A Study of the Effectiveness of K–3 Literacy Coaches

Based on data from Reading First principals, teachers, and coaches in:

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, Wyoming

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NATIONAL READING
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Contents

Those who prepare teachers to teach our K–3 children to read shoulder an immense responsibility. While pre- and in-service training introduces teachers to effective uses of scientifically-based reading research strategies in their classrooms, teachers must continue to receive support to advance their reading instruction skills. Reading coaches support this effort. The coach provides ongoing training at the school site; integrates that training into teachers' daily work; promotes the collective participation of teachers; aligns instructional goals, instructional practices and local standards; provides opportunities for active participation and learning; and thereby improves reading instruction and student achievement.

The National Academy of Education[1] provides evidence that professional development, coaching, and mentoring can improve instruction and promote the retention of highly effective teachers. Coaches serve as a valuable resource to classroom teachers by providing the necessary job-embedded, ongoing professional learning and at-the-elbow support as teachers hone their craft of delivering effective reading instruction.

We might assume that coaches possess the qualifications and characteristics to serve effectively in their role, but questions remain. *Who become coaches? What are the credentials of coaches? What roles do coaches perform? How do coaches manage their schedules to meet the many demands of their roles? How effective are coaches perceived to be? Is there any evidence that the presence of coaches increases student achievement?*

Over the past six years, Reading First has provided the means for a tremendous increase in the number of school-based literacy coaches, and offers rich data about how coaches support teachers. The present study draws on a careful review of states' external evaluation reports, relevant literature and research pertaining to coaching, documents obtained from state and local education agencies about coach roles and responsibilities, and personal interviews with school-based literacy coaches. Topics addressed include the qualifications of the school-based literacy coach, roles of the coach, effectiveness of the coach, and coach perceptions of job satisfaction and expectations.

This study attempts to update findings on the role of the literacy coach. Clearly, the coach's role is complex and varied; most would agree that it significantly affects the ability of school staff members to improve their reading instruction. Because teaching matters, school-based coaching responds to the national priority of improving teacher quality. Best of all, school-based coaching benefits students through supporting high-quality instruction.

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[1] National Academy of Education. (2008). *Improving Teacher Quality and Distribution* (Education Policy Briefing Sheet). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved June 11, 2009, from http://www.naeducation.org/White_Papers_Project_Teacher_Quality_Briefing_Sheet.pdf

Professional development stands as a central tenet of the Reading First program. At the school level, the literacy coach usually delivers this professional development.[2] Since Reading First began, the number of literacy coaches across the nation has grown dramatically. This unique funding opportunity has provided a literacy coach in ninety-nine percent of all Reading First schools—coaches who are highly knowledgeable and specially trained in adult learning as well as reading. The high percentage of schools with coaches reflects the fact that nearly all states required Reading First schools to have a literacy coach (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 73).

Many believe that literacy coaches are the most effective way to provide ongoing professional learning for teachers. Some disagree about the precise roles that a literacy coach should play and the qualifications and characteristics of an effective coach. State processes for qualification and credentialing literacy coaches vary. At one end of the continuum, states provide detailed job descriptions that include specific guidance on how coaches should spend their time, and collaborate with universities to develop and implement formal coach credentialing programs. At the other end of the continuum, states have neither published job descriptions for the role nor credentialing processes in place.

Defining coaching for school-based professional development

In recent years, many articles have been published on coaching and the role that coaches play in their schools. Puig and Froelich (2006) defined coaches as "ones that assist in shifting classroom teachers to better understand critical pedagogy and the need for change based on evidence." This definition of a literacy coach differs substantially from that of a reading specialist as traditionally defined, with its greater emphasis on the instruction of struggling readers and less emphasis on the resource support and leadership role (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002).

Showers (1985) outlined the following purposes of coaching: (a) to build communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft; (b) to develop the shared language and set of common understandings necessary for the collegial study of new knowledge and skills; (c) to provide a structure for the follow up to training that is essential for acquiring new teaching skills and strategies.

The International Reading Association (2004b) summarized coaching in this way:

> Coaching provides ongoing consistent support for the implementation and instruction components. It is nonthreatening and supportive—not evaluative. It gives a sense of how good professional development is. It also affords the opportunity to see it work with students. (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, & Supovitz, 2003, as cited in International Reading Association, 2004b).

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[2]While many states and LEAs use the term reading coach, others adopted the term literacy coach. Throughout this document, literacy coach is used interchangeably with reading coach where appropriate. Literacy coach is the preferred term, connoting a broader view of coaching that encompasses all areas of language arts, including reading, writing, and oral language development, as well as literacy across content-area subjects.

Taken together, these definitions all suggest that the essential elements of coaching include: helping teachers improve their understanding, providing ongoing support to teachers in implementing their new understanding, and providing feedback and follow-up in a nonthreatening, collegial environment.

Reading First provision for the school-based literacy coach

The definitions above match the intent of the federal priority that local education agencies (LEAs) assist teachers in becoming highly qualified in reading instruction. Specifically, as outlined in Title I, Part B, Section 1202, 4 (c) (7) (A) (ff) (iv) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended, LEAs are directed to meet the professional development needs of teachers. Specific requirements of LEAs include:

Requirements of professional development for LEAs

- Provide professional development for teachers of kindergarten through grade 3, and special education teachers of kindergarten through grade 12
- Prepare teachers in all of the essential components of reading instruction[3], including information on instructional materials, programs, strategies, and approaches based on scientifically based reading research; and instruction in the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessment
- Provide professional development by eligible providers and assist teachers in becoming highly qualified in reading instruction in accordance with the requirements

Value of coaching for school-based professional learning

In years past, teachers often received their professional development through "one-shot" workshops delivered by external trainers who may or may not have been familiar with their needs and classroom situations. Recent research suggests linking this traditional model of professional development to a school-based coaching model which follows up on initial training and becomes job-embedded, ongoing professional learning with continuous support. This is the predominant Reading First coaching model used by LEAs, and is supported by research on adult learning (e.g., Guskey, 2000; Norton, 2001; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999, as cited in Deussen, et al, 2007).

The present study describes the features of this Reading First model and presents perceptions of principals, coaches, and teachers on how literacy coaches influence the quality of teaching and how, combined with school teams, they affect student achievement.

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[3]The key instructional requirements focus on several decades of scientifically based reading research. In 2000, the National Reading Panel Report identified five essential components of effective reading instruction, which are incorporated into the Reading First Initiative. They are: 1) phonemic awareness, 2) phonics, 3) vocabulary development, 4) reading fluency (including oral reading), and 5) reading comprehension strategies. Only programs based on scientifically based reading research may be funded through Reading First.

Purpose and methodology of study

This study offers insights on several features of coaching: coaches' qualifications, their roles, and how they allocate time to coaching tasks. The study also reports on the perceptions of principals, teachers, and coaches on the effectiveness of coaching in improving student reading achievement, particularly on and the link between coaching and student achievement.

The study uses a multiple-methods approach to document evidence on the role of the literacy coach. Methods include a synthesis of existing research and program evaluation findings; a review of relevant documents on the coach's role, responsibilities, and tasks; and interviews with school-based Reading First coaches.

To prepare documentation for this study, we reviewed all fifty-two 2007 state and territory external evaluation reports of Reading First. These reports are available online on the United States Department of Education website at http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/evaluationreports/index.html. Reports selected for inclusion in the research synthesis were selected based on the extent of information on the following three areas: (a) the qualifications of the literacy coach, (b) the role and functions of the literacy coach, and (c) the perceived effectiveness of the literacy coach.

Of the 52 reports reviewed, 15 were deemed as having adequate information on all three areas to warrant inclusion in the study. The evaluation report must also have been presented in a usable format that could be aggregated with the results of other states.

To complement information obtained from the state external evaluation reports, additional information was collected from states, LEAs, and school-based literacy coaches. Documents relating to literacy coach qualifications, credentialing, job descriptions, schedules, and time allocations were obtained and incorporated throughout the study where appropriate. These documents were selected as examples to illustrate the practices of selected states and LEAs related to the literacy coach role.

Finally, individual interviews were conducted with five school-based Reading First literacy coaches from across the nation. Information collected from interviews was used to gain additional insight into the coach's role, the tasks coaches perform, and how they balance the many demands of their role.

Qualifications of the school-based literacy coach

Minimum qualifications and desired skills of the coach

With the upsurge in the number of literacy coaches across the nation, many articles have offered guidance on the most critical qualities coaches should possess. Perhaps one of the most noteworthy publications on this topic came in 2004, when the International Reading Association (IRA) (2004b) released its guidelines on the role and minimum qualifications of the reading coach.

Minimum qualifications of a coach
A coach…
- should be an excellent teacher of reading, preferably at the levels at which she is coaching;
- has in-depth knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction;
- has expertise in working with teachers to improve their practices;
- is an excellent presenter and group leader; and
- has the experience or preparation that enables her to model, observe, and provide feedback about instruction for classroom teachers.

Expected qualities and skills of school-based literacy coaches

In addition to the qualifications necessary for effective coaching, other skills appear necessary to coach teachers effectively in their teaching of reading skills. Many resources explicitly detail the desired skills of literacy coaches. An especially good example is provided by Learning Point Associates (2004, p. 5) which specified desired skills and abilities.

Desired skills and actions of a coach include:
- look for the positive in each interactive opportunity;
- display strong listening skills, questioning abilities, and confidentiality;
- demonstrate a willingness to embrace the teacher/coach model as a way to address professional development needs;
- actively support the individual teacher's learning;
- coach individuals and groups to identify their strengths, areas of potential growth, and steps to take in improving instruction;
- provide instruction and coaching that honors the diversity of students and teachers; and
- communicate appropriately with all involved in the success of the program.

To fully understand the qualifications of the school-based literacy coach reviewed for this study, two key aspects are examined: (1) credential requirements of coaches; and (2) job descriptions of coaches.

Credentialing programs

The credentialing process for literacy coaches varies widely by state and by LEA. In recent years, some states have made great strides in establishing uniform preparation for literacy coaches. One example is Ohio's *Literacy Specialist Endorsement Program*, offered by a consortium of seven Ohio universities. It is designed as a one-year program that includes both online coursework and a university-based internship. Participants who complete the program are awarded a *Literacy Specialist Endorsement*, a state credential that is added to their teaching certificate or license (John Carroll University, 2007). The program standards are based on the International Reading Association's *Standards for Reading Professionals, Revised 2003*, and promote a career ladder in literacy for experienced teachers (International Reading Association, 2004c).

Another example of a state literacy coach credentialing program is California's *Reading Certificate* and the *Reading and Language Arts Specialist* credential programs that prepare teachers to play leadership roles at the school and district levels, respectively. A coach with the *Reading and Language Arts Specialist* credential works with teachers (and students, at times) in varied settings with numerous roles, including assisting and supporting the classroom teacher, selecting and applying instructional materials, offering professional development, assessing of student progress and monitoring achievement, directly intervening with students, and working with the school and district staff on reading and language arts programs. To be eligible to pursue the credential, candidates must possess a basic teaching credential and a minimum of three years of teaching experience (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1998, p. 7). In California, 1,320 Reading First reading/literacy coaches received coach training aligned with their duties in implementing Reading First Program Assurances. From 2004 through 2006, about 380 of these coaches completed the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) *Reading Certificate Program*; an additional 110 coaches completed the CCTC *Reading and Language Arts Specialist Credential Program* in 2007. Both CCTC programs had partnered with the UCLA Education Extension (Haager, Dhar, Mouton, and McMillan, 2008, p. 84).

Job descriptions

Another example of a state's efforts to provide guidance in defining the role of the literacy coach comes from Alabama. Before Reading First, Alabama had its own reading initiative, and many elements of the *Alabama Reading Initiative* were incorporated into the state's Reading First initiative. In Table 1, Alabama defines the essential skills of the school-based coach.

Table 1

Alabama Reading Initiative essential skills of the reading coach

1

The Reading Coach must know how to implement school wide practices that substantially accelerate the learning of struggling readers.

Teaching struggling readers

The reading coach knows how to:
- demonstrate a high level of skill in all aspects of instruction that accelerates the learning of struggling readers
- promote highly specialized reading instruction in which struggling readers thrive: instruction that is explicit, intensive, accelerated, and provides ample practice
- arrange for the organizational features needed to increase the achievement of struggling readers: more time with more highly skilled teachers, reduced teacher/pupil ratio, and flexible/varied grouping
- monitor student progress in ways that inform teaching and motivate learners
- make available student materials that ensure students read at their instructional reading level throughout the school day
- coordinate across instructional settings the instruction provided to struggling readers (e.g., intervention teacher collaborating with the social studies teacher)
- create practices that motivate struggling readers and reward their progress
- create an environment in which all adults in the school know the struggling readers by name and collaborate in increasing their reading achievement
- partner with the principal to:
    - bring about all that is needed to facilitate a school wide commitment to reach all struggling readers
    - motivate faculties to contribute to the school wide commitment to all students reading well

2

The Reading Coach must know how to facilitate professional development that results in improved student reading achievement.

Ensuring ongoing professional development

The reading coach knows how to:
- structure professional activities that are research-based, ongoing, coordinated, and responsive to student needs revealed by data (e.g., workshops, book studies, classroom coaching)
- model research-based instructional procedures and help teachers implement these procedures
- identify teachers' strengths and areas for improvement based on student performance data and classroom observations
- provide teachers with feedback and coaching that impacts student learning
- help teachers select materials and instructional strategies that fit students' needs and interests
- organize professional materials to enhance a system of ongoing learning
- organize and make accessible instructional materials (e.g., leveled text, electronic sources, content-related texts)
- ensure that research-based literacy strategies learned in workshops are used effectively in classrooms
- assist teachers in overcoming problems they encounter in their classrooms
- work closely with new teachers and administrators, helping them to understand the school's literacy program and their roles in it
- model ongoing learning (e.g., participate in self-reflections on teaching; read professionally; participate in professional meetings; stay current with national, state, and local initiatives)

Alabama Reading Initiative essential skills of the reading coach (continued)

3	
The reading coach must be able to cultivate a community of learners that values collaborative problem solving.	

Influencing school climate and school-wide commitment to 100% literacy

The reading coach knows how to:

- assist administrators in organizing literacy leadership teams that review assessment data and develop literacy plans for schools

- collaborate effectively with faculty and administrators on a professional basis to achieve literacy improvement in their schools

- nurture supportive, respectful behavior in all interactions among adults in the school

- influence school wide policies, procedures, and practices that prompt proficient reading for all students

- provide an essential link among teachers on a grade level or within a department; across grade levels and across departments; and between faculty and administrators

- build collaborative, professional relationships among administrators, faculty, and staff

- align reading standards, instruction, and measures of learning

- select reading programs based on their compatibility with scientific research

- secure commitment of all adults to implement a school wide research-based, comprehensive reading plan that features systematic collection, analysis, and use of student performance data

From *Alabama Reading Initiative Essential Skills of the Reading Coach* (n.d.). Retrieved May 22, 2009, from https://www.jefcoed.com/departments/human-resources/Job%20Descriptions/Reading%20Coach.pdf. Reprinted with permission.

From the nascent stages of Reading First, the role of the literacy coach began to evolve and be refined. In time, it was revised by states through changes in their job descriptions. In California, as in many other states, the state's job description for the coach role was developed as a template for LEA use. The description specifies that the coach must be a certificated teacher, with three or more years of teaching experience, who works with classroom teachers (not directly with students) in assisting with the full implementation of the district's adopted reading instructional program. The position entails many roles, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2

California's literacy coach job description

- provides support and assistance to all classroom teachers in the full and skillful implementation of the district's adopted reading/language arts program
- conducts demonstration lessons to insure that all teachers have been trained to an advanced level of delivery and are using the instructional materials as designed
- provides on-site staff development to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about program components and understand the instructional design of how the program meets the standards
- assists teachers in building an interactive classroom environment focused on the content and learning strategies embedded in the program
- conducts classroom observations and provides "next-step" support for all teachers
- serves as a resource in identifying appropriate instructional strategies and interventions to improve student achievement for all students including English learners, standard English learners, Spanish learners, students enrolled in Special Education Programs, and students with diverse learning needs
- assists teachers in preparation and pacing for instruction
- participates in collaborative grade level meetings to assist in the analysis and utilization of assessment data to improve student achievement
- assists grade level teams in setting goals for improved instruction
- meets regularly with the principal to review 6 week skill assessment data and to assess the outcomes of goals established by grade level teams
- prepares forms, records, and reports as directed
- attends meetings and trainings as directed

From *Job descriptions: Reading First instructional leadership personnel*, by the California Reading First Technical Assistance Center, 2003. Retrieved March 24, 2009, from http://www.calread.net/documents/JobDescripInstLdrshp.pdf

Summary of states' data

Using the states' external evaluation reports, 11 of 15 selected states included data on coaches' experience and educational levels. Table 3 reports the teaching experience and educational background of coaches by state; it also includes information, when available, on the average number of hours coaches worked per week, to determine whether school-based coaches generally held full- or part-time positions in a school or schools.

Table 3

Literacy coach qualifications (2006–07)

State	Number of coaches reporting[a]	Average number of years prior teaching experience	Percentage of coaches with advanced degrees and credentials	Average number of hours worked per week or full-time status
Alaska	14	13	14% Master's degree in reading 36% Master's degree in area other than reading 29% Reading certification	44
Arizona	88	15	--	49
Arkansas	94	18	62% Master's degree 19% Reading endorsement 16% Certified as a reading specialist	--
California	1018	45% have at least 11 years of teaching/support experience	--	--
Illinois	183	16	90% Master's degree 47% Reading specialist licensure 80% Reading endorsement licensure	--
Indiana	66	74% have at least 11 years of teaching experience	72% at least a Master's degree	--
Montana	13	15	38% Master's degree 30% Reading certification	49
North Dakota	15	19	40% Master's degree	--
Pennsylvania	186	68% have at least 13 years of teaching experience	79% at least a Master's degree	90% are full-time
Washington State	84	Average of 17 years of teaching experience	18% Master's degree in reading 60% Master's degree in area other than reading	89% are full-time
Wyoming	12	Average of 18 years of teaching experience	25% Master's degree in reading 67% Master's degree in area other than reading 42% Reading certification	51 100% are full-time

a When available, actual numbers of coaches responding to surveys are provided. If numbers were not available, the number of coaches based upon the number of Reading First schools in the state is provided. If multiple years of data are reported in an evaluation report, only the most recent year's data were used in this analysis.

The findings reported in Table 3 suggest that the Reading First literacy coaches most often:

- are experienced classroom teachers, with an average of between 11 and 19 years of classroom teaching experience;

- possess graduate degrees as well as advanced training in literacy (note, however, that while most coaches do possess graduate degrees, the degrees are often not in literacy, in part because graduate programs concentrating in literacy have only become commonplace in some states in recent years); and

- are employed full-time at one or two schools (based on established coach/teacher ratios).

Illinois stands out as a state in which literacy coaches are particularly well credentialed:

- Ninety percent of the Illinois literacy coaches possess a Master's degree.

- Forty-seven percent possess the *Reading Specialist Licensure*.

- Eighty percent possess the *Reading Endorsement Licensure*.

The reader is urged to keep in mind that the data compiled here were collected during the 2006–07 school year. It is reasonable to postulate that as the Reading First program has evolved, even higher proportions of literacy coaches will possess advanced degrees and reading credentials in subsequent years.

In order to understand the role of the coach and its potential impact on teacher learning and student achievement fully, it is important to have a strong grasp of the coach role and of how coaches function in their schools.

The diverse roles of the coach

In perhaps the most comprehensive study of the roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach, the *Reading First Implementation Evaluation Final Report* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) included survey data from a randomized selection of more than 1,600 school-based Reading First coaches. Of particular interest is the portion of the survey on activities coaches viewed as central to their roles; they were broken into three categories: teacher support activities, administrative and school support activities, and activities that support teacher instruction. Table 4 lists the activities rated as central to their role by at least 50 percent of the coaches.

Table 4

Literacy coach tasks viewed as central to the coach role in 2006–07

Task	Rank order of percentage of coaches rating task as central to their role
Teacher support activities	
Coach staff on a range of topics	95%
Provide training and professional development in reading materials, strategies, and assessments	94%
Organize professional development for K-3 teachers	86%
Facilitate grade level meetings	79%
Administrative and school support activities	
Participate in professional development provided by the district, state, or other consultants	93%
Compile reading assessment data	92%
Administer and coordinate reading assessments	88%
Participate in school leadership team meetings	83%
Order and manage reading instruction materials	75%
Activities that support teachers' instruction	
Help teachers in interpreting assessment results	97%
Help teachers design strategies for struggling readers	95%
Help teachers monitor the effectiveness of strategies for struggling readers	93%
Observe and provide feedback to teachers	92%
Assist teachers in using the core reading program	89%
Assist teachers in forming instructional groups	88%
Give demonstration lesson with core and supplemental materials	79%
Plan reading instruction with teachers	77%
Give demonstrations on assessment administration and scoring	72%

Adapted from *Reading First Implementation Evaluation Final Report* (pp. 77–80), by United States Department of Education, 2008, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.

Of the eight tasks rated by at least 90 percent of the coaches as central to their role, four fall under the category of supporting teachers' instruction. Tasks in this category related to interpreting assessment results, designing and monitoring the effectiveness of strategies for struggling readers, and observing and providing feedback to teachers were viewed as most central to the coaching role. Additionally, under the category of teacher support activities, the task of coaching staff on a range of topics and providing professional development were viewed as most central to coaches' role. These findings are in keeping with the guidance given for the Reading First coaching role, which is to provide teachers with ongoing professional development and to assist teachers in the use and interpretation of assessment data.

In one of the most widely cited studies exploring the roles and functions of Reading First coaches, Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) identified five categories of reading coaches' orientations, based upon data collected from five western states. Deussen and colleagues categorized coaches as either data-oriented, student-oriented, managerial, *individual teacher*-oriented, or *teacher group*-oriented. (The distinction between the latter two is the extent to which the coach works with teachers individually or in groups).

The most significant factor that predicted the category to which a coach would belong was the state in which the coach worked, because certain coach categories were more common in some states than others. The authors found a pattern in which category of coach occurred more often in certain states. This suggests that a state's guidance on the coach's role influenced the type of work its coaches did. Another interpretation is that teacher-oriented coaching tasks, which included coaches helping teachers interpret assessment results, design strategies for struggling readers, and build knowledge on a range of topics occurred more often.

Based on their findings, the researchers called for additional empirical research to document the preparation, assigned roles, and actual use of time on the job for the Reading First coach to isolate which factors best explain the orientation of coaching tasks. They also proposed further research studies be undertaken to explore how coaches balance the demands of "absolutely central" priorities in real time.

Another recent research study suggests that coaches do engage more frequently in providing group professional development than in one-on-one coaching. Rosemary and Roskos (2005) analyzed coaching log data for 87 Ohio Reading First coaches over the course of a school year and found that coaches in their study engaged most frequently in:

- participating in or providing group professional development;

- providing individual assistance to teachers;

- carrying out administrative tasks for managing work;

- performing school and district duties; and

- conducting assessment training and administering assessments directly to students.

However, as would be expected, some coaching activities depended on the time of year. For example, coaches were more frequently involved in periodically administering assessments to students and therefore may have simultaneously reduced their time for providing professional development opportunities.

In addition to these existing studies that investigate the complex nature of the coach role, a growing body of research highlights the challenges coaches face due to the complexity of their role. Al Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt, and Dole (2008) conducted a case study on the challenges experienced by an "exemplary" reading coach during the first year of implementation of a literacy program reform project. While this study was not specific to Reading First, its implications apply to coaches in a variety of settings, including school-based Reading First programs.

The researchers identified several challenges in implementing the system-level change, including:

- integrating newer SBRR concepts into teachers' existing knowledge of early literacy concepts,

- integrating the use of SBRR concepts into the district's mandated core reading program,

- conflicting views of the reading coach's role, and

- needing time for organizational change to occur.

One lesson learned from this study of particular relevance to Reading First coaches is that, "it takes hard work for a coach to change teachers' views" about reading instruction. Another important lesson is that teachers may not fully understand the coach's role, which may lead them to resist or resent the coach. Finally, teachers hold conflicting views and ideologies about how best to teach early reading, views and ideologies that may or may not be supported by the SBRR framework in which the Reading First coach is operating. These findings have implications for coaches' day-to-day practice. Coaches would be well-advised, therefore, to share information with teachers about their role and the support and resources they can provide.

In the evaluation report of Arkansas Reading First (National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems, 2007), the researchers provided the following list of challenges faced by coaches that have yet to be resolved (reported in the order of prevalence):

- resistance to change to Reading First methods (36%),

- reluctance of teachers to change their behavior or attitudes (12%),

- lack of support from principal (12%),

- time to meet with teachers and follow up (8%),

- lack of training on how to facilitate intervention instruction (8%), and

- teacher turnover (4%).

Gibson (2006) also investigated the challenges faced by coaches, documenting through observation and interviews the experiences of a reading coach as she provided lesson feedback to an experienced kindergarten teacher. Gibson concluded that the reading coach experiences specific challenges and that, "any conceptualization of reading coaching as an easy, or quick, route to instructional reform" are unfounded (p. 314). The study suggests that coaching requires many areas of technical expertise which are developed through time spent coaching, training, reflection, and the coach's maintenance of an expert stance within coaching relationships.

Bean, Swan, and Knaub (2003) investigated the role of reading specialists in schools with exemplary reading programs. Although their investigation focused on reading specialists, whose role included the regular direct instruction of students, their findings also have implications for the school-based literacy coach. Key findings include: (a) although reading specialists are very positive about their role, there is also great frustration and confusion about the many tasks that they are required to perform; (b) the vast majority of the principals surveyed agreed that the reading specialists were important to the success of the reading program; (c) the five broad roles of reading specialists include serving as a resource to classroom teachers; serving as a resource to other school staff members as well as parents, volunteers, and other community members; serving as coordinator of the reading program; serving as coordinator of assessment; and providing instruction to students.

Coaches' allocations of time

With the multifaceted roles that literacy coaches fill in their schools, accomplishing all of the tasks associated with the job description poses challenges. Many states and LEAs have attempted to mitigate challenges by developing guidelines for how coaches allocate their time. One example is Florida's Orange County School District's *K–12 Literacy Plan*, reported in Table 5. It is important to note that the district is "working toward" these time allocations (E. Shanks, personal communication, May 7, 2009).

Table 5

LEA-suggested guidelines for coach time allocations

Role	Suggested percentage of time
Whole faculty professional development	10
Small group professional development	10
Planning	10
Modeling lessons	10
Coaching	10
Coach—teacher conferences	10
Student assessment	5
Data reporting	5
Data analysis	10
Meetings	5
Knowledge building	5
Managing reading materials	5
Other	5

From *Orange County Public Schools K–12 District Literacy Plan* (n.d.). Retrieved April 29, 2009, from https://www.ocps.net/cs/services/cs/currareas/read/Curriculum/Documents/Leadership%20District%20Level.doc. Used with permission.

Noteworthy here is the emphasis placed on both large and small-group professional development, coaching activities with individual teachers, and a full 20 percent of the coaches' time devoted to assessment and data use. Also of interest is the fact that no direct teaching of students, such as in an intervention group, is present. As stated in Orange County's *K–12 Literacy Plan*:

> *For a reading coach to be effective, the role of the coach must be clear to school administration, teachers, and the coach. The role of the coach is not to serve as an administrator, test coordinator, or to conduct bus/lunch duty (beyond duty service that is required of classroom teachers). Coaches are not resource teachers and should only be working with small groups of students when they are modeling for teachers.*

The National Center for Reading First Technical Assistance *Advanced Training for Reading First Coaches Module* (2009) provides further guidance on the coach's schedule:

- The majority of coaching time should be in the classroom.

- Time allocations are flexible and include:
    - assessing,
    - planning,
    - monitoring, and
    - reflecting.

- General "red flag" guidelines include:
    - more than 50% in any one area, and
    - consistently little to no time in any one area.

Weekly schedule of a school-based coach

How does an "effective" Reading First coach juggle all of the responsibilities and tasks associated with the role? This question was posed to an experienced Reading First coach who had been at her school since before it implemented Reading First. The school enrolls approximately 950 K–6 students, and is now in its sixth year of implementing its SBRR reading program. Nearly 100% of the school's students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and nearly 64 percent are English language learners. Table 6 shows a sample weekly schedule for this coach. Note that this schedule reflects a time in the school year when all major screening assessments had been completed.

The table illustrates the many and varied tasks a literacy coach must focus on during a typical week. It is likely that a look at a different week would highlight some tasks that are similar and others that are very different. Perhaps in other weeks this coach would focus more heavily on whole-school professional learning, administering assessments, and managing instructional materials. In this snapshot, the coach divides her time between small-group and individual professional development, modeling lessons, developing Power Point presentations based on the core reading program contents, reviewing data, meeting with administrators, meeting with teachers for collegial exchange, and finding time for her own continued professional learning and reflection.

Table 6

Sample weekly schedule of an effective Reading First coach

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-9:00	ELD[a] demo lesson for 2nd grade "Teacher A." Focus on all components of systematic ELD.	ELD demo Lesson for 2nd grade "Teacher A." Focus on lesson delivery.	Observe 2nd grade "Teacher A" ELD lesson. Focus on lesson delivery.	ELD demo Lesson for 2nd grade "Teacher A." Focus on student practice opportunities.	Observe 2nd grade "Teacher A's" ELD lesson. Focus on student practice opportunities.
9:00-10:00	Prepare materials for K-3 PLC[b]. Gather grade level data for the teams.	Prepare materials for 4-6 PLC. Gather grade level data for the teams.	Observe 1st grade "Teacher B" on comprehension strategies (reflective coaching during recess).	Observe 1st grade "Teacher B." Focus on fluency instruction (reflective coaching during recess).	Observe 1st grade "Teacher D." Focus on pacing (reflective coaching during recess).

(continued)

Sample weekly schedule of an effective Reading First coach (continued)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10:00-10:20	Recess. Meet informally with teachers.	Recess. Meet informally with teachers.	Recess. Meet informally with teachers.	Recess. Meet informally with teachers.	Recess. Meet informally with teachers.
10:20-11:15	Meet with administrators to set goals for the week, discuss PLCs, and/or review data.	Attend grade 1 PLC to present a quick review of blending strategies with a focus on using uniform strategies.	Attend grade 4 PLC to complete common assessment and share materials and ideas for teaching idioms.	Observe 1st grade "Teacher C." Focus on fluency practice and management (reflective coaching during lunch).	Attend Kindergarten PLC Complete reading common assessments.
11:15-12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
	Take three 2nd grade teachers to observe 2nd grade "Teacher C" deliver supplemental intervention lesson.	Attend grade 2 PLC to identify students who did not meet benchmark on phonics test and plan next steps.	Attend grade 5 PLC to identify students who did not meet benchmark in comprehension assessment. Plan common assessment based on item analysis.	Conduct training on supplemental intervention for three 2nd grade teachers.	Conduct demo lesson on supplemental intervention for 2nd grade teacher.
12:00-1:00	Develop PowerPoint presentations on core reading program grammar lessons for Grade 1.	Attend grade 3 PLC to analyze student writing from prompt to determine next steps for teaching expository writing.	Attend grade 6 PLC to determine essential standard for reading comprehension.	Develop PowerPoint presentations on core reading program grammar lessons Grade 6.	Develop PowerPoint presentations on core reading program grammar lessons for Grade 2.
1:00-2:00	Lesson planning, professional reading or research, respond to communications.	Respond to communications, lesson planning, professional reading or research.	Respond to communications, lesson planning, professional reading or research.	Respond to communications. Prepare weekly literacy newsletter and schedule to send to staff.	Respond to communications. Meet with intervention staff to discuss student data and progress.
2:00-3:00 Afterschool	Coach 2nd grade "Teacher A," reflecting on demonstration lesson. Identify components of lesson. Plan for next day's demonstration by coach.	Coach 2nd grade "Teacher A," reflecting on demonstration lesson. Identify components of lesson. Plan for next day's lesson by "Teacher A."	Coach 2nd grade "Teacher A," reflecting on lesson. Identify components of lesson. Plan for next day's demonstration by coach.	Coach 2nd grade "Teacher A," reflecting on demonstration lesson. Identify components of lesson. Plan for next day's lesson by "Teacher A."	Coach 2nd grade "Teacher A," reflecting on lesson. Plan a focus for next steps. Return in three weeks.

[a]ELD is an acronym for English Language Development.

[b]PLC is an acronym for *Professional Learning Community*.

Perceptions of coaching roles

An area of particular interest is the role that the coach plays in implementing a school's reading/language arts program. *California's Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report* (Haager, Dhar, Moulton, & McMillan, 2008, p. 85) provides information on perceptions of teachers, principals, and coaches on the role that the coach plays in implementing the district's reading/language arts program. Table 7 reports percentages for each group.

Table 7

Perceptions of coaches' role in reading/language arts program implementation

Who takes responsibility for teachers using the district's adopted reading/language arts program?	Teachers %	Coaches %	Principals %
Neither the principal nor the coach take much responsibility	2%	1%	0%
The principal takes primary responsibility	13%	37%	36%
The principal and coach share equal responsibility	45%	47%	50%
The principal gives the coach primary responsibility	38%	14%	10%

From *The California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report* (p. 85), by D. Haager, R. Dhar, M. Moulton, & S. McMillan, 2008, Morgan Hill, CA: Educational Data Systems.

Particularly interesting here is the relatively high percentage of teachers (compared with coaches and principals) who reported the coach as taking primary responsibility and the relatively low percentage of teachers (compared with coaches and principals) who reported the principal as taking primary responsibility. The authors note that the Reading First program encourages principals to take primary responsibility, in collaboration with the coach.

The authors also examined the aspects of coaching perceived as most valuable. Teachers and principals responded to the open-ended question, *"In your opinion, what aspects of Reading First-funded coaching do you view as most valuable or beneficial and why?"* and coaches responded to, *"In your opinion, what are the most valuable or beneficial aspects of your role as a Reading First coach and why?"* The results of the qualitative data analysis offer further insight into the perceived value of coaching. Table 8 presents selected results.

Table 8

Relative perceived value of coaching aspects

Response category (code)	All N = 14,118		Teachers N = 12,243		Coaches N = 978		Principals N = 947	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Demonstration by coaches	1	24.2%	1	17.5%	3	28.3%	2	36.1%
Teacher support	2	17.2%	6	8.1%	1	40.7%	1	38.9%
Instructional strategies	3	15.4%	2	10.8%	5	25.9%	8	17.7%
Program implementation support	4	14.6%	8	5.5%	2	35.1%	3	35.9%
Collaboration/grade-level planning	5	13.9%	5	9.0%	4	26.8%	5	21.2%
Knowledge and skills provided by coach	6	12.2%	4	9.4%	10	16.1%	12	11.6%
Coach as resource	7	11.9%	3	10.0%	12	13.2%	13	7.3%
Data analysis/assessment	8	11.9%	7	6.8%	6	22.1%	4	23.7%

Note. Adapted from *The California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report*, (p. 90) by D. Haager, R. Dhar, M. Moulton, & S. McMillan, 2008, Morgan Hill, CA: Educational Data Systems.

Table 8 shows the rank ordering of the relative frequency with which the codes (response categories) occurred, for the eight categories that occurred with the greatest frequency across the groups. Note that certain responses could have been coded into more than one category and the reported percentages will therefore not total 100%. These results offer insight into the relative value of aspects of coaching and how they vary among the groups.

Aggregated across the three groups, demonstration by coaches, teacher support, and instructional strategies were ranked as the three most beneficial aspects of Reading First coaching. While demonstration by coaches is consistently in the top three response categories for all three subgroups, teachers frequently mentioned the value of the coach as a resource (ranked number 3 for teachers), which coaches and principals perceived to be of relatively less value (appearing as numbers 12 and 13, respectively). For more information on this topic, the reader is referred to the full evaluation report, which includes insightful commentary by the stakeholder groups.

Summary of states' data

In nine of the fifteen selected evaluation reports, states' data on the role of coaches and how their time is spent were analyzed and reported in Table 9. Most often, these data were collected through surveys and coaching logs. To a lesser degree, data were collected through interviews with coaches.

The state evaluators categorized the coaching tasks as follows:

- *coaching,* including one-on-one coaching or group coaching;

- *assessments and data,* including administering/coordinating assessments, managing data, using/interpreting data, and data reporting;

- *intervention support,* including planning intervention strategies and providing intervention instruction; and

- *other activities,* including attending or instructing professional development, procuring instructional materials, and planning for and facilitating grade level meetings.

Table 9

Percentage of time spent on coaching tasks by state[a]

State	Coaching	Assessment and data	Intervention support	Other activities
Alaska	26%	23%	15%	35%
Arizona	37%	23%	6%	33%
Arkansas[b]	55%	15%	4%	24%
Illinois	33%	24%	5%	38%
Indiana	52%	14%	4%	26%
Montana	31%	24%	18%	26%
Washington	25%	31%	16%	27%
Wyoming	36%	29%	6%	29%

[a] In cases where multiple years of data were reported in an evaluation report, only data for the most recent year were used in this analysis.

[b] The activities of two cohorts of coaches were provided, with very similar results reported for each. Therefore, an average composite was calculated and these are the numbers reported.

The findings reported in Table 9 suggest the following:

• Coaches (in general) spend the bulk of their time on coaching and assessment-related activities (which is consistent with other recent studies cited).

• Coaches spend a much smaller portion of their time on planning and providing intervention strategies and instruction.

• Coaches spend a significant portion of their time on "other" activities.

Effectiveness of the school-based literacy coach

The literacy coach role and its relationship to student achievement

To date, there has been limited published research on the impact of the literacy coach role on teachers' instructional practices, and in turn, on student achievement. One study that offers guidance on the type of methodology that could be used to investigate this important topic further was conducted by Salzman, Rosemary, Newman, Clay, and Lenhart (2008). In their study, Salzman and colleagues examined the relationship between professional development and teacher classroom practices in Ohio Reading First classrooms and consequent student growth in reading. The authors describe Ohio's Reading First professional development model as one developed by and disseminated through a triadic model involving field faculty from universities, school-based literacy specialists (i.e., "coaches"), and classroom teachers. In this study, professional development was delivered to school-based literacy specialists who, in turn, provided the professional development (including on-going, classroom-embedded support) to the K–3 teachers at their school sites. The study is important in that it offers one possible approach to researching the effect of professional development on classroom instructional practices and the impact on student achievement.

Salzman et al. used the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool* (ELLCO) as a measure of classroom environment. Examining the relationship of the ELLCO data to the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as a measure of student growth in the key technical skills of reading at the class level for students in grades kindergarten through three, the authors found that the ELLCO items relating to classroom instructional setting were predictive of student reading achievement as measured by the DIBELS assessments. The importance of this study is twofold. First, it addresses the relationship between classroom practices and student achievement. Second, it lays the groundwork for further investigation into the relationship between continuous, intensive professional development in which the literacy coach plays an integral role and teachers' instructional practices and student growth in reading.

Understanding how coaches spend their time and the relationship of certain types of coaching tasks to student achievement informs program administrators about which coaching tasks have potentially greater "pay off" in terms of increased student achievement. Pasisz, LaVenia, Roehrig, and Hassler Lang (2008) grouped coaches based on how they spend their time and the relationship of the coach group to student achievement. They examined reading coach logs from all coaches in Florida (both Reading First and non-Reading First) at all school levels. Part of the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) used in Florida to record and track student progress, the coach log records the amount of time coaches spend on 12 different job tasks, including professional development, planning, modeling, coaching, coach/teacher conferences, student assessment, data reporting, data analysis, meetings, knowledge building, managing reading materials, and "other." The data set included approximately 2,500 full-time coaches across the state. The researchers used Latent Profile Analysis to classify coaches based on their self-reported time spent on various job tasks. Elementary level coaches were categorized into four types: *normal* (they spent a relatively uniform amount of time in each of the coaching activities), *student assessment, high student assessment,* and *conference*. At the middle and high school levels, coaches fell into two

categories: *normal* and *conference*. Next, the researchers looked at whether there were significant differences in Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores among the types of coach groups at each school level. They found no significant differences and concluded that while there are latent groups of reading coaches based on time spent on various job tasks, no between-group differences exist as measured by the FCAT. This study is significant in beginning to pave the way for further research on coach tasks and their potentially differential impact on student achievement.

Another methodology that has been used to link the presence of a coach to increased student achievement is found in a recent study of coaching in Florida middle schools. Marsh, Sloan, McCombs, Lockwood, Martorell, Gershwin, Naftel et al. (2008) examined the implementation of Florida's statewide reading coach program and its impact on student achievement through both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In order to document the effects of coaching on student achievement, the researchers collected data from a variety of sources, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, school visits, classroom observations, and standardized achievement tests.

Marsh et al. found that the majority of teachers and principals reported that the coach had a positive effect on their instructional practices and schools; forty-seven percent of reading teachers characterized this influence as "moderate to great" in magnitude. In terms of the relationship of the coach role to student achievement, the researchers reported that "the evidence is mixed regarding the impact of coaching on achievement." Key findings include:

- There was a small but significant relationship between the frequency with which coaches reviewed assessment data with reading teachers and higher reading and mathematics scores.

- The number of years a school had a coach position was significantly related to higher reading test scores, which suggests that "the benefits of having a coach accrue over time.".

- Having a coach was associated with "small but significant improvement in average annual gains in reading for two of the four cohorts analyzed."

Underway at the time of this current study, the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University is expanding the initial study by examining the relationship between coach contact hours with selected teachers to identify the impact on classroom practice and student achievement. This more tightly coupled design, based on randomly selected coaches and classroom teachers, can test for significant linkage between coach hours, teacher practice, and increased student achievement. This approach holds promise for establishing a relationship between the coached teacher and student achievement.

Pipes (2004) explored and documented the diverse roles of the coach and the impact on student reading achievement in Alabama. She found that coaches (termed *reading specialists* in the study) who served primarily as instructional coaches appeared to have a positive relationship to substantial school-wide reading achievement. Conversely, coaches who served primarily as intervention teachers appeared to have a negative relationship to substantial school-wide reading achievement. These findings support the emphasis of the Reading First coaching model on school-based and within-the-classroom professional development rather than a model where coaches work directly with students.

Rosemary and Roskos (2006) examined the relationship of teacher participation in professional development and student reading performance. In the model that they examined, professional development sessions were delivered by school-based literacy specialists (literacy coaches) throughout the school year, with an emphasis on developing teacher learning in practice contexts. They found increases in the percentage of students scoring at the benchmark level on DIBELS over the course of a year at most grade levels and schools included in the study but

stop short of concluding that there is a direct relationship between the professional development and increased student achievement.

In summary, through studies such as those cited above, the research documenting the impact of coaching on classroom practices and in turn on student achievement is still emerging, yet promising.

Perceived effectiveness of school-based literacy coaching

Numerous publications have sought to answer the question, *"What constitutes effective literacy coaching?"* Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz (2003) studied the role of coaching in the *America's Choice* comprehensive school reform design. One of the essential principles of the *America's Choice* design involves school-embedded, ongoing, teacher professional development led by a full-time reading coach (p. iii). The findings from this study are relevant to the Reading First coach role as well. The researchers cited several factors as influencing coach effectiveness, including:

- coach's human relations skills and his or her personality or approach to coaching;

- coach's accessibility;

- ability of teachers to have individual interaction with their coach;

- extent to which the coach included teachers in his or her planning of the coaching process;

- timeliness and relevance of the coach's information;

- coach's willingness and ability to adjust the coaching model to meet local needs;

- extent to which teachers resisted the coaching model;

- extent to which the coach adhered to the model;

- coaches' background and experience (the researchers found that a coach's prior experience as a colleague of the teachers could be "double-edged" and either hinder or help the coach's effectiveness);

- extent to which the principal supports the coach; and

- degree to which the coach has mastered the material on which he or she is coaching.

The *America's Choice* list of comprehensive factors supporting coach effectiveness includes both qualifications and abilities of a coach and the importance of a supportive principal.

In *The Literacy Coach's Survival Guide*, Toll (2005) posited that effective coaching hinges on the essential elements of trust and respect, with an emphasis on relationships based on sharing and helping both coaches and teachers to grow. Toll suggests that rather than trying to be an expert on all aspects of literacy teaching, coaches may find it more effective to acknowledge their expertise as well as the expertise of the teacher or teachers with whom they are working.

Toll (2005) outlined the essential qualities of the effective coach:

- Attending to attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as precursors to change;

- Valuing the expertise of others and the limitations of one's own "expertise"; and

- Respecting teachers as reflected in a commitment to help teachers meet their goals (p. 60).

These are described in detail in Table 10.

Table 10

What respectful reading coaching relationships look and sound like

Objective	Looks like	Sounds like
Planning for coaching	The reading coach meets with teachers to listen to and learn about their concerns, strengths, needs, and efforts so far.	"When you [the teacher] think about your goals for teaching—the kind of readers and writers you want your students to be, the kind of classroom you want to have, and the kind of work you want to do—what gets in the way?"
Altering teaching practices	The reading coach and teacher look at data, standards, curricular goals, student characteristics, and teaching strengths and interests in order to establish priorities.	"What are you doing successfully? What do you want to do differently? How can I help?"
Improving assessment practices	The reading coach and teacher plan for assessment when they plan instruction and then collect meaningful data, including student work samples. School-wide, the staff examines and talks about a range of formal and informal assessments and what they mean for the curriculum, staff organization, and school goals.	"How will you know when your efforts have been successful? What will success look and sound like?"
Organizing for instruction	The reading coach and teacher plot the teacher's daily and weekly schedules and match teaching goals to time allocations. This process includes consideration of how multiple goals and standards can be met with particular organizational structures and ways to collaborate with other school staff members.	"Let's find the time and human resources to help you meet your goals."

From C. Toll, 2005. The literacy coach's survival guide (pp. 59–60). Copyright 2005 by the International Reading Association (www.reading.org). Used with permission.

Summary of states' data

All of the selected fifteen states' evaluation reports included data on the perceived effectiveness of the literacy coach role. Table 11 reports these findings.

Table 11

Perceived effectiveness of the coach role[a]

State	Principal perceptions	Teacher perceptions	Coach perceptions	Additional findings
Alaska	--	More than 80% of teachers agreed that the coach is a knowledgeable resource for reading research and practice.	--	Teachers who were observed more frequently by coaches were more positive about their coaches.
Arizona	--	Eighty-six percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the coach is a knowledgeable resource for reading research and practice.	--	Seventy-one percent of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that they work effectively on Reading First with their principal.
Arkansas	One hundred percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the K-3 teachers in their school have had adequate support from a coach in developing effective reading instruction.	Eighty-five percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the assistance in developing effective instructional strategies provided by the coaching model was effective.	One hundred percent of the coaches agreed or strongly agreed that the K-3 teachers in their school have had adequate support from a coach in developing effective reading instruction.	Teachers noted that the most helpful feature of the Reading First coaching model was the modeling of lessons.
California	Eighty-seven percent of principals characterized the coach as giving specific, detailed answers that teachers can use.	Sixty-six percent of the teachers characterized the coach as giving specific, detailed answers that they can use.	Eight-six percent of coaches characterized themselves as giving specific, detailed answers that teachers can use.	Based on the perceptions of principals, coaches, and teachers, the most important functions served by coaches include: providing demonstration lessons, serving as a resource and support for teachers, and facilitating collaboration on student achievement and fidelity of implementation.
Illinois	Ninety-seven percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the K-3 teachers in their school have had adequate support from a coach in developing effective reading instruction.	Teachers viewed the coach as crucial to their success in implementing the reading program.	Ninety-three percent of the coaches agreed or strongly agreed that the K-3 teachers in their school have had adequate support from a coach in developing effective reading instruction.	Teachers reported that they would like more time with their coach, including more in-class modeling and feedback from classroom observations.

[a] In cases where the activities of more than one cohort of coaches were reported, the results for the newer cohort were used. In these cases, the findings across cohorts were very similar.

(continued)

Perceived effectiveness of the coach role[a] (continued)

State	Principal perceptions	Teacher perceptions	Coach perceptions	Additional findings
Indiana	Ninety-seven percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the coach helped teachers better understand SBRR strategies.	Seventy-three percent of K-3 teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the coach helped teachers better understand SBRR strategies.	Ninety-three percent of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that they helped teachers to better understand SBRR strategies.	Coaches reported that communication between coaches and teachers is the most challenging aspect of their position.
Maine	The vast majority of principals agreed that the coach provides ongoing support to teachers in their reading instruction.	Between 74% and 90% of the teachers reported that the coach observed reading instruction in their classrooms and that this was usually or always helpful.	--	A majority of coaches indicated that the most frequent types of coaching support (daily or weekly) included observing teachers deliver reading instruction in their classrooms, providing feedback to teachers, and coaching teachers in their classroom.
Montana	--	Seventy-nine percent of teachers reported that demonstration lessons conducted by the coach were usually or always helpful.	--	Sixty-nine percent of teachers believed that the coaching position should be continued after the grant ended.
New Jersey	Ninety-seven percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that teachers had adequate support from the coach in developing effective instruction.	Eighty-four percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that teachers had adequate support from the coach in developing effective instruction.	Ninety-nine percent of coaches agreed or strongly agreed that teachers had adequate support from the coach in developing effective instruction.	In general, school-based staff expressed satisfaction with their training experiences through the coaching model and stated that these experiences had improved reading instruction in their schools.
North Dakota	--	The perceived quality and utility of coach-provided professional development was consistently high, with mean ratings greater than 3.5 (good to excellent) on most items.	--	Based on data collected during site visits to selected schools, the evaluators found that coaches are vital to program implementation and outcomes.
Ohio	All principals described the literacy specialist as very important to the school.	Most teachers perceived the literacy specialist to be important.	--	In schools in which teacher opinions of the literacy specialist were mixed, the literacy specialist position in the most current school year reported was a half-time position.

[a] In cases where the activities of more than one cohort of coaches were reported, the results for the newer cohort were used. In these cases, the findings across cohorts were very similar.

(continued)

Perceived effectiveness of the coach role[a] (continued)

State	Principal perceptions	Teacher perceptions	Coach perceptions	Additional findings
Pennsylvania	--	Eighty-four percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the coach was an important source of professional development.	--	In prioritizing the needs of teachers with whom they work, 62% of coaches indicated that they "worked with teachers whose test data indicate there is a need for support" and "with teachers who requested their support or assistance." The second most commonly selected response (17%) was working regularly with every teacher.
South Carolina	All principals reported that their coach had enough content and assessment knowledge to help teachers.	Eighty-five percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the professional development provided by the coach met their needs.	--	Overall, respect for coaches was high, with over 94% of teachers, principals, and interventionists reporting that they respect their coaches.
Washington	--	The majority of teachers rated the support provided by the coach as usually or always helpful.	--	Teachers who were observed more frequently had more positive perceptions of their coach.
Wyoming	--	Teachers perceived the impact of coaching to be substantial and believed that coaches were a significant part of instructional change at many schools.	--	Most teachers reported receiving a variety of supports from their coach, including regular classroom observations and feedback.

[a] In cases where the activities of more than one cohort of coaches were reported, the results for the newer cohort were used. In these cases, the findings across cohorts were very similar.

The findings reported in Table 11 suggest that:

- The vast majority of principals agree that the coach is a knowledgeable and valuable resource who effectively provides ongoing support for teachers.

- The vast majority of teachers agree that the support they receive from their coach is helpful in supporting their implementation of SBRR strategies, and that the coach is a knowledgeable and valuable resource.

- The vast majority of coaches agree that the support they provide to teachers is both valued and useful.

- One of the most valued features of the Reading First coaching model is coaches' in-class modeling of lessons.

The perceptions of teachers is summed up well in Alaska's evaluation report (Davis & Roccograndi, 2007), in which 79% of the teachers surveyed felt that the position of literacy coach should be sustained even after their school no longer receives Reading First funds.

Coaches' perceptions of job satisfaction and expectations

Interviews with school-based Reading First coaches were conducted to gather information on coaches' perceptions of their role. It was assumed that five coaches could provide meaningful comment on their work and offer some insight into what coaches do and how they prioritize their time to meet the many demands of their job. However, these coaches were not randomly selected, and their views are not to be considered as representative of nor generalizable to the views held by coaches in the study's states. The interview protocol appears in the Appendix to this report.

Coaches were chosen based on several factors, including location, experience, and recommendations by state or LEA Reading First staff. The five coaches participating in the interviews were experienced Reading First coaches with between three and six years of Reading First coaching experience. They work in four different states in four different parts of the country. Of the five, only one did not work in her current school before becoming a coach. Four out of the five have Master's degrees, and one coach is currently enrolled in a graduate program in reading. All five have taken multiple college-level courses in reading.

Coaches' job satisfaction

Four of the five coaches were "very satisfied" with their current coaching situation (at least an eight on a scale of one to ten, with ten as the highest rating). One coach cited her satisfaction level as a six. Factors that coaches cited as contributing to their satisfaction included the following (frequencies are presented in parentheses):

- professional, welcoming, and supportive teaching staff at their school (5);

- supportive school administration (4);

- supportive district administration (3);

- needy student population and an urgent need to deliver effective reading instruction (2);

- availability of resources, including materials and professional development opportunities (2); and

- improved performance in reading, as evidenced by increased test scores (1).

Coaches were clear that the most important element in their job satisfaction was the support of their colleagues at their school. For example, one coach stated:

> The teachers that I work with are welcoming and want me to work them. My principal is also very supportive. The principal is willing to take a portion of the budget to support the coach role. This was also supported by the school staff. Having a coach is important for capacity building. Even with no more Reading First funds, we have a model that will be sustained.

Conversely, when support at the school and district level is not present, its lack can lead to frustration on the part of the coach. In the words of one coach:

I think that the way this role is set up in my district, it is impossible to make it work well. The coach role should be set up differently; otherwise you are a teacher who is not welcomed in the teacher's lounge.

The factors inhibiting coach job satisfaction were more varied and included:

- the multitude of additional responsibilities that are not central to the coach role (2);

- the multitude of responsibilities that are related to the coach role (1);

- the coach role sometimes requires administrative-type tasks, but does not grant administrative authority or status (1);

- union rules prohibit some coaching tasks from occurring (for example, taking notes during classroom visits or observations) (1);

- not all classroom teachers are open to coaching (1);

- lack of administrative support (1);

- factors that are out of the control of the coaches, for example, budget constraints and pacing schedules that must be adjusted to allow for the additional testing of ELL students (1);

- friendships formed with classroom teachers has both helped and hindered the coach role (1); and

  the disconnect between regular education and special education teachers (1).

Coaches' expectations

All of the coaches interviewed had seen a job description for their position, and many had shared the description with the teaching staff at their school. In terms of what is expected of them in their role, all of the coaches emphasized their role of supporting teachers, which in turn supports higher student achievement in reading. This finding is congruent with Pipes (2004) who also found that coaches (in the study termed *reading specialists*) believed their main responsibility was to improve classroom reading instruction by working with teachers.

In the interviews, coaches shared that they viewed the following activities as central to their role in supporting teachers' classroom reading instruction:

- providing group and individual ongoing professional development for teachers;

- monitoring student progress (including coordinating and administering assessments, data interpretation, and planning of interventions);

- coaching in classrooms and following up with reflections;

- managing core, supplemental, and resource reading materials;

- attending planning sessions with teachers and administrators;

- serving as a resource for knowledge of literacy and reading instruction;

- conducting parent workshops; and

- accompanying the principal on classroom walkthroughs.

One coach summed up her role in this straightforward way: "To support teachers in helping them meet the needs of their students in the kindest way possible." With regard to her role, another coach stated:

You are in a difficult position because you are not an administrator or an evaluator; you don't want to be either of these. It is constantly tweaking your craft and making sure that it is teacher friendly, but at the same time, letting teachers know that you have a lot of knowledge and what you have to say is important.

Of all of the tasks that coaches perform in their role, being in the classrooms and modeling for teachers was most often reported as their favorite task. A close second to this was interpreting data. As one coach stated, "Data analysis is the most challenging and most enjoyable too, because seeing student growth is satisfying."

Balancing priorities

All of the coaches interviewed served full time in a single school; many worked with as many as eight teachers per grade level. Supporting this number of teachers calls for coaches to perform a juggling act to balance the priorities of their role while supporting teachers effectively.

Coaches accomplish this by maintaining schedules which are often shared with school staff ahead of time. The importance that coaches placed on planning and keeping a schedule cannot be over-emphasized. As one coach stated, "I think the key thing is planning—you can't do too much!" Most coaches spoke of keeping teacher support as the central priority in their scheduling, adding the other essential elements, such as assessments, data analysis, and group professional development as secondary priorities. Coaches also place a high priority on individual teacher and administrator requests for support. Often coaches will block off a period of time to focus on teachers of a certain grade level, changing grade levels approximately every two weeks. Coaches said that prioritizing has become easier with experience, and they now recognize which times of the school year must be reserved for assessments and which times of year lend themselves more to working with individual teachers.

Coaches also rely on the expertise of the teachers in their school. For example, one coach said:

I rely on the strengths of the teachers in my school to assist in helping with other teachers. If I know of a teacher who is in need of help in the area of vocabulary, I will pair her up with a teacher who I know is strong in that area, and she will go into her classroom and observe. Afterwards, the teacher and I will discuss how this relates to her classroom practices.

In terms of how much time coaches actually spend on tasks that they view as central to their role, most agreed that there was a good balance between the time that they allotted to their essential tasks and what they viewed as most important. Several coaches made it clear that there is not enough time available for what they view as the most essential task that they perform—modeling in the classroom. In the words of one coach:

I think the most important role that I serve is in working in the classroom with teachers. That's where we see our biggest changes in teacher and student performance. I wish there were more time for this, because it allows us to follow through on what has been done in staff development.

The states' Reading First program over a six-year period offers a large-scale, in-depth view of the degree to which the role of coach is valued. Most descriptions of the school-based coach specify that the person in the role is considered as an expert, resource-rich provider, respected by teachers and school administrators for efforts to assist in developing and refining the delivery of reading instruction. Through an examination of external evaluation reports, a review of selected relevant research studies, and a series of interviews with school-based Reading First coaches, insights are gained into the qualifications, roles, challenges, and perceived effectiveness of the coach. All of the findings presented support the notion that coaching matters. A positive and significant relationship between coached teachers and student achievement gains appear promising in initial research studies.

Furthermore, while the study concludes that the role of the school-based coach is complex and varied, most educators agree that a qualified, experienced coach offers value-added support to teachers of reading and can improve teachers' skillful delivery of reading instruction. The interview findings and recent studies suggest that the role of the coach can bring job satisfaction as a collegial contributor of professional learning to a school staff.

At several points in this study, researchers suggested the need for additional studies and extensive research in order to further validate a strong relationship between coaching teachers and student reading achievement. This study also suggests that investigation be conducted on credentialing to better understand the essential program elements for training highly effective literacy coaches. This study's review of external evaluation reports, representing thousands of higher-achieving Reading First schools staffed with hard-working and highly trained coaches, offers substantial evidence that there is a perceived relationship between coaches and teachers and between teachers and increased student achievement outcomes.

School-based coaching supports the national priority for improving teacher quality. Best of all, school-based coaching benefits students through providing high-quality instruction.

Telephone Interview Protocol for Reading Coaches

Telephone Interview Protocol for Reading Coaches

1. How long have you been a reading coach?

2. How long have you been a reading coach at your current school?

3. Prior to becoming a reading coach, how many years were you a classroom teacher?

4. At any time before becoming a coach, did you work at your current school?

5. Do you currently serve as a full-time reading coach in one school only?

6. How many hours do you usually work each week?

7. Please describe your school:

    a. Is it urban, rural, or suburban?

    b. What is the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch?

8. To what extent have you participated in college-level work in reading?

    a. Undergraduate courses:

    b. Graduate courses:

9. What is the highest college degree you have attained, and what was your major area of study?

10. What reading certifications, endorsements, or licenses do you possess?

11. On a scale of 1–10, with 10 being the highest, how satisfied are you currently in your reading coach situation?

    a. What are the factors that contribute to your satisfaction?

    b. What are the factors that inhibit your satisfaction?

12. Have you ever seen a job description for your current position?

13. What is expected of you in your role as reading coach?

14. What tasks do you view as essential to your role as a reading coach?

15. How do you balance the demands of all of your absolutely essential priorities?

16. Which of those tasks do you most enjoy?

17. How does actual time and effort that you spend on various tasks relate to what you perceive as being the most important tasks for your role?

18. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The telephone interviews were conducted during May, 2009.

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