-survey (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Participant mean scores increased the most for collective efficacy for teachers of grades 3-5 with a pre-survey ranges of 2.2 to 3.2 and post-survey mean ranges of 2.8 to 3.8.

**Finding 6: Peer coaching increased teacher collaboration.** Teachers reported that peer coaching increased opportunities to collaborate with peers which may have resulted in some increases in collective efficacy.

The peer coaching professional development series as well as peer coaching cycles provided the opportunity to collaborate and discuss with peers specific situations that highlighted teachers’ methods of teaching reading. Teachers’ comments during the focus group session indicated that peer coaching provided increased teacher collaboration (Robbins, 2015). For example, one participant stated, “we really don’t have any opportunities to talk with each other.” Another participant said, “The relationships are important the more often you go in, you become a part of it and it’s not so scary.” Providing teachers with time and support to work with peers on self-identified goals through the peer coaching series may have led to increases in the teachers’ sense of collective efficacy.

Peer coaching supports teachers as professional learners and can help a school to become a community of learners (Gottesman, 2000; Robbins, 2015). When teachers have opportunities to collaborate with peers and reflect on their teaching, they become focused on continual improvement (Kohler, Ezell, & Paluselli, 1999). One teacher stated, “This helped to put a pause on the cycle of planning and teaching to think about what the students are actually learning and
doing in reading class.” Another said, “It helps you to look at yourself and see what can I do better and it helps you to strive to keep growing.” Reflection with a peer on teaching may empower teachers to take more of a part in decision-making about instruction. School cultures that promote teacher decision-making have higher levels of perceived collective efficacy, which in turn results in teachers putting forth more effort to strive to meet expectations for successful teaching (Goddard et al., 2004).

**Research Question Three: What are teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching as a model for professional learning?** Research question three was designed to gather data about teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about peer coaching. The major themes that emerged from a study of participant responses are as follows:

1. Peer coaching increased teacher reflection.
2. Peer coaching supported teacher learning.
3. Peer coaching provided teachers with new teaching ideas.
4. Peer coaching improved teacher collaboration.
5. Peer coaching helped teachers to improve instruction.

In addition to these themes which were discussed in Chapter 4, three findings emerged from the focus group discussion.

**Finding 7: Peer coaching is a valuable professional learning opportunity.** Peer coaching was reported to be a valuable use of professional learning time by the participants in this study.

As new reading programs are implemented and new standards and assessments are adopted, teachers are looking for support and guidance on how to navigate changes to their instruction. They are hungry for professional growth and learning that will arm them with
evidence-based practices to positively impact student learning and achievement. The teachers involved in this study were learning to implement a new program, Wilson Fundations, in Grades K-2 and newly aligned curricula in grades 3-5. One participant’s response supports this finding:

It was especially helpful for us this year because we were tossed into a new program and it’s so involved and there are so many components to it, and it was nice to see somebody else teach it and to look at what you are missing, what you are doing well, what you need to do.

This comment reflects a major concern that is often expressed about professional development for teachers, which is the lack of transfer or application back to the classroom (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Peer coaching provides teachers with opportunities to augment typical one-shot professional development sessions and bring the focus to improving teaching and learning within schools (Robbins, 2015). When teachers are supported through a peer coaching professional learning model that provides them with time to collaborate, observe, and learn together with peers, they may be able to better reflect on their own teaching and make adjustments to improve teaching and learning (Bruce & Ross, 2008; Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995; Gottesman, 2000; Kohler et al., 1999; Phillips & Glickman, 1991; Swafford et al., 1997).

**Finding 8: Teachers would continue peer coaching.** The teachers in this study reported that they would continue participation in peer coaching opportunities.

Peer coaching empowers teachers to explore their instructional practice and address student learning problems within the context of their own classrooms (Robbins, 2015). It helps to build teacher capacity and advance teacher learning (L. Rivera- McCutchen & Scharff Panero, 2014). It can also empower teachers to advocate for more professional learning opportunities on
identified areas of need. Peer coaching helps teachers to focus on what students are learning and how to best meet their individual needs. One participant shared:

I would agree that having an outside perspective really helps you to look at your teaching in a new light. I have been teaching reading for a while, but having the opportunity to see another teacher teach and having another teacher watch me teach and discuss it made me think about how I teach reading and gave me new ideas and insights.

Although teachers’ time is often limited and teachers are constantly being asked to do more without being given more time to do it, the teachers in this study indicated that the time spent on peer coaching was beneficial. Teachers indicated that they would continue participation even though it was voluntary, and they were not compensated. One participant shared, “I would definitely do it again. I don’t see any reason to not do it.” Another said, “I want to continue doing it, because there is so much you can learn from the process.”

**Finding 9: Peer coaching placed an emphasis on student learning.** Participating in a peer coaching model for professional learning helped teachers to focus on student learning.

Reading is one of the most important foundational skills for academic success, yet the teaching of reading is very complex. Teachers must have specialized knowledge of the complexities of reading and they must be supported with ongoing professional learning for quality literacy instruction (Moats, 2009). Today’s classrooms are comprised of children from diverse literacy backgrounds, and teachers need knowledge about why some students struggle in reading and what they can do to prevent reading difficulties. Teachers of both K-2 and grades 3-5 reported low pre-survey scores on collective efficacy survey questions about how well teachers in the school know how to teach reading to all students including struggling readers. There were also low scores for how well skilled teachers are in various methods of reading, and
how well they reached students with methods of teaching reading. After participation in the peer coaching professional learning, post-survey scores for each of those questions increased.

Teachers’ willingness to participate as well as their responses during the focus group session provide evidence to indicate that teachers of reading are seeking professional learning opportunities that are focused on their specific needs and the needs of their students. One participant commented, “I liked that it made me pay attention to what the students were doing and what they were learning. It gave us ideas about little things to change.” Another participant stated, “I would agree that having an outside perspective really helps you to look at your teaching in a new light. I have been teaching reading for a while, but having the opportunity to see another teacher teach and having another teacher watch me teach and discuss it made me think about how I teach reading and gave me new ideas and insights.”

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of the study was that there were a small number of participants. The scope for this study was one elementary school with eight participants from the school who volunteered to participate in the study. On the day of the focus group, two participants were absent, so responses were only collected from six participants. The fact that the participants volunteered for the study may also potentially skew the data. These may have been teachers who already had high levels of teaching efficacy, based upon their willingness to participate. Conducting the study with a small group of teachers within one school may limit generalizations to other school settings. Each school has its own unique population and culture.

A second limitation was the limited period of time during which the study was conducted. There were six weeks between the pre and post-survey. There were not significant changes in teacher self-efficacy or teacher collective efficacy between the pre- and the
post-survey, and this may be attributed to the short duration of the study. Most participants shared that they were able to conduct one cycle with a peer; however, a longer study may have provided more insights.

Another limitation was that I am the Elementary Reading Coordinator for the school district. As the researcher, I participated in the study as the facilitator for the professional learning series. Although I have no responsibility for evaluation of teachers and all survey responses were self-reported anonymously by participants using a unique code, the participants may have reported ratings they believed would be pleasing. While I do not believe this is the case, I recognized that this could have affected the results of the study.

**Implications for Practice**

This study engaged a group of committed K-5 reading teachers in an assessment of their teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy for literacy instruction as they participated in a professional learning series about peer coaching. The data collected from this study give indication of the potential benefits of peer coaching on teachers’ self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and professional learning. Participation in peer coaching cycles may have provided sources of efficacy information such as mastery experiences and vicarious experiences which seemed to influence teachers’ assessment of their self-efficacy for teaching literacy and perceived collective efficacy of teachers in the school.

Using peer coaching in practice may lead to lower self-efficacy as vicarious experiences often cause people to compare themselves to others (Bandura 1977, 1997). For the K-2 teachers who participated in the study, initial self-efficacy reports were high. Peer coaching experiences for the most part seemed to cause slight decreases in self-efficacy from pre- to post-survey.
Three of the four K-2 participants mean scores for self-efficacy responses dropped during the study.

K-2 teachers were involved in the implementation of a new reading program. Part of their professional learning included training from a literacy specialist from the Wilson Language Company. Teachers were involved in vicarious experiences of watching the literacy specialist teach “model” lessons. As teachers watched the literacy specialist and participated in peer coaching opportunities, these vicarious experiences may have caused a lowered assessment of their own personal teaching competence as they learned new teaching procedures resulting in slight decreases to their self-efficacy.

For teachers of grades 3-5, the mastery and vicarious experiences involved with peer coaching seemed to cause increases in teacher self-efficacy from pre- to post-survey. All four teachers of grades 3-5 who participated in the study showed an increase in pre- to post-survey means. When responses were changed from pre- to post, they increased in all instances except one. On question #1, participant 7 changed her response from 4- Very Well to 3- Pretty Well. Although teachers of grades 3-5 were not involved in implementing a new reading program with visits from a literacy specialist, they were teaching with newly-aligned English Language Arts curricula. Their students were engaged in more rigorous tasks and complex texts. The data collected during the focus group sessions supports the notion that these teachers were gaining new ideas and insights through peer coaching cycles that led to increases in their teacher self-efficacy beliefs.

This study provided teachers the time and space to learn about themselves as teachers of literacy. Teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy influence teacher behavior, which in turn impacts student learning. School leaders should work to empower teachers to take ownership for
their learning and to build their capacity for engaging others in learning. A voluntary peer coaching model has the potential to be a powerful professional learning opportunity that creates an improvement culture within a school.

In the design of this study, I did not collect data about how many peer coaching cycles participants engaged or participants’ feelings about their teaching and teacher self-efficacy as a result of the peer visit and conference. One of the implications for practice is that more information about peer coaching cycles may lead to a more in-depth insight about changes in teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

This study on peer coaching has important implications for improving the system of professional learning by focusing on teachers’ professional growth and student learning. Peer coaching as a model for professional development creates improvement from within the school, which is a paradigm shift from the traditional view that outside “experts” should be brought in to “develop and train” teachers. Viewing teachers as valuable resources with expertise in what has worked, considering the experience they have acquired through students for many years, can empower teachers to take ownership for their own learning, and to advocate for the needs of their students, and to continue their own learning. This, in turn, may build capacity and increase teacher decision making. Schools where teachers are more involved in decisions about curriculum and instruction show higher levels of collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). When teachers have higher collective efficacy, they are more likely to persist to improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, peer coaching allows for professional learning to be self-directed which can lead to increased motivation and improve teaching practices.
Implications for my Leadership Agenda

This investigation in peer coaching provided valuable information about the benefits of peer coaching on teacher self-efficacy, teacher collective efficacy, and professional learning for the teachers in my school district. A group of nine committed teachers (eight participants and myself) engaged in an effort to improve teaching and learning. Moving forward, this “improvement community” has the potential to impact teaching and learning on a larger scale by making improvements to the system of professional learning within our school and school district. It will be my role to lead this learning and empower the teachers involved in this improvement community to share and spread their learning about peer coaching to other teachers. I plan to continue to offer sessions about peer coaching and to invite other teachers to participate. I will work with school administrators to share the learning gained from this peer coaching study so that together we can continually improve the system of professional learning in our district.

As I consider planning future professional learning opportunities around peer coaching, it will be important to create a nurturing environment for peer coaching in my district. Teacher collaboration and trust must become the norm. As in many schools, collaboration has not been the norm for teachers in our school district. It will be my role to help teachers and school leaders understand that peer coaching is intended to be learning-focused. I have to support teachers as they learn to work together in trusting relationships with their colleagues. Providing short learning sessions about what peer coaching is and what it is not, as well as the benefits that can occur as a result of peer coaching, may help to develop teacher interest in peer coaching. Continued opportunities for spreading a peer coaching model of professional development may be realized by having the teachers who participated in this study and the series on peer coaching
lead future series of peer coaching sessions. This improvement community of teachers can share their new learning with other colleagues and begin more peer coaching cycles.

Research on professional learning suggests a need for ongoing collaboration amongst teachers. Teacher collaboration has been shown to increase consistency in instruction, improve teacher practices, and positively impact student learning (Wei et al., 2009). The teachers who participated in this study were willing to use their common planning time to collaborate with peers and they reported the benefits far outweighed any loss of time. Teachers reported that they would participate in more peer coaching cycles and their responses showed that collaboration with a peer had many positive outcomes.

Our district classrooms are comprised of a range of learners with many diverse learning needs. At times, teachers may feel that they aren’t adequately prepared to teach reading to all students, including struggling readers. Peer coaching may provide teachers with opportunities for observing and conferencing with a peer about specific teaching challenges they are facing. These vicarious experiences associated with peer coaching may encourage risk-taking and new mastery experiences. Research showed that teachers changed beliefs and persisted in efforts when they had opportunities to see a colleague perform a skill that was previously thought to be difficult or threatening (Licklider, 1995).

As initial peer coaching cycles and implementation of new teaching experiences may result in perceived failure, it will be important to support teachers in preserving and continuing collaboration with partners as they experiment on self-identified goals. Forming learning communities centered on peer coaching may help me to gain information about what teachers learn from peer coaching cycles and what they need in terms of future professional learning.
sessions. Peer coaching can provide teachers with experiences that help them to identify and advocate for their professional learning needs.

Teachers often do not receive enough feedback about their teaching from school leaders. New teachers may have two or three formal observations per year, while veteran teachers may only have one formal or informal observation. Feedback is critical for teachers to improve their teaching and student learning. Participants of peer coaching cycles receive feedback about their teaching through peer interaction and observing another teacher. Peer coaching provides opportunities for self-evaluative and non-evaluative feedback, which have been shown to promote reflection and changes to instruction, a drastic shift from other approaches to enhancing teacher performance (Licklider, 1995).

Many of the teacher comments during the focus group discussion revealed that the peer coaching feedback helped them to connect their instruction with student learning. Teachers reported that peer coaching increased their reflection and provided them with new teaching ideas. Moving forward, I must help school leaders understand that peer coaching is not about evaluation but rather about building a community of learners who are committed to learn together through peer coaching cycles to increase teacher and student learning.

As I continue to learn about peer coaching and its impact on teacher self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and professional learning, I may design future studies of peer coaching which are longer in duration and in which I seek to gain more in-depth information about the peer coaching cycles. Specifically, I am interested to learn more about the influences of mastery and vicarious experiences on teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Continuing to study peer coaching in my district may help to reveal further insights about improvements to teachers’ self-efficacy. Previous studies on self-efficacy beliefs provided evidence to support the idea of a connection
between self-efficacy beliefs and effective literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Teachers’ feelings about their abilities to engage students in learning were related to the nature and quality of their own professional learning in literacy (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Working with district leaders to spread a peer coaching model of professional learning across the district could pave the way for establishing a culture of literacy improvement within our district.

My learning agenda is about supporting elementary reading teachers to be highly effective and efficacious. I believe that professional learning which is supported through voluntary peer coaching experiences can improve teachers’ self-efficacy and can result in improved teaching and learning. I intend to continue my work with teachers in learning about and supporting peer coaching.

Directions for Further Research

All elementary reading teachers should be supported through a strong system of professional learning to improve their reading content knowledge, their self-efficacy for teaching reading, and their instructional literacy practices. Supporting teachers’ professional learning can have a significantly positive impact on reading instruction and ultimately student reading outcomes. However, there has been very little empirical evidence about the impacts of professional learning on teacher practice and student learning (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011).

Teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs have been found to impact their literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Professional learning opportunities influence teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Continued research on professional learning that has a positive impact on teacher
self-efficacy should be encouraged in order to continue to expand the research on improving student literacy outcomes.

This study could be replicated on a larger scale to find out how peer coaching impacts teacher self-efficacy for teachers in other contexts. Replicating the survey over a longer period of time, perhaps over an entire school year, could potentially reveal significant changes in teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy and would yield even more information about peer coaching for continued professional learning. A case study design, which gathers additional data about specific teachers, may also help to investigate some of the factors related to decreases or increases in teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy as a result of peer coaching.

Future research on providing feedback to teachers to improve their teaching practice should also be investigated. Once-a-year teacher evaluations do not provide teachers the ongoing feedback necessary for adjustments in teaching practice that positively impact student learning. A focus on looking for evidence of student learning should be the purpose of peer coaching and teachers need continual practice to use this information to improve their teaching practices.

I look forward to continuing my work with the teachers in my district to improve our system of professional learning. I aim to expand the peer coaching series to other schools in our district and empower the teachers with whom I have worked during this study to facilitate some of the learning about peer coaching with other teachers in our district. I will seek other opportunities to continue to improve teaching and learning in the field of literacy.
References


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Appendix A: Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction Survey for K-2 Teachers

Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) 1- Not Well At All to (4) 4- Very Well as each represents a degree on the continuum. Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.

1. How well can you teach phonological awareness (breaking down spoken language into smaller units, words, syllables, phonemes)?
   - Not well at all
   - Not too well
   - Pretty well
   - Very well

2. How well can you teach phonics (letter/sound correspondences)?
   - Not well at all
   - Not too well
   - Pretty well
   - Very well

3. How well can you get students to read fluently during oral reading?
   - Not well at all
   - Not too well
   - Pretty well
   - Very well

4. How well can you help your students figure out unknown words when they are reading?
   - Not well at all
   - Not too well
   - Pretty well
   - Very well

5. How well can you model effective reading strategies?
   - Not well at all
   - Not too well
   - Pretty well
   - Very well

6. How well can you use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of your students?
   - Not well at all
   - Not too well
   - Pretty well
   - Very well

*Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction Questions adapted from Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011).
Appendix B: Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction Survey for 3rd-5th Grade Teachers

Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction
Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) *Not Well At All* to (4) *Very Well* as each represents a degree on the continuum. Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your *current* ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.

1. How well can you provide your students with opportunities to apply their prior knowledge to reading tasks?  
   ![Not well at all](1) ![Not too well](2) ![Pretty well](3) ![Very well](4)

2. How well can you implement effective reading strategies in your classroom?  
   ![Not well at all](1) ![Not too well](2) ![Pretty well](3) ![Very well](4)

3. How well can you adjust your reading materials to the proper level for individual students?  
   ![Not well at all](1) ![Not too well](2) ![Pretty well](3) ![Very well](4)

4. How well can you integrate the components of language arts?  
   ![Not well at all](1) ![Not too well](2) ![Pretty well](3) ![Very well](4)

5. How well can you provide children with writing opportunities in response to reading?  
   ![Not well at all](1) ![Not too well](2) ![Pretty well](3) ![Very well](4)

6. How well can you use a variety of informal and formal reading assessment strategies to identify the literacy needs of your students?  
   ![Not well at all](1) ![Not too well](2) ![Pretty well](3) ![Very well](4)

*Teacher Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction Questions adapted from *Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI)* developed by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011).*
Appendix C: Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction Survey for K-5 Teachers

Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) *Not Well At All* to (4) *Very Well* as each represents a degree on the continuum. *We* refers to teachers in this school, including yourself. *Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not too well</th>
<th>Pretty well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How well can we motivate our students in reading?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How well can we teach reading?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How well do we know how to teach reading to <em>all students</em> including struggling readers?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How well skilled are we in various methods of teaching reading?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How well do we reach students with our methods of teaching reading?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Collective Efficacy for Literacy Instruction adapted from Goddard et al. (2004).
Appendix D: Focus Group Questions for K-5 Teachers

1. Was peer coaching a valuable use of your professional development time? Why or why not?

2. Would you continue participation in peer coaching? Why or why not?

Additional questions (if time permits)

3. What did you learn by participating in the peer coaching process?

4. Did the peer coaching process help you to identify something you would like to learn?
Appendix E: Peer Coaching Description

In this series, peer coaching will be used as a professional learning model that provides a safe and structured framework for a teacher to visit the classroom of another teacher to provide feedback on a focus identified by the inviting teacher. "Peer coaching is a confidential process through which two or more colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace" (Robbins, 1991, p. 1). Three commonalities exist in the literature about peer coaching programs: 1) Peer coaching is non-evaluative; 2) It involves the observation of classroom teaching followed by constructive feedback; 3) It is aimed at improving classroom instruction (Ackland, 1991; Swafford et al., 1997).

The peer coaching process typically includes a pre-conference, classroom visit, and post-conference (Gottesman, 2000; Robbins, 1991, 2015). The peer coaching model I will refer to for this study is the one developed by Pam Robbins (1991, 2015). During the pre-conference, the inviting teacher (coachee) shares with the invited teacher (coach) the focus for the classroom visit. Together the coach and teacher should determine what specific data to collect and how the data will be collected to best provide information about the focus area the teacher has identified. The main goal for the visit is collect the data on the focus the teacher has specified to prepare for the post-conference following the lesson. The coach should collect the data that has been agreed upon in the pre-conference without making any judgments or interpretations during or after the visit. After the visit, the coach and teacher reflect individually about the lesson in preparation for the post-conference. The goal of the post-conference is to engage in dialogue that encourages reflection on the part of the teacher about the data collected during the lesson. Any data collected or notes taken by the coach should be given to the teacher at the conclusion of the post-conference. At the conclusion of the post-conference, the pair may decide to set up another pre-conference and visit based on what was learned or they may switch and have the teacher become the coach and the coach the teacher.
Appendix F: Peer Coaching Professional Development Series

Session 1: Overview of Peer Coaching
- Peer Coaching
  - A definition
  - Overview of the Research on Peer Coaching
  - Why participate in Peer Coaching?
    - Overview of the Process (Pre-Conference, Classroom Visit, Post-Conference)

Session 2: The Peer Coaching Process
- Determining the focus (Teacher/Coachee identifies a specific objective)
- What happens during the pre-conference?
  - Role of the Coach and Coachee
  - Pre-Conference Sample Questions

Session 3: The Classroom Visit
- Role of the Coach and Coachee
- Collecting data/ Observation instruments

Session 4: The Post-Conference
- What happens during the post-conference?
  - Roles of the Coach and Coachee
  - Post-Conference Sample Questions
  - Communication skills for conferencing

Session 5: Planning for Application with a Colleague
- Review of the Peer coaching process
  - Pre-Conference
  - Classroom Visit
  - Post-Conference
- Questions

Session 6: Focus Group Session
- Was peer coaching a valuable use of your professional development time? Why or why not?
- Would you continue participation in peer coaching? Why or why not?
  - Additional questions (if time permits)
- What did you learn by participating in the peer coaching process?
- Did the peer coaching process help you to identify something you would like to learn?