

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES AND PRINCIPALS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The U.S. education system continues to face challenges with teacher retention, evaluation systems, and teacher preparation programs, along with an increase in demands on teachers to provide quality instruction for students in a changing classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Expectations for teachers to be able to implement educational initiatives, provide quality instruction, differentiate for changing populations, and meet the social and emotional needs of learners have become increasingly challenging. These challenges are infiltrating schools at a rapid rate for both teachers and school leaders. As these demands continue to rise, school leaders are desperate for radical change as the pressure from policy reforms and the public have placed a greater focus on the development of principals to improve schools (Hallinger, 2005).

#### Changing Roles

In the 1980s, the research conducted on effective schools and the student achievement efforts of school leaders and teachers prompted the exploration of principals and instructional leadership. Policy and reform efforts quickly followed this groundbreaking research. The reform efforts called leaders to think differently about their roles and how they could improve student outcomes. As principals transitioned from operational leader to instructional leader, the new role required principals to think differently about systems, teacher professional development, and school improvement (Glickman, 2002; Ross & Cozzens, 2016).

As the key instructional leader, principals became ultimately responsible for leading change and reform efforts while supporting teachers (Fullan, 1997). As the principal role as instructional leader transitioned during the 1990s, professional development approaches that could meet the growing need of teachers as well as principals continued to evolve (Denton &

Hasbrouck, 2009; Desimone & Pak, 2017). Thus, the evolution of the role of instructional coach (IC) entered as the new form of teacher professional development.

The study of teacher professional development and how teachers acquire and implement new learning in the 1980s contributed to the shift in professional development approaches (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987). Joyce and Showers (1981) challenged traditional forms of professional learning. When teachers were only presented knowledge and asked to apply what they learned on their own without additional support, their ability to transfer and apply what they learned to their classroom and work with students tended to be low (Joyce & Showers, 1980). In a later study, Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) extended this argument. They found traditional forms of teacher professional development that incorporate and are based only on theoretical constructs without related development of skills, practice, and feedback were not enough to sustain a learning culture. Furthermore, this form of teacher professional development was not personalized and tailored enough to meet the growing needs of teachers. These findings are a reminder that traditional forms of professional learning, such as conference style professional development, have a lower transfer of knowledge and application, requiring a higher level of support to increase the rate and fidelity of teacher implementation. Thus, the research findings of Joyce and Showers (1980) launched instructional coaching as the new form of teacher professional development that encompassed transfer of knowledge to the classroom, as well as new skill attainment, and set theory into practice (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

#### Instructional Coaching as the New Professional Development Model

Instructional coaching has become a common form of professional development that personalizes and tailors the needs of the teacher with job-embedded professional learning. With a growing body of research to support the implementation of instructional coaching as a form of

teacher professional development and the impact ICs can have on student achievement, more schools are turning to this model of teacher learning, growth, and support. The instructional coaching model offers teachers the opportunity to receive personalized professional training that leads to implementation in the classroom (Knight, 2009). The role of the IC allows deeper understanding and implementation of high-leverage strategies for teachers. High-leverage strategies focus on the impact of the strategy on student outcomes and cycles of looking at student work to transform instruction in the classroom (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Instructional coaching, as a model for teacher professional development, continues to challenge the status quo in the areas of teacher retention, school leadership, student achievement, and positive climate and culture (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

The idea of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional learning is effective, but the success of this form of teacher professional development depends on training, environment, relationships, and the conditions in which coaches approach their work with teachers (Knight, 2007, 2009). In addition to the characteristics of an effective IC, part of the effectiveness lies in the hands of the principal as instructional leader (Fullan & Knight, 2011). The second greatest factor that contributes to student achievement, other than the teacher, is the principal (Hall & Simeral, 2008). As stated by Range, Pijanowski, Duncan, Scherz, and Hvidston (2014), “Principals increase the impact of coaching when they collaborate with instructional facilitators to assess student data, plan professional development activities, and celebrate the successes that arise as a result of the initiative” (p. 260).

Conditions set forth by principals that lead to student achievement are the same conditions that must exist for IC success (Tanner, Quintis, & Gamboa, 2017). Yet, the IC fulfills a dual role. In practice, the IC serves as an extension of the leadership team while functioning as

a teacher under principal supervision. Instructional coaches are continuing to search for ways to improve their practice as teacher-leaders so they can have a greater impact on teacher instruction. Yet, a paucity of research exists regarding the relationship that needs to exist between the principal and the IC.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem of practice for this study was to explore the principal behaviors that influence the IC's work with teachers, with a focus on the IC and principal relationship, communication, and supportive conditions, as seen through the perceptions of instructional coaches. Instructional coaching is a fast-growing form of professional development, but this form of teacher professional development still lags in the reservoir of research in understanding issues related to implementation, training, role clarity, and relationship practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Neumerski, 2013). Although research studies examining instructional coaching revealed some form of success with this model of teacher professional development, the research base still lacked definitive studies examining specific individuals and/or characteristics that contribute to the success of an IC, particularly in terms of administrator and IC relationships.

Instructional coaching literature consistently links administrative support with instructional coaches as an important condition for success; yet, such research lacks clarity and specific findings as to what administrative support means (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2009). Does administrative support mean the administrator verbally encourages the coach? Does the administrator define the relationship? Does the administrator meet with the coach consistently? Does the administrator encourage coaching with teachers? Does the administrator discuss with the coach the needs of the campus and individual teacher needs?

In addition to lack of clarity of principal relationship characteristics that lead to the success of an IC, a lack of clarity exists regarding the processes and protocols that foster principal relationships with instructional coaches. Yet, the success of a coach hinges on the relationship, approach, and communication among the teachers, IC, and principal. The rapidly growing rate of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development calls for a greater knowledge base about IC and principal relationships. An investigation into how school administrators work with ICs so that they can more effectively impact teacher instruction is needed. Further, the identification of each of these factors and understanding of how each factor could impact the coach's effectiveness is warranted. Therefore, research studies that investigate IC and principal relationships and the impact that an IC can have on teacher instruction can add to the knowledge base and research literature.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction.

Using a qualitative research design, the held perceptions of ICs regarding their work with school administrators to gain an understanding of the (a) supports, (b) conditions, and (c) relationship between the principal and the IC were examined. Through a review of literature, focus group interviews, and individual interviews, perceptions of instructional coaches were explored to identify specific experiences, characterize principal impact, and inform the influence of the principal in the IC's work with teachers.

## Research Questions

The following overarching research question was used to guide this dissertation study:

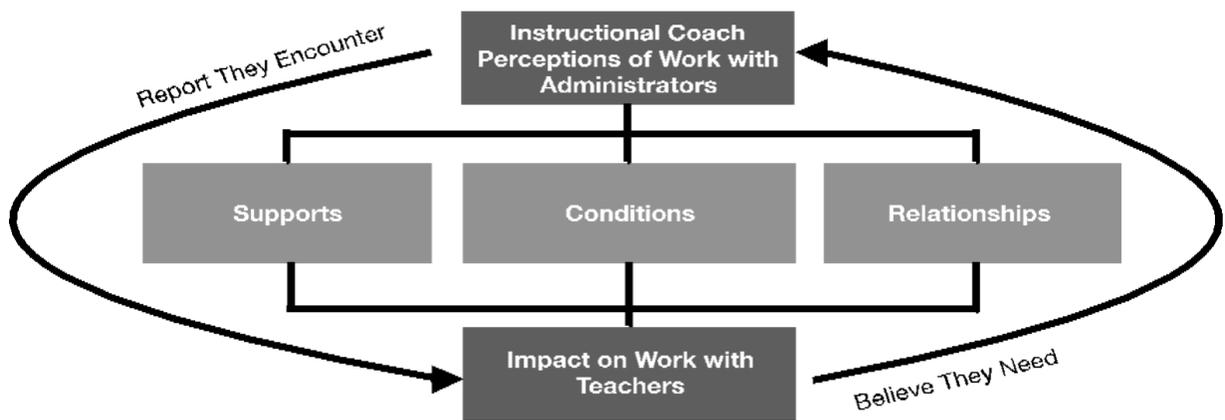
What are the perceptions of ICs on the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators? Two additional sub-research questions were used to further support and guide the study:

RQ1. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches report they encounter in their work with school administrators?

RQ2. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches believe they need in their work with administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction?

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to undergird the current study assumed that the instructional leadership conditions that must exist for teacher development and growth must also exist for the IC. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the study of IC perceptions of principal behaviors that may impact the IC's work with teachers. The constructs studied were derived from existing literature and personal experience which narrowed the focus of the study. The conceptual framework graphic guided my efforts in conducting this study, particularly in terms of my intent to gain a better understanding of the supports, conditions, and relationships instructional coaches encountered in their work with school administrators and what ICs believed must exist between themselves and their administrators so they could more effectively impact teacher instruction. The three factors within the framework were conceptualized as significant principal behaviors that could impact the instructional coaches' work with teachers.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework. The figure provides a visual representation of the study of instructional coach perceptions of principal behaviors that may impact ICs' work with teachers.

### Providing Support

The first factor focuses on supports ICs encounter and believe must exist to impact the IC's work with teachers, specifically the supports set forth by the principal. It is important for the principal to support the IC by protecting the role of the coach from work that has little impact on student achievement (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009; West, 2017). In addition, it is important for the principal to publicly endorse the IC's work as important for continuous improvement cycle, for professional learning, and to establish a culture of growth on the campus. For the purposes of this study, support could also be defined as meeting with the IC consistently, ensuring the IC's work is non-evaluative, and providing time for coaching (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009). When support does not exist for ICs, they might not feel supported, become frustrated, and feel their role is not valued by both principal and teachers.

### Creating Conditions

The second factor focuses on the conditions ICs encounter and believe must exist between the principal and IC; more specifically, the type of conditions that influences the IC's work with teachers. Conditions that might qualify could be related to the need for both the

principal and IC to receive training on instructional coaching and how to maximize the IC's effectiveness, including a common understanding of the role (Fullan & Knight, 2011).

Conditions may also be defined as a culture of learning throughout the school that is modeled by the principal. In addition, coaching is prioritized by the principal and evident through their actions. Principals share professional learning responsibility with the IC. One other important condition that must exist is the communication between the principal and IC. When the IC and principal communicate frequently, the IC's work with teachers is more aligned to the school's vision and goals (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009). Clarity around the type and frequency of the IC's work with teachers is also gained with a clear understanding of the IC's role. The communication between the principal and IC provides a more strategic approach for the IC's work with teachers, creating a more systemic and aligned impact in the IC's work instead of misaligned, isolated pockets of success. When open channels of communication between the IC and the principal do not exist and/or are not maintained, a clear understanding of the roles that both the IC and teachers are supposed to fulfill become vague (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Fullan and Knight (2011) discuss instructional coaches as system leaders as well as ways in which principals can squander ICs' coaching efforts. They list three main levers that can have the greatest impact on their efforts which are related to the principals' vision, clarity, and goals: 1) Give coaches the wrong work; 2) Keep goals unclear; and 3) Don't train your coaches. The IC's work is driven by the principal's vision and clarity of the coaching role. The roles that instructional coaches adopt might not be intentional or aligned to the principal's vision and goals. Yet, when the principal does not communicate a clear vision, clarity, and goals with the IC, the impact can result in small, isolated pockets that can negatively impact the efforts.

## Developing the Relationship

The third factor focuses on the relationship between the principal and IC and, more specifically, defining the relationship characteristics that ICs encounter and believe need to exist so the IC's involvement with teachers can have an impact on both their work as well as the teacher's level of effectiveness in the classroom. When an IC and principal have a strong relationship, trust and respect tend to be more evident in their work together which, in turn, can promote and further the IC's work with teachers (Fullan & Knight, 2009; West, 2017). In addition, a relationship built on mutual respect is key (West, 2017). This trust also involves the principal seeing the IC as a partner. A principal invites the IC to be a part of the leadership team and values their collaboration. They commit to consistent communication and protected time with one another. When a strong relationship does not exist between the IC and principal, the IC tends to complete their work with teachers in isolation and not in partnership with the principal. The IC then bases their work with teachers off of what they might feel is the direction they need to go with teachers. This could be in conflict, unintentionally, with the principal's expectations or vision, which then does not give the IC clear direction. The work of the IC involves meeting with teachers to discuss lessons, modeling instructional strategies, and implementing a professional development plan for individual teachers and the campus in order to fulfill the vision of the principal. When the relationship is not strong between the principal and IC, the work the IC engages in with teachers may not be connected to the school or principal's vision and goals or expectations. This has significant impact on the IC's work with teachers. Without a strong relationship between the IC and principal, clear communication, and a shared vision, there could be significant consequences for the IC, teacher, and campus and may detract from any of

the IC's attempts to work with the teachers in the school, especially those who may need the most support or assistance.

The factors depicted in the conceptual framework were identified as significant behaviors of the principal that influence how ICs work with teachers. Although the literature reviewed provided ways in which the principal might support the IC, further research is needed to define specifically the behaviors and conditions that impact and influence the ICs work the most. In Chapter 2, the research literature that substantiates the conceptual framework and supports the factors depicted in the conceptual framework is presented.

### Significance of the Study

As a form of teacher professional development within and across a school district, instructional coaching requires the administration to make a significant and extensive investment financially as well as in terms of training, time, and relationships. Due to the rise in the use of instructional coaching models, the need to identify the specific characteristics that enable ICs to be effective in their work with teachers is critical. The findings of this study add to the current knowledge base and research literature on the role of the IC. The findings can also be used to inform district-level administrators and provide greater clarity for existing ICs and administrators. Specific supports, conditions, and relationships identified by ICs, supplemented by recommendations for future IC models, can be used to influence and enhance IC and principal training on instructional coaching and clarify the variable roles of the IC, principal, and teacher (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Johnson, 2016; Knight, 2009; West, 2017). Additional contributions to the current knowledge base also apply:

- a description of the types of relationships that need to exist between the principal and the IC that ultimately yield the most benefit to teachers and their students;

- a definition of the specific behaviors, characteristics, training, and procedures in which district administrators and campus leaders can engage to provide the types of support needed to impact teacher instruction;
- a delineation of existing coaching models or alternative coaching models in terms of the types of relationships, communication, and teacher professional development that might be offered for coaches and administrators; and/or
- an identification of the characteristics of success as well as help to define the foundations of successful relationships between the IC and administrator.

### Delimitations

According to Roberts and Hyatt (2019), delimitations outline the boundaries of the study and the choices the researcher made to define those boundaries. There are several delimitations that narrowed the scope of this study. The first delimitation was the geographical location in which this study was conducted. The geographical area from which participants were selected was limited to ICs in the North Texas region. In terms of the types of ICs and instructional coaching models that exist, a range of district- and campus-based ICs types and models exist. Through purposive sampling, however, participants and types of ICs who were recruited to participate in this study were limited to campus-based ICs. Data were collected solely from campus-based ICs with campus-based ICs regarding their perceptions through the use of focus group and individual interviews. Consequently, rather than providing the perspectives of both district- and campus-based ICs, providing a wider perspective of ICs' perceptions, a single perspective was obtained. In addition, principals' perceptions regarding their work with ICs were not explored.

## Assumptions

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) referred to assumptions as the acknowledgement of what the researcher takes for granted in the study. For this study, I assumed that, based on the IC participants' prior experiences with their principal, each of the IC participants could contribute to the study. Confidentiality statements were used to help ensure honest and transparent statements that were shared during the interview process. Therefore, I assumed that the IC participants answered all of the focus group and/or interview questions and disclosed honest and accurate responses to each of the questions.

## Definition of Key Terms

In order to provide clarity with common vocabulary in the context of this study, definitions of key terms are shared below.

**Coach efficacy.** For purposes of this study, coaching efficacy is the beliefs that instructional coaches hold about their ability to impact teacher practice and student achievement.

**Coaching model.** For purposes of this study, a coaching model is a systemic structure and framework from which instructional coaches engage in their work with teachers through a strategic and comprehensive approach.

**Instructional coaching.** A form of professional learning in which a teacher engages in a partnership with a knowledgeable master teacher who serves as a thinking partner and assists the teacher with the implementation of curriculum and instruction through job-embedded professional learning (Knight, 2009).

**Instructional coach's work/Partnership approach.** A relationship approach between the IC and principal that shares instructional responsibility, engages in a non-hierarchical relationship,

invites collaborative and risk taking culture, and engages in the work to build capacity in teachers as partners (West, 2017).

**Instructional leadership.** A leadership style that evolved into a significant principal role in which the principal behaviors are directly and indirectly connected to teaching and learning (Çalik, Sezgin, Kavgaci, & Kilinc, 2012; West, 2017).

**Job-embedded professional learning.** A form of professional learning that provides immediate implementation of teacher professional learning and personalizes the professional development to meet the needs of the teacher. Job-embedded professional learning allows teachers access to learning and implementation of their new learning during the school day (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

**Teacher effectiveness.** For purposes of this study, teacher effectiveness is behaviors, characteristics, and practices of teachers that are linked to successful outcomes of students.

**Teacher efficacy.** The effectiveness beliefs of teachers about their own ability to provide curriculum and instruction that impacts student achievement (Shidler, 2009).

### Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In Chapter 1, the purpose of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, and explanation of the conceptual framework were identified. In addition, the definition of terms, assumptions, and delimitations of the study were addressed. Chapter 2 consists of a review of instructional coaching literature, specifically focused on the changing roles of principals, teacher professional development, and the evolution of instructional coaching. Within Chapter 3, the methodology, research design, criteria used to select the participant sample, data collection tools, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies. In addition, the reflexivity and positionality

are addressed as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the data analysis, followed by a presentation of the findings extracted from the data collected from the focus group and individual interviews that were conducted with the ICs. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, reflections, and conclusions.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature, specifically addressing concepts introduced in Chapter 1.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

School performance continues to be a legislative focus amidst rising standards and insurmountable challenges. Now more than ever, the role of instructional leadership in schools is a prominent topic of conversation, research, and practice. Effective schools have three primary components: quality instruction, effective teachers, and strong principal leadership (Neumerski, 2013). Neumerski noted when reform efforts focus on effective instructional practices, teacher professional development, and school leadership, positive results will follow. Among school leadership and numerous reform strategies, the role of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development has been developed and connected to positive results (Knight, 2009). Instructional coaching research and literature is growing, specifically in the area of identifying variables that impact the instructional coaches' (IC) work with teachers. One of the main identified variables that impact the IC's work with teachers is the role of the principal (Fullan & Knight, 2011; West, 2017). The role of IC can be instrumental in the success of school reform efforts if the IC has a strong partnership with not only teachers, but a strong working relationship with the principal (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009; West, 2017).

#### Overview

Over 20 years ago, Hattie (2009) conducted the largest study that consisted of a meta-analysis related to the effects that teachers' instructional practices have on student achievement. Hattie's meta-analysis synthesized the findings of thousands of research studies, which were analyzed through effect sizes, examining instructional practices that contribute most to student achievement. The effect sizes served as a guide for instructional leaders on which practices have the greatest impact compared to others (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). As explained by Leithwood et al., Hattie's meta-analysis revealed the greatest impact variables not only

correlated to classroom teachers and their efforts, but also practices defined by the principal as instructional leader. In his meta-analysis, Hattie (2009) identified classroom-level practices that had the greatest effect size: “(.73) teachers provide students with immediate and informative feedback, (.74) teachers use reciprocal teaching strategies, (.72) teacher and student relationship, and (.52) classroom management” (p. 674).

The practices listed above can have the greatest impact when implemented with fidelity. Identifying practices alone does not mean teachers will transfer the practices into the classroom, thus, impacting student achievement. Systemic implementation of identified high-leverage practices must begin with the leader on campus. When considering who has the greatest impact on teacher supervision and teacher professional development, the campus leader is the primary influencer (Neumerski, 2013). Ultimately, principal supervision of teachers and the level of professional development that teachers receive can impact and influence every practice listed above (Neumerski, 2013). Due to the realization that the instructional leader on campus influences teacher practices, researchers transitioned their attention away from teachers to principals and focused more on determining which instructional leader practices impacted teacher practice. Leithwood et al. (2010) added to the extensive list of principal influence and leadership practices, in addition to the factors identified by Hattie: “promote school-wide professional development, monitor and provide feedback on teaching and learning cycle, develop and communicate shared goals, establish high expectations, clarify shared goals about academic achievement, and monitor student performance in relation to academic goals” (p. 674).

In the process of identifying which principal practices were most effective, the instructional leadership role that could contribute to or strengthen the practices listed emerged: the IC. In partnership with the principal, the role of the IC was found to influence and support

the principal's efforts. In a symbiotic way, the interdependent roles of principal as instructional leader and the IC was recognized as vital for improving teacher instruction.

### History of Changing Roles

It is important to review the literature related to the evolution of instructional coaching and how the IC position came to fruition. In addition, it is important to review the literature on the changing roles of teacher professional development and the changing role of principals, as both are integral to the evolution of instructional coaching. In the following sections, a historical view of the evolution of principal as instructional leader, as well as teacher professional development and instructional coaching as a form of professional development, are reviewed.

#### Changing Role of the Principal

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) was groundbreaking legislation that marked the first time the federal government played a role in public education policy and funding (Casalaspí, 2017). By granting access to strategic funding, the ESEA equalized spending and improved the quality of schools, impacting the ongoing trajectory of federal policy and reform that is currently in effect. This legislation spawned a growing interest in school improvement, student outcomes, and the role of school leadership.

According to Hallinger (2005), a growing interest in the instructional leadership role of principals was stimulated initially by findings from research that focused on instructionally effective schools conducted during the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1980s, the boom continued, which led to the start-up of *leadership academies* devoted to leadership development for school principals. Shortly thereafter, policymakers leading school reform efforts started to link student achievement directly to principal leadership. Their reform efforts placed additional pressure on principals due to the discovery that the level of effort that principals exerted in their role as an instructional leader influenced student achievement. According to Hallinger, reform efforts for

school improvement resulted in a focus on school leaders. Hallinger alluded to many instructional leadership definitions and models resulting from these efforts. However, all of the definitions placed an unwavering focus on student achievement as well as the development and promotion of a positive school culture and climate. In addition, a major vision of leadership was rooted in instructional dialogue through supervision of the instructional program (Neumerski, 2013).

Ross and Cozzens (2016) captured the shift in the principal role in terms of instructional leadership as a theory. They studied elementary schools within poor urban communities where students were able to achieve success. Conditions that facilitated their success as instructional leaders was their ability to limit academic disruptions, keep instruction as the priority, and uphold high academic expectations. In their analysis, they referenced Edmonds' (1979) groundbreaking research which made the case for principals to function as instructional leaders (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). This shift was anything but subtle and required a reframing of the principal's role. Understanding the qualities of an effective instructional leader forced school principals to begin to develop requisite skills in order to function in their new role. Although many descriptors and characteristics of instructional leadership already existed, the approach taken by the principal replaced the traditional view of principals as school managers and separated them as instructional leaders.

Glickman (2002) differentiated principals as instructional leaders by their use of "time, focus, and structure" as well as "how staff development, school improvement, personnel evaluation, and classroom assistance were used together" (p. 2). He also distinguished between the definition of instructional leadership and how it was employed. According to Glickman, successful principals intentionally focused on instruction and every aspect of systems that

impacted instruction. The principal was the key figure in leading change efforts and supporting teacher professional development. Similarly, Fullan (1997) provided context on the changing roles and responsibilities of the principal, describing the shift and responsibility of the role in research and policy literature. Over the last decade, it became evident that the role of principal as instructional leader was now the focus of school improvement efforts through teacher development and would serve as the lead change agent.

The ESEA (1965) was reauthorized under the Clinton administration as the Improving America's School Act. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) was reauthorized once again under the Bush administration. NCLB placed a continued focus on school improvement and highlighted the gaps in academic achievement among underserved populations, contributing to greater involvement on the part of the federal government in public school policy and funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Since the inception of NCLB and new standards for accountability, schools have been tasked with meeting insurmountable challenges and the principal has served as a conduit for accomplishing such reform efforts.

Although NCLB (2002) held all stakeholders accountable for student achievement, the role of the principal had already started to shift. School reform soon became the hot topic within principal leadership circles and conversations as additional research findings featured principals who were successful at improving schools through instructional leadership. As Fullan (1997) captured, no longer could the principal function solely as the managerial and operational leader. In the new accountability system, overwhelming challenges and a demand for dynamic leadership officially transformed the role of the principal from managerial to instructional. The

ability of the leader to adapt to multiple roles was viewed as essential to the success of the school, a result of the NCLB legislation (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

In Waters et al.'s (2004) quantitative, meta-analytic study, more than 5,000 studies were reviewed to discover how school leadership impacted student achievement. A secondary purpose of the study was to identify which leadership practices had the greatest impact on student achievement. The sample size was 2,894 schools, with 14,000 teachers and 1.1 million students. The findings confirmed a significant impact on student achievement that positively correlated principal leadership with a .25 average correlation, and some studies within the analyses reported a .50 effect size on student achievement.

Clearly, the new principal role as instructional leader required a diverse skill set in order to lead change efforts and develop teachers. Instructional knowledge, professional development design, instructional vision and goals, and the ability to provide quality feedback to teachers were identified characteristics that heavily impacted student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). Regardless of the official *title* designated to the school principal, the *job* of the principal required instructional knowledge and dynamic leadership in order to impact student achievement.

The challenges principals faced were not unique to their positions. As principals and school personnel faced new instructional and curriculum challenges, the roles of those held responsible for the school curriculum and providing instruction began to transition simultaneously (West, 2017). The same challenges and demands school leaders faced shifted directly into the classroom and required classroom teachers to learn how to implement different approaches to instruction in order to impact student achievement. As a result, teacher professional development began to transition in order to meet the needs of all learners. As the role of the principal changed, teacher professional development simultaneously began to change.

## Changing Role of Professional Learning

The evolution of teacher professional learning has transitioned over the last three decades into professional learning networks, job-embedded professional learning, personalized learning, and teacher voice (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). Teacher professional development offerings were once described as in-service; however, the content of the offerings expanded and emphasized what teachers learned and how what they learned would be implemented in the classroom. The changes that took place in teacher professional development mirrored the changing role of the principal as the instructional leader of the school (Glickman, 2002). This change, in turn, transferred the focus to classroom instruction and efforts to change teacher behavior.

The research of Joyce, Showers, and Rolheiser-Bennett (1987) signified a pivotal moment in the teacher professional development world. Known as the professional development pioneers, Joyce et al. were the first to fully identify the characteristics of effective teacher professional development. The characteristics included specialized teacher training on fundamental practices and curriculum implementation. In the 1980s Joyce et al. studied and hypothesized how teachers learned best, applied the new learning, and developed skills through professional learning (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). During that time, research and practitioner literature existed on teacher professional development, but the number of studies that examined the ways in which teachers actively incorporated specific skills into their instructional repertoire were few (Showers et al., 1987). As a result, the journey toward discovering the first theoretical framework to hypothesize teachers' transfer of knowledge through professional development began. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) underscored the importance of these new practices and learned knowledge and skills:

When teachers learn about new practices through presentations of new knowledge and skills, along with a) presentation of the theory underlying these practices b) opportunities for practice and feedback, and c) observation of demonstrations of the new practices, they develop a level of cognitive understanding that enables them to integrate new teaching behaviors into their practice and the ability to apply these new behaviors thoughtfully and purposefully during instruction. (p. 152)

As theory transitioned to practice, the question of *how* instructional leaders would support the professional development of teachers using the recommended methods became the next question. Thus, the evolution of instructional coaching began. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) credit Joyce and Showers as the first to identify instructional coaching as a platform to transfer knowledge and skills learned from teacher professional development into classroom practice. When teachers were provided professional development experiences and frequent practice within a feedback cycle, the main component of instructional coaching, the transfer of the new professional development into the classroom was more successful (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Compared to other forms of teacher professional development, coaching, study teams, action research, and peer visits were found to have the highest transfer rate of teacher skill attainment and implementation of new skills into the classroom (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Table 1 provides information regarding the relationship between the levels of impact and components of training applied to instructional coaching as a high impact model of teacher professional development, when compared to other traditional forms of teacher professional development.

Since the early 1980s, research on instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development continued to increase. Despite a growth in the body of research related to instructional coaching, successful implementation of instructional coaching did not yield same rate of growth (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Between the early 1980s and into the 1990s, the implementation of coaching as a form of teacher professional development varied. In the late 1990s, federal initiatives and mandates began to consume school districts with high-

stakes accountability, diverse challenges, and overwhelming pressure tied to student achievement outcomes (Neumerski, 2013). If teacher professional development was not already on the forefront of every principal’s mind, it soon would be.

Table 1

*Relationship Between Levels of Impact and Components of Training*

Components of Training	Professional Development Levels of Impact %		
	Concept Understanding	Skill Attainment	Application/Problem Solving
Presentation of Theory	85	15	5-10
Modeling	85	18	5-10
Practice and Low Risk Feedback Coaching	85	80	10-15
Coaching, Study Teams, Action Research, Peer Visits	90	90	80-90

*Note.* The source for these levels of impact comes from the work of Joyce and Showers (2002, p. 78).

### Role of the Instructional Coach

As the role of instructional leader became prominent in principal development efforts and research, instructional coaching—the new form of teacher professional development—evolved at the same time. Principals grappled with the additional demand placed on them to adequately invest in professional development that armed teachers with an understanding of the various instructional models they could utilize in their classrooms. Thus, the need for a model that could provide a vehicle for teacher professional development and provide evidence of impact to the classroom was paramount (West, 2017). Instructional coaching became an appealing model for providing support to teachers as well as the principal as instructional leader. Starting in the late

1990s, as noted by Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), “a renewed emphasis on coaching, particularly in support of reading instruction, spawned in large measure by several federal initiatives. Subsequent legislation provided not only an incentive, but funding, for the position of the instructional coach” (p. 153). When legislation incentivized funding of the IC position, research soon followed.

Entering into the 2000s, research studies examining instructional coaching discovered a direct correlation between coaching effectiveness and its impact on various aspects of school improvement. Desimone and Pak (2017) outlined the five features of effective teacher professional development evident within the instructional coaching role from cross-sectional studies: (a) content focused, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) sustained duration, and (e) collective participation. As noted by Desimone and Pak (2017), studies conducted in the “early 2000s” linked “instructional coaching with improvements in school culture, teacher collaboration, improved teacher attitudes, skill transfer, feelings of efficacy, and student achievement” (p. 4). Their findings and recommendations led to the widespread use of instructional coaching as the new form of teacher professional development. Policy makers understood the complex and difficult tasks that school leaders would face in their efforts to put theory into practice. Instructional coaching was viewed as the popular approach to meet such mandates. However, this was only the beginning.

NCLB (2002) created, transitioned, and defined many roles in education, and also transformed the role of teacher professional development. NCLB resurrected a literacy focus for all schools, recommending the use of instructional coaches to meet the reading goals outlined in the legislation. Since NCLB (2002) placed heavy emphasis on the need for highly qualified reading teachers and the implementation of reading materials and instructional practices that

evidenced effectiveness from scientifically based research, instructional coaching became the preferred conduit for change (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The idea of job-embedded professional development that personalized learning experiences and tailored feedback to teachers represented one way to meet the federal mandates and impact student achievement. Instructional coaches became a preferred form of teacher professional development and, in some cases, instructional coaching became a mandate for schools.

The current reform era and research on instructional coaching came to a crossroad with the principal role as legislation continued to endorse coaching for reform efforts. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) served as an updated reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which was reauthorized over 30 years after its inception as NCLB (2002), and reauthorized eight times since 1965. Once again, through the language of the ESSA, the IC role was referenced as a conduit to change (Desimone & Pak, 2017):

In 11 instances throughout the bill, state and local agencies are encouraged to develop, train, and appropriately compensate coaches to work with teachers in development of assessments, interpreting student data, designing and differentiating instruction, providing feedback, or evaluating performance. Policymakers' preference for coaching as a lever for professional development, especially in the areas of reading and literacy, is supported by several decades of research documenting its benefits. (p. 4)

Shortly after the ESSA was enacted, practitioners and researchers sought to define the role of instructional coaching. They outlined the benefits and the impact of the role in terms of how it helped teachers and improved student achievement.

Knight (2009) described the role of the IC as a form of job-embedded professional development and found the IC to be instrumental in transforming teacher pedagogy. Knight reviewed more than 200 articles, presentations, reports, and books with a focus on the impact of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development. His research focused on the role of the IC as teachers transferred what they learned in professional development to their

classroom and relied on the IC to help them master the instructional practices they learned. Compared to other forms of teacher professional development such as presentation of theory and modeling, the effects of instructional coaching had the greatest transfer of new learning and implementation within the classroom. Instructional coaching also affected the campus culture and level of instructional leadership that existed on the campus and within classrooms. One of the studies Knight (2009) reviewed about instructional coaching was a 5-year longitudinal study that took place in California. The findings of Knight's (2009) study revealed the transfer of teacher professional development to the classroom was the highest when a teacher worked with an IC with a 95% implementation rate of new professional development, reinforcing Joyce et al.'s (1987) results. Knight (2009) also found higher professional development implementation rates for teachers who worked with a coach compared to those who did not work with a coach. It is not surprising that instructional coaching was appealing to instructional leaders and continues to be a worthwhile investment for school improvement efforts.

Knight (2005) expanded the definition of instructional coaching further: assisting teachers with implementation of research into the classroom and helping coaches achieve at high levels through coaching protocols and conditions for success. Knight's research provided an explanation of specific behaviors in which the IC should engage and offered details about how coaches should spend their time. Knight (2009) outlined characteristics of consistent practices among effective instructional coaches:

- focus on professional practice,
- professional learning is job-embedded,
- coaching is intensive and ongoing,
- coaching is grounded in partnership with teachers,
- the coaching approach is dialogical,
- coaching is non-evaluative,
- coaching is confidential, and
- coaching is facilitated through respectful communication. (pp. 18–19)

Other studies attempted to expand instructional coaching impact and knowledge. Koehler (2017) identified four critical practices that impact the coaches' work with teachers: a) clarity of coaching role, b) training for coaches, c) administrator training and support, and d) time with teachers.

Range et al. (2014), through a quantitative study, measured the perceptions of instructional facilitators (instructional coaches) in three areas: their role in instructional leadership, teachers' instructional practice, and the support ICs received from principals and teachers. The study was initiated after legislation passed in Wyoming that provided a grant for ICs. Due to an overwhelming positive reception of ICs, followed by a decline in funding over the years, there was a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the support of ICs. In addition, Range et al. attempted to further research in this area due to recommendations from prior researchers, highlighting their recommendations for "further studies "on how coaches might best be supported to carry out their responsibilities" (p. 277). Range et al.'s quantitative study consisted of an online survey from the Kansas Research Project that measured IC perceptions through a Likert scale and two open-ended questions. The intended sample size was all 282 instructional facilitators in Wyoming, with 241 receiving the email invitation and 142 responding to the survey. The study consisted of six research questions, addressed through the design of the online survey, with a 59% response rate. Cronbach's alpha was conducted on all survey items with a .79 calculation, showing good internal consistency and reliability. In addition, the authors' literature review reinforced the content validity of the survey items used in order to gauge accurate perceptions. The open-ended questions were coded and analyzed by two researchers, both independently and collaboratively, to compose the themes and calibrate the analysis.

Overall, Range et al. found a positive perception of instructional coaching through identified themes in the data, with means over 3.0 on a Likert scale for each research question.

Poglinco and Bach (2004) reviewed characteristics of ICs, including strong interpersonal skills, repertoire of coaching skills with adult learners, and positive relationships with teachers and the principal. One of the consistent findings, central to the effectiveness of the IC, was the role of the principal. A well-established partnership between the principal and IC stood out as a priority before “the coaching model” (p. 400) could be expected to succeed. In fact, the role of the principal was crucial to both the success of the IC and the work of the coach with teachers to improve instruction (Dean, Dyal, Wright, Carpenter, & Austin, 2012). In addition, coaches who set goals with administrators and worked closely with them were more successful than those who worked poorly with administrators (Anderson & Wallin, 2018).

Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, and Garnier (2009) focused specifically on the impact of instructional coaching and the relationship with the principal. The purpose of their study was to “address existing gaps in the research on instructional leadership” as well as “the contextual factors” that contributed to the “variable implementation of instructional coaching programs in schools, specifically . . . the relationship between principals’ leadership (p. 661). Matsumura et al. addressed IC research gaps, noting a lack of controlled studies. Historically, IC studies provided mixed results regarding the impact on student achievement. Using a qualitative research design guided by four research questions that focused on principal leadership and IC relationships, the researchers conducted 15 individual principal interviews and 11 IC interviews to gather data on the type of support the principals provided the IC. Overall, the findings outlined principal behaviors that influenced ICs’ impact and work with teachers: (a) principal publicly endorses the coach’s work, (b) professional autonomy of the coach, (c) active

participation of the principal, and (d) clarity of instructional coaching role by principal.

Participants' responses and subsequent findings were positively correlated to principal behaviors, prompting Matsumura et al. to make recommendations and positive correlations directly related to principal behaviors.

As with any legislative mandate, instructional coaching positions and models were growing faster than the research. Instructional coaching was becoming a fast-growing form of teacher professional development but faced a lagging reservoir of research in understanding issues related to implementation, effective training, role clarity, and relationship practices (Wren & Vallejo, 2009).

#### Intersect of Principal and Instructional Coach Role

The roles of the principal and IC continued to evolve into instrumental forms of leadership, professional learning, and resources for teacher growth over the past few decades. Thus, the roles of the principal and IC eventually came to a crossroad, causing the principal and IC to become more dependent on one another in order to effectively impact teacher instruction (West, 2017). Knight (2009) defined the conditions that must exist for ICs to be successful in their work with teachers in his research conducted from 2005 to 2008.

- 1) focus and continuity on a few high-leverage strategies,
- 2) a learning-friendly culture,
- 3) principal support,
- 4) clear roles,
- 5) protect the coaching relationship,
- 6) time for coaching, and
- 7) continuous learning for coach and administrators. (pp. 19-20)

Based on the research conducted by Knight and the list of factors that impact the IC's work, it is evident that conditions set forth by the principal lead to IC success in the work of the coach with teachers. The principal is instrumental and responsible for providing the seven supportive

conditions listed above. The supportive conditions set forth by the principal indirectly and directly impact the IC and their work with teachers (Neumerski, 2013). Moreover, principals are responsible for creating a culture and conditions for IC success. As stated by Kraft and Blazar, (2018), “leaders have a key role to play in creating a culture of trust and respect among administrators and staff in order to ease teachers’ concerns and increase their willingness to actively engage” (p. 73). Thus, the principal is a conduit for the IC’s work and success with teachers by the conditions they set for the IC and their work with teachers.

### Supportive Conditions

The intersect of the work of the IC and principal revealed that the principal and IC became not only dependent on each other but their work together was vital to the success of continuous improvement efforts (West, 2017). Fullan and Knight (2011) found that when principals do not function as instructional leaders, the work of an IC is wasted. Schlechty (1997) defined the structure, work, and beliefs of an organization by the relationships that exist between and among the individuals within the organization. In his research, he found by exploring the beliefs that govern behaviors, roles that shape behavior, and relationships of roles, schools can begin to move toward their instructional vision. This reinforces the importance of exploring and defining the different roles in a school and how they intersect in order to move toward an instructional vision, most importantly, the principal and IC role.

The research literature references the relationship between principal and coach as a key component to IC success, including supportive conditions. Johnson (2016) noted similar conditions for IC success such as role clarity, clear vision, partnership approach, protected time, and an environment of learning and collaboration. Koehler (2017) found administrators as barriers to the coaches’ work if supportive conditions did not exist. Range et al. (2014) studied

specific principal behaviors that supported instructional coaching such as confidential conversations, support of the IC's work, frequent meetings, and working in close alignment with the principal. Dean et al. (2012) expounded on supportive conditions set forth by the principal as follows: (a) demonstrating the value of the IC role, (b) communicating the IC's responsibilities in the school and providing clarity of the role with the IC and teachers, (c) providing the school vision and focused work of the coach, (d) IC and principal training, and (e) modeling coaching in the principal's own leadership. These conditions correlate to descriptions of the principal functioning as an instructional leader.

In conclusion to the findings of his study, Johnson (2016) underscored the reality of instructional coaching that is prevalent in "many schools today" (p. 39). Yet, he noted that administrators are lacking in their "experience or background on how to utilize this professional development model effectively" (p. 39). Johnson further alluded to the importance of the principal understanding the critical role that instructional coaching plays in supporting their efforts to improve instruction, helping them to "balance the managerial and instructional leadership responsibilities required of their role" (p. 39). When principals function as instructional leaders and receive proper training on the IC role, the partnership between the principal and IC can have a positive impact on the campus.

#### Revisiting the Gap in the Current Research Literature

Understanding the complex and multifaceted relationship of the IC with the principal serves as a worthwhile endeavor for impacting student achievement. Desimone and Pak (2017) confirmed a gap in the research, particularly when trying to understand "how, when, and why coaching models work" (p. 9). Instructional coaching, as a form of teacher professional development, represents a financial undertaking that more schools are investing in each year and

has become a growing field. Nevertheless, a dearth of research studies exploring the relationship between the IC and principal, especially in regard to identifying specific principal behaviors, communication, and conditions that must exist for the IC to be successful, have been conducted.

Dean et al. (2012) recommended further research on the influence of administrators on ICs. Neumerski (2013) highlighted the wealth of literature addressing the principal as instructional leader but acknowledged the lack of IC literature and the behaviors that must exist to improve instruction. Koehler (2017) recommended administrators also be trained in coaching to support coaches in their work and create a culture of coaching. Additional research on the relationship between the IC and principal and the impact the quality of their relationship can have on teacher instruction is a necessary endeavor. As stated by Fullan and Knight (2011):

If teachers are the most significant factor in student success, and principals are second, then coaches are third. All three, working in a coordinated team, will be required to bring about deep change. The work of coaches is crucial because they change the culture of the school as it relates to instructional practice. (p. 53)

Despite Fullan and Knight's claim, the research knowledge base continues to be lacking in definitive studies examining roles of principals within a school or district administrators and the factors that contribute to the success of an IC, particularly in terms of principal and IC relationships (Kraft & Blazar, 2017). Previous studies have linked administrative support with ICs as an important condition for success; yet, the specific findings as to what specific actions define administrative support are not clear. Thus far, studies purporting to discover the impact an IC can have on instructional improvement have been limited to examining the relationship the IC has with the principal. More research is needed to specifically identify the impact the principal has on the IC's work with teachers and which principal behaviors, factors, and school conditions contribute to the IC's success the most. Identification of principal and IC behaviors may add to the knowledge of instructional coaching and the research literature. Furthermore, it

may provide a greater understanding of the impact that ICs can have on instruction and ultimately, student achievement, through the examination of this important relationship.

### Summary

In this chapter, the literature review addressing the historical background of education reform, leading up to the introduction of instructional coaching; the changing role of the principal as a result of those reforms; the role and function of ICs in the context of improving instruction and student outcomes; and the important contribution that ICs make in promoting and supporting teachers' professional development was addressed. Research findings presented within the literature review substantiated the various components of the conceptual framework to be used for this study, which reinforces the importance of the relationship between the principal and IC. The literature review contained within Chapter 2 established the need for additional research that might help to define the types of support, conditions, communication, and relationships that must exist between the IC and principal. Due to the gap in the research literature, a need for further research on IC and principal relationships is warranted. In Chapter 3, the research design that facilitated my ability to address the purpose of this study and answer the research questions used to guide this study is presented.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction.

Using a qualitative research design, I explored the held perceptions of ICs regarding their work with school administrators to gain an understanding of the following: (a) supports, (b) conditions, and (c) relationships between the principal and the IC. Through a review of literature, focus group interviews, and individual interviews, perceptions of ICs were explored to identify specific experiences, characterize principal impact, and inform the influence of the principal in ICs' work with teachers.

#### Research Questions

The following overarching research question was used to guide the study: What are the perceptions of ICs on the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators? Two additional sub-questions were used to further support and guide the study:

- RQ1. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches report they encounter in their work with school administrators?
- RQ2. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches believe they need in their work with administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction?

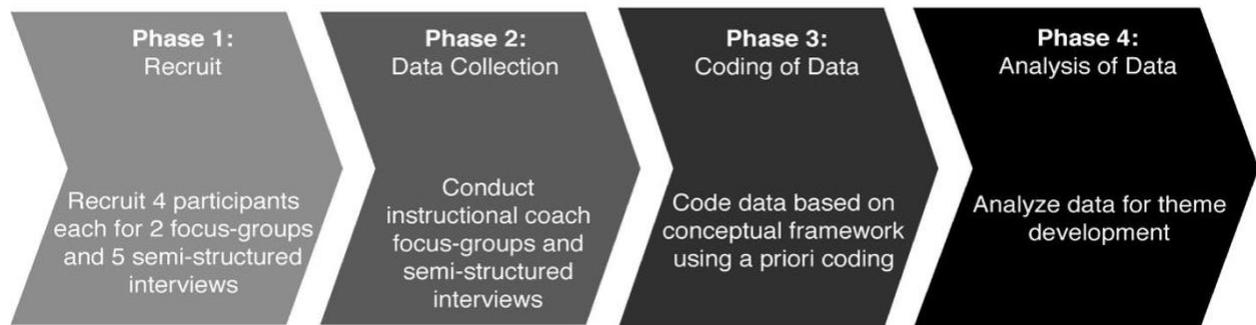
In this chapter, an explanation of the qualitative methodology and research design as well as the rationale for why a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study is presented. An overview of the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies used in this study is also provided. Finally, the limitations and ethical considerations relevant to the study are presented.

### Research Design

To address the purpose of the study and answer the research questions, an exploratory case study research design and approach was used. When the researcher seeks to understand and create meaning from the lived experiences of others, a qualitative research design serves as the most appropriate approach (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The research questions used to guide the data collection and analysis processes were related to ICs' perceptions of their work with administrators that they believe impact teacher instruction.

Using the case study method allowed me to capture the lived experiences of ICs and gave insight into the administrator and IC relationship as well as the types of conditions, support, and communication necessary to impact teacher instruction. Hesse-Biber (2017) referred to case studies as an appropriate qualitative approach when the researcher seeks an "in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme, or system in a 'real-life' context" (p. 221). As cited in Hesse-Biber (2017), Stake defined case study as "an interpretive approach that emphasizes creating thick descriptions of social life from the viewpoints of participants to understand meaning from the perspectives" (p. 226). Creswell (2002) described a case study as a "problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a 'case' or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 61). Figure 2 provides

a visual depiction of the various phases of the data collection and data analysis procedures. Data collected via focus group and individual interviews were coded and analyzed so principal behaviors that impact instructional coaches' work could be identified.



*Figure 2.* Procedures used. This figure depicts the various procedures utilized to complete the data collection and data analysis phases of the study.

### Population and Sample

Participants for this study were drawn from the population of ICs who, at the time this study was conducted, were employed in North Texas area public schools. The participants were part of an instructional coaching group that meets regularly to learn more about instructional coaching practices. Initially, a small group of ICs decided to meet every few months to offer support and suggestions for one another. Over time, this group formalized into an organization, Northside Coaching Network (pseudonym), maintaining its original intent: to serve as a time to meet as IC professionals to learn, study, and train in the IC role. The participants varied in implementation of coaching models, support, professional development, training, and experience. I attended their monthly meeting to explain the purpose of the study and gather a list of individuals who showed an interest in getting additional information and/or being a part of the study.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with a minimum of one year of instructional coaching experience in an area public school. Participants represented a diverse

cross-section of ICs in terms of district type, size, location, and grade level assignments.

According to Bernard (2013), purposive sampling is often used in qualitative studies because it allows the researcher to make sure the individuals who are recruited to participate in the study are the most appropriate due to their roles and responsibilities and will be able to provide the information needed to support the purpose of the study and help to answer the research questions. The purposive sampling method allowed me, as the researcher, to select participants who could provide diverse perspectives from a variety of experiences regarding levels of instructional coaching model implementation, school grades served, administrative support, and school demographics for the study.

Participants were asked to complete a form identifying their school, coaching model details, demographics of the school, and coaching experience. I assured the participants the information they shared would be held in strictest confidence. Based on information gathered, selected participants were notified and invited to participate in a focus group interview or a one-on-one, semi-structured interview. I selected participants based on their experience, grade levels served, and demographics of their district in order to acquire a diverse representation of instructional coaches' perceptions to see if they identified the same practices and characteristics as shown in Table 2. In both cases, individuals were asked to read and sign the informed consent form. Since I used a purposive sampling method, the goal was to select a minimum of four participants for each focus group and a minimum of five participants for the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews.

Table 2

*Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Years of Experience	Elementary or Secondary IC	Gender
P1	2	Elementary	Female
P2	4	Elementary	Female
P3	4	Secondary	Female
P4	2	Secondary	Male
P5	4	Elementary	Female
P6	6	Secondary	Female
P7	8	Elementary	Female
P8	2	Secondary	Male
P9	3	Elementary	Female
P10	2	Secondary	Female
P11	3	Secondary	Female
P12	2	Elementary	Female
P13	2	Secondary	Female
P14	8	Elementary	Female

Data Collection Tools

For this study, the instructional coach was the unit of analysis. Themes highlighting administrative support as an important factor in determining the overall climate and effectiveness that an IC experiences in his or her work, that emerged from the review of the research literature presented in Chapter 2, informed the conceptual framework and research questions.

Consequently, questions developed for the focus group and individual interview protocol aligned with and were informed by the conceptual framework and research questions.

Two different data collection tools were used. Two focus group interviews were conducted with a minimum of four ICs per focus group, followed by five semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, conducted with ICs who did not participate in either of the focus group interviews. The data collected measured ICs' perceptions of (a) the types of support they received from administrators, (b) the types of support they needed, and (c) the types of support that contributed to their ability to improve teacher instruction.

Both interview protocols were field tested by five instructional coaches, separate from the Northside Coaching Network, and two researchers with qualitative research experience. Feedback from the field-test participants yielded valuable information and helped to increase the validity of the interview protocols prior to completing both the focus group interviews and individual, semi-structured interviews with the IC participants.

#### Focus Group Interview Protocol

The focus group interview protocol, consisting of interview questions and probes (see Appendix A), was used to gain an understanding of the different aspects of the relationship between the instructional coach and administrator and how the relationship impacted the IC's work. Hesse-Biber (2017) described focus groups as unique interviews that "result in data that are not comparable to the sum total of individual interviews" (p. 151). According to Bernard (2012), focus group interviews enable the researcher to gain more insight about the content of their research and/or feedback on the process during data collection. Furthermore, focus groups can illuminate or complement other forms of data collection that help the researcher understand why participants feel the way they do.

The focus group interviews allowed me to gain insight from multiple ICs related to their relationships with administrator(s) and the various supports, conditions, and relationships that

existed. The focus group participants were also able to expound upon what they believed they need from their administrator(s), allowing me to collect group effect data that would not be possible to collect from individual interviews. Hesse-Biber described group effect as “an important and unique source of data” where “participants both query each other and explain themselves to each other (p. 153). When participants are able to collectively engage with one another, their responses offer “valuable data on the extent of consensus and diversity among the participants” (p. 153). The structure of the focus group interviews, through natural conversation, enables participants to build upon or become dependent on one another’s responses, yielding valuable data and different perspectives.

#### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

A semi-structured, face-to-face interview protocol was used to solicit and probe participating ICs for answers that are specific to the research questions and that elicit individual stories. Bernard (2012) referred to the use of a semi-structured interview protocol as an interview technique where the researcher uses an interview guide. A semi-structured interview format allows the interviewer to elicit open responses from the respondent while maintaining some control over the interview. The guide provides specific questions relevant to the topic, orders the questions appropriately so the interview flows smoothly, and helps to ensure the interviewer covers the topic fully. The same questions asked in the focus group interviews were also used in the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (see Appendix B). This allowed me to compare data from the focus group interviews. Although the same interview questions were initially used as in the focus group interviews, the semi-structured interview format was intended to draw out thoughts from participating ICs that contributors might have been reluctant to state during a focus group. The individual interviews were in a different context, in addition, the

format may naturally elicit longer responses as well as providing more data. I conducted the focus group interviews first and then, if necessary, adjusted the questions and/or probes in order to elicit answers specific to the types of support provided by administrators that ICs believe have the greatest impact on their work with teachers for the purpose of improving instruction. The interview questions and guide included items related to recurring themes in the literature around the types of supports, conditions, and relationships ICs receive from administrators that impact their work with teachers or believe they need from administrators. In addition, questions that elicit individual stories and further probes that stem from the focus groups may have been used.

### Data Collection Procedures

The method used for this study involved two different data collection methods: (a) two focus group interviews with a minimum of four ICs and (b) semi-structured face-to-face interviews with five different ICs. The data collected from both methods measured the following construct: participants' perceptions of the type of supports, conditions, and relationships ICs receive from administrators and believe they need that result in ICs guiding teachers to improve teacher instruction. All of the participants were asked to provide written consent to indicate they were willing to allow me to audio-record both the focus group and individual interviews. The audio-recorded focus group and individual, semi-structure interviews were transcribed using a computer-based program and transcription service, Rev™.

### Focus Group Interviews

Before starting the interview, I stated the purpose of the study, explained the protocol for conducting the interview, and asked if there were any questions. Each participant was assigned a research focus group number. Ten open-ended questions were asked during the focus group interview which took approximately 90 minutes (see Appendix A). The focus groups interviews

were conducted at a professional development center located in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex area where the Northside Coaching Network members meet regularly.

#### Semi-Structured, Face-to-Face Interviews

The semi-structured interview protocol provided me with the same interview guide as the focus group interview, 10 open-ended questions. The individual interview protocol included questions related to recurring themes in the literature around the types of support instructional coaches receive from administrators that impact their work with teachers (see Appendix B). Each of the individual, semi-structured interviews took place at a mutually agreed upon location, date, and time and lasted for approximately 60 minutes. At the end of the interview, I explained the process of member checking, informed them I would be sending them the transcript for them to review and confirm its accuracy, and checked to ensure I had the correct contact information for each participant. Prior to ending the interviews, each participant was afforded the opportunity to clarify or add to anything that was not asked or discussed in the interview protocol.

#### Data Analysis Strategies

Hesse-Biber (2017) described data analysis as the process of analyzing and interpreting data and then presenting the data to the intended audience in a meaningful way. Data analysis is the next step after the data collection process. For the purpose of this study, I used Hesse-Biber's steps for qualitative data analysis: prepare, explore, reduce, and interpret the data.

#### Data Preparation

The first step in preparing the data was to upload all audio-recorded files from each interview into my selected transcribing service, Rev™. Next, I listened to each audio file and compared the transcription of each interview to confirm accuracy of the transcripts. After my

initial comparison, each participant was sent their transcript to review. All of the participants confirmed the accuracy of their transcript via email, allowing me to conduct the next phase of the data analysis process, data exploration.

### Data Exploration

To develop themes in the data collected from the focus group interview and semi-structured interviews, I used a qualitative data analysis program, QSR NVivo. All data were coded using a-priori codes. The three a-priori codes—providing support, creating conditions, and developing relationships—were derived from the conceptual framework and research questions presented in Chapter 1. These a-priori codes were also used to organize and identify emerging themes.

Following the focus group and individual, semi-structured interviews, all data were coded. I followed the steps embedded within the Hesse-Biber (2017) technique: “a) code texts for themes; b) link themes into theoretical models using a priori coding; and c) display and validate coded data” (p. 525). Each transcript was examined and then categorized under the initial themes, which served as a priori codes as well: providing support, creating conditions, and developing relationships. During this process, I also made notes in preparation for my second review of the data.

### Data Reduction

Data reduction allows the researcher to review the data a second time and make connections to the problem statement and purpose by identifying key phrases and words that stand out among the data. During this phase, I compared the data to the initial review and began to compare, organize, and reduce the data in a more meaningful way to further my exploration of

the themes. This included looking at key words and phrases with high frequency counts and connections to the conceptual framework, problem statement, and purpose.

### Data Interpretation

In order to establish trustworthiness of the data and the data collection process, a former doctoral student who earned her PhD in educational leadership at UNT reviewed and coded the data obtained from the focus group and semi-structured interviews independently. This student was experienced in qualitative research design and her dissertation topic addressed instructional coaching from a different perspective. Therefore, her insights provided credibility to the accuracy of the overall data analysis. The coding process and steps were explained, discussed, and reviewed with the elected doctoral student. To establish interrater reliability, we compared her codes with my codes. Interrater reliability is the degree of agreement between codes and the data collected in qualitative designs when there is more than one coder (Hesse-Biber, 2017) and ensures greater reliability internally between coders before analysis of measured constructs continued in the data analysis process. There was 95% of agreement when codes were compared. We further discussed the reasoning for our choices in order to reach a new agreement on the codes for which we were not in agreement. Through further dialogue and by justifying our choices, we reached 100% consensus on the codes.

According to Hesse-Biber (2017), member checking is another qualitative technique that establishes reliability and validity during data analysis by allowing participants to view the codes to confirm accuracy and address possible areas of misinterpretation. Creswell and Miller (2000) capture this technique as a “validity shift from the researcher to the participant” and as the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 127). I used the member-checking technique to establish further internal reliability and trustworthiness with each participant. After coding the

data, the coded data of the interview transcripts which represented my interpretations of the data were sent to each participant and each participant was asked to indicate whether the themes or categories made sense to them and were developed with sufficient evidence. In addition, they were asked to confirm “whether the overall account” of the analysis was realistic and accurate” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Any additional revisions and comments made by each participant were captured in the final analysis.

### Reflexivity/Positionality

In a qualitative study, the researcher serves as the research instrument. It is important for me to address my positionality in order to add validity to the data and credibility to my role as the researcher. Hesse-Biber (2017) described positionality as the acknowledgement and understanding that “all researchers start their projects with a certain set of values and ideas about social reality” (p. 44) and the influence, experiences, and values guide their study. In addition, Hesse-Biber described reflexivity as “awareness that all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced” (p. 45). Therefore, through reflexivity, the researcher is not only aware of the complex social reality and perspective that exists with the researcher but is aware of one’s positionality so that individual bias and influence can be minimized throughout the research process.

Through the practice of reflexivity, I recognized the need to continually acknowledge my position as the researcher and intentionally be aware of the influence my personal and professional bias could have on the research process and participants. Hesse-Biber (2017) described bracketing as a technique that researchers use to “bracket off their specific values or point of view . . . so as not to influence the interview process itself” (p. 124). In my previous administrative position, I served as an instructional coach for five years and developed positive

relationships in my position with the administrators at two different schools to which I was assigned. Besides establishing positive relationships with the administrators, I also developed strong ideas about how the relationship should function between the IC and school administrator. In any research study, researcher bias can impact all aspects of the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, when interacting with the participants, I guarded against displaying any of my own reactions or biases through verbal or nonverbal behaviors. Due to the potential impact my own bias could have on the participants in this study and the entire research process, none of the participants who were interviewed worked for districts or schools in which I currently or previously held a supervisory position.

#### Limitations of the Study

Purposive sampling allowed me to choose participants based on set criteria for the sample. However, it could also be viewed as researcher bias with my IC experience. Due to the multiple perspectives participants may have had of their administrators and the support they provide, the results of the study may not fully capture an accurate picture of the types of support ICs currently receive. In addition, the IC may have had limited knowledge on which practices do or could impact their work with teachers, based on their personal knowledge or experiences. Finally, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the perceptions of ICs and their work with administrator(s); therefore, administrators' perceptions were not examined.

#### Ethical Considerations

When conducting research, it is important to ensure ethical research practices are used and informed consent is obtained from the participants. Informed consent reaches beyond signed paperwork (Hesse-Biber, 2017); each participant must fully understand why the researcher is conducting the study, the purpose of the study, and how the possible findings may impact their

work as well as inform principals in their work with ICs. Throughout the research process, transparency, reflection, and informed consent were used to ensure ethical practices. On September 26, 2018, I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of Extramural Research online training for protecting human research participants.

Although purposive sampling was used, all participation was voluntary, and any participant could withdraw from the study at any time. The same interview protocol was used with each participant. Each participant was assured confidentiality and asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendices C and D). All data were stored using a password protected device for the duration of the study. If data were transitioned from the protected device or further storage needed, the external drive was stored in a locked cabinet when not in my possession. At the conclusion of the study, all data were stored on an external drive that is locked in a cabinet in the office of the supervising investigator. All research procedures and informed consent followed the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board guidelines and requirements.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction. The purpose of the research design was to gather data to identify and analyze themes through IC perceptions. In Chapter 3, the research methodology and discussed the sampling procedure was explained and procedures for data collection and analysis were described. Limitations of the study were addressed, as well as ethical considerations. In Chapter

4, the findings that are connected to the research questions, literature reviewed, and the conceptual framework are presented.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction.

Using a qualitative research design, the held perceptions of ICs regarding their work with school administrators were explored to gain an understanding of the (a) supports, (b) conditions, and (c) relationships between the principal and the IC. Through a review of data gathered from focus group interviews and individual interviews, perceptions of ICs were explored to identify specific experiences, characterize principal impact, and inform the influence of the principal in ICs' work with teachers.

The research questions were based on existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the purpose of the study addressed in Chapter 1. The following overarching research question was used to guide the study: What are the perceptions of ICs on the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators? Additional questions to support and guide the study were,

1. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches report they encounter in their work with school administrators?
2. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches believe they need in their work with administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction?

In order to answer the research questions, the findings of the study have been organized by themes based on the conceptual framework. Two different data collection methods were used: (a) two focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 10 participants, then (b) five semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with different ICs that did not participate in the focus group interviews.

The rapidly growing rate of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development called for a greater knowledge base about ICs and principal relationships. An investigation into how school administrators work with ICs so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction was needed. Moreover, the identification of each of these factors and understanding of how each factor could impact the coach's effectiveness was warranted. For this chapter, a description of findings and results of the study is presented. The organization of this chapter is represented by the three themes categorized by the conceptual framework. Finally, additional barriers and sub-themes relevant to this study are presented.

### Findings

Responses from ICs who participated in the focus-group and individual interviews provided answers to Research Questions 1 and 2. Through an analysis of the participants' responses, I was able to connect the characteristics, experiences, and constructs they encountered with the types of relationships, support, and conditions that existed with their principal and what they believed they needed from their principal. Through the coding of interview transcripts, the following themes and categories were based on the conceptual framework: principal developing a relationship with the IC, providing support, and creating conditions. The themes were identified and analyzed and are presented as research findings. In response to each research question, the findings are categorized and presented around the three themes from the conceptual

framework. Figure 3 provides a representation of the themes. Under each theme, the key words and phrases defined in the conceptual framework that were used in the coding of the data are categorized.

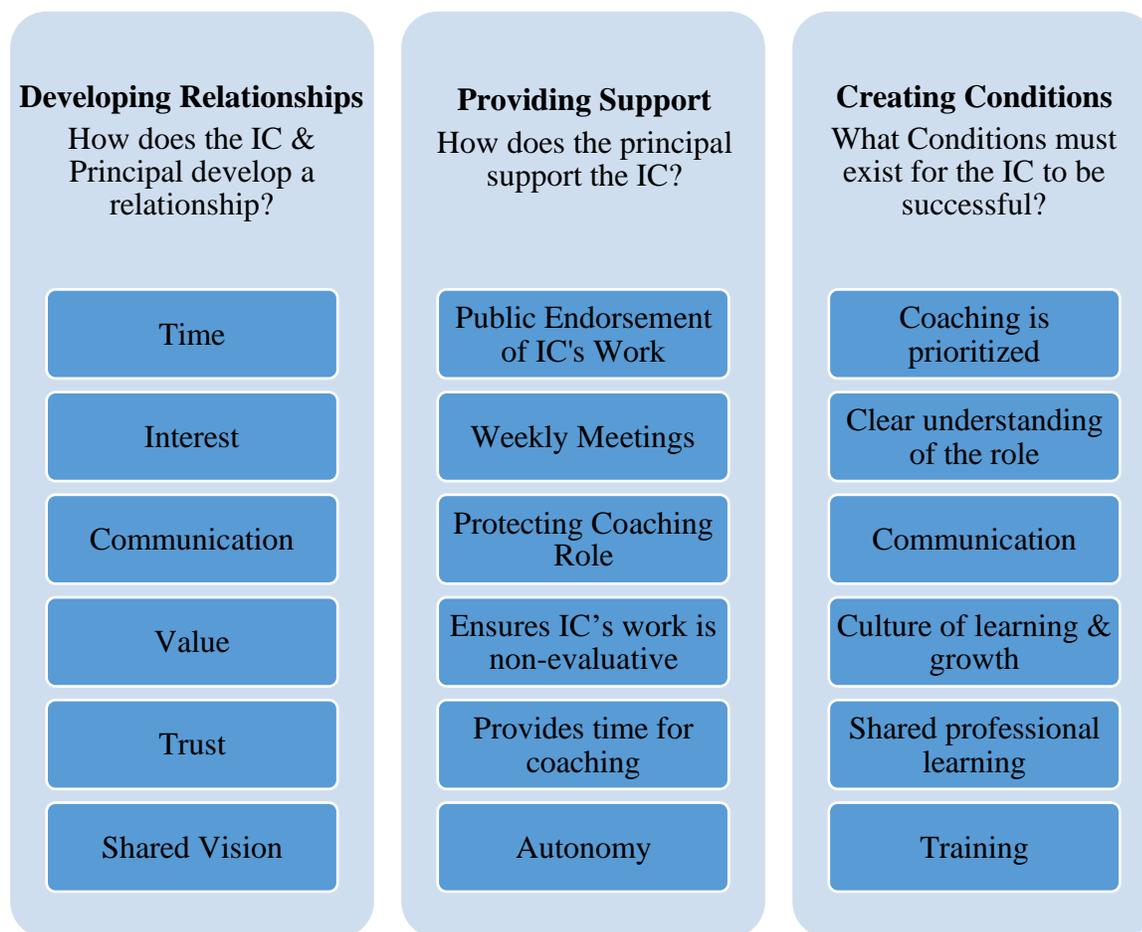


Figure 3. List of conceptual framework competencies defined.

### The Principal and Instructional Coach Relationship

The data were coded and categorized around the first major theme in the conceptual framework: the principal and instructional coach relationship. When an IC and principal have a strong relationship, trust and respect are evident in their work together, which could promote and further the IC's work with teachers (Fullan & Knight, 2009; West, 2017). In addition, a

relationship built on mutual respect is key (West, 2017). Such a relationship involves the principal seeing the IC as a partner.

In this study, the relationship between the IC and principal influenced the IC's work with teachers and was directly correlated to the impact the IC had when working with teachers. Based on an analysis of the participants' responses, the relationship characteristics and the importance of a positive relationship were evident.

One participant (P6) shared the importance of the relationship and how the principal added value to the work of IC by viewing them as a partner in their work with teachers, including the ability to make significant gains in their work with teachers:

It's hard to do anything, that's truly worthwhile if there's not a strong relationship with the campus principal. You can't, you can only make the gains that you can make as an individual . . . And very often, if you are working individually as a coach and without the support of this principal, even if it's just passively without the support of the principal, you're fighting your own battle.

If a relationship did not exist between the IC and principal, the IC's work tended to be done in isolation, limiting their impact on teacher instruction. Another participant (P14) described the relationship with their principal as "fantastic" and described the principal's behaviors that made the relationship a positive one: "He is a coaching principal . . . he gets the relationship of coaches." In such a relationship, this participant noted, the principal understood coaching and the practices the coach must exhibit in the role, including a culture of coaching. The principal respected confidentiality, as the participant explained, "He's very respectful of the privacy between me and the teachers." He only asked the IC to do tasks aligned to their role, and modeled coaching by coaching teachers themselves. This allowed the IC to trust the principal, develop the relationship further, and gain a sense of pride and privilege in working with the principal that had not previously occurred with other principals:

My current relationship with my principal is fantastic. He is a coaching principal for sure. He gets the relationship of coaches. He's very respectful of the privacy between me and the teachers and our conversations that we have. And then he asks us to do certain things coaching-wise . . . I really feel privileged to work with him because in the past I haven't had that experience with all of my principals.

Thus, this participant alluded to the need for the principal to understand the coaching role, respect the IC's relationship boundaries with teachers, and model coaching themselves.

Positive relationship: Impact of relationship on IC's work with teachers. The importance of how the principal and IC relationship impacts the ICs' work with teachers was a theme. One participant discussed how the principal relationship impacted their work with teachers. Not only did the principal and IC relationship impact the work they encountered together as instructional leaders; it also impacted the ICs' work and relationship with teachers. According to this participant (P6), a positive relationship made "teachers want to come to you."

The principal and IC relationship also opened doors for the IC to coach teachers. One participant emphasized the importance of the principal and IC relationship and how such a relationship mirrored the IC and teacher relationship, serving as a model. For this IC (P6), the principal relationship directly impacted the IC's work: "How the principal perceives you and shares what you do with the staff is what allows you to actually coach people and build meaningful relationships with the staff."

Participants shared the importance of the relationship between the IC and principal and discussed the impact the relationship had on their own personal motivation as an IC. Being part of the administrative team and seen as an equal participant showed the ICs they were valued. The IC's role on the leadership team includes aligning their work with the principal's vision, sharing the work they are focused on with teachers, developing professional development as a team, and streamlining communication with teachers. As noted by one IC (P9), when such a partnership

occurs, they are more likely to feel as though they are a “strategic part of the team.” The ICs also acknowledged that their ability to be a member of the team meant the coaching plan did not expect them to execute specific actions in isolation, but in partnership with the leadership team. According to the participants (P1, P9, P14, P11) when the IC is given the opportunity to sit on the leadership team and is included in strategic planning, the option aligns their work with teachers and demonstrates their value to the team. As described by one participant (P9):

I see value in, that is, I feel I’m a strategic part of the team. We have a plan and we all have our roles in helping to accomplish that plan. And it makes the work that I do feel meaningful because it’s driven and focused towards what I know our team is working towards.

The participants shared the different ways they developed a relationship with their principal. Time, interest, and communication were common trends in participants’ responses. Frequent communication and the principal’s open-door policy facilitated the IC’s development of a strong relationship with their principal.

*Time.* One participant (P7) described how she and the principal started their weekly conversations: “He and I started off every Monday, and we always started with our personal lives, trying to make connections there before we talked about anything else.” Showing personal interest in the IC helped to develop the relationship between the IC and principal. A different participant (P14) detailed how she and the principal communicated regularly, texted one another “constantly” and were able to meet on a weekly basis among other things: “We’ve built a really strong relationship. Just our working relationship is full of communication. We’re constantly texting, we meet at least weekly. We definitely see each other every day. And he’s got an open-door policy and that really helps.”

Another participant shared the importance of time spent with the principal, both on a personal and professional level. She spoke about the importance of having face-to-face time, a

meeting between the principal and the IC that is protected and intentional, in order to effectively discuss their work together. For example, the meeting might start off as catching up on their personal lives and then shift to intentional planning and design which, as noted, can develop the IC and principal relationship further. The principal can reinforce the IC's impact on campus or show a personal interest in their life, making the IC feel valued. As stated by one participant (P3):

I think the face-to-face time is, be it talking about instruction or talking about personal things, impacts my relationship with my principal most because I can see that he's sincere. He appreciates me. He is either asking about my life or appreciating the impact that I'm making on campus. I think that's the most impactful to our relationship.

*Personal interest.* According to several participants, one way that principals can develop a relationship with the IC is to show a personal interest in their work by acknowledging their work and providing time to meet with the IC, allowing the IC to showcase their work and receive feedback. In doing so, the principal makes them feel valued; consequently, they trust their principal, and they feel respected. The respect shown to them, in turn, translated to their work with teachers. Participants also shared when an IC and principal have a strong relationship, the IC can feel empowered in their work with teachers because, in the instructional coaching role, the purpose of the position is to develop teachers by building instructional capacity in them. Thus, when the principal models this behavior for the IC, the IC gains confidence and continues the development and capacity in their work with teachers. One participant used words such as "respected" and "empowered" when describing the relationship. The participant (P13) continued to describe how the principal personally invested in her, "I felt it before he had to tell me . . . his goal is to grow people . . . which he has done for me, I'm here."

*Communication.* Although there are several ways to develop a relationship, communication is vital to the success and sustainability of the principal and IC relationship. One

participant (P10) shared that boundaries are important for an IC in order to keep information confidential, but communication is still essential to the relationship: “We have to respect boundaries, but communication is key . . . figure out what is best for your principal and then adapt, but keep it a priority.” Another participant (P3) referred to the type of communication that develops a relationship with the principal as “an open environment . . . to openly communicate how I feel personally, professionally.” In essence, the participants acknowledged when the IC can be open and transparent in communication with the principal, it helped to develop the IC and principal relationship even further. Another participant (P12) described protected time to communicate, noting that “it really helps to have that time set aside to be able to talk specifically about what we need to work on.” Protected time allowed for open communication and demonstrated the value the principal placed on the IC’s role and the work they did for the campus. In turn, communication provided the opportunity to develop their relationship which then advanced the IC’s work with teachers on the campus.

Developing the principal and IC relationship: Value, trust, and shared vision. There were three factors that contributed to the development of a positive principal and IC relationship. The three themes were value, trust, and a shared vision. All three factors impacted the development of a positive principal and IC relationship and had a significant impact on the IC’s work and their own self efficacy.

*Value and trust.* The participants used value and trust interchangeably, alluding to their interdependency. When talking about trust, the IC felt valued and vice versa: the IC felt valued when trust was extended or earned. One participant shared the specific questions the principal asked the IC that made her feel valued as a coach. Notably in her response, when principals checked in with the ICs and asked them how they were doing as well as how they, as principals,

could support their future goals or work with teachers, the ICs felt the principals valued their position. The resulting principal and IC relationship provided an opportunity for the ICs to reflect on their work. According to one participant (P13):

We have check-ins and reflections throughout the year, and I mean, just a few weeks ago his specific question was, “How can I add value to you?” And just the fact that you’re even asking that, you want me to grow.

Another IC (P11) emphasized when the principal provided time and demonstrated a vested interest in the IC and their work, it made the IC feel valued and confirmed to them their work is important.

Participants revealed the importance of trust and its impact on how ICs engaged with teachers. The relationship between the principal and IC directly impacted their work with teachers when the principal trusted the IC. For example, if a teacher engaged in work with the IC is in a vulnerable state, a relationship of trust between the IC and teacher must first be developed before the teacher allows the IC to engage in their instructional practice as a partner for growth. Typically, when the principal trusted the IC, however, trust between the teacher and the IC was gained more quickly. Trust by the principal opens doors for the IC to work with teachers and once trust is established, coaching can spread quickly like wildfire for the IC.

According to one participant (P2):

I feel like I agree that the buy-in from the teachers as far as the trust of a principal and the relationship between the two is huge, especially if you haven’t had an instructional coach before. And a lot of teachers don’t even understand what that looks like. But if they trusted their principal, and the principal puts their trust in the instructional coach and that’s evident, then the teachers are more willing to give it a shot and then it just kind of catches on like wildfire.

When participants described the impact of trust, it was evident that trust was multifaceted and impacted them, personally and professionally, in many ways. When the principal trusted the IC, shared leadership was evident and shared decision making took place with the IC, demonstrating

the importance of trust in the IC. In addition, autonomy to take risks or how the IC approached their work developed the relationship further because the principal trusted the IC. One participant (P10) prioritized and captured the multiple layers of impact trust has on the IC:

I would just say the first one is trust. I can't say that enough. I think sometimes principals struggle relinquishing, I don't want to use the word power, but decision making or leadership, because they trust themselves. And so having that foundation of trust has been definitely a support. I think also she [the principal] has worked really hard in reminding me that she trusts me and for me to act . . . And so I think the support that I appreciate most from her is the clear support, and is that trust in which she gives me.

Trust was also built with the principal when the principal asked the IC to contribute and share their insights by including the IC in instructional conversations. By including the IC, the IC felt valued and trust was further built with the principal. One participant (P3) reported trust and value as the foundation of the IC and principal relationship:

He values me, and he values what I bring to the table. And that's it for me. He brings me in and wants to know my opinions. He wants my insights on campus things, not only instructional things. And so he's always looking for ways to have instructional conversations with anyone that walks in the door and he wants me to be there to be apart of it, too. So I think that's the foundation is built on value, and I just so appreciate it.

The participant continued to describe how trust of the principal impacted the work of the IC with teachers:

Because the teacher saw that he trusted me and that I was safe to trust. And so, I think he not only helped me, knowing I have a good relationship with him, but he helped me build strong relationships with teachers that allowed me to coach them.

Overall, participants discussed trust as foundational to the principal and IC relationship. To sum up the importance of trust and the relationship between the IC and principal addressed by her IC peers, one participant (P3) identified the significance of trust in the relationship:

All the things that you're saying makes me think about, again something that we haven't said yet, but it's been implied is that our principals trust us. And I think that's huge, too, that is foundationally the reason this relationship works so well, and that they do because they trust us to be their thinking partner. They trust us to execute their vision. And I think that's a big role of what we do is understanding their vision and helping them

sometimes create their vision and letting them think it out and work it out. And then we help them realize that vision on the campus and so I do think it's based on trust because they trust us to lead in that way.

Since the teacher and instructional coach relationship was developed over time and was based on trust, the principal modeled the relationship with the IC which, in turn, invited the same type of relationship between the IC and teacher. As stated by one IC (P3):

So I feel like, too, by him giving me some easy wins when I first came to the campus, that that was nice because the teacher saw that he trusted me and that I was safe to trust. And so, I think he not only helped me, knowing I have a good relationship with him, but he helped me build strong relationships with teachers that allowed me to coach them.

*Shared vision.* Trust was also defined as alignment of the IC and principal philosophically. Participants stressed it is important for the principal and IC to be on the same page, aligned, and working together towards a shared vision. When asked about the most important aspect of the relationship, one participant (P10) reiterated that trust is the foundation of the principal and IC relationship when they align philosophically:

Definitely open communication. I can't say it enough, is trust. But trust is only born out of the same philosophical beliefs and foundation. And so, I don't think, I know I couldn't work in this capacity with a principal who we didn't philosophically align. I couldn't do it. Because we do, we, therefore, trust each other.

In the case of establishing a shared vision, trust is important both for the IC and principal. Trust allows the principal to support the IC's work with teachers. If the principal does not trust the IC, they are less likely to promote their work with teachers. In addition, the principal and IC are not viewed as a congruent team. To sum up the importance of the relationship, one participant (P12) shared the impact on their work with teachers:

I feel like when I have a strong relationship with my principal that she supports me, and therefore she supports me to teachers, and therefore teachers are more likely to ask for support because they feel like you're that safe space for them to go to. I feel like it's really important that we have that trust. And so it helps that they feel like they can come to me and trust me with something but that because they also know that we [the principal] work together.

When trust and a relationship exist between the principal and IC, the relationship can directly impact the work of the IC with teachers. They are more likely to trust the IC when the relationship is modeled by the principal which, in turn, can directly transfer to the IC and teacher relationship.

The value and trust that comes from the relationship between the IC and principal drives the work of the IC. When there is not a relationship, there are consequences. The IC might not feel valued or feel their role or work is important to the campus. One participant (P8) shared their lack of relationship and how it made her feel:

One of the things I've leaned heavily on is my relationship with the teacher. And I kind of came to the conclusion that I don't have a great relationship with our campus principal. And it's not that we don't like each other in person or anything like that. It's the opposite, we get along great. It's just, it's difficult to pin him down for time. We used to have a standing appointment that was on the calendar and then he frequently missed it. And it made me feel it wasn't important to him. A couple of other efforts to make some standing appointments kind of fell flat. As far as a personal relationship, I think we have a solid one. As far as a professional relationship, I think it's almost nonexistent just because there's no, I don't feel that relationship is important to him on a professional level.

The participants confirmed that although a personal relationship may exist with a principal, both a professional and personal relationship is important to the IC. Without a strong relationship, the IC may not feel valued or that their work is important to the principal. Time spent with the IC is one way the principal can make the IC feel valued and can help develop a professional relationship. The principal relationship allows the IC to feel they are not alone: one team working together to bring the principal's vision to life in their efforts to build capacity in teachers. One participant (P4) shared the impact it would have if they did not have a good relationship with the principal:

Without having that strong relationship with the principal, I can't imagine what my world would be like, because it would be like trying to push a big rock up a mountain. But with the support of my principal, I know that we can do this together. And I understand her

vision, I understand the mission. I feel valued because of that relationship. And so, I still feel like I can make change occur. I feel like I can shape the world.

Clearly, the principal and IC relationship is foundational to shared leadership and a shared vision. When the relationship is strong, both the principal and IC grow each other and engage in collective learning, thus, develop a shared vision. In addition, the relationship strengthens communication which, in turn, benefits teachers and ultimately, students. One participant (P14) confirmed the importance of the principal and IC relationship after varied experiences with principals in the IC role:

I can't imagine not having a good relationship. Like I said, I've had several principals, only one has been difficult . . . and so that was hard. The benefits are that I get to grow as a learner because he coaches me also. And he gets to grow because I'm okay challenging him, that sort of thing. But ultimately, the students get to grow because we're growing teachers and we're really big on collective ownership. And so, our teachers are growing, that means our students are growing. And so that's probably the biggest benefit. I think having a good relationship leads to good communication. I think good communication leads to results.

Time with the principal was evident as one of the most important factors for the IC and their relationship with the principal. Both time and value were synonymously linked to the impact on the IC and principal relationship. Essentially, the participants noted how important it is for the principal to realize the importance of the principal and IC relationship and how it impacts the IC.

One participant (P10) shared the impact personally:

But there have been cases where I felt like I wasn't getting the time I needed with her [the principal], and I did sit for a hot minute and wallow in, "Why am I not valued? No one cares about instruction." And so those are things that I think I have definitely had to work on to make the relationship more cohesive.

The participants revealed the importance of the principal and IC relationship with an overwhelming confirmation of the significance of the principal role in the IC's work. For them, the relationship between the principal and IC directly and indirectly impacted their work with teachers. For some (P10, P13, P6, P9), it was evident the relationship impacted their efficacy and

value. Based on the responses of the ICs who participated in this study, the principal relationship is vital to the IC's sense of belonging and effectiveness as a coach.

### Providing Support

Based on the conceptual framework, the second factor addressed in the research questions focused on the types of principal support that ICs encountered and/or believed must exist and which types of support most impacted their work with teachers. The data were coded and categorized around the theme of the types of support the principal provided to the IC. Range et al. (2014) studied specific principal behaviors that supported instructional coaching, such as confidential conversations, support of IC's work, frequent meetings, and working in close alignment. The principal and IC practices examined in the study included types of communication and frequency.

Several researchers have underscored the importance of principal support for the IC by protecting the role of the coach from work that has little impact on student achievement (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009; West, 2017). Additionally, the need for the principal to endorse the IC's work as important publicly to establish a culture of growth on the campus through professional learning and a continuous improvement cycle was cited. For the purposes of this study, support is also defined as meeting with the IC consistently, ensuring the IC's work is non-evaluative, and providing time for coaching (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009).

Participants were asked two interview questions regarding IC support:

1. What types of support have been impactful in your collaboration with your campus principal? (RQ1)
2. Describe a time when you felt well-supported by your campus principal. (RQ1)

For the participants in this study, the principal supported the IC in various ways; however, they revealed three main supports provided by the principal: autonomy, protecting the coaching role, and feeling valued. Table 3 provides some of the participants’ responses that aligned with this theme and the different ways in which the principal supported their work with teachers.

Table 3

*Participant Comments–Sub-Themes for IC Support Needed by the Principal*

Category	Participant Response
Autonomy	<p>“Freedom to do what IC needs to do”</p> <p>“Lets [the] IC run with ideas”</p> <p>“Gives IC freedom to try new things”</p> <p>“Allows IC to take risks”</p>
Protects the Role	<p>“Takes administrative duties off of the IC’s plate”</p> <p>“Keeps other things off of IC’s plate”</p> <p>“Time and resources”</p> <p>“Values time and resources in growing teachers”</p> <p>“Protects coaching role to provide time to complete coaching cycle”</p>
Value	<p>“Provides books”</p> <p>“Sends IC to professional development”</p> <p>“Number one cheerleader”</p> <p>“Pushes IC”</p> <p>“Provides feedback”</p> <p>“Trusts IC to lead professional development”</p> <p>“IC contributes to weekly newsletter”</p> <p>“Respects the teacher and IC relationship”</p> <p>“Honors confidentiality”</p> <p>“Gives credit to the IC’s work”</p> <p>“Involves the IC in instructional decisions”</p>

The ICs defined autonomy as the principal allowing them to run with their ideas and take risks and freedom within how they go about their work. While ICs sought permission to do so, they also needed to be granted autonomy to try new things and grow in the coaching role. Participants (P8, P9, P10, P11, P13) shared how they felt supported when the principal protected the coaching role from other duties that were not aligned to coaching. Time to coach was one of the greatest ways they believed a principal could support the IC. For them, protecting the role from other duties is a constant battle when a coach is part of a campus and administrative team and it is important that the IC has time to coach. ICs emphasized value as a major support in different ways, ranging from being pushed by the principal to honoring confidentiality between the IC and the teacher. In addition, providing resources and including the IC in decisions were also identified. The types of support the principal provided the ICs that impacted their work with teachers is expounded on in the next sections.

Public endorsement. One of the main components of support was the public endorsement of the IC's work with teachers. A public endorsement along with the principal talking about the value of an IC in front of teachers is instrumental in many ways. One participant (P10) shared that when the principal publicly endorses the IC's work, she demonstrates that "she trusts and values me in my position to help build that credibility that may not have already existed." They stressed that credibility and trust between the IC and teachers develops over time, but the principal can help establish this for the IC by publicly endorsing their work. This same participant described her principal accordingly: she "builds me up from her perspective, which in turn the campus then believes and trusts [the IC] in the same way." Public endorsement made the IC feel valued, but the main impact was how public endorsement opened the door for the IC to work with teachers. When asked if public endorsement opened doors for the IC to engage in

coaching with teachers, the participant expanded on the impact: “Yes, a thousand percent.” For her, the support and public endorsement removed the barrier for the IC even when teachers were hesitant to work with the IC. For instance, “even if they were a reluctant teacher, they could no longer stand on the leg of me not being credible.” It removed the perception, doubt, or reluctance to engage in work with the IC, as it was “not an option not to support and believe in me, because she [the principal] so deeply does.”

An IC has the greatest impact when they enroll a teacher in a coaching cycle (Killion & Harrison, 2017). One of the first techniques an IC often learns is how to enroll teachers in a coaching relationship. However, this technique can be mastered and expedited if the principal publicly endorses the IC’s work from the beginning. The cycle allows the coach to set instructional goals with the teacher, observe, and then provide feedback so that the teacher can adjust their instruction (Killion & Harrison, 2017). When the coaching cycle is followed, principals can endorse the IC’s work when they ask a teacher to work with the coach. The principal’s endorsement opens the door for the IC to engage the teacher in a coaching cycle (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

One participant (P4) shared an example of how the principal endorsed their work through individual conversations with teachers:

They [the principal] endorse me by asking teachers to work with instructional coaches, especially if they see if they’ve gone in and done an observation. And they might have some further questions, or they might want to see something specific that they want that teacher to work on, then they ask that teacher to reach out to an instructional coach. Occasionally the principal will come to me and say, “Heads up, I’ve sent this person to see you.”

Another participant (P11) shared how the IC was not even present when introduced to the campus and how the principal’s public endorsement opened doors for the IC from the beginning:

She has endorsed my work and I believe that . . . And I was out the first week of school. I didn't meet the staff when she met the staff . . . and when I came back, my teachers literally embraced me and it was an immediate culture of respect.

According to one participant (P14), one way the principal publicly can endorse the IC is to reference the IC as a resource in one-on-one conversations with teachers: "that's another way that he promotes coaching and he'll say, 'get with the IC and see how she can help you with guided reading' or things like that. . . . So he pushes that even through their evaluation process."

Another IC (P3) confirmed the importance of the public endorsement at a secondary campus,

I think his public endorsement definitely impacts because that's what opened the door . . . especially on a high school campus, they really trust him and because he had been there for years before I got there, and so that impacted my work in a huge way."

The principal is a key role in the public endorsement of the IC's work and gives status to the IC, models the relationship, and allows for the teachers to trust the IC (P10):

Vocally on many occasions, but with all staff, building up my credibility and placing her full amount of trust on me. And then I led that, and she participates in a meaningful and impactful way to model what it looks like.

The participants' responses captured the different ways the public endorsement from the principal impacted the IC and their work with teachers. In addition, the participant findings revealed the importance of public endorsement to the IC and their work with teachers.

### Protecting the Role of the IC

The IC often serves other roles that are not aligned with coaching, such as other duties, tasks, and assignments that have no impact on student achievement. Since the coaching role is mainly autonomous, unique and flexible, it can be tempting to assign the IC to other tasks or duties that need to be fulfilled on the campus. When the IC fulfills other duties outside of the coaching role, the duties conflict with not only the IC's work, but also the teachers' perception of their role and their ability to complete coaching cycles. Frequently, ICs are viewed as administrators when their roles are not clearly defined. Since ICs often partner with

administrators, it can be a challenge to define clear roles or clear up misconceptions of their role with teachers. One way to define clear roles is for the principal to protect the IC from all administrative tasks, such as discipline or other administrator duties that prevent the IC from having time to coach or being viewed as an administrator. Furthermore, this can also challenge the IC's own personal sense of value to a campus.

One of the main ways the principal supported the IC's work with teachers was by protecting their role from tasks and duties not aligned with coaching, which is captured in Table 3. Researchers revealed that time to coach is an important factor to the success of an IC in their work with teachers (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Often coaches are constrained by the master schedule. According to the ICs, the availability for teachers to seek the IC out at any time of the day to engage in coaching is critical. In regard to the work of the IC, participants noted that availability and accessibility to teachers throughout the school day was important. Not only did participants note that protecting their role as IC made them feel supported, it also impacted their work with teachers. One participant (P13) shared the importance of being available and accessible throughout the school day:

It gives us more time. I mean, if we were to have lunch duty, that's 30 minutes. That is a classroom, that could also be a conversation with a teacher. That could be a coaching conversation. That could be a moment to work with kids. That is not stolen from us. We have that time. That's big.

The IC participants noted that when teachers are available, it is essential for them to be available to address their needs during that time; thus, the assignment of other duties may take away from the opportunity for them to meet with teachers. They also noted that a teacher who is also an athletic coach might only be available before or after school and have limited time during their conference period to meet with the IC. Since much of the coaching role is dictated by the master

schedule, protecting the IC from performing other duties provides flexibility for the IC to serve their assigned purpose: coaching teachers.

Just like teachers who are tasked with helping students become better learners, the IC's role is to help teachers become more effective teachers through coaching. To fulfill their primary duties, the ICs stressed how they need to be able to serve teachers within the constraints of the master schedule and be available for teachers and campus administration. One participant (P10) shared the impact on their own motivation to coach and how coaching was enhanced because the principal valued the IC's time and protected them from performing other duties:

I feel grateful. I feel privileged because it's not that way everywhere, and I feel empowered to maximize what happens during those time slots because she is protecting them, if that makes sense. Like I would never feel okay during lunches to be like, "I'm going to go out to eat," because I know that there are people doing lunch duty, and that on some campuses I might have had to, but because she made it a priority, I make sure to maximize that time to meet with teachers. So, I work harder and maximize that time because I'm nervous she's protecting it.

Another participant (P1) shared the perception of teachers and common misconceptions about their role when the principal did not protect the IC's role: "It is the foundation of trust and a common understanding and the purpose and goal of the position . . . how we want to use this position to impact instruction, teachers, and students must be there." A different participant (P8) shared how the absence of non-instructional duties directly impacted their time with teachers and opened the door for them to engage in more coaching: "Teachers say, 'Hey, can you come in.' And we have the time to meet them in their conference and do all these different things because we're not pulled in different directions for things unrelated to instruction."

As shared by participants, the IC balances a fine line of shared responsibility with campus duties and tasks, but also understands the importance of availability and being accessible to teachers during all times during the school day. They all noted that when the principal

understands the IC's role and the importance of time to coach, their decisions to allow the IC to have available time with teachers increased the impact of their success. One participant alluded to the importance of protecting the role and specific examples of how time to coach impacts their feelings of support from the principal. According to one participant (P10), the administrator's act of protecting the coaching role tends to be rare because it is easy to assign other duties to the coach. Thus, according to this participant, "Unfortunately, when you talk to other people, you realize that it's [not being assigned additional non-instructional duties] special." When a principal understood that time to coach is important not only for the IC to feel supported but could also maximize the effectiveness of their role and work with teachers, greater outcomes for the IC, and ultimately, student achievement took place. The participant continued to provide specific examples of why time to coach was important, particularly in terms of administering the STAAR test or performing lunch duty:

I do not administer the STAAR test because it is a prime time to support teachers, and that is an important time to connect with teachers, and look at data. . . . I don't do lunch duty because I meet with teachers when they are eating lunch, and if I were assigned to lunch duty, that would take away the 2-hour slot.

This IC realized the principal's decision regarding the duties she performed might not be the norm compared to other IC's experiences and further expounded: "I don't think I understood that she [the principal] was protecting my role until I started talking to other people . . . she definitely understands the purpose of this role, and then protects the duties and the job assignments around it."

According to the participants, the principal can increase the IC's effectiveness by protecting the role, making the IC feel valued, and motivating them in their work with teachers. When the principal protects the coaching role, ICs have more time to coach teachers. Not only is coaching a time commitment but it is often a financial investment where a district has repurposed

a position or sacrificed a position to implement instructional coaching. By protecting the IC role from other duties, the district is more likely to directly connect the time spent coaching to improvement in teacher performance, thus, increased student outcomes.

Meetings with the principal. An IC may serve as the only IC on a particular campus. Collaboration is key to their work with teachers, which stems from the communication and meetings with the principal. The majority of ICs stressed the importance of a weekly meeting with the principal. During this weekly meeting, the ICs stated they clarify goals, inform the principal on instructional matters, and develop strategies and professional development. Table 4 reveals participants’ responses on the frequency and importance of a weekly meeting and the impact on their work with teachers.

Table 4

*Participant Comments—The Importance of IC Weekly Meeting with Principal*

Category	Participant Response
Frequency	<p>“Every day. Formal and informal, I would say, formal multiple times a week but informally every day.”</p> <p>“Once a week.”</p>
Importance	<p>“At least once per week, but typically a check in every day.”</p> <p>“From a meeting once a week, but we check in once a day, at least probably multiple times a day.”</p> <p>“Definitely I spoke to him every single day informally, but officially we met once a week.”</p>
Impact	<p>“Every week, we meet and it’s specifically about instructional decisions.”</p> <p>“Scheduled time really helps to not feel like I’m interrupting her somewhere else, because I know she’s got a million things going on.</p> <p>“I think one of them is the action of having those weekly meetings that are more formal.”</p> <p>“The weekly meetings started to happen, and things got much better with communication and we started working together.”</p>

Table 4 Continues

Category	Participant Response
Impact, Cont.	<p>“And then we do have a standing appointment once a week, where we meet together and discuss what’s going on. The parts that I do share about what I’m doing with teachers”</p> <p>“Definitely those standing meetings are so important because I feel like last year that was something we struggled with. We didn’t get to have those huddles as often . . . having them stay in those standing meetings this year has been really beneficial.”</p> <p>“Our weekly face-to-face where I have the decisions, and then I have the updates.”</p> <p>“I would say the weekly meetings. Definitely the weekly meetings because it’s stuff that I can carry into my weekly meetings with my teachers because we meet weekly.”</p> <p>“We meet together and collaborate, but she really lets me go with ideas that I have that would help on the campus.”</p> <p>“I feel one of the biggest types of support is that she takes time and she invest time in . . . I know that I’ve worked for other principals who sometimes they were busy and meeting with me became the last thing or when we met it was not even about what we talked about meeting.”</p>

According to the participants, it is evident the meetings are vital to the success of the IC from a communication standpoint as well as the direct impact the meetings can have on the IC’s work with teachers. One participant (P8) noted the consequences of not having a weekly meeting: “We used to have a standing appointment that was on the calendar and then the principal frequently missed it. And it made me feel it wasn’t important.” The weekly meeting helped to inform the IC’s work with teachers, made the IC feel that their work was important to the school. Participants noted, meetings were important to the IC and served as another way the principal supported the IC and their work with teachers.

#### Creating Conditions

The final theme was categorized around the third component from the conceptual framework, conditions ICs encounter and believe must exist between the principal and IC;

specifically, the conditions that influence the IC’s work with teachers. Knight (2009) defined conditions that must exist for ICs to be successful in their work with teachers: “(a) focus and continuity on a few high-leverage strategies, (b) a learning-friendly culture, (c) principal support, (d) clear roles, (e) protect the coaching relationship, (f) time for coaching, and (g) continuous learning for coach and administrators” (pp. 19–20). According to Fullan and Knight (2011), an examination of the conditions the principal provides for the IC to be successful might also include culture and climate, collaboration, and training for both principal and IC. Conditions may also be defined as a culture of learning throughout the school, modeled by the principal. In addition, coaching must be prioritized by the principal and made evident through their actions. In short, principals share the responsibility of professional learning for teachers with the IC in order to serve as the instructional leader and share responsibility for the professional learning of all teachers .

In regard to the types of conditions that ICs both encountered and believed they need from the principal, ICs were asked: What types of conditions do you believe contribute to the success of your work as an instructional coach? (RQ2). Table 5 provides excerpts from the participants’ responses coded under *creating conditions*.

Table 5

*Participant Comments–Sub-Themes for Conditions the Principal Creates for the IC*

Category	Participant Response
Campus Culture	“Establishing the environment and the norm that people will be in your classroom.”
	“Open environment.”
	“Principal models culture of coaching and the culture of feedback and change.”
	“IC is part of vision casting and vision making.”

Table 5 Continues

Category	Participant Response
Vision and Clarity	“IC understands the vision and also has checkpoints along the way and getting feedback their own practices.”
	“Listening to IC.”
	“Principal sits in on professional learning communities.”
	“Alignment with what the campus is wanting to do.”
	“Principal has a good vision of what they want for their school, what their goals are.”
	“Calibrate, to be aligned, to know the expectation.”
	“IC understands exactly how the district goals have been interpreted by the principal.”
Shared Leadership	“IC is clear on what their instructional goal is going to be in the year.”
	“Clarifies to staff what the instructional coach’s role is and is calibrated with all staff.”
	“District truly supports IC role and then is pushed out to the administrators on the campuses.”
	“Principal and IC work and plan professional learning together.”
	“Principal and IC push each other in thinking.”
	“Principal and IC do book studies together.”
	“Shared leadership is a condition that the principal has to set up on the campus.”
	“Principal follows along and makes sure they are part of the coaching cycle.”

The participants noted the importance of this condition for the IC. When the principal created a culture of coaching on campus, it established an environment that opened the door for the IC to coach teachers. Since the coaching role involved a coach being in classrooms to observe instruction and enroll teachers in a feedback cycle, the culture of a campus was foundational for the IC. In addition, when the IC was part of creating the vision of a campus culture, they were able to partner with teachers to reach that vision and the goals of the campus.

Clarity for the IC was essential to their work in knowing what the campus goals were, and how they should focus their work with teachers. One condition that participants noted must exist for the IC, is for the principal and IC to share leadership, which in turn aligned the work of the IC with the principal.

It was evident the principal was seen as responsible for creating the conditions for the IC to be successful. Overwhelmingly, the participants spoke about the three most important conditions: campus culture, vision and clarity, and shared leadership. When principals led by creating a culture of coaching and modeled this for the IC, they set an example for the IC and teachers. When the principal trusted the IC and created conditions for risk taking and running with ideas, thus, providing autonomy, the IC felt valued and trust was further developed with both the principal and teachers. When the IC and principal shared leadership, worked together on professional development, and partnered in their work with teachers, the IC was able to have a greater impact in their individual work with teachers. One participant (P4) summed up the importance of the principal creating these conditions for the IC:

The conditions that she set up that lead to my success is that she leads by example. I'm a people pleaser, and I think most coaches are. We want to fix problems. We want to fix problems kind of quickly. But she allows me to take chances. She allows me to take risks. She pushes me in my thinking, she allows me to come to professional development. She allows me to go back and talk about the professional development opportunity that I had, and maybe even this participant's study, unless it's confidential. But we really have a good relationship where we are talking and that communication is always open. And if the communication weren't that open, I wouldn't be as successful as an instructional coach.

The conditions created by the principal set up the IC for success and affected their relationship with the principal in all aspects. More importantly, the conditions impacted the IC's work with teachers.

Communication with the principal. Communication was continuously referred to throughout all themes from the conceptual framework, but communication was categorized and expounded under the conditions the principal creates for the IC. Communication between the principal and IC was one of the most important and essential conditions identified. When the IC and principal communicated frequently, the IC's work with teachers was more aligned to the school's vision and goals (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009). Clarity around the type and frequency of the IC's work with teachers was also gained with a clear understanding of the IC's role. This provided a more strategic approach for the IC in working with teachers, creating a more systemic impact in their work. When communication did *not* exist between the IC and principal, role clarity for both the IC and teachers was vague and did not align the work of the IC with the principal's vision and goals, providing small, isolated pockets of impact. The principal and IC practices examined in the current study included types of communication and frequency. Two interview questions specifically solicited responses in relation to communication.

Describe communication and the types of communication that you have with your principal? (RQ1)

Probe: Which do you believe impacts your work with teachers the most?

Probe: Which do you believe impacts your relationship with your principal the most?

The range of participant responses about the importance of communication between the IC and principal are listed. Moreover, this list emphasizes the reason communication was essential to the IC and principal relationship and also the impact it had on the work of the IC with teachers.

- “**Face-to-face** is very impactful, but I would not discount the one-offs of text messages and phone calls.”
- “Set up weekly meetings to ensure that we get that **time together.**”

- “I think **face time**, like sitting down, having those conversations.”
- “**Open relationship** as far as being able to talk about things very openly, and almost any time of day.
- “As a campus coach, I had the **regular meeting** with principal, **communication** was solid.”
- “Being a **sounding board** for the principal and helping them focus their message their vision and expectations.”
- “Asking those **clarifying questions** and making sure I’m on the **same page** with principal and that I’m using my role to **support them** and not work against them unintentionally.”
- “One of my main goals when I’m meeting with the principal is to **calibrate**, to be aligned, to know the expectation.”
- “That’s always priority for me is just keeping the **principal informed** so that the arms and the legs are saying the same thing.”
- “**I ask the principal** to do certain things because I believe it should come from a principal. And then the principal asks me to do certain things because they believe it would be better received coming from my position.”
- “And then when I need a **direct decision**, I go to the principal during our **weekly meetings** and I have a list, the top part of the list is things I need a decision on, the bottom half of the list are things to fill the principal in on.
- “But there’s definitely the **value** of after a walk through with a post conference of saying, ‘Hey, these are some great instructional strategies if you’re looking to add some more, why don’t you go visit your instructional coach’ and having those **moments**.”

Although face-to-face communication was important, the most important aspect of communication was that it frequently existed between the principal and IC. The participants noted the importance of the weekly communication and that it was instrumental in their work. One participant (P10) shared how she was not receiving the communication she needed and had to verbalize her need to her principal. In addition, she recommended how ICs might need to make adjustments as the relationship develops with their principal:

And then I realized I control that [communication]. And so, I set up weekly meetings with her to ensure that we get that time together. I've also been strategic about using other modalities of communication, because if I can't get face-to-face with her, then she has said, "text the question and I'll answer." And so, I've had to adapt my best mode of communication, which is face-to-face, to fit her best mode of communication, which sometimes is digital, for a quick response.

No matter the mode of communication used, the data extracted from the participants' responses overwhelmingly revealed the importance of communication between the principal and IC. By creating the conditions for open communication, the principal set the IC up for success in their work with teachers.

Instructional coach perceptions of barriers created by principals. One of the interview questions specifically asked the participants to speak about the types of barriers that existed between their role as an IC and the principal's interpretation or understanding of what their role as an IC was. A response provided by one of the ICs regarding a barrier that existed or, at the very least, *could* become a barrier was related to the principal's lack of understanding or appreciation for the professional expertise and potential contribution the IC could offer the school. The amount of time needed to transition the IC to an instructional leader and support for the principal in the participant's district appeared to be a barrier. Rather than seeing the IC as a potential partner, the principal viewed the IC as an "interventionist" or "data clerk." According to the IC (P14),

I think the principal not understanding a coach's role. And like I said, in our district, it's been a huge transition. And so, the principals that viewed us more as an interventionist, or as a data clerk, or a, another administrator, that created barriers for me to actually coach because of time mostly.

Moreover, time, as a commodity, was consistently referenced as a gift or barrier for the IC. ICs that were used to complete administrative duties, such as student discipline or other administrative tasks, did not report having time to coach and risked being seen as an administrator by teachers. The participant (P14) elaborated on the importance of preventing time as a barrier by protecting time for the IC to coach:

With this principal, I've never been pulled to do discipline. But other principals have pulled me in to do discipline and other things that are very administrative. And so, I think the gift of time or the lack of time to coach is probably the biggest barrier.

The participant confirmed the importance of time to coach, stating they could be a better IC if they had more time. The participant added the need for the principal to not only provide the time to coach but protect the IC from other tasks and duties that arose and helped the IC prioritize.

If I was only a coach then I could coach better. There's a lot of other things on our plate that sometimes coaching gets moved down the list. And so, we talk a really good game of, this is going to be . . . like I said, we plan for the next week of our coaching plan and things like that, but things get in the way. And barriers of time are probably the biggest problem there.

One IC (P6) posed a cautionary question of the principal as instructional leader and the importance of their role with the IC's work. The participant shared the need for the principal to remain in the instructional leadership role, even with the increasing role of instructional coaches in schools today. The participant noted that although there has been an increase over the last decade in both the IC role and the value of the role, there has been a shift in the instructional leadership role for principals. The same IC questioned why administrators seemed to be satisfied with not serving as instructional leaders since the principal could serve as an IC for them, as viewed from a leadership perspective. This particular IC expressed a sense of sadness when the

reciprocal aspect of IC on the part of the principal did not take place since one sole IC did not provide the same level of insight and various perspectives of instruction provided by both the IC and principal along with other experts represented a much larger benefit and level of appreciation from the staff:

Administrators are a little bit more okay with not being instructional leaders. They feel they have people [the IC, for example] on their campus who can take that on because they don't have any other responsibilities. And it makes me sad as an instructional coach too, because I want the instructional leadership from that person as well. And I don't want the role of the instructional coach to eventually morph into the only person on the campus, who is leading instructionally. That's not fair to me and that's not fair to the staff. The staff needs to learn from a wide variety of people and I know that I can't be the expert in all things.

Although the focus of this study was on the IC and principal relationship, one IC referenced the importance of collective understanding of the role and how everyone can support the IC, in addition to the principal. The more staff members understood the role of the coach, the more likely they endorsed the right work of the IC and protected their role from other duties that were not aligned with the IC role. This was especially important to clarify with other administrators on campus. However, the principal was referenced as key to this communication (P10):

Maybe it would be the principal being more of an advocate and clarifying [the IC role] in front of our front office staff and our administrative team. The principal does a great job with teachers, and that's most important because that's who I serve and that's who I work most closely, but sometimes I think that gap is missed with the other leaders on our campus.

One role of the principal was to break down barriers for the IC, allowing the IC to fulfill the job duties outlined in their role. Another participant (P8) shared,

As far as barriers, I think it's just being aligned with a common vision and then being aligned with what the reality is. And I think that most teachers often feel that there's a disconnect sometimes between administration and teachers. And helping administration understand that and make those connections.

Another participant (P6) shared the importance of clarifying the role, especially at the secondary level with high turnover in administration:

And that's clarifying what an instructional coaches role is. And I think that's really difficult at a secondary level because there tends to be more turnover with administrators at a secondary level. I don't know that I've been at the same high school for the last 15 years and we've had at least one new AP every single one of those 15 years. And we're now on the fifth principal in those 15 years.

Another participant (P9) confirmed the importance of understanding the role in order to have the greatest impact and this could be done through training:

And lack of training maybe on the part of the principal and the coach. Because I think that if I was in a situation that would be a barrier to doing my job if it was not clear what I could do in this role and the value I could bring to the team. Instead being used kind of a sub sometimes. Very often I get this sometimes.

By identifying barriers, principals could then be aware of the barriers and address them in order to more effectively impact the IC's work with teachers.

Instructional coaches' perceptions of what they believed they need from the principal. Participants' responses were coded and categorized around the conceptual framework and the three themes. Most of the participants specifically addressed the first research question and what the participants encountered with the principal regarding relationship, supports, and conditions. However, the second research question asked ICs to expound on what they believed they *need* from principals:

2. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches *believe they need* in their work with administrator(s) so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction?

Participants revealed various supports, conditions, and relationships they *believed they need* from the principal so they could more effectively impact teacher instruction. One participant (P10)

shared if an IC did not have consistent and frequent communication with the principal, not only did it impact their work with teachers, but it made them feel isolated and not valued. Therefore, the importance of the weekly meeting was one thing they believed was necessary:

I think it was frustrating because she didn't know anything that was happening. And for me, it's an isolating position already, I've felt alone. I convinced myself into thinking I wasn't supported because we weren't talking really. And so, to me, I was like, well . . . And then because we weren't really talking, the things in which she said and did didn't reflect the things I wanted her to say and do, because we hadn't been updating each other.

The participant referred to the connection between having intentional time with the principal to the worth and value of the IC role on campus and how time and communication are associated with feelings of support. The IC also stressed the importance of communication between the principal and IC and how communication impacted the campus culture and the direction of both the IC's work and the work of the campus.

So, I would say the effects of not discussing, impact culture and impacts your personal feelings . . . depending on where you get your value. But to me it felt of value, and it also impacts the direction in which your campus goes, because if you don't have a hand in collaborating with that head principal about where they're going, it's going to go a direction that isn't one in which maybe your work lies in.

The weekly meeting with the principal was reported as instrumental in the IC's work with teachers. The weekly meeting did not only serve as important for communication and guiding the IC's work, but the meeting made the IC feel valued and respected because of the dedicated time with the principal and the subsequent support the IC felt as a result of the investment of time provided. The time with the principal also allowed the IC to get feedback on their work and the principal's perspective on where the campus was going (P1): "I want the principal to know that his feedback matters to me, and that he may give me an idea and I can do what I want with that idea, but at the end of the day, I wanted it to be something that he supports as well."

ICs continued to allude to their positions as a journey that evolved in both their work and their relationships. They reported the importance of risk taking, autonomy, and trust as essential to their work and growth. One participant (P2) stressed the importance of being able to try new things regardless of their outcome and providing a space for not reaching perfection at times. Being true to themselves as ICs and permission to fall short of perfection were specific principal supports mentioned:

Letting me have the freedom to try things and then support me when they are successful, and then maybe when they aren't as successful, but let me try things that also push me to grow as a coach. And let me live in the fact that it is okay. I wasn't supposed to be perfect. And that, that makes us even better coaches when we're not expecting ourselves to be perfect and we can muddle through it but allow a space for that.

Autonomy and freedom were consistently referenced with trust and value. One participant (P12) referenced the need for a standard understanding of the role across the district. While the participant's experience with their principal was a positive one, the participant acknowledged the discrepancies between ICs across the district in regard to principal relationships and the work they engaged in on their different campuses. Without a clear message of the IC's role across the district, it was easy for "misconceptions" of the role to "lead to resentment" or, in some cases, a minimization of the actual impact certain ICs within the district might be able to actually have in their role and work with teachers:

I do sometimes wish . . . for the clarity and understanding of the role across the board, because I think that all the misconceptions then lead to resentment or someone not being as impactful as they can be in this position, come from misconceptions around the role. And my principal does a great job of that with teachers.

If there was not a clear understanding of the IC role that was calibrated across district principals, it impacted individual coaches and their relationship with their principal and teachers, specifically the work they engaged in daily. Furthermore, it impacted sustainability of the role,



## Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encountered in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believed they needed from administrators so they could more effectively impact teacher instruction. The information derived from the IC participants in this study included two focus groups with five participants in each group and five individual interviews with different participants. The participants were ICs from districts located in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. An analysis of responses in the qualitative data addressed answers to both research questions. Transcripts of participants' interviews were analyzed and then categorized into three themes based on the conceptual framework. Themes of relationships, support, and conditions were coded accordingly. A discussion of themes was presented as research findings. Participants identified the same themes and practices regardless of the coaching model or grade levels served. Chapter 5 includes an in-depth review of the study in which the problem statement, methodology, and research questions are addressed. The chapter also includes an analysis of the results, conclusions, and implications for further research based on the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the qualitative study, overview of the research, problem statement, purpose of the study, and the research questions addressed is provided. In addition, a review of the methodology outlined in Chapter 3 and a summary of the findings and discussion based on data presented in Chapter 4 are addressed. This is presented and organized in accord with the conceptual framework, research questions, and related literature that guided the study. Next, implications for action and recommendations for further research are offered. Finally, the researcher's reflections and a brief conclusion is presented.

#### Overview of the Study

A review of literature confirmed the growing rate of instructional coaching as a form of teacher professional development and called for a greater knowledge base about instructional coach (IC) and principal relationships. An investigation into how school administrators work with ICs so that they can impact teacher instruction more effectively was needed. Moreover, the identification of each of these factors and understanding of how each factor could impact the coach's effectiveness was warranted.

Instructional coaching research and literature is growing, specifically in the area of identifying variables that impact the instructional coaches' work with teachers. One of the main identified variables that impact the IC's work with teachers is the role of the principal (Fullan & Knight, 2011; West, 2017). Several researchers identified the IC's role as instrumental to the success of school reform efforts, particularly when the IC has a strong partnership with teachers and a strong working relationship with the principal (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009; West, 2017). As the roles of the principal and IC continued to evolve over the last few decades

into instrumental forms of leadership, professional learning, and resources for teacher growth, the roles of the principal and IC have come to a crossroads, becoming dependent on each other in order to move instruction forward (West, 2017). The intersect of the IC and principal roles became dependent on each other: vital to the success of continuous improvement efforts (West, 2017). As this form of teacher professional development remains a popular model for schools seeking to transform instruction, the factors that contribute to the success of ICs continue to be an area of research (Neumerski, 2013).

Fullan and Knight (2011) recognized the importance of the principal as instructional leader as being equally important to the work of the IC in the following statement and noted that the IC's work "is squandered if school principals are not instructional leaders" (p. 53). In conjunction with teachers being the "most significant factor in student success" (p. 53), Fullan and Knight rated principals second and ICs third. To "bring about deep change" (p. 53) they noted that teachers, principals, and ICs need to work in concert with one another as a "coordinated team" (p. 53). Thus, the relationship between the principal and IC are directly correlated to the impact the IC will have when working with teachers.

Dean et al. (2012) expounded on supportive conditions set forth by the principal as demonstrating the value of the role, role and responsibility clarity, providing the vision and focused work of the coach, training, and modeling coaching in the principal's own leadership. Knight (2009) defined conditions that must exist for ICs to be successful in their work with teachers: "a) focus and continuity on a few high-leverage strategies, b) a learning-friendly culture, c) principal support, d) clear roles, e) protect the coaching relationship, f) time for coaching, and g) continuous learning for coach and administrators" (pp. 19-20). According to Knight, an examination of the conditions the principal provides for the IC to be successful might

include culture and climate, collaboration, and training. Engaging in conversations and training around the contributing factors that lead to the success of the IC may ensure that the IC reaches maximum potential, teacher instruction improves, and instructional leaders ultimately impact student achievement. The findings of this qualitative study offered information regarding the types of supports, conditions, and relationships between the IC and principal that ICs encounter and believe they need from the principal. The qualitative data gathered support further development of the IC and principal relationship and defined principal supports that impact the work of the IC with teachers.

#### Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrators. A secondary purpose was to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction.

Using a qualitative research design, I explored the held perceptions of ICs regarding their work with school administrators to gain an understanding of the following: (a) supports, (b) conditions, and (c) relationships between the principal and the IC. Through a review of literature, focus group interviews, and individual interviews, perceptions of ICs were explored to identify specific experiences, characterize principal impact, and inform the influence of the principal in ICs' work with teachers.

The research questions were based on existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the purpose of the study addressed in Chapter 1. The following overarching research question was used to guide the study: What are the perceptions of ICs on the supports, conditions, and

relationships they encounter in their work with administrators? Additional questions to support and guide the study are listed in the next section.

### Research Questions

1. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches report they encounter in their work with school administrators?
2. What supports, conditions, and relationships do instructional coaches believe they need in their work with administrators so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction?

### Review of the Methodology

To gain an understanding of the overall purpose of the study and types of supports and conditions relevant to the work of ICs in schools, a qualitative research design and approach was used to answer the research questions. Through the use of focus groups and individual interviews, I was able to capture the lived experiences of ICs and give insight into the principal and IC relationship that informed the types of conditions, support, and communication necessary to impact teacher instruction.

The findings of the study were organized by three themes based on the conceptual framework: providing support, creating conditions, developing relationship. A discussion of the research findings is provided in the next section.

### Discussion of Findings

This section is organized into three sections based on the conceptual framework and weaves the findings presented in Chapter 4 into the research questions and the conceptual framework. Within these three sections, both research questions are addressed by the

corresponding themes identified in the conceptual framework: support, conditions, and relationship ICs report they encounter and believe they need from the principal.

### Findings Related to Research Questions

#### Perceptions of the Relationship

The IC and principal relationship is multi-layered, ranging from developing the relationship with the principal to the principal impacting the work of the IC with teachers. Fullan and Knight (2011) alluded to the significance of the IC and principal relationship by stating: “If teachers are the most significant factor in student success, and principals are second, then coaches are third. All three, working in a coordinated team, will be required to bring about deep change” (p. 53). The relationship between the principal and IC are directly correlated to the impact the IC will have when working with teachers. Anderson and Wallin (2018) found that coaches who set goals with administrators and worked closely with them were more successful than those who worked poorly with administrators. The role of the principal is crucial to both the success of the IC and the work of the coach with teachers to improve instruction (Dean et al., 2012). According to Poglinco and Bach (2004), a well-established partnership between the principal and IC stood out as a priority before “the coaching model” could be expected to succeed (p. 400).

The participants confirmed the research findings and the importance of the principal and IC relationship that informed the conceptual framework. The participant data revealed three main relationship factors as most impactful on the IC’s work with teachers and the development of the relationship between the principal and IC: a) developing the principal relationship and trust, b) the principal understanding the role, and c) the impact of the relationship in the IC’s work with teachers.

Developing the relationship. Range et al. (2014) studied specific principal behaviors that supported instructional coaching such as confidential conversations, support of IC's work, frequent meetings, and working in close alignment. The participants in this study noted several ways that ICs develop relationships with their principal. They indicated that time and interest, both personally and professionally, were important to the development of the relationship. In regard to time as an important factor, participants noted that the principal not only showed a personal interest in the IC and their work, but this time led to the IC feeling valued.

Most ICs attributed their weekly meetings as the most important time when relationship development took place. They attributed the constant and frequent communication, both formally and informally, to their relationship development as well. One common factor was that trust was developed when the principal made time for the IC and trust was foundational to the relationship between the IC and principal. According to the literature on instructional coaching, when an IC and principal have a strong relationship, trust and respect are evident in their work together (Fullan & Knight, 2009; West, 2017).

Trust was defined further as trust in the work of the IC, trust by providing autonomy, trust in decision making, trust to carry out the principal's vision, and trust of confidential conversations with teachers, but also as a safe place for the IC to confide in the principal. Furthermore, the trust the principal had in the IC gave them confidence in their work. More importantly, participants reported that if the principal demonstrated trust toward the IC, the teachers were more likely to trust the IC. Based on the participants' responses, the relationship of the IC is dependent upon trust and if trust does not exist, a relationship between the IC and principal will have little or no impact on the IC's work with teachers.

Understanding the role. Johnson (2016) alluded to the importance of the principal understanding the role of instructional coaching, which “can help administrators balance the managerial and instructional leadership responsibilities required of their role” (p. 39). It is important that the principal understands the role of the IC and how it is used to build capacity in teachers; thus, impacting student achievement. However, as noted by Johnson (2016), principals often lack understanding of the role because they “often lack experience or background on how to utilize this professional development model effectively” (p. 39). On the other hand, when the principal understands the role of the IC, they can share how the work of the IC can impact their work with teachers and respect boundaries and confidentiality between the IC and teacher.

Several researchers underscored the importance of principal support for the IC by protecting the role of the coach from work that has little impact on student achievement (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009; West, 2017). Participants reported role clarity was important to the relationship of the IC and principal. If the principal understood the IC role, the principal then protected the coaching role from administrative duties, aligned the IC’s work with teachers, and respected the confidentiality of the coaching relationship with teachers. Knight (2009) captured the misconception that happens if there is not a clear understanding of the role by noting: “[I]f teachers perceive their coach as an administrator rather than a peer, they may hesitate to open up about their needs or take risks” (p.19). When the principal models these behaviors, the IC and principal relationship is developed further and trust is built. Participants indicated when there was not clarity around the role, teacher perceptions of the IC’s work and role was confusing, which led to teachers and other staff members asking them to do tasks that did not align to instructional coaching roles and responsibilities.

The IC could have lack of clarity around their purpose and value, causing frustration and lack of direction. The principal and IC can ensure they have a clear understanding of the role by discussing the role and responsibilities to ensure it aligns with coaching. Furthermore, they can discuss how the role will be communicated to teachers and how both the principal and coach will work together to protect the coaching role. In addition, the principal and IC should have frequent meetings to reflect and discuss the impact of the role to ensure the principal continues to protect the role. If success of the IC role hinges on their ability to have time to coach teachers, then the ability of the principal to protect the role is vital to the success of the school and the relationship between the IC and principal. Table 6 displays specific examples that informed the conceptual framework and summarizes the characteristics of developing the principal relationship.

Table 6

*Conceptual Framework Component—Developing the Principal Relationship: Perceptions of Influences and Effects on the IC Relationship with the Principal*

Influences	Effect on the Relationship
Time with the principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IC feels they are not doing the work in isolation</li> <li>● IC feels they are part of the team</li> <li>● IC feels that their work is valuable to the campus</li> <li>● IC is clear on the priorities of the campus</li> </ul>
Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IC is equipped with knowledge for communication with teachers</li> <li>● IC feels they can carry out the vision of the principal</li> <li>● IC feels they can make decisions</li> <li>● IC feels valued, respected, and empowered</li> <li>● IC feels they have the autonomy to coach teachers</li> </ul>
Understanding the IC Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IC feels the principal will protect their role from administrative duties</li> <li>● IC feels they have time to coach</li> <li>● IC feels they have collective responsibility with instruction</li> </ul>

Impact of the relationship on the work. Participants revealed how the principal and IC relationship indirectly and directly impacted the work of the IC with teachers. According to Poglinco and Bach (2004), one of the consistent findings central to the effectiveness of the IC was the role of the principal. The supportive conditions set forth by the principal indirectly and directly impact the IC and their work with teachers (Neumerski, 2013). Participants consistently alluded to how the coaching relationship was modeled by the principal, causing teachers to trust the IC and engage in a coaching cycle with the IC. Teachers saw how the principal and IC worked together, collaborated, and were aligned, which in turn served as a model relationship for the IC and teacher. Several participants shared how the principal relationship opened the door for the IC's work, encouraging a culture of coaching and endorsing their work with teachers. The principal and IC relationship also impacted the coaches' own efficacy in their work with teachers. The ICs emphasized the importance of the development of the principal and IC relationship and the specific practices above as foundational to the relationship such as trust, respect, protecting the coaching role, and time spent with the principal. In addition, the relationship was furthered when trust was extended and the principal provided autonomy for the IC to take risks and approach their work. Based on the ICs' responses, the relationship and practices then directly and indirectly impact the work of the IC with teachers.

#### Perceptions of Support

Data generated from both the focus groups and individual interviews confirmed the importance of principal support for the IC. The participants reported the different ways the principal supported the IC and defined critical practices of support to their success. Matsumura et al. (2009) focused specifically on the impact of instructional coaching and the relationship with the principal, referencing the importance of principal support in their study. In their

findings, they outlined principal behaviors that influenced the IC's impact and work with teachers: (a) principal publicly endorsement of the coach's work, (b) professional autonomy of the coach, (c) active participation of the principal, and (d) clarity of the instructional coaching role by principal. Koehler (2017) identified four critical practices that impact the coaches' work with teachers: a) clarity of coaching role, b) training for coaches, c) administrator training and support, and d) time with teachers. Participants defined autonomy as the ability to try new things and take risks as an IC. Autonomy was synonymously used with trust from the principal. Participants reported public endorsement of the IC's work with teachers was key to their work and enrolling teachers in a coaching cycle. When the principal publicly endorsed their work, it opened doors for the IC to coach more teachers and demonstrated the trust of the principal in the IC. These behaviors and actions made the IC feel valued by the principal. Several researchers underscored the importance of principal support for the IC by protecting the role of the coach from work that has little impact on student achievement (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009; West, 2017). Participants shared the importance of protecting the IC role from other duties. When the principal protected the role, it provided more time to coach and allowed the IC to have a greater impact on a campus. In addition, the principal's protection clarified the coaching role for teachers. Koehler (2017) underscored clarity of the coaching role for teachers as a critical practice.

The weekly meeting the IC had with a principal was reported as one of the most critical supports by participants. Knight (2009) referenced meeting frequently with the coach as a way to provide principal support "to ensure that their coaches share their vision for professional learning" (p. 19).

The IC confirmed these practices as critical ways the principal supports the IC. Table 7 captures and summarizes their perceptions of the supports the principal provided the ICs that were critical to their success.

Table 7

*Conceptual Framework Component–Support: Perceptions of Critical Supports the Principal Provides*

Critical Supports Defined	Support to Coaches
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ability to feel they can take risks</li> <li>● Ability to feel they can run with ideas</li> <li>● Ability to try new things</li> </ul>
Public Endorsement of the IC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Opens doors with teacher to enroll in a coaching cycle</li> <li>● Models trust of the IC’s work</li> <li>● Shows value of the IC role to teachers</li> </ul>
Protecting the Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides time for the IC to coach</li> <li>● Provides accessibility and availability to teachers throughout the school day</li> <li>● Provides clarity of their role to teachers</li> </ul>
Meeting with the Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shows the principal values the position</li> <li>● Aligns the vision of the campus to the IC’s work</li> <li>● Provides time to communicate</li> <li>● Principal takes a professional and personal interest in the IC</li> <li>● Involves the IC with instructional decisions</li> <li>● Prioritizes the IC’s work with teachers</li> </ul>

Knight (2009) defined instructional coaching conditions for success that included “principal support, clear roles, protect the coaching relationship, and time to coach” (p. 19). The practices participants shared were critical to their support from the principal, aligned to the literature, and were identified as essential in the IC’s work with teachers. Principals need to

identify the supports their IC communicates they need and the types of support that are most important to their work with teachers. When ICs feel supported and can identify the ways their principal supports them, they are more likely to feel valued. In addition, both principal and IC are clear on what support is needed to further the IC's work with teachers.

### Perceptions of Conditions

There were several conditions created by the principal that were essential to the IC's work with teachers. Johnson (2016) noted conditions for IC success such as role clarity, clear vision, partnership approach, protected time to coach, and an environment and culture of learning and collaboration. Range et al. (2014) studied specific principal behaviors that supported instructional coaching, such as confidential conversations, support of the IC's work, frequent meetings, and working in close alignment. Dean et al. (2012) expounded on supportive conditions set forth by the principal as demonstrating the value of the role, clarity of their role and responsibility, providing the vision and focused work of the coach, training, and modeling coaching in the principal's own leadership. When examining the conditions needed for IC success, ICs' descriptors correlated to the principal as instructional leader. Table 8 provides a summary of the ICs' perceptions of critical conditions that the principal created.

When the principal created conditions for coaching, the IC's work excelled with teachers. Koehler (2017) found administrators as barriers to the coaches' work if supportive conditions did not exist. Participants revealed that principals benefited the IC's work with teachers when they fostered a culture of growth and collaboration, and established observation of instruction as common practice. Knight (2009) defined a *learning-friendly culture* as a condition for success for instructional coaching. Participants reported that principals should ensure the IC understands the vision of the campus and that their role as an important support. When the IC and principal

communicate frequently, the IC’s work with teachers is more aligned to the school’s vision and goals (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2009). By frequently meeting to discuss the priorities of the campus, the IC can align their work with teachers to the vision and goals of the campus. Principals should provide time with the IC to communicate the priorities and allow the IC to clarify and ask questions as ICs are responsible for helping principals carry out their vision. The participants reported feelings of disconnect, confusion, and lack of clarity when time was not made with the principal. In addition, the participants felt the role was not valued when time was not made to meet with the IC. Table 8 captures and summarizes the participant findings and perceptions of the conditions the principal creates that lead to success for the IC.

Table 8

*Conceptual Framework Component–Conditions: Perceptions of Critical Conditions the Principal Creates*

Critical Conditions Defined	Support to Coaches
Campus Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establishes a culture of growth</li> <li>● Establishes the norm that ICs will be in your classroom</li> </ul>
Vision & Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alignment of the IC’s work with teachers to the campus vision</li> <li>● Teachers know the expectation and the principal holds up the standard for the IC’s work</li> </ul>
Shared Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IC and principal share professional learning responsibility</li> <li>● Principal is involved in the coaching cycle</li> <li>● Teachers view the IC and principal as aligned and share responsibility</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IC is calibrated with instruction and feels aligned with the principal’s expectations and vision</li> <li>● Feels the IC’s work is a priority, valued, and respected</li> <li>● Understands the priorities of the campus</li> </ul>

Koehler (2017) recommended administrators also be trained in coaching to support coaches in their work and create a culture of coaching. Knight (2009) also defined principal training on instructional coaching as a condition for success. The participants revealed the importance of a coaching culture and growth that is defined by the principal's behaviors. A lack of training for principals on the instructional coaching role made it difficult to establish a culture of coaching. Thus, the conditions the principal creates for the IC are critical to their success and could be used for training for both the principal and IC.

### Implications for Action

The findings of this study provide several implications for action based on the themes and literature reviewed and add to the current literature base examining specific individuals and/or characteristics that contribute to the success of an IC, particularly in terms of principal and IC relationships. By identifying each of these factors and understanding how each factor could impact the coach's effectiveness, both instructional coaches and principals may benefit.

The IC participants in this study characterized principals' actions and identified specific principal practices that impacted their work with teachers. Several recommendations emerged from the data, suggesting a need for further training for the principal and IC in three areas:

1. Developing a relationship: development of a relationship built on trust, defined foundations of successful relationships, and identified relationship characteristics that yield the most benefit to the IC in their work with teachers;
2. Providing support: principal support of the IC by meeting with the IC weekly, endorsing the IC's work with teachers, providing autonomy for the IC, and protecting the role from other duties by providing time for coaching; and

3. Creating conditions: establishing a culture of growth, casting the vision for the campus, aligning the work of the IC with the vision, and enhancing communication with the IC through frequent meetings and open communication.

Table 9 provides a framework for implications for action that could serve as a training guide for current or future instructional coaching models. It could also be used as a reflection tool of practices for current principals and ICs.

Table 9

*Framework of Implications for Action*

Critical Components Defined	Actions for Training
Development of Principal and IC Relationship	Develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A foundation of trust &amp; respect</li> <li>● Consistent communication through a set meeting</li> <li>● Confidentiality standards</li> <li>● An interest in the IC professionally &amp; personally</li> <li>● Ways to show the IC is valued</li> <li>● Autonomy</li> </ul>
Principal Providing Support of the IC	Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public endorsement of the IC's work</li> <li>● Weekly meetings with the IC</li> <li>● Protection from other duties &amp; tasks not aligned to coaching; time for coaching</li> <li>● Non-evaluative framework</li> <li>● Value of the role</li> <li>● Autonomy</li> </ul>
Principal Creating Conditions for the IC	Create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shared leadership, vision, &amp; professional learning</li> <li>● Alignment of vision to the IC's work</li> <li>● Clear understanding of the role with all staff</li> <li>● Coaching as a priority</li> <li>● Open communication</li> <li>● Culture of learning &amp; growth</li> <li>● Opportunities for training</li> <li>● Autonomy</li> </ul>

The findings of this study contribute to the current literature on the role of the IC and further inform what principals and district-level administrators can do in their future work with ICs:

- 1) provide clarity for existing ICs and administrators;
- 2) provide specifics for future coaching models in order to enhance training, communication, and role clarity; and
- 3) identify which principal practices impact the IC's work with teachers the most.

### Recommendations for Further Research

#### Expansion of the Current Study

While this study drew information from a diverse sample of participants across several schools and districts, the scope of the study was limited to one region. A larger study that encompasses a geographical location larger than the North Texas region with ICs across Texas or in other states could provide additional data with more varied perspectives and provide a wider scope and variety of principal and IC roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and practices as well as the conditions and supports necessary for ICs to be able to impact teacher instruction and ultimately, student achievement.

There are different types of ICs, including district- and campus-based instructional coaching models. Through purposive sampling, the IC participants involved in this study provided perspectives that were limited to their experiences as campus-based ICs. Additional research studies seeking to obtain the perspectives of district-level instructional coaches or instructional coaches who serve as outside consultants are advised. Findings from these studies could be compared with the findings generated from this study to determine whether district-

level ICs or IC consultants encounter similar principal behaviors and supports and whether ICs believe they need the same principal support as those that were identified in this study.

The findings of this study were limited to a single perspective, the perceptions of instructional coaches and what they encountered and believed they need from the principal. It might be beneficial to conduct a study with principals as the participants to identify how they believe they support the IC to compare findings and if the same practices are identified. In addition, do the beliefs of the principal about instructional coaching impact the IC's work with teachers or the IC's perceived effectiveness. A principal study could also be conducted around the instructional leadership role of the principal and if the role or lack of instructional leadership impacts the IC's work with teachers.

The ICs who participated in this study had obtained at least 1 year of instructional coaching experience. A similar study could be expanded to include first-year coaches. It might also be beneficial to compare first-year ICs' perceptions of what they encounter and believe they need from the principal to see if additional practices are identified or if the findings are similar to the findings of this study. The findings could further inform the development of a first-year coaching model or first year ICs with more intentional and specific training for both the IC and principal, specifically focusing on the development of the principal and IC relationship.

#### Follow-up to the Current Study

The focus of this study was the identification of specific practices the ICs encounter and believe they need from principals to impact their work with teachers. A study to examine the impact the principal has on the IC's efficacy could provide findings related to the IC's effectiveness and allow researchers to identify the practices that most contribute and impact coach efficacy.

## Longitudinal Possibilities

This study could be extended to include a longitudinal study that follows instructional coaches and principals over time to see if the identified practices over several years impact the work of the IC with teachers and their perceived effectiveness. Potential research questions could be examined: Does the amount of time the IC and principal engage in a relationship have a greater impact on the IC's work with teachers? Does it strengthen their work or improve the IC's perceived effectiveness? Do the perceptions of what the ICs encounter or believe they need from the principal change over time?

This study could also be extended into a comparative study. Coaching models that offer training on the identified behaviors and practices could be compared to coaching models that do not provide principal and IC training on the identified actions. The research question could be: Are there differences between perceived IC effectiveness with coaching models that received training versus those that did not?

## Researcher Reflections

In my journey to add to the field of instructional coaching research and the literature base, having experience in this role myself, I felt prepared and hopeful that I would confirm my own assumptions and experiences as an instructional coach. While many of my findings confirmed my beliefs, experiences, and assumptions I had about instructional coaching, the voices of the participants and consequent findings that resonated with me continue to challenge my thinking in the field of instructional coaching. There are many practices and behaviors a principal can do that were revealed by the participants in this study; yet, there are a few that I believe are critical to the success of the IC, now having completed this study. There was a

preponderance of evidence to support the importance of these findings and the conceptual framework.

I learned that while the weekly meeting of the IC and principal was an important practice for the IC to align their work with the principal's vision, this practice fulfilled many needs of the IC and was one of the most instrumental in their success. Not only did this weekly meeting provide frequent communication, clarity, and direction for the IC, but the IC found their own personal value, trust, and respect from the principal during this time. The participants shared emotional experiences both from those who experienced this practice every week to those who rarely met with the principal. While the importance of a weekly meeting with the principal did not surprise me, the social and emotional connection to the work and the coaches' own perceived value did. Upon reflection of my own positive experiences with this practice, I now understand that this practice not only impacted my coach efficacy, but my value to the school and the principal. If the IC feels valued by the principal, they are more likely to feel of value to the campus and their daily work, which then leads to foundational trust and respect for both the principal and the teachers they serve. Often, there is only one IC position on a campus and it can be lonely. Feelings of isolation and lack of support can surface if the IC does not feel they are a part of the leadership team and have time with the principal. If I was asked, "What is one thing a principal can do to ensure success for the IC?", I would say without hesitation, a weekly meeting with the IC.

I recently had the privilege and opportunity to launch my own instructional coaching model for a district. Before launching the model, I spent a lot of time reading about instructional coaching and focusing on the principal and instructional coach relationship. Reflecting on the findings of this study affirmed the importance of training for both the IC and principal on this

role. In addition, any time there is turnover for either the IC or the principal, it is important to recalibrate, provide clarity of expectations, and discuss how they will build a relationship with each other. I was personally shocked at how many coaches shared that neither they nor their principal received training on instructional coaching. The findings of this study defined the most critical aspects of this training which should include: understanding the purpose of the IC role, providing time to coach, frequent communication, endorsement of the IC's work, and a shared vision with the principal.

I have experienced first hand the value an IC can bring to a campus. Working alongside teachers as partners to impact instruction, thus student achievement, is one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my career. The voices of the ICs from this study should be heard and I am hopeful that I represented them well. While many of the findings might seem common sense or natural, the findings of this study confirmed that the practices have to be defined and principals and ICs must be intentional or the IC could have little or isolated impact on a campus. Often the best teachers are pulled out of the classroom to become instructional coaches so that they can have a greater, systemic impact on student achievement. However, if close attention is not paid to this study's findings, the IC positions could be of little value to a campus and in the end, student achievement could suffer. How does removing a highly effective teacher with a proven track record of student achievement exponentially impact a campus? In my opinion, the answer to the question resides in the findings of this study.

#### Concluding Remarks

The findings of this study revealed the importance of the principal and IC relationship, specific relationship characteristics, support, and conditions ICs encountered and believed they need from their principal. The findings confirmed the impact the principal has on the IC's

perceived effectiveness. It is evident the principal is instrumental in the IC's work with teachers and can further their work when a relationship exists and the principal provides the identified supports and conditions. Overwhelmingly, the results of the study reinforce the importance of the partnership between the principal and IC.

While many behaviors and practices of the principal were identified as important in the study, three significant findings emerged. The interview questions evoked specific responses which allowed me to gather data related to which principal practices and behaviors the ICs perceived as important to their work with teachers. However, most participants shared insights on how these practices and behaviors made them feel. Overwhelmingly, the participants confirmed the principal was critical in the IC's perceived value and effectiveness, even alluding to the impact of the principal on their own coach efficacy. When these behaviors and supports did not exist, the IC did not feel valued, felt isolated, and unimportant to the campus. This, in turn, affected their work with teachers. The greatest correlations to the IC feeling valued and perceived effectiveness were principals showing value in the IC role and protecting the IC from tasks that were not aligned to coaching. In doing so, they provided more time for coaching. Ultimately, the principal can enhance the IC's work and perceived effectiveness or be a barrier to their work and even their own perceived value.

The second interesting observation is the importance of weekly meetings and communication with the IC. Overwhelmingly, participants spoke about the importance of being able to meet regularly to strengthen their work with teachers. When asked which practices impacted their work with teachers the most, the weekly meeting was the top response, second to the public endorsement of their work with teachers by the principal.

Lastly, the relationship with the principal transfers to the relationship the IC has with teachers, almost mirroring the principal relationship. When the IC and principal have a strong relationship, the IC is more likely to have strong relationships with teachers. If a strong IC and principal relationship exists, the principal shows value in the role, endorses the work of the IC, communicates frequently, and creates effective conditions for the IC to work with teachers.

Although research exists on instructional coaching, including the importance of principal support and relationships, the literature still lacks specific relationship characteristics, supports, and conditions provided by the principal that impact the IC's work with teachers. Moreover, researcher studies seeking to identify which principal practices impact the IC's work with teachers the most were lacking. Identification of these behaviors, practices, and actions are important for developing appropriate training for both ICs and principals. The findings generated from this study can serve as foundational practices for future instructional coaches and principals.

Instructional coaching is a financial investment for a district. Nevertheless, instructional coaching has the ability to impact student achievement when the role is effective in implementation. It is also a huge undertaking for a district and principal and calls for specific training and success criteria in relationship development, support, and conditions. ICs are often hired and then thrown on a campus without any training or facilitation of relationship development between the principal and IC. Moreover, the practices that are most successful for the principal and the IC in their work together may not be identified or provided. Principal and instructional coach training could benefit from the inclusion of the comprehensive findings of this study. Ongoing training and relationship development that specifically address the following are recommended: a) the development of a positive principal and IC relationship, b)

principal support that enhances the work of the IC, and c) the conditions that must exist for the IC to be successful. Although a variety of instructional coach and principal training offerings exist, the perceptions of ICs and what they believe they need from the principals do not. The principal is key to the IC's success. Investing in training and relationship development and examining the principal behaviors that impact the IC's work with teachers can maximize the IC's effectiveness and their own value, resulting in a greater impact on student achievement.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrator (s). A secondary purpose is to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrator(s) so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction.

I will begin the focus group interview by stating the purpose of the study and the research questions that are guiding the study. A minimum of four coaches from Northside Coaching Network will be interviewed in each focus group. Consent will be obtained, and each participant will be assured that the interviews will remain confidential. Participants will be informed that the interviews will be audio-recorded, with their permission, and may be stopped at any time. Participants will be assigned a number during the focus group interviews in order to identify each participant during the transcription process and to protect participants' identity.

1. Please describe your academic and professional experiences. (Background)
2. How did you become an instructional coach? (Background)
3. What district training did you receive for the instructional coach position? (Background)

Probe: What training did you receive from the school principal?

4. Describe your relationship with your principal. (RQ1)

Give a couple of examples of ways you work with the campus principal.

5. Describe actions you or your principal have taken to develop a relationship. (RQ1)
6. What do you consider to be the benefits of a strong relationship with the campus principal as an instructional coach? (RQ2)
7. What are your goals when working with the campus principal? (RQ1)

8. What types of support have been impactful in your collaboration with your campus principal? (RQ1)

9. Describe a time when you felt well-supported by your campus principal. (RQ1)

Probe: Describe times when you felt there were barriers to having the support you need.

10. Describe communication and the types of communication that you have with your principal? (RQ1)

Probe: Which do you believe impacts your work with teachers the most?

Probe: Which do you believe impacts your relationship with your principal the most?

11. What types of conditions do you believe contribute to the success of your work as an instructional coach? (RQ2)

12. What, if anything, would you change about your work with the campus principal as you strive to be the most effective instructional coach that you can be? (RQ2)

13. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to tell me about?

## APPENDIX B

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the supports, conditions, and relationships they encounter in their work with administrator (s). A secondary purpose is to identify the supports, conditions, and relationships that instructional coaches believe they need from administrator(s) so they can more effectively impact teacher instruction.

I will begin the individual interview by stating the purpose of the study and the research questions that are guiding the study. Five different coaches from Northside Coaching Network that did not participate in the focus group interview will be interviewed individually. Consent will be obtained, and each participant will be assured that the interviews will remain confidential. Participants will be informed that the interviews will be audio-recorded, with their permission, and may be stopped at any time.

1. Please describe your academic and professional experiences. (Background)
2. How did you become an instructional coach? (Background)
3. What district training did you receive for the instructional coach position? (Background)

Probe: What training did you receive from the school principal?

4. Describe your relationship with your principal. (RQ1)

Give a couple of examples of ways you work with the campus principal.

5. Describe actions you or your principal have taken to develop a relationship. (RQ1)
6. What do you consider to be the benefits of a strong relationship with the campus principal as an instructional coach? (RQ2)
7. What are your goals when working with the campus principal? (RQ1)

8. What types of support have been impactful in your collaboration with your campus principal? (RQ1)

9. Describe a time when you felt well-supported by your campus principal. (RQ1)

Probe: Describe times when you felt there were barriers to having the support you need.

10. Describe communication and the types of communication that you have with your principal? (RQ1)

Probe: Which do you believe impacts your work with teachers the most?

Probe: Which do you believe impacts your relationship with your principal the most?

11. What types of conditions do you believe contribute to the success of your work as an instructional coach? (RQ2)

12. What, if anything, would you change about your work with the campus principal as you strive to be the most effective instructional coach that you can be? (RQ2)

13. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to tell me about?

## APPENDIX C

### Focus Group Informed Consent Form

#### STUDENT INVESTIGATOR AND ADULT SUBJECTS University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

IRB NUMBER: **IRB-19-300**

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: The Relationship Between Instructional Coaches and Principals

Student Investigator: Lani Norman, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Teacher Education and Administration. Supervising Investigators: Dr. Barbara Pazez

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves the identification of your experiences and perceptions related to instructional coach and administrator relationships.

Study Procedures: If selected for participation, you will be asked to take part in a one-time focus group and/or individual interview conducted by the student investigator. The focus group and/or the individual interview is expected to last approximately 90 minutes.

During the course of the study, you will be asked to participate in the following procedures:

- If you agree to participate, you will be included in a focus group led by the student investigator. The focus group will be set up at a time convenient for the participants. With your permission, the focus group will be audio recorded and notes will be taken. You will be assigned a number that you will be asked to state before any response. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the participants, network, and any school names used during the interviews.
- You will be asked to review the analysis of the transcribed recordings to assure that the analysis accurately represents your responses.

Foreseeable Risks: The potential risks involved in this study are minimal.

Benefits to the Subjects and others:

- This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you, but we hope to learn more about instructional coach and administrator relationships. We expect the participation in the focus group may benefit you and your work by allowing time for reflection and may inform potential actions or next steps in the relationship with your administrator as a result of participation.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Information collected about you will be handled in a confidential manner in accordance with the law. Some identifiable data

may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). Aside from these required disclosures, your confidentiality will be protected through the following procedures:

- Only the student investigator will see the information about you from this study. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity and position of each participant. If information is shared that will reveal the participant's identity, substitutions will be used, or the information will not be shared. The results of this study may be published in a scientific book/or journal or presented to other people. If this is done, your name will not be used so no one will know who you are. The data from the transcribed interviews will be stored on a password-protected laptop until the study is complete, then will be stored on a password-protected flash drive in a locked cabinet in the supervising investigators' office for the required 3 years of retention. Information that is kept on computers will be kept safe from access by people who should not see it, through password-protection. Digital recordings will be deleted after transcriptions have been complete. At the end of the federally required 3-year period, all data will be destroyed.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions about the research study, you may contact the supervising investigator, Dr. Barbara Pazey, at [Barbara.Pazey@unt.edu](mailto:Barbara.Pazey@unt.edu) or the student investigator, Lani Norman, doctoral student, at 979-324-4883 or [lanijurena@gmail.com](mailto:lanijurena@gmail.com).

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participant Rights:

- Lani Norman has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told of the possible benefits and the potential risks.
- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

_____ Printed Name of Participant	_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Date
_____ Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent	_____ Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	_____ Date

## APPENDIX D

### Individual Interview Informed Consent Form

#### STUDENT INVESTIGATOR AND ADULT SUBJECTS University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

IRB NUMBER: **IRB-19-300**

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: The Relationship Between Instructional Coaches and Principals

Student Investigator: Lani Norman, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Teacher Education and Administration. Supervising Investigator: Dr. Barbara Pazey

Questions about the Study: If you have questions about the research study, you may contact the supervising investigator, Dr. Barbara Pazey, at [Barbara.Pazey@unt.edu](mailto:Barbara.Pazey@unt.edu) or the student investigator, Lani Norman, doctoral student, at 979-324-4883 or [lanijurena@gmail.com](mailto:lanijurena@gmail.com).

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves the identification of your experiences and perceptions related to instructional coach and administrator relationships.

Study Procedures: If selected for participation, you will be asked to take part in a one-time individual interview conducted by the student investigator. The interview is expected to last approximately 90 minutes.

During the course of the study, you will be asked to participate in the following procedures:

- If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed individually by the student investigator. The interview will be set up at a time convenient for the participants. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the participant, network, and any school names used during the interviews.
- You will be asked to review the analysis of the transcribed recordings to assure that the analysis accurately represents your responses.

Foreseeable Risks: The potential risks involved in this study are minimal.

Benefits to the Subjects and others:

- This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you, but we hope to learn more about instructional coach and administrator relationships. We expect the participation in the interview may benefit you and your work by allowing time for reflection and may inform potential actions or next steps in the relationship with your administrator as a result of participation.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Information collected about you will be handled in a confidential manner in accordance with the law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). Aside from these required disclosures, your confidentiality will be protected through the following procedures:

- Only the student investigator will see the information about you from this study. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity and position of each participant. If information is shared that will reveal the participant's identity, substitutions will be used, or the information will not be shared. The results of this study may be published in a scientific book/or journal or presented to other people. If this is done, your name will not be used so no one will know who you are. The data from the transcribed interviews will be stored on a password-protected laptop until the study is complete, then will be stored on a password-protected flash drive in a locked cabinet in the supervising investigators' office for the required 3 years of retention. Information that is kept on computers will be kept safe from access by people who should not see it, through password-protection. Digital recordings will be deleted after transcriptions have been complete. At the end of the federally required 3-year period, all data will be destroyed.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions about the research study, you may contact the supervising investigator, Dr. Barbara Pazey, at [Barbara.Pazey@unt.edu](mailto:Barbara.Pazey@unt.edu) or the student investigator, Lani Norman, doctoral student, at 979-324-4883 or [lanijurena@gmail.com](mailto:lanijurena@gmail.com).

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participant Rights:

- Lani Norman has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told of the possible benefits and the potential risks.
- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining  
Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining  
Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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