

“MY COACH GOT ME EXCITED ABOUT LITERACY EVEN THROUGH THIS  
TOUGH YEAR”: TEACHERS AND COACHES’ EXPERIENCES IN AN EARLY  
LITERACY COACHING PROGRAM

by

MELISSA ANN BISHOP

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Oakland University  
Rochester, Michigan

Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Tomoko Wakabayashi, Ed.D., Chair  
Julie Ricks-Doneen, Ph.D.  
Sherri L. Oden, Ph.D.  
Krista Shambleau, Ph.D.  
Cynthia Carver, Ph.D.

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*To my husband and daughters*

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Melissa Ann Bishop

## ABSTRACT

### “MY COACH GOT ME EXCITED ABOUT LITERACY EVEN THROUGH THIS TOUGH YEAR”: TEACHERS AND COACHES’ EXPERIENCES IN AN EARLY LITERACY COACHING PROGRAM

by

Melissa Ann Bishop

Adviser: Tomoko Wakabayashi, Ed.D.

For over 100 years, reading has been a critical topic of discussion in the education field. Theories have been developed and revised on how children learn to read and as more research was completed (Crawford, 1995). Literacy and reading scores around the United States have been low for over ten years. In 2019, only 32% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders nationwide have been proficient in reading (NCES, 2020). Many states have developed laws around reading proficiency targeted at reaching reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Including Michigan’s, the Read by Grade Three Law (Act 306 of 2016: MCL 380.1280f, 2016).

In Michigan, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School District Administrators in collaboration with early literacy experts created the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy (MAISA, 2016a). One county in Michigan developed a literacy coaching program for prekindergarten teachers. This coaching program was the basis for this dissertation research that explores teacher and coach experiences in the program.

This research was completed as a mixed-methods case study, using both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Surveys and interviews gathered perspectives of the coaches and teachers on coaching strategies that were effective for them. In addition, the perception of the quality of relationship between the coach and teacher was investigated. Coaching was completed virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and participants shared their experiences with navigating coaching, teaching, and using technology in new ways. Survey and interview data was analyzed using in-vivo coding to explore initial categories and then themes.

The study describes a variety of coaching strategies that coaches and teachers found effective. I also compare the reported impact of an in person versus virtual coaching on teachers' literacy practices. Constructive feedback was not only the strategy reported as used most often, but also it was perceived to have the most impact on teaching practices by both coaches and teachers. Teachers' strong relationship with coaches affected their success; those reporting a stronger relationship also reached also their goals and gained new knowledge from the coaching program. Resources and difficulties faced varied for the teachers; these ranged from materials, budget, and available staff.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
The History of Reading and Literacy	1
Michigan's Literacy Timeline	3
Insights from the Field and Evaluation	5
GSRP Teacher	5
Early Childhood Specialist	6
Literacy Training of Trainers	7
Literacy Concerns	9
Equity Disparities	11
A Local Initiative	14
Definitions	17
Early Childhood	17
Early Literacy	18
Professional Development	19

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Coaching	22
Rationale for Current Study	23
CHAPTER TWO	
LITERATURE REVIEW	25
Theories	25
Knowles' Theory of Adult Learning	26
Vygotsky's Theories	30
Vygotsky Space	30
Zone of Proximal Development	31
Scaffolding	32
Bandura's Social Learning Theory	33
Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle	35
Search and Compilation Strategy	36
Related Research	37
Importance of Professional Development	38
Coaching Effectiveness in Early Childhood	40
Literacy Coaching Effectiveness in Early Childhood	44
Increasing Teacher's Literacy Knowledge and Practice	45
Improving Language Development	48
Two Year Coaching	49



## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Online and On Site Coaching	52
Summary	55
Coaching Strategies and Challenges	57
Coaching Strategies	57
Coach and Teacher Conversations	64
Challenges	65
Summary	66
Research Gap	69
Pertinent Policies, Standards and Organizations	70
Michigan Laws and Policies	70
National Laws and Policies	72
Head Start	72
Third Grade Reading Legislation	73
National Association for the Education of Young Children	74
Summary	75
CHAPTER THREE	
METHODS	79
Overview and Research Questions	79
Research Design	80
Positioning Statement	81
Study Participants	82

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Participant Recruitment	82
Participant Characteristics	84
Teacher Demographics	84
Coach Demographics	85
Data Collection Procedures	89
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval	89
Participant Consent	89
Data Collection	89
Surveys	90
Focus Groups and Interviews	90
Existing Data	92
Data Analysis Approach	93
Data Sources	93
Qualitative Data	95
Theme Development	100
Quantitative Data	102
Validation	102
CHAPTER FOUR	
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	103
Research Questions and Analysis Approach	103

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Coaching Strategies	104
Observation	107
Communication	110
Reflection	113
Analyzing Data	114
Modeling and In Person Support	115
Developing an Action Plan	117
Individualization	118
Goal Setting	119
Role-Play	122
Using Video for Feedback	123
Problem-Solving Discussion	124
Constructive Feedback	126
Summary	127
Relationships	128
Coach Qualities	129
Teacher Motivation and Buy-in	130
Building Relationships First	132
Impact on Teacher Success	133
Summary	134

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Positive Learning and Development Experienced	135
Teachers	135
Literacy Practices Impacted	136
More Intentional and Focused	136
Gained Confidence	137
Students	137
Coaches	138
Summary	140
Difficulties	140
Classroom and Building Issues	141
Assistant Teachers	142
Virtual Coaching	142
Teacher Knowledge	143
Summary	144
Resources	145
Literacy Materials	145
Available Staff	146
Work Time	147
Administrative Support	147
Support Needed for Coaches	149

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Summary	149
CHAPTER FIVE	
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	151
Introduction	151
Coaching Strategies	153
In Person Coaching	154
Virtual Coaching	154
Individualization	156
Role-Play	157
Problem-Solving Discussions	157
Relationships	158
Teacher Motivation and Buy-in	158
Build Relationships First	159
Impact on Teacher Success	160
Learning and Development Experienced	161
Difficulties	162
Resources	163
Limitations	164
Directions for Future Research	166
Recommendations	168

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Virtual Coaching	168
Relationships	169
Training	170
Communication	170
Conclusion	171
APPENDICES	
A. IRB Approval Letters	174
B. Literacy Timelines	178
C. M-STEP Scores in Oakland County	180
D. Table of Studies from Chapter Two	183
E. TCE Teacher and Coach Survey Questions	189
F. Interview Questions	194
G. Essentials Checklist	197
REFERENCES	207

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Reading Assessment Scores	10
Table 2.1	Theory and Coaching Strategies Comparison	77
Table 3.1	Research Involvement in Prior Related Research	83
Table 3.2	Teacher Education Level	86
Table 3.3	Teacher Classroom Type	86
Table 3.4	Teacher Years of Teaching Experience	87
Table 3.5	Classroom Types Where Coaches Worked with Teachers	88
Table 3.6	Data Sources for Research Questions	94
Table 3.7	Coding of Teacher Qualitative Survey and Interview Data	97
Table 3.8	Triangulation of Teacher Codes and Categories	98
Table 3.9	Coach Coding and Triangulation	99
Table 3.10	Coding Process and Outcomes	101
Table 4.1	Percentage that the Strategy was Reported as Used “All the time” in the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys	105
Table 4.2	Strategies That Made the Most Impact From TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys	106
Table 4.3	Strategies Coaches and Teachers Reported Wanting to Use “All of the Time” during Coaching from TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys	108
Table 4.4	Summary of Strategy Ratings From TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys	109
Table 4.5	Amount of Contact from TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys	111

## LIST OF TABLES—Continued

Table 4.6	Modality of Contact with Coach from TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys	112
Table D.1	Coaching in Early Childhood Studies	184
Table D.2	Early Childhood Literacy Studies	185
Table D.3	Coaching Strategies Studies	187



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure B.1	Michigan’s Literacy Timeline	179
Figure B.2	Literacy Projects Timeline	179
Figure C.1	Oakland Schools M-STEP Data	181
Figure C.2	Lake Orion School District M-STEP Data	181
Figure C.3	Pontiac School District M-STEP Data	182

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
DISTAR	Direct Instructional Model
EELCP	Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program
GLI	Guiding Literacy Instruction
GSRP	Great Start Readiness Program
GELN	General Education Leadership Network
MAISA	Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts
ECS	Early Childhood Specialist
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
M-STEP	Michigan Student Test for Education Progress
MEAP	Michigan Educational Assessment Program
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NPDCI	National Professional Development Center on Inclusion
NACCRRRA	National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
PD	Professional Development
IRB	Institutional Review Board
TCE	Teacher and Coach Experience Surveys

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Reading and literacy have been a concern of researchers since the early 1920s. Almost 100 years later, children's proficiency in reading and literacy are still major concerns of parents, educators, administrators, and policy makers. In 2019, only 35% of 4th graders and 34% of 8th graders were proficient in reading (NCES, 2020). To increase literacy skills, states across the country have enacted laws that focus on the need for children to be proficient in reading by the end of third grade (NCSL, 2019). To improve teachers' literacy practices, some states and counties are turning to professional development to increase these skills. One form of this professional development is coaching early childhood educators in literacy teaching practices to support the development of literacy skills in children. The focus of this study was to understand the experiences of coaches and teachers who participated in an early literacy coaching program and documenting the program's successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

#### **The History of Reading and Literacy**

As stated above, the topics of reading, literacy, how children learn to read and how to prepare them for reading fluency in adulthood, have been focuses since the early 1920s. Since then, there has been much debate on how children learn to read, at what age they should be reading, how to teach them, and what can be done at the federal level to support these endeavors (Crawford, 1995). One of the early theoretical views of children's learning was the Maturational Theory which states that "young children needed time to mature and develop before beginning formal reading instruction" (Gesell,

1925, as cited in Crawford, 1995, p. 72). A term that is still used today, ‘Reading Readiness’, was used as far back as 1925, which measured readiness through tests instead of teacher and parent perspectives (Jenkins, 1927, as cited in Crawford, 1995). In 1937, researcher Arthur Gates discovered that reading development was influenced mostly by the experiences and instruction a child received more than their maturity, which contradicted maturational theorists’ perspectives (Crawford, 1995).

Almost three decades later, Project Head Start began to address the gap between children living in poverty and children in more middle-class households. The aim was to help increase their school readiness in terms of providing experiences proposed by developmental theorists to be foundational (Crawford, 1995). Research on Project Head Start found that the gains children made while in the program did not carry over into elementary school, which led to Project Follow Through which focused on helping disadvantaged children to succeed in elementary school (Crawford, 1995). Financial constraints prohibited this program from being implemented across the country, which led to Project Follow Through becoming a research initiative to find the best instructional strategies to help these disadvantaged children (Crawford, 1995). HighScope was one of the programs that stemmed from Project Follow Through’s research (Crawford, 1995). The Direct Instruction Model, or DISTAR, also developed in Project Follow Through’s research was focused on rapid growth through teacher directed instruction (Becker, 1977, as cited in Crawford, 1995).

In the 1960’s, the push for academic instruction in a formal setting began with reading readiness skills, pushing first grade activities into kindergarten curriculums (Elkind, 1987, 1986, as cited in Crawford, 1995). This mindset of readiness has continued

and is integrated into the materials designed for teaching reading, and it has been widely adopted by educators. Clay (1966, as cited in Crawford, 1995) noted that children come to school with their own sets of knowledge and skills that they have already acquired. Instead of using the term readiness, she felt that ‘emergent literacy’ was a better phrase for the type of skills the children were developing. In the 1970s, research began on how children learn reading and writing, and this research continues now with terms such as “emergent literacy, whole language, and authentic reading and writing” (Crawford, 1995, p. 77). This history of literacy and reading is valuable as a foundation of this research to understand how the view of reading has evolved over the last 100 years. Yet, there is still eerily the same concern as many children are still not receiving high quality literacy instruction. Professional development and coaching are current tools used to fight against the gap that many children are experiencing in their foundational years.

### **Michigan’s Literacy Timeline**

After examining the national literacy history, it is important to this research to understand Michigan’s literacy timeline through an overview of the legislative and organizational history. For a visual of this information, a figure detailing Michigan’s Literacy Timeline is included in Appendix B (Figure B.1). More in-depth explanations of these laws, regulations, and organizational support are discussed in the next chapter. In 2016, Michigan enacted the Read by Grade Three Law (Act 306 of 2016: MCL 380.1280f, 2016) which states that by the end of third grade all students need to be reading at grade level. If students are not reading at grade level, or within one level, they have the possibility of being held back or remaining in third grade, for another year. This was supposed to begin in the 2019-2020 school year; however, school districts are now

beginning this initiative at times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before students reach third grade, the law requires that schools identify those learners who are struggling in reading and writing and provide them with additional help.

To help with this enormous task of all third graders in the state being proficient readers by the end of third grade, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators' (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) developed the Early Literacy Task Force. This task force developed the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy (*Essentials Pre-K*, MAISA, 2016a) which outlines ten literacy practices that can be done daily in classrooms to improve children's literacy skills. The purpose of the *Essentials Pre-K* was to, "Increase Michigan's capacity to improve children's literacy by identifying a small set of research-supported literacy instructional practices that could be a focus of professional development throughout the state" (MAISA, 2016a, p. 1).

In 2017, the state developed Michigan's Action Plan for Literacy Excellence for 2017-2020. Within the plan it states that the current and future education workforce "deserve continuous support to grow their instructional skills in literacy" (MDE, 2017, p. 19). In 2018, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) developed the Early Literacy Coaching Model, which describes how literacy coaching can improve teaching practices that will in turn improve student achievement scores. This coaching model includes information for kindergarten through third grade and does not include information on literacy coaching at the Pre-K level.

Then in 2019, the Oakland Schools' Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP) began which focused on literacy coaching in Pre-K classrooms. The study was

originally designed to compare the differences between in-person and virtual coaching on prekindergarten teachers' literacy practices. The teachers received training on the Essential Literacy Instructional Practices in Early Literacy (hereon *Essentials Pre-K*; MAISA, 2016a) while receiving coaching on these literacy practices. In March of 2020, the study design was altered due to COVID-19 which resulted in teaching and coaching being done virtually. In June of 2020, I completed the pilot study for the current research in which I conducted focus groups with the coaches to explore their experiences and the support they needed to be successful in the program. The current research involves coaches and teachers in year two of the EELCP during the 2020-2021 school year. All coaches but one participated in both year one and year two of the program, but teachers only participated in one year of the EELCP. As discussed throughout in subsequent chapters, year two of the EELCP was designed with only virtual coaching, however some coaches were able to go into classrooms in the spring when visitor restrictions were lifted.

### **Insights from the Field and Evaluations**

#### **GSRP Teacher**

One of my teaching experiences was in a Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) classroom that was housed within a childcare center. GSRP is a state-funded preschool program in Michigan that serves four-year-old children who may be “at risk for low educational attainment” due to risk factors affecting their family such as low-income level, incarceration of a parent, living in a single parent household or having a teen parent (MDE, 2020). Classrooms for GSRP can be based either within a school district or a community-based organization such as a childcare center. While I was teaching GSRP in

a childcare center, I began to see parts of the day where I could provide support to the neighboring classrooms' preschool teacher. I provided support by implementing developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. More specifically, the children were given choices of which centers they could play in and when they would play in the centers. Another example of a developmentally appropriate activity would be active and appropriate skills for children to practice during whole-group time such as learning to count, and identifying letters, or colors (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Additionally, aims designed to support and promote the children's literacy skills by incorporating more books and open-ended projects throughout the day. This opportunity led me to dive more into the theories and research on coaching approaches that can help a coaching program to be successful.

### **Early Childhood Specialist**

Throughout my professional experience, I have attended many professional development training sessions that were just one or two days long. However, much of the content and knowledge presented I was not able to incorporate into my classroom, due to it not meeting the requirements of my curriculum and program. In GSRP, a master-level Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) was assigned to each teacher and the ECS assumed the roles of evaluator and liaison to the state. My ECS conducted monthly coaching sessions which included an observation and then immediate feedback and goal setting. Her visits helped me as the teacher to see areas that I needed to improve upon and get ideas and strategies on how to better meet the needs of my students. While she visited, she observed my teaching and then we planned together creating a new goal. After observing we discussed what she saw, ideas for improvement and then we planned how I could



implement these new ideas. One example of this was when she observed our morning routine and transitions. She suggested new ways to have students plan before their work time and ways for them to review afterward, such as using props or pictures to allow students to share in different ways. This coaching process occurred over three years while I was in this teaching position. After working with the ECS, I was able to refine my classroom management skills to meet the changing needs of each group of children.

### **Literacy Training of Trainers**

In 2018-2019, I was a graduate research assistant at Oakland University. In this position, I had the opportunity to be a part of the evaluation of the statewide Training of Trainers for the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Prekindergarten (MAISA, 2016a). The various collaborators on the research team, included a faculty member from Oakland University and three Early Childhood Ph.D. students. Our team attended the trainings to learn more about the concepts taught, the overall design of the training, and provide in-depth analysis of the training. The trainings were designed and conducted by the Early Literacy Task Force formed within the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators' (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN), our team was not part of the design or implementation of these trainings. As a part of the evaluation, our research team captured the training participants' perceived impact of the training with surveys. Next the research team conducted focus groups with training participants and the leadership group who designed the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Prekindergarten (hereafter the *Essentials Pre-K*; MAISA, 2016a) document and training. The surveys and focus groups explored the impact of the

training on participants' knowledge of the practices, the design of the training, and their perspective on the implementation of the trainings to teachers in their counties.

We also conducted observations in preschool classrooms in the Tri-County area of Metro-Detroit (Oakland, Macomb, and Livingston Counties), including GSRP, Head Start and other childcare settings. An Essentials Checklist (Wakabayashi et al., 2019) was developed by the research team to examine the fidelity in which the *Essentials Pre-K* was being implemented prior to training being implemented fully throughout the state. This checklist organized the materials and practices from the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) into a document that administrators, coaches, and teachers could use to find which practices were already implemented and those that were lacking. From the evaluation and observations, we found that most teachers needed support on at least one, if not more, of the Essential Practices, as indicated by their scores on our Essentials Checklist. Training workshops for teachers were the design presented, but our research found that coaching may play an integral role in supporting teachers' practices to include those in the *Essentials Pre-K* document (MAISA, 2016a). Participants in this training however, shared that they were concerned about the effectiveness the trainings would have on impacting teacher practice without any type of follow-up support, such as coaching (Wakabayashi et al., 2019). My role in this evaluation was helping to develop the survey, conducting a focus group, coding, and analyzing data from both the surveys and focus groups. These experiences gave me ideas, experience, and skills that I drew from in developing my dissertation research.

## **Literacy Concerns**

Coaching is an important part of professional development for teachers and may be more effective than typical professional development. Coaching is professional support that meets the unique needs of teachers and can help teachers to implement new practices in their classrooms (Knight, 2009). Professional development typically consists of trainings that could last a couple of hours to a couple of days, and usually there are no follow-up trainings or discussions afterward. Given the focus on literacy proficiency both nationally and in Michigan and considering only slight increases in students' literacy scores on various measures, coaching support for teachers in literacy instruction may be a strategy that deserves intentional consideration. Table 1.1 shows reading scores from two grades from a recent year compared to ten years before from Michigan and across the country.

Students' levels of reading on three assessments compare national reading scores to those in Michigan in Table 1.1. The two state assessments, M-STEP (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) and MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program), were used due to the change to Michigan's state-wide assessment and because comparing the scores across a ten-year period was not possible. The first assessment is the NAEP, National Assessment of Educational Progress, a nation-wide standardized assessment given every 2 years to some schools that receive Title 1 funding in each of the states (NCES, 2020). The demographic of the schools and students it serves must meet certain criteria to ensure that all major demographic types are represented (e.g., Race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and English language learner). Students

do not take it every two years; they may only take it only one time or they may take it more than once.

Table 1.1 Reading Assessment Scores

Grade			NAEP			Grade			M-STEP			MEAP		
4	2019	32%				4	2019	46%	2014	72%				
	2009	29%					2015	47%	2009	65%				
8	2019	31%				7	2019	43%	2014	73%				
	2009	30%					2015	49%	2009	52%				

Note: The 7<sup>th</sup> grade M-STEP is included as the 9<sup>th</sup> grade M-STEP does not include reading.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) chooses the states and schools that are going to be included each year. From 2009 to 2019, there has only been a small increase for both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' scores (NCES, 2020).

Students in Michigan take the M-STEP assessment each year from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, although 8<sup>th</sup> grade does not include reading, so that is why grade 7 scores were used (State of Michigan, 2021). The M-STEP first was used in 2015 as the state assessment. Table 1.1 shows how 4<sup>th</sup> grade scores have not changed much, but the 7<sup>th</sup> grade scores decreased by 6% from 2015 to 2019. The MEAP was used earlier in time as the state assessment in Michigan. From the table, the scores from 2009 to 2014 increased, compared to the M-STEP scores the following year and the NAEP scores, there may have

been some discrepancy in the proficiency of Michigan's students (State of Michigan, 2021).

### **Equity Disparities**

After examining the scores across the United States and within Michigan, it seems that there are disparities among states and their assessments. While the data presented above shows the great need for literacy intervention and support to occur in the state of Michigan. A closer look at schools in Oakland County was warranted, since this is where the teacher participants for the dissertation research was located. Within Oakland County there are 61 diverse communities that include urban, rural, and suburban (Advantage Oakland, 2022). In Figure C.1 (located in Appendix C) there are large demographic differences between some of the schools in Oakland County (State of Michigan, 2021). While these are not all the schools, it can be seen how large of a difference there is between the scores of children within the same county and intermediate school district. It is important to point out a couple of schools in Figure C.1. Specifically, the orange line at the bottom refers to Whitman Elementary located in the Pontiac School District. The red line refers to Woodland Elementary in the Avondale School District. The pink line refers to William A. Brummer Elementary School which is located in South Lyon School District. The next two graphs show more specifics of two school districts in Oakland County. These school districts show the great difference between the scores of schools within Oakland County, 10% in Pontiac with 78% in Avondale (See Figure C.2 and C.3 in Appendix C, State of Michigan, 2021).

A closer look into two bordering school districts, Lake Orion and Pontiac, was needed to further examine the disparities that exist despite similar geographic locations.

The graph in Figure C.2 (located in Appendix C) shows schools in the Lake Orion School District. Scores were very low in 2014-2015; the scores rose the following year, then the schools experienced varying levels of improvement in the years following. The biggest take away from Figure C.2 is that the school in Lake Orion School District with the lowest percentage of students achieving proficiency in reading was 57% (State of Michigan, 2021).

The graph in Figure C.3 (located in Appendix C) shows the Pontiac School District on the same test for the same years. There is a large variability in the percentages of proficiency attained across elementary schools. However, the highest score at Whitman Elementary in the Pontiac School District is only 32%. Compare this to the highest percentage at Webber Elementary in the Lake Orion School District which was 86%. Then Pontiac's highest percentage, is lower than the lowest percentage at Orion Oaks Elementary in Lake Orion which was 57% (State of Michigan, 2021).

The comparison ties back to the evaluation we did for The *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) Training of Trainers and the concerns the trainers had for the inequity that impacts teachers' resources and training opportunities. The participants shared that they were concerned some childcare centers may not be able to receive adequate training. A participant stated, "A large percentage of my audience is in-home child-care providers and licensed exempt providers. [...] The school districts that we work with will be a part of the audience. [...] But what about the rest of those folks" (Wakabayashi et al, 2019). These three graphs show the diversity of the literacy levels of students in Oakland County. There more needs to be done to support the students, especially in school

districts that have these low literacy scores. This ties to a local initiative that I partnered with for my dissertation as presented in the next section.

Long-term consequences have been found for children with low reading levels at third grade. Specifically, children who are not proficient readers when they are in third grade are four times more likely to not graduate from high school on time and one in six children are not proficient in the third grade (Hernandez, 2011). When looking at the statistics in Michigan, Hernandez's findings are quite shocking. "A lack of access to literacy-stimulating preschool experiences" can lead to low reading outcomes for minority children and those living in poverty (Snow et al., 1998, p. 20). This may be part of the issue in these under-performing school districts.

Teachers in kindergarten through third grade are feeling pressure to improve literacy practices and student scores. The need to improve children's literacy proficiency has led to a push for early childhood teachers to incorporate more literacy practices in their classrooms. Although literacy is tied to language development, language and literacy practices may not have been a main focus in prekindergarten classrooms. Recent research conducted on literacy development has found that classroom environments need to be rich in language and literacy activities and resources from birth to provide all children with an equitable start in their development (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000; Piasta et al., 2012; Rowe & Goldin-Meadow, 2009). By focusing more on academics, there is an urge to make early childhood, especially prekindergarten, structured more like a kindergarten classroom rather than using a whole-child approach. This type of a drive occurred in the 1960s when first grade skills and activities were integrated into kindergarten curricula (Elkind, 1987, as cited in Crawford, 1995).

However, as we know, it is important to keep the activities in prekindergarten developmentally appropriate and using a whole-child approach (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), which often differs from the types of activities and expectations for children when they enter kindergarten.

In their Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practices, NAEYC states that educators need to provide a variety of learning opportunities within their classroom including self-directed play, guided play, and direct instruction. Direct instruction can include using “relevant academic vocabulary, point out relationships, helping children recognize specific phenomena, or suggesting an alternative perspective” (NAEYC, 2020a, p. 21). However, the effectiveness of direct instruction is impacted by the “degree to which it extends children’s interests and learning in meaningful ways” (NAEYC, 2020a, p. 21). To teach children literacy skills in a developmentally appropriate way, teachers can use songs, books, and other hands-on activities to engage children. With the push towards kindergarten-like activities, teachers may include using worksheets, lectures, and other non-engaging ways to teach children skills (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). NAEYC (2020a) states that kindergarten through third grade teachers need to use seatwork only when that is the “most effective format for meeting the learning objective” (p. 24). Professional development is used to address these concerns over student achievement and the appropriate way to help children become proficient readers, which is the focus of this research.

### **A Local Initiative**

To support literacy development, Oakland Schools’ District and School Services Early Childhood Unit developed the Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program



(EELCP) to examine the effectiveness of early literacy coaching on teacher practices. Their project began in November of 2019 and concluded in May 2021. This dissertation research explores experiences during the second year of the coaching program. Coaches in the 2020-2021 school year met with their teachers virtually due to the COVID-19 restrictions on visitors within classrooms. Many of the coaches also served as Early Childhood Specialists (ECS) for the district, but they provided literacy coaching to teachers that they did not oversee in their ECS position. This allowed the literacy coaches to focus strictly on the teacher's literacy practices, while the ECS supported the teachers on overall classroom quality including classroom management and other areas where the teacher may need support.

The literacy practices and coaching goals of the EELCP were based on the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Prekindergarten (*Essentials Pre-K*; MAISA, 2016a). Coaches were trained through the Training of Trainers for the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) in November and December 2018. Teachers were trained on the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) by the literacy project coordinators at Oakland Schools' Early Childhood Unit. Year 1 and Year 2 trainings were designed as a continuous series over five months and included a morning training on the Pre-kindergarten Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a). An afternoon community practice for teachers to share and problem-solve around their implementation was also included during training days. Coaches met together monthly with the project coordinators and received training and support with coaching strategies. Book studies were completed on *The Art of Coaching* (Aguilar,

2013) and *The Art of Coaching Teams* (Aguilar, 2016) and time was devoted to problem solving and discussing needs.

Lead and assistant teachers were included in the coaching program; however, classroom teams were not in coaching together. Some participated in the first year while others participated in the second year. Teachers were trained at the beginning of the school year in the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) to create foundational knowledge about these literacy practices. Coaches and teachers met virtually for most of the school year, though some were able to have in-person sessions in April 2021. The TORSH online video sharing system was used to share video recorded lessons with their coaches in place of in-person observations. Data were collected throughout the two-year project, including a reflection tool, training and coaching logs, teacher action plans, and surveys for teachers and coach evaluations.

The current dissertation research is a result of my interest in coaching tied with the evaluation of the Training of Trainers for the *Essentials Pre-K* in late 2018 and 2019. This evaluation project then led to my involvement in the EELCP's advisory committee to explore how the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) training could be delivered to teachers and programs locally. This involvement has led to a relationship with Oakland Schools regarding my personal research interest in coaching as a form of professional development in the field of early childhood. Further discussion on these involvements is discussed in the "Positioning Statement" in Chapter Three.

## **Definitions**

It is important to note the definition of four phrases that will be used throughout this document to ensure that the reader has a clear understanding of the content: Early Childhood, Early Literacy; Professional Development, and Coaching.

### **Early Childhood**

The phrase ‘early childhood’ needs clarification pertaining to the age of children the teachers are working within the studies examined in this dissertation study. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2020a), early childhood is, “the first period in child development, beginning at birth. Although developmental periods do not rigidly correspond to chronological ages, early childhood is generally defined as including all children from birth through age 8” (p. 52). This is important to note since early childhood does encompass early grades in elementary schools, usually up to third grade. Developmentally appropriate practices need to be integrated into those lower grades to help children learn in a way that is appropriate for them, instead of the current ways the educational system is designed (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Children up to third grade still count as being within early childhood as the areas of the brain that control the executive function and self-regulation skills are not yet fully formed (Center on the Developing Child, 2011; NAEYC, 2020a).

While this paper is not focusing on children within kindergarten to grade three, it is crucial to note that they deserve and need better systems to help them learn in the best way possible according to their developmental levels. Pre-kindergarten is the focus of this research, the Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP), and the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) creating a crucial foundation of early literacy skills

begin. Early childhood poses unique and special characteristics that are not predominant in mid-elementary years and later. Some of these characteristics point to the differences in care that are needed for young children depending on their developmental level, daily tasks of early childhood teachers, relationships with families, and professional development opportunities offered to these teachers. The topic of effective professional development in early childhood will be deeply explored as the main topic of this literature review.

### **Early Literacy**

Zero to Three (2003) states that “Early language and literacy (reading and writing) development begins in the first three years of life” (p. 1). Michigan’s definition of literacy in the Action Plan for Literacy Excellence (2017) elaborates this, “As the ability to read, view, listen, write, speak, and visually represent to comprehend and to communicate meaning in various settings through oral, written, visual, and digital forms of expression” (p. 8). A child’s early experiences with books, crayons, paper and most importantly with the people around them, shape their early literacy skills into adulthood (Zero to Three, 2003). The skills of language, reading, and writing are linked in their development as they all develop together, “Language, reading, and writing skills develop at the same time and are intimately linked” (Zero to Three, 2003, p. 1).

Using formal, or direct instruction, to teach young children to achieve reading proficiency is not developmentally appropriate and the use of this may be “damaging to children, who may begin to associate reading and books with failure” (Zero to Three, 2003, p.1). Instead, early literacy can be developed through experiences that occur naturally in the child’s environment and with those around them (Zero to Three, 2003).

Juel (1988) found that children who came into first grade with little phonemic awareness and were poor readers, would likely be poor readers in fourth grade. Spira and colleagues (2005) found a similar result, showing that kindergarten literacy, expressive language, and classroom behavior accounted for “35% of variance in second grade reading scores” (p. 230).

### **Professional Development**

Professional development has a multitude of meanings and uses depending on the purpose of the training, how it is delivered, and the profession it is used in. For some occupations, professional development can be done through lectures, conferences, or physical practices to add to the professional’s repertoire. Within the education field, professional development can look strikingly different for administrators, high school teachers, elementary school teachers, and early childhood teachers. Lectures, workshops, and conferences are used often in the education field as professional development opportunities to learn about licensing, new curriculum or state standards, behavior management, or using new teaching practices.

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) noted aspects of effective teacher professional development. This includes training that is content focused, incorporates active learning, and supports collaboration. Early childhood has its own unique challenges that can make professional development difficult, costly, and ineffective. Teachers in early childhood encounter an array of challenges depending on the age or grade they teach, the type of building they are in, and their program’s funding source. For those who are in a childcare setting with funding coming only from parents, training sessions are often done by the director or other teachers to meet the requirement for

professional development while staying within their budget by not bringing in an outside professional. Teachers in a public school or a GSRP classroom may have more opportunities for outside personnel to deliver trainings due to professional development being an allotted portion of the budget (MDE, 2020).

If the professional development is not tied to what the teachers need and how they teach in their practice, they may not integrate what is presented in the workshop into their classroom. From my own experience, professional development sessions that are lecture based and do not give tangible ideas that can be easily integrating into classrooms the next day are ineffective. They failed to change my teaching practices because there were too many steps to begin integrating the changes. My experience is supported by the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI, 2008) which created a document titled *What do we mean by professional development in the early childhood field?* NPDCI (2008) states that professional development can range from a semester long course to a few hours of a workshop, and it can contain information about a variety of topics from theory, research, strategies, and content. The definition created by NPDCI is:

Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice. The key components of professional development include: (a) the characteristics and contexts of the learners (i.e., the “who” of professional development, including the characteristics and contexts of the learners and the children and families they serve); (b) content (i.e., the “what” of professional development; what professionals should know and be able to do; generally defined by professional competencies, standards, and credentials); and (c) the organization and facilitation of learning experiences (i.e., the “how” of professional development; the approaches, models, or methods used to support self-directed, experientially-oriented learning that is highly relevant to practice). (NPDCI, 2008, p. 3)

NAEYC (2020b) states that programs need to, “design and support professional development that advances early childhood educators’ mastery of the standards and competencies” (p. 27). NAEYC (2020b) goes on to state that programs need to put together professional growth plans that help their staff continue to develop the knowledge and practice of skills needed to work with young children. High quality professional development programs are also needed for those who want to go into the early childhood field in the future.

Programs should also provide professional development opportunities for their staffs—particularly through coaching and mentoring—to advance staff’s understanding and application of the standards and competencies. Professional development should strengthen early childhood educators’ ability to engage in reflective practice. (NAEYC, 2020b, p. 28)

This statement notes that professional development for early childhood educators needs to be geared toward developing the skills they need to support the children and their families.

NPDCI supports this position by stating that early childhood professional development should have the educators engaged in learning that applies to their practice or problems they are having in their practice (NPDCI, 2008). This means that those who create professional development opportunities for early childhood educators need to present it in ways that are easily applicable and relevant to the teacher’s everyday practice and ensure that it is relevant to their needs. An example of this would be a workshop on growing children’s social-emotional skills. The presenter could develop a workshop in a lecture style to give important research and information on the topic such as brain development and how it is affected by events that occur in a child’s life. As a hands-on activity, the teachers could play *The Brain Architecture Game* (USC Creative

Media & Behavioral Health Center, et al., 2019) in which they would go through a child's possible life and build a brain structure representing how life events affected the child's brain. Through the game, teachers talk, problem solve, and discuss how a child's brain architecture is affected and what supports they need along the way to give their brain a better chance at surviving. Then, the teachers could work in groups to discuss issues they are having in their classrooms, brainstorm new ways they could support their students, and find ways to apply those ideas to their students or classrooms. While there could be some information given via lecture, it would not be the entire time in this way early childhood educators learn as they teach in their classrooms. Making the information easily applicable to their classrooms will more likely result in teachers using the information they learned from professional development.

### **Coaching**

An extremely important term to clarify within the professional development sphere is coaching as this will guide the discussion in this literature review. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) note that coaching, including feedback and reflection, are important aspects toward effective teacher professional development. Knight (2009) states that, "coaching is not a one-shot workshop, but rather differentiated professional support, meeting each teacher's unique needs over time. Coaching often occurs one-to-one and may involve several interactions lasting days, weeks, and, in some cases, months" (p. 18). Learning Forward (2011) supports this notion that occasional professional development workshops are not effective in changing teacher practices, while coaching with constructive feedback has a bigger impact on teacher practices. "Coaches need to be excellent communicators who articulate their messages clearly,



listen respectfully, ask thought-provoking, open-ended questions, and whose observations are energizing, encouraging, practical, and honest” (Knight, 2009, p. 19).

The joint statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA, 2011) states that, “Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group” (p. 11). The two organizations described specific characteristics of coaching including the development of specific skills and practices that should be embedded into professional development (NAEYC/NACCRRA, 2011). Relationships with the coach should include a supportive role, not an evaluative role, and build with trust and respect. Coaching should include goal setting and use a variety of strategies to support teachers in reaching their goal (NAEYC/NACCRRA, 2011). For this study, coaching included literacy coaches or others who provide a support role for teachers. Coaching did not include mentoring given by peer teachers.

### **Rationale for Current Study**

In the pilot study, I explored supports that early childhood literacy coaches needed to be successful and the strategies that they felt were the most effective when working with teachers (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021). This research was conducted in partnership with Oakland Schools through their Essential Early Literacy Coaching Study (Green, Shambleau, & Wood, 2019). From that project, I learned how the coaches felt they needed more engagement from the teachers and building supervisors to better support the teachers. This led me to wonder why the teachers were not very engaged in the literacy coaching and what they needed to be more engaged in the coaching program.

Restructuring was needed due to COVID-19, which included coaching being done virtually and the change in supports required to continue with the program.

In the pilot study, coaches shared many strategies that they felt were effective in helping the teachers to improve their literacy practices (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021). This led me to want to explore similar questions but including the teachers' perspectives. Coaches shared assumptions they had about teacher engagement; however, it is crucial to hear the teachers' perspectives and experiences in the program. For example, what strategies do the teachers feel were most effective when working with their coaches? Or what other strategies would work better to change teacher practices? The current research continued the partnership with Oakland Schools' Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP) to gather perspectives from teachers and coaches on the strategies and required support.

The research questions for this study were answered from gathering the perspectives of coaches and teachers. The questions were: (1) What strategies were reported as being effective for coaches and teachers? (2) How did the relationships between the teachers and coaches impact the success of the coaching program? (3) What positive learning and development did the coaches and teachers experience during the coaching program? (4) What difficulties did coaches and teachers face during the coaching program? and (5) What resources do coaches and teachers need to fully participate in the literacy coaching program?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes past research that explores the effects that various coaching strategies have on increasing early childhood teachers' literacy practices and on children's literacy proficiency in early childhood classrooms. Theories that support adult learning and the underlying importance of professional development are examined in this chapter. To better understand the topic of early childhood coaching, this chapter explores what early childhood professional development is, how coaching can be used in early childhood and coaching strategies. Then, I explore several education and early childhood professional organizations' perspectives on why professional development is needed in the field of early childhood. Research supporting professional development, in particular coaching and coaching strategies, will be revealed to identify gaps in existing research. Finally, I will discuss the laws and policies nationally and in Michigan, surrounding early literacy, professional development, and coaching. The final section of the chapter will draw together the ideas, research, theories, and policies to point out the gaps in research examining what specific strategies and support are needed for both coaches and teachers to improve effectiveness and success.

#### **Theories**

Many theories come into play when discussing professional development of early childhood teachers. I selected those that connected most closely to my investigation of literacy coaching for professionals in the field early childhood. These theories are Adult Learning Theory as introduced by Knowles, Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory,

including a focus on the Vygotsky Space and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, Bandura's Social and Cognitive Learning Theories and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.

### **Knowles' Theory of Adult Learning**

For professional development to be effective, it should be informed by the principles of adult learning. While many agree that pedagogy encompasses all learning including how both children and adults learn, Knowles (1980) discussed that there could be a difference in the way adults learn, leading him to use the term andragogy to differentiate adult learning from that of children. Knowles (1980) stated that adults become ready to learn when they encounter real-life problems or situations where they do not have the current knowledge base to solve a problem. Knowles proposed that adult learners want to be able to immediately apply the knowledge that they learn from trainings or professional development. As adult learners acquire new knowledge, the knowledge should visibly influence their performance in their lives or careers. In professional development situations, the trainer needs to show the importance of the skill or practice that they are teaching and thereby influence and persuade the participants that the training will be meaningful and worth their time.

Within adult learning, Knowles (1980) discussed four assumptions that are critically different from those of pedagogy. One assumption is that the learners move from being reliant on the trainer to being self-directed in their new practices. The second assumption is that adults have already gathered a reservoir of knowledge and experience, a valuable resource when learning new skills. This notion is supported by Trotter (2006) who noted, "Professional development programs must take into consideration the

practical knowledge of the educators” (p. 9). Although adult learners have a great amount of experience and knowledge, trainers may need to help adults examine some of their current habits and patterns to help them be more open to new ideas and practices. The third assumption is that adults gain new skills, and the training improves their ability to perform in their social roles. The last assumption is that adult learners want to be able to apply what they learn in training immediately to solve the particular problem they are encountering. Following this later assumption, trainings need to be performance centered instead of subject-centered (Knowles, 1980). Many of these assumptions of adult learning are also best practice when working with children. Therefore, the adult learning approach could serve as a general model of desirable instructional practices. Teachers need to take children’s prior knowledge into account while teaching new concepts and teachers need to help children build new habits and skills they can use.

These strategies and assumptions are supported by the research review conducted by Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino (1999), who identified three key elements of how people learn. The elements are: (1) In order for new concepts to be learned, connections must first be made to the learner’s pre-existing knowledge base; (2) Learners must have a foundation of factual knowledge to build and organize a framework for new knowledge and inquiry; and (3) Learners need to take control of their own learning and progress, while being supported by a teacher (or coach) that can model skills for them.

Knowles’ assumptions were also supported by Trivette, Dunst, Hambly, and O’Herin (2009), who also described three adult learning elements, each of which included two components. Their three elements were planning, application, and deep understanding. Within planning, the actions of introduction of new knowledge and

materials are included, and modeling is provided to demonstrate the newly presented knowledge and materials. Application also included the learner using the new skills and practices along with an evaluation of how successful the application was for the learner. The learner then reflected on their experience and assessed their competence to find new areas to explore and create a deep understanding (Trivette et al., 2009).

Another important aspect of adult learning is that adults need to be interactive participants in their learning (Knowles, 1980). Trainers need to identify this difference between adult and child learners and alter the way they present their information in professional development situations to helping adult be self-directed learners.

“Andragogy assumes that a teacher cannot really ‘teach’ in the sense of ‘make a person learn,’ but that one person can only help another person learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 48). Trotter (2006) also noted that professional development should include time for teacher reflection, which can be accomplished through working with a coach. This ties into my current research into professional development and specifically the coaching element of professional development. Trainings and workshops can only go so far, whereas coaching can guide those teachers who want to learn and improve practices.

Knowles (1980) discussed several attributes that need to be applied in adult learning situations to ensure that they are productive and useful for everyone involved. The adult learners need to feel respected, accepted, and supported, and learners need the space to “voice their opinions and thoughts without being ridiculed” (Knowles, 1980, p. 46). Techniques that can be used to tap into an adult’s prior experience and expertise are role playing, skill-practice exercise, group discussion, field projects, and work conferences (Knowles, 1990). Embedding opportunities for learners to practice and plan

how they are going to implement new practices into their daily lives is important to maintain and extend knowledge gained in training sessions.

We can take this knowledge that Knowles shared of how adults learn, and we can apply this to professional development and coaching opportunities. Coaching plays a large role in this maintenance and transfer of skills from training to the classroom. A coach can support the teacher in using new skills and suggest where new practices can be used.

The more opportunities a learner has to acquire and use new knowledge or practice, the more frequently those opportunities occur, and the more the learner is engaged in reflection on those opportunities using some external set of standards, the greater the likelihood of optimal benefits. (Trivette et al., 2009, p. 11)

Oja (as cited in Trotter, 2006) shared key strategies to making an adult learning session successful. Those strategies included the trainer or coach using concrete experiences, having supervision readily available, encouraging adults to expand into new roles, and getting feedback and support while trying out new practices.

Andragogy also differs from pedagogy, according to Knowles (1980) in the teachers' use of grading students. In andragogy, the focus is on helping the adult through self-evaluations, so they can measure the progress they made in working towards their goals. Through these self-evaluations, adults learn how to identify areas that they need further support in and seek out further training opportunities to fill in those knowledge gaps. With all these varying descriptions of adult learning, Trotter (2006) synthesized these themes of adult learning,

Adults used experience as a resource, and it cannot be ignored. Adults needed to plan their own educational paths based on their interests and

their classrooms. [...] Adult education should be to promote individual development by encouraging reflection and inquiry. (p. 12)

These theories of adult learning tie into the current study; coaching as a form of learning and professional development, and these strategies are thought to benefit the adult learner could impact the success of a coaching program. If adult learning strategies are used throughout a coaching program, the teachers may be more effective in their implementation of new teaching practices.

### **Vygotsky's Theories**

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory explores how children can learn through their social interactions and these theories are applicable to how adults learn in social situations. The Vygotsky Space Theory clarifies the process that occurs as people learn in different social situations. Exploring the Zone of Proximal Development is crucial because it addresses how a coach can support a teacher to perform better than they could on their own, much like a child is able to do more with the support of their teacher.

**Vygotsky space.** Gallucci (2008) expanded the Vygotsky Space theory into representing learning in terms of relationships between collective and individual actions and between public and private domains of action.

These dimensions are conceptualized as four phases of a process through which cultural practices are internalized by individuals, transformed in the context of individual needs, and uses, and then externalized (shared) in ways that may be taken up by others. (Gallucci, 2008, p. 548)

This process of learning is ever evolving because learning and change happen over a lifetime and have impact at both the individual and societal levels. Gallucci (2008) used this idea to describe how professional development can be linked to individual and whole



school learning, which is thought to lead to changes on the district level in terms of future professional development opportunities.

The first phase is when a professional development session occurs, and the teachers are given new strategies or practices to try in their classrooms. Then, coaches or other support staff help teachers interpret knowledge and try out these new ideas. In the third part of the process, teachers reinterpret the ideas and modify strategies learned from the professional development in their own way, which leads to changes in their teaching practices. When teachers share their new strategies with other teachers in their school or district, they move into the final phase (Gallucci, 2008). This process demonstrates how professional development of teachers could lead to changes in support that schools and districts provide. It also describes how growth develops from an individual level to the school level and that could also reach to the community level.

**Zone of Proximal Development.** The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is “The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). While this definition is focused on child learning, the same can be applied to adult learning. Adults have a level of mastery of specific topics and a more knowledgeable peer or in this case, coach, can help further develop those skills. The ZPD describes not only what the person has already been able to achieve, but what they are continuing to develop and master. Vygotsky (1978) discusses how the ZPD can be an important tool to use to increase the effectiveness of our education system because it looks at what a person’s mental development is and the areas that are continuing to

develop. Within this theory comes the interaction with peers and others in a collaborative setting to help both children and adults grow to their fullest potentials with that extra support (Vygotsky, 1978). This aspect further supports the use of coaching as a support when adults are acquiring new skills and practices.

**Scaffolding.** Scaffolding is a technique that teachers, trainers, and coaches can use to help children and adults while working in their ZPD succeed in more challenging activities. While the term scaffolding was not developed by Vygotsky, it is often paired with the concept of ZPD to help children reach that higher ability level (Berk & Winsler, 1995). The theory of scaffolding was originally discussed by Bruner, Woods, and Ross (1976). This extra support, known as scaffolding, refers to situations in which a teacher or coach provides the assistance needed to a teacher to help them reach the higher level of knowledge and understanding. “Learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). When thinking of professional development in terms of ZPD and scaffolding, it appears that having a longer period for teachers to work on gaining new skills and receiving the support of a coach to help them reach that next level of mastery is highly important. Coaching provides teachers with an opportunity to concretely embed new skills into their repertoire as when they receive support and feedback from their coach. These theories of Vygotsky space, ZPD, and scaffolding provide an outline to how coaching can be effective from a school level perspective down to the strategies coaches use while working one-on-one with teachers.

## **Bandura's Social Learning Theory**

Bandura proposed that most of the skills and knowledge that people acquire are from the imitation of those around them and that learning does not take place in isolation but in social situations (Thomas, 2005). This way of thinking is known as the Social Learning Theory, stating that children and adults learn through interacting and watching those around them. Within the Social Learning Theory, there are a couple of key areas that Bandura focused on that tie into adult learning and the coaching process. Those concepts are modeling and self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) used the word modeling to describe when a child gains a new skill or idea and puts it into their knowledge base to use at a future time. These new skills are acquired through observing the model over time; however, they do not get immediately put into use by the individual. This is important when applying the Social Learning Theory to the process of adult learning and coaching. As with children, adults need multiple exposures to new practices, skills, and ideas with opportunities to receive reinforcement from their peers or coaches.

Several of the Social Learning Theory concepts of the learning process, such as learning from observing a model's behavior, may pertain to the previously discussed theories of adult learning and conceptions of the coaching process. Bandura (1977) broke down the stages of learning from a model and those include paying attention, coding for memory, retaining the information in memory, carrying out actions, and motivation. Both adults and children need these stages to fully incorporate the new concepts into their repertoire of knowledge. The first step of paying attention includes the adult focusing on certain aspects of what their model or coach is doing while ignoring other factors that could affect their attention. Moving this information into stored knowledge calls for

adults to use prior information to code the actions they saw another adult peer whom they observed during the modeling session. Practicing and reviewing the skills shared in the modeling session helps adults to allow for memory permanence. When adults then use the observed skills modeled on their own, this is known as behavioral production. The coach can help during this time to give feedback on what they were successful with and what areas need continued practice. Motivation is the underlying process that allows for all the other four processes to occur and it is especially important when working with adult learners as they need to feel motivated to put in the energy to acquire new knowledge sets (Bandura, 1977).

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in oneself that they can complete the actions necessary to attain a goal (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, if someone does not believe that they have the ability and skills to attain a goal, they will not give much effort into attempting the steps it takes to achieve that goal. Bandura (1977) pointed out four processes that are involved in having self-efficacy: cognition, emotion, motivation, and selection. Incorporating these into adult learning indicates that adults are thinking about their own standards and how they function in their current social situation. From that, they connect their emotion on how they feel about their experiences, which influences their selection of activities they may pursue. This affects the amount of motivation they feel for pursuing a new adventure (Bandura, 1997). This connects this to adult learning and teacher development as it may be important that they have self-efficacy in knowing they can learn new skills and practices. If adults do not have self-efficacy in their professional abilities, then the training or coaching may not lead to a gain in knowledge or practice.

This theory of social learning applies to the current study because of the nature of coaching, how teachers learn through relationships and interactions with their coaches, and how coaches can help build teacher's self-efficacy in their literacy teaching practices. Bandura's social cognitive theory builds on this idea of self-efficacy by adding that not only is self-efficacy built from our interactions with those around us, but it is also influenced by our personal actions and behavior (Bandura, 1991). For instance, in coaching, the teachers are affected by the support of their coach giving them strategies to try in their classroom. The teachers are further influenced by their actions of trying the new practices outside of coaching time. During coaching sessions, teachers can be engaged in constructive conversations with their coach that will impact their practices for later use. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory ties to the teachers' work of how they can be proactive in coaching to make it a successful experience for them.

### **Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle**

The Theory of Experiential Learning states that learning is not a fixed system rather a cyclical process of constant learning and relearning where ideas are formed and reformed (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) also believed that learning was based on experiences in which we learn and relearn based on our past experiences and previous knowledge. For coaches, this may be drawing out what the teacher already knows and believes about their teaching practices and children's learning and then modifying those beliefs which helps learning to occur. Kolb (1984) notes that learning occurs in and beyond the classroom, extending throughout our lives in varying situations such as work, relationships and in everyday activities. "Therefore, it encompasses other, more limited adaptive concepts

such as creativity, problem solving, decision making, and attitude change that focus heavily on one or another of the basic aspects of adaptation” (Kolb, 1984, p. 32).

Many different terms are used in Kolb’s theory to describe the outcomes and processes of change including performance, learning, and development. Within experiential learning, these three terms are on a continuum with their own specific use and purpose. Kolb (1984) clarified these terms in experiential learning as where performance is tied to short-term outcomes, learning is longer-term to specific situations and development includes adapting learning which lasts a lifetime. “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Kolb’s view of learning is more focused on adaptation of current knowledge as opposed to learning content, and because knowledge is created and recreated, it is a transformative experience (Kolb, 1984). This type of learning, the continuation of learning, and applying is important for adult learning, especially important when coaching teachers to learn new skills and practices to improve their teaching and children’s development. Kolb’s theory ties to the current study because of the cyclical nature of learning that can occur during coaching. Teachers gain new information from a training or their coach. Then they can try out a new practice and are able to reflect on that experience with their coaching and then their coach can help them to modify it, if needed.

### **Search and Compilation Strategy**

I conducted my search a few different ways and utilized the following databases to retrieve the studies: Oakland University’s Library One Search, ERIC, and PsychInfo. The key phrases I used were ‘early childhood’, ‘prekindergarten/preschool’, ‘coaching’, ‘coaching strategies in Pre-K’, and ‘literacy coaching’. Other websites and search engines

I used to retrieve studies were EBSCO, Google Scholar, and Research Gate. I thoroughly read through the studies and used the reference lists as another tool to help find pertinent and substantial studies focused on my research topic.

While exploring the articles and studies from my searches, studies that did not examine professional development tied into coaching were not included in my review of the literature. Others were not included because they utilized peers as coaches, instead of having an outside person or a specific literacy coach within the school perform the coaching. Some of the coaching literature was not included if it did not focus on early childhood. For this literature review, I looked for studies in early childhood and specifically those studies that addressed teachers and classrooms that teach with children from birth to pre-kindergarten.

### **Related Research**

To clearly show how literacy coaching in early childhood is an integral part of effective professional development and an important topic to be explored, I broke down the studies into three sections. The first examines how coaching is effective as a form of professional development in early childhood, and these studies cumulatively demonstrate the importance of quality coaching for early childhood teachers. Next, I examined how coaching can be effective in increasing teachers' use of literacy practice in their early childhood classrooms with professional development that includes a coaching element. The final section describes studies that examine the teachers' perspective of coaching and what specific coaching strategies are beneficial to the teachers. These studies are described in detail to examine the different methods which could have led to the variety

in outcomes. Before exploring these studies, it is important to discuss why professional development is important for all teachers, especially early childhood teachers.

### **Importance of Professional Development**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2008) developed a Policy Workforce Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems which outlined the importance of professional development for early childhood educators as well as suggestions on how to implement successful trainings. NAEYC (2008) stated that there needs to be an “integrated early childhood professional development system” meaning that ongoing professional development is available for all those who work with young children (p. 1). The document outlines areas that policy needs to be improved to have a competent workforce who are effective, diverse, and adequately compensated. This is extremely important as there is great diversity in the settings, care is provided for young children, and the receipt of support and training the early childhood workforce. This great amount of diversity creates a barrier in providing high-quality care for all children. NAEYC (2008) states that,

Professional development activities include [...] observation with feedback from a colleague, mentoring, coaching, and other forms of job-related technical assistance. [...] Professionals need to continue to incorporate new knowledge and skill, through a coherent and systematic program of learning experiences. (p. 8)

Specifically, these professional development opportunities must be research-based and grounded in theory, promote links between theory and practice, and be flexible based on the teacher’s background, experience, and role in the classroom (NAEYC, 2016).

The National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center, 2014) supports professional development and



coaching for administrators in addition to teachers. PDW Center (2014) states, “Directors who receive leadership and management training specific to EC (early childhood) are more effective. Administrative practices improve when directors receive mentoring or coaching as supplements to training” (p. 77). The Division for Early Childhood (DEC, 2017) also has a recommendation for personnel preparation which is to, “Provide mentoring/coaching that promotes increased understanding, skills, and implementation of practices through self-reflection” (p. 8).

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) described effective professional development as being content focused, incorporating active learning, supporting collaboration, and using models of effective practice. The authors also noted that providing coaching and expert support, offering feedback and reflection and stating that professional development should be sustained for a period of time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Through their exploration of effective professional development models, the researchers found that those models that had higher student gains made time for teachers to reflect, receive feedback, and make changes to their practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The professional development that offered many opportunities for teachers to engage in learning about one set of topics had a greater chance in changing teacher practices and ultimately student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This ties together the importance of professional development and important characteristics previously discussed in adult learning theory. In their evaluation of adult learning theories, Trivette et al (2009) stated, “The more adult learning method characteristics that are incorporated into a training program or practice, the more likely the learning experiences will have optimal positive benefits” (p. 10).

## **Coaching Effectiveness in Early Childhood**

To lay the foundation of the use of coaching in early childhood classrooms, it is important to know how coaching has been effective in changing teacher practices.

Coaching and training, along with staff selection, have been found to affect the implementation of science curricula in early childhood classrooms (Halle et al., 2013, as cited in Snyder et al., 2017). The following studies examine how coaching can be used in many different content areas while working with early childhood teachers.

McLeod, Hardy, and Grifenhagen (2019) examined perspectives from coaches, teachers and administrators in a statewide coaching program implemented in pre-kindergarten classrooms. The researchers were specifically interested in the amount of coaching that was done, the experiences throughout the process, and the perspectives of participants on the effectiveness of the coaching. A survey was sent out to 49 coaches, 947 teachers, and 189 administrators asking questions pertaining to the aforementioned items. Coaches were sent to a one-day training on completing a needs assessment with teachers, joint planning, observations and giving teachers feedback. McLeod and colleagues (2019) found that coaches met with their teachers mostly once a month, but if there was a new teacher, they met typically every other week and had mostly face-to-face contact. The coaches' observations lasted between 30-60 minutes while seasoned teachers' meetings were less than 30 minutes.

Teachers shared that the areas they focused on with their coach were language and literacy teaching practices, approaches to learning, classroom organization, and behavior. However, the coaches noted that their focus was math, social-emotional, classroom organization, and behavior. Almost all the coaches and teachers felt that the

coaching partnership was positive and productive. Most teachers, coaches, and administrators stated that coaching was very effective and almost all administrators found it beneficial for teachers.

Another study related to my current research examined the use of a multicomponent professional development and how it affected the teachers' practices when working with children's social-emotional development and challenging behavior (Fox et al., 2011). The professional development included training, implementation guides, classroom materials and instructional coaching. Three early childhood special education teachers were the participants in the study and all three classrooms had children with and without disabilities. Teachers attended a three-day workshop followed by coaching sessions that included observations lasting 30-90 minutes and a 30-minute debriefing session. Two of the teachers were able to meet the 80% implementation level and their coaches focused on transitions with visual schedules, teaching emotional literacy, anger management strategies, and other social-emotional skills. The third teacher was not able to meet the required implementation level before the school year ended. Her coaching was focused mainly on preventative practices such as transitions and expectations along with social-emotional teaching strategies. Although this helped her teaching practices and classroom management skills, her practices did not meet the goal for using the required practices. This study is relevant to my current research as it shows the effectiveness of coaching on the ability to increase a teacher's practice while working with young children.

A study by Romano and Woods (2018) examined how collaborative coaching could improve the teachers' use of language to support students in an Early Head Start

classroom. Collaborative coaching in this study was focused on specific components including setting the stage, observation, and opportunities to embed, and problem solving and reflection. The study included three teachers who concentrated their intervention efforts on specific activities focused on expanding the child's utterances, responding to the child's communication, and environmental arrangement. These coaching sessions occurred twice a week and lasted 30-45 minutes over a two to three-month period. All teachers increased the use of the strategies after the coaching sessions began, although there was not a steady increase as sessions went on. A few months after the coaching occurred, a focus group was held with the teachers. The teachers commented that the coaching was useful in helping them to set goals and feeling empowered to help the children (Romano & Woods, 2018). This study links to my current research because it detailed the components of coaching sessions and how the coaching sessions led to an improvement in teacher practices. Most importantly, the increase in teachers' practices led to an increase in the children's communication levels, which demonstrates that coaching has a direct effect on child outcomes.

Understanding how coaching can strengthen and significantly add to training is demonstrated through this last study by Riley and Roach (2006). Their study addressed the question, "How do teachers learn?". Their research focused on improving the quality of care provided by early care teachers in 31 childcare facilities around the state of Wisconsin. Through reflective conversations with training specialists, teachers developed the skills they needed to improve their classroom teaching. The method for the project was to have coaches observe teachers in action in their classrooms, record their

observations, and share observations directly with teachers immediately after the observation.

Coaches were trained on six elements: (1) build a trusting relationship; (2) shape promising practices; (3) generalize effective practices; (4) provide conceptual labels; (5) link practices with research-based knowledge; and (6) encourage teacher's self-exploration. The practice of self-exploration was thought to be useful for teachers who were highly skilled and experienced, helping them to not become stagnant and lose interest in the field. "Every teacher needs to feel like they are growing, needs to feel the excitement of new possibilities" (Riley & Roach, 2006, p. 368). The training and coaching resulted in higher quality teacher beliefs, observed sensitivity, and interaction with the children to provide overall higher quality classrooms (Riley & Roach, 2006). In relation to my current research, this project gave examples of strategies used to improve teacher's knowledge, with "*building a trusting relationship*" as an important strategy effectively strengthened through a coaching program.

These studies show how coaching, in addition to training, can be effective in improving teacher knowledge and practice in varying content areas in the early childhood classroom. There were similarities in what these studies found in the strategies used by the coaches when working with the teachers. Observation, modeling, giving feedback, goal setting, and reflection were included in some way in all four of these studies. Three of the studies measured teacher growth during their coaching, those teachers showed growth in their teaching strategies (Fox et al., 2011; Riley & Roach, 2006; Romano & Woods, 2018). Training and coaching helped to improve teacher beliefs and interactions with children increased children's language and communication skills, teachers use of

social-emotional teaching strategies, and the effectiveness noted by teachers, coaches, and administrators. These studies build a foundation of research that demonstrates how coaching can be effective in early childhood and the many uses it can have to help improve teacher practice which then leads to better student achievement.

While these studies are supportive of coaching and how it can positively impact teaching practices, there was little done in these studies to find out how the coaching process could be improved. All of these studies use different methods of collecting data from surveys, coaching logs to focus groups, which gather data on different aspects of coaching. The study done by McLeod, Hardy and Grifenhagen (2019) was the only study to explore what the coaches needed to be effective; they found that coaches needed more support and training than they were given in their one-day training. Coaches commented that they needed more support and training in areas such as mentoring, and collaboration and how to support teachers when dealing with challenging behaviors. Only two of the studies gathered the teacher's voices to see how they felt about their coaching experience (McLeod, Hardy & Grifenhagen, 2019; Romano & Woods, 2018). The lack of research into the feedback and coaching process from the coaches and the teachers, leaves a gap in finding out how these coaching practices could be more effective, especially for those teachers who do not make adequate progress during coaching.

### **Literacy Coaching Effectiveness in Early Childhood**

After demonstrating the overall effectiveness of coaching in early childhood, it is important to look specifically at literacy coaching within early childhood. Knight (2009) noted, "The term literacy coach is used widely to refer to educators who use a variety of tools and approaches to improve teachers' practices and student learning related to

literacy” (p. 18). Justice et al. (2008) noted that even if teachers have a literacy or reading curriculum, many teachers are unable to provide high-quality literacy instruction. The following sections will highlight the impact that coaching has on teachers’ literacy practices and child literacy skills. In these sections, I also draw attention to how coaching has a greater effect on teachers’ practice and children’s learning outcomes when compared with professional development that consists of only trainings or workshops.

**Increasing teacher’s literacy knowledge and practice.** Weber-Mayrer and colleagues (2018) focused on the implementation of a state-wide coaching program focused on increasing teachers’ literacy knowledge and practice. The intensity of the coaching was defined by the dose, frequency, duration, and cumulative intensity that occurred across the state and how that affected changes in educator’s literacy practices. A total of 65 early childhood educators in school and center-based programs participated in the study. Teachers were given 30 hours of professional development over the course of a year, which included the topics of environment, play, oral language, early reading, and early writing. Within the workshops, topics were discussed, applied to real-world scenarios and connected to the teachers’ classrooms.

The researchers found that the longer the coaching sessions were, the less frequently they occurred. The dose of coaching sessions was linked to the quality of the literacy environment at the spring evaluation. While the coaching that lasted for a longer time was linked to gained knowledge from topics taught in the professional development, more coaching sessions led to a greater amount of distal knowledge encompassing broader literacy concepts. However, the more cumulative time in coaching led to teachers having less of a change in their distal knowledge. None of the intensity variables were

strongly linked to quality classroom interactions. The researchers noted the possibility that the teachers who had a slight gain in distal knowledge but had the most coaching time may have been due to the coaches focusing on other topics to help in the classroom, not just the literacy topics covered in the professional development (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2018). This study demonstrated that coaching influences the knowledge of educators, which may lead to better practices as they continue to grow their broader literacy knowledge.

Another study examined how coaching could impact teachers' literacy knowledge and practice. Hsieh et al. (2009) studied five prekindergarten classrooms in which the teacher received coaching two to three times a week over 8-12 weeks. The three content areas the coaching focused on were vocabulary, phonological awareness, and print concepts with written language. Coaching for these content areas occurred in a cycle, focusing on one content area at a time. The cycle was composed of an initial meeting and baseline evaluation, followed by the teacher practicing then the coach observing the teacher and giving feedback to the teacher. The last part of the cycle was a booster session that was given if the teacher was unable to reach 80% use of the strategies focused on in the sessions.

From this coaching intervention, the teachers increased their use of instructional strategies in all three content areas and even maintained higher scores than their baseline after coaching was finished. Teachers were asked for their perspective on how coaching went, and they stated that their literacy knowledge increased and that they were more confident in creating literacy activities. Teachers also shared that they learned how to effectively arrange their classroom to make it rich in literacy. The teachers rated the



impact of coaching on their students' literacy skills as excellent; this was supported by testing measures that found their literacy skills had improved significantly in the two-and-a-half-month intervention (Hsieh et al., 2009). This study supports the findings in Weber-Mayrer et al.'s (2018) study, while adding pieces of the teacher's perspective that will be pertinent to this study.

A 2009 study by Neuman and Cunningham examined how professional development with coaching affected the early childhood teacher's quality and use of language and literacy practices in their classrooms. Teachers in the intervention group received a 45-hour, three-credit, course in language and literacy that was held at local community colleges. Coaching sessions with teachers occurred weekly for one to one-and-a-half hours. The first 15 weeks of coaching aligned with the professional development course the teachers took. After the class was completed, coaching continued for another 17 weeks bringing the total number of coaching sessions to 32. In the pre-test scores, there were no significant differences between the control and treatment groups of teachers in teacher practice or knowledge.

After the intervention, there was no difference between the treatment or control group in teacher knowledge. Those teachers who had the training and coaching scored significantly higher in teacher practice than those who had just the training or the control groups, this included home-based, and center-based (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). This study is important to my research due to the finding that teacher practice can be largely affected by adding coaching to a professional development course. It is important to note that with this study the professional development was not only for a day or two, it lasted an entire semester. This shows that even if the training is extended over a longer

period of time, it does not make as large of an impact on teacher practice without the addition of coaching.

Piasta et al. (2020) also researched literacy coaching and its effects on teacher's practice and knowledge. The coaching and training were conducted in a cycle formatted like that of Hsieh et al. (2009). As with the previous two studies, Piasta and colleagues (2020) found that professional development and coaching positively impacted teacher's quality and quantity of their literacy practices in the areas of phonological awareness and writing. The authors noted that there was no impact on other areas of teacher practice from the professional development and coaching intervention. These studies demonstrate how coaching can be used to positively impact teachers' literacy knowledge and practice.

**Improving language development.** A 2015 study by Rezzonico and colleagues looked at the impact of speech-language pathologists working as coaches in preschool classrooms to see how the coaching affected children's language development. Many activities were chosen to improve children's language development including how the teacher used interactive shared book reading and children's participation in the shared book reading. Small groups of preschoolers participated in the study with their teacher, with a total of 32 preschool teachers. The intervention group received training workshops plus coaching sessions that lasted for around one hour. The coaching sessions were comprised of videotaping the teacher during the small group lesson, the coach then provided feedback and suggestions while they viewed the video. A discussion of strategies for the teacher was done to round out the coaching session.

After the intervention, the educators asked more experiential reasoning questions, the children answered these questions more often, and the children had longer utterances

than the control group. There was no significant effect of coaching on the frequency and length of coaching sessions, or number of children in conversations during shared reading. However, the intervention group used twice as many experiential reasoning questions, compared to the control group, which means that coaching supported the teachers' ability to help the children connect the stories to their real lives. Children in the intervention group also had longer utterances when they answered their teacher's questions, compared to the control group (Rezzonico et al., 2015). This study contributes to the research showing that coaching is a very effective way of improving teacher practices and children's developmental outcomes. Specifically, this study demonstrates the importance of having a coach help to embed the knowledge and strategies learned during workshops into practice in the classroom.

**Two-year coaching.** Hindman and Wasik (2012) studied the effects of two years of coaching on teachers' classroom language and literacy environments and interactions and children's gains in several literacy skills. Teachers in Head Start centers received two years of both coaching and training on language and literacy development and instruction. Coaches were trained to use the Exceptional Coaching for Language and Literacy (ExCELL) model and followed the same schedule, content, and training when working with teachers. Coaches also met in community to share the progress they made with their teachers and brainstormed ways to further help their teachers. Teachers came to a two-day summer workshop prior to the intervention starting. Professional development (PD) occurred each month lasting three hours and coaching happened each week for three hours per teacher. In the first year, all the topics were discussed. In the second year, the topics were revisited and went into more depth about the topic during the trainings. The

ExCELL model cycle was used to form the schedule of PD and coaching. This included workshops and was followed by coaching visits the following week. The teachers were given two weeks to practice before the coach observed the teacher in the last week. During the observation visit, the coach discussed the observation and gave feedback on what they saw (Hindman & Wasik, 2012).

In the first year, there were gains in the quality of language and literacy environment and in instructional interactions. The second year saw additional gains in the areas of instructional interaction, concept development, language modeling, and feedback to children. Environmental gains were maintained from Year 1, but there was no additional growth in this area in Year 2 for teachers. Children in the intervention classroom had significant gains in their vocabulary in Year 1 and even greater gains in Year 2. The children also made great gains in their alphabet knowledge and sound awareness, but there was no effect from the second year. The researchers noted an interesting finding with the control group, these teachers' language and literacy environments decreased from spring of Year 1 to spring of Year 2. This shows that even when teachers received training or materials, they may slip into old practices if they did not receive any coaching or training follow-ups (Hindman & Wasik, 2012). This study illuminates the importance of coaching when receiving training for teachers to continue to grow in their practice which could lead to better student achievement. This ties into current research focus as it demonstrates that coaching can be extremely effective in an early childhood classroom for the classroom environment, teaching practices and student outcomes.

Powell et al. (2010b) also conducted a study on literacy coaching with Head Start teachers that lasted two years. This research focused on the instructional plans developed by the coaches and teachers; examining the frequency of content areas, types of practices or materials, and instructional techniques used. Teachers participated in professional development in the form of five full-day workshops over four months and coaching sessions that included observations and feedback discussions with teachers once a month. From the data, researchers found that the average monthly coaching session lasted three-and-a-half hours. In the coaching sessions, about six instructional plans were developed in each session and 90% of those were related to literacy (Powell et al., 2010b). The skill that was focused on the most was letter-word knowledge, while phonological awareness and conversation expansion with children were the least focused on.

In the plans, most of the activities were to be used with whole-group instruction and teacher behavior was the focus of half of the plans, while in 41% of the plans were focused on only the use of materials. Letter-word knowledge plans were the highest for material-based plans and the lowest for teaching practices. More than half of the plans focused on new practices, rather than repetition or expansion on the topic. Although these teachers participated in workshops focused on literacy practices, it is important to note the focus of these coaching sessions were new practices and plans. The coaching sessions grew the teachers' reservoir of literacy practices to use while teaching their students. This study ties in with Hindman and Wasik's (2012) study illustrating how the continuation of coaching even after the workshops can continue to improve different areas of teachers' literacy practices.

**Online and on-site coaching.** In another study, Powell and colleagues (2010a) examined the impact a literacy-focused professional development with coaching would have on Head Start teachers and their students. Effects of either remote or in-person coaching were also explored in the study (Powell et al., 2010a). Teachers in the intervention received training focused on improving the use of evidence-based literacy instruction that would lead to better child literacy achievement. Content topics discussed included phonological awareness, letter and vocabulary knowledge, comprehension skills, and oral language skills. The intervention lasted 15 weeks during which time seven coaching sessions occurred. On-site coaching sessions lasted around 90 minutes, which allowed for an observation and 30 minutes for the coach to provide feedback. For remote coaching, the teachers submitted a 15-minute-long video to the coach and the coach gave comments and sent the teacher any videos or content on literacy instruction that could be valuable for the teacher. The remote teachers were also given 16 modules to work through that focused more specifically on skills discussed in the training with videos, research, and readings.

Teachers in the intervention group had larger gains in general classroom environment, language, literacy and curriculum, and greater gains in code-focused instruction such as phonological awareness and letter knowledge. There were no gains in teacher practices in promoting vocabulary or children's talk during free time or large group (Powell et al., 2010a). Children in the intervention group had gains in letter knowledge, concepts of print, blending and writing. However, they did not have gains in receptive language, letter and word identification, or initial sound matching compared to the control group. Teachers who had on-site coaching had larger gains and higher scores

in code-focused instruction. The children in the remote teaching classrooms had larger gains on the vocabulary test and more initial sound matching skills than those who had on-site coaching (Powell et al., 2010a).

Snyder and colleagues (2018) also examined the difference between in-person and online coaching. The online coaching involved the teachers having access to an online portal with materials for the teacher to use on a weekly basis, unlike Powell et al.'s (2010a) study where there was no interaction with a coach online. Snyder and colleagues found that those teachers who received on-site coaching in addition to workshops had better rates and accuracies of implementation of the specific practices focused on in the coaching program. Compared to business-as-usual teachers who participated in online self-coaching, student outcomes were also positively impacted if their teachers had on-site coaching (Snyder et al., 2018). The modality of the coaching, being both remote and on-site in both studies, is congruent with the initial design of the coaching program I explored for the current study. These studies demonstrate that coaching in addition to training workshops resulted in gains for both teacher practices and child outcomes.

Landry and colleagues (2009) explored professional development focused on language and literacy practices for teachers in Head Start programs serving low-income children. Teachers were randomly put into one of five groups that included being coached and using a digital platform, not coached but using a digital platform, coached in-person with feedback, or control. Coaches were trained on classroom management, language and literacy-rich classroom environments, along with child development areas of oral language phonological awareness, letter knowledge, reading, and writing. Instructional strategies and activities to promote children's language and literacy were also included in

the training. The online platform was used for small group learning sessions and a space to share videos of modeled activities, interactive coursework and assessments, activities for teachers to practice in their classroom and personal experiences and get feedback from the facilitator. The facilitators coached teachers twice a month for two hours each visit for the school year (Landry et al., 2009).

There were several findings from the data collected from areas of teacher quality to child learning outcomes. While teachers in the online coaching group had the highest teaching quality of all the groups, the teachers who did not have a coach or detailed feedback had the poorest teaching quality, although it was still higher than the control group. For phonological awareness instruction, those teachers who were coached had a higher quality of instruction than those in the intervention groups without coaching. Teachers in the online intervention groups had higher quality writing instruction, but those who were online with coaching had more engaging and even higher quality writing activities. The online teachers also fared better than in-person teachers in print and letter knowledge instruction, play, and learning centers. Those teachers who received coaching had more written documentation of their planned instruction than the other intervention groups (Landry et al., 2009).

Focusing now on the child outcomes, the vocabulary scores of the children in the online group had higher scores than those with in-person coaching. The intervention had an impact on the children's letter knowledge and print awareness compared to their initial knowledge levels. Those children whose teachers received the online feedback had higher letter knowledge and print awareness scores than the other groups. Students in the intervention groups scored higher than the control groups in both composite language and



phonological awareness (Landry et al., 2009). This ties into my research topic with the modalities of the professional development being both online and in-person along with the coaching piece being added in for some teachers. In addition, it supports the notion that coaching can influence teacher practices and children's academic skills.

**Summary.** These studies examined the effects that coaching in early childhood could have on teachers' literacy practices and subsequently their students' literacy skills. These studies provide evidence that literacy coaching in early childhood, beyond training, is effective in encouraging growth for both teacher practices and student literacy skills. The effectiveness of using of online coaching was shown in a group of studies in which coaches were able to give feedback and strategies to videos teachers sent to them (Powell et al., 2010a; Rezzonico et al., 2015; Snyder et al., 2018). These studies found that teachers made positive improvements in their literacy-based teaching practices. Most of these studies had a comparison group of teachers that received training, but not coaching. In all these studies, the teachers that did receive both training and coaching made larger gains in their literacy teaching quality and classroom literacy environment. Child academic outcomes were also measured in four of the studies, and those students gained in their literacy knowledge and skills due to the training and coaching their teacher received (Hindman & Wasik, 2012; Hsieh et al., 2009; Landry et al., 2009; Powell et al., 2010a; Rezzonico et al., 2015). Another connection with the previous section was in the study by Weber-Mayrer et al. (2018) in which coaching time was spent on other topics in the classroom such as classroom management before the coaches were able to focus on literacy skills, this also occurred in the study conducted by Fox et al. (2011).

One variable that was present in all of the studies was the amount of training and coaching the teachers received. This is important to explore because of the variation in the amount of training and coaching and how that could impact the outcomes of the studies. Weber-Mayrer et al. (2018) looked at a state-wide coaching program which led to a lot of variation in the amount of coaching teachers received; this affected the teachers' gains. Other studies had specifics on the dosage amount given to teachers (Landry et al., 2009; Neuman and Cunningham, 2009; Powell et al., 2010b), the shortest amount of time in training and coaching was four hours of training and five coaching sessions (Rezzonico et al., 2015). The longest amount of coaching was two years in which teachers received three hours of professional development each month and three hours of coaching on weeks that did not provide training (Hindman & Waski, 2012). With the variances in time between the coaching and training hours, it is feasible to see how teachers could be more successful in the studies that lasted longer or had more training and coaching sessions. This difference in training time leads to examining the methods of the studies to see which of studies were conducted with fidelity, which leads to the credibility of the data found. This is important for the current study as it demonstrates how important it is to have concrete methods for collecting the data and how specific the procedures need to be for coaching and training to be conducted.

Within this set of studies, there continues to be a gap in the discussion of what coaching strategies were used during the coaching sessions, only five of these studies mentioned what the coaches did (Hseih et al., 2009; Powell et al., 2016a; Powell et al., 2010b; Rezzonico et al., 2015, Snyder et al., 2018). Furthermore, none of these studies explored the coaches' perspectives of what supports they needed to make the coaching

more effective. Teachers' perspectives were only examined in one of these studies (Hseih et al., 2009). This continues the gap found in the earlier section surrounding a lack of teacher and coach perspectives on the coaching's effectiveness.

### **Coaching Strategies and Challenges**

The various coaching strategies used have been documented in some of the reviewed studies. Not many studies describe the strategies from the coach's view or from the perspective of what worked best for the teachers. Feedback from the teachers on the design of coaching programs and what the coaches need to support teachers are also missing in these studies. Other studies previously discussed have mentioned collecting insights from teachers and coaches on how effective the coaching process was for them and what support the coaches needed to be more successful (McLeod et al., 2019; Romano & Woods, 2018). This section highlights the few studies that touch on one portion of this topic to show that more research is needed to gather information to find the strategies that lead to effective coaching for both the coach and the teacher.

**Coaching strategies.** One study examined the strengths and limitations of coaching along with the characteristics of a coaching program that support adult learning (Knoche, Kuhn, & Eum, 2013). For Knoche et al.'s (2013) study, early childhood coaches, preschool teachers, and childcare providers, were interviewed on two occasions two months apart. From these interviews, five themes were developed integrating the perspectives of both the coaches and the teachers. The first was that the quality of the coaches was important, including their knowledge, expertise, experience working with young children and ability to provide a fresh perspective when working through problems. Resources that the coach provided was another theme; these included ideas,

strategies, formal professional development opportunities and the coach's physical presence in the classroom.

The relationship between the coach and teacher was another theme and this had many important parts. One area of the relationship was reciprocity, which included trust, the coach keeping their word, mutual respect, and partnership between the coach and teacher. Also included with relationship was communication practices and giving and receiving feedback. A final area of the relationship was the empowerment that the teacher felt if the coaches were advocates for the teacher and willing to help. A fourth theme was teacher transformation, which encompassed improvement of practice, transformation of emotions, perceptions, and self-concept (Knoche, Kuhn, & Eum, 2013).

A 2010 study by Bean and colleagues explored the work that coaches do and how they distributed their time among their many responsibilities. The researchers also explored how the teachers felt about the coaches and if they felt supported by the coaches. The data showed that coaches spent most of their time working with individual teachers, followed by management, school related tasks, planning and organizing, working with groups and the smallest amount of time working with students. Coaches spent an average of 35.7% of their time providing direct support to teachers (Bean et al., 2010).

Intensity of coaching was discussed on how intense the activities were that the coaches were doing. Level one activities were the least intense and mostly focused on building a relationship with the teacher. In levels two and three, the relationship has already been formed and the activities were more intense; 55% of the coaches were doing level three coaching activities, 38% of activities were level two and only 7% were level

one (Bean et al., 2010). The group sessions were grade-level meetings. During that time, data was discussed, strategies were developed, and interventions were planned on what would be done differently in the following quarter. Other group sessions focused on reading instruction professional development for teachers who had recently joined the building. While working individually with teachers, coaches showed teachers how to differentiate instruction for students, brainstormed how to change activities to be more effective, and coaches gave feedback based on observations. Coaches worked with teachers on implementing specific strategies, using new materials, or a new instructional approach. In addition, coaches modeled instructional approaches and assessment strategies along with co-teaching lessons. The management portion of their day included entering assessment data, writing reports, and other administrative support.

The researchers also found a correlation between the amount of coaching performed and student achievement. The teachers felt that the coach spent more time on administrative tasks than in their classroom supporting them. In addition, when the coaches spent more time on management items, the teachers had a negative view on the coach as an important resource (Bean et al., 2010). This study gave descriptive details on the activities and strategies that coaches do during a given day. Teachers' viewpoints on what strategies the coaches used that supported their needs were also shared. For my research, I want to dig deeper into the topic of what supports or strategies the coaches use that the teachers feel benefit them the most.

Schachter et al. (2018) also examined coach activities and strategies coaches used while working with their teachers. This study gathered data from coaches through an online log during their participation in a state-wide literacy coaching program. Coaches

were asked to note the content area they were focusing on, the type of interaction (e.g. on-site, email, etc.), and then a comment area was available for coaches to give details on what they did during this time. This open comment area allowed the researchers to find the nuances in the coaching sessions that may be left out of other coaching research. Like Bean et al. (2010), Schachter and colleagues (2018) found quite a bit of the coaches' time was spent on administrative tasks, even if it did involve the teacher. Tasks such as setting up meetings, planning for meetings, and gathering paperwork, while a necessary part of coaching, these tasks did not impact the teacher's practices and were coded as administrative tasks. These tasks took up more than one-fifth of the coaches' time and the researchers noted that this needs to be considered when planning a coaching program for time constraints (Schachter et al., 2018).

The content area that was focused on most frequently in the coaching sessions was the environment, followed by early reading. Play and emergent reading were focused on the fewest number of times. Specific coaching strategies were also examined, and the frequency of their use was totaled. Classroom observation was used most frequently (205 times) followed by discussion (used 173 times), while relationship building (used 66 times) and modeling practices (used 5 times) were some of the least used strategies by staggering amounts. Both studies explored specific strategies used by coaches. This is an area that I am going to dig into to see how often the coaches in my research use these strategies.

Koh and Neuman (2009) further explored the qualitative portion of the data that was included in the Neuman and Cunningham (2009) study. This portion of the study described the techniques and supports the coaches gave to family care providers from

both the coach and provider views. The coach gave suggestions on the environmental arrangement, including placing more writing materials in the classroom and adjusting boards or easels for children to have more exposure to print, which worked together to sustain children's engagement. Coaches also helped to add in new book reading techniques to help providers get better engagement from the children.

Another strategy coaches used was to identifying literacy specific goals which helped the providers to focus on letter knowledge and more productive book reading. New literacy teaching practices that the coaches implemented included adding new activities to teachers' instruction, creating new techniques that could be used in existing practices, and finding new ways to use current materials or get new materials inexpensively. "Coaches focused on the qualities of shared book reading and reacting positively to children's questions and activities. At the same time, coaches focused on the practical aspects of embedding knowledge in the context of instruction" (Koh & Neuman, 2009, p. 557). These findings apply to my research topic, showing the specific strategies that coaches used in addition to collecting the childcare providers' feedback. This provides a snapshot of what the providers felt were the best support the coaches gave to them that helped them improve their literacy teaching practices. However, there is still more investigation needed on the specific strategies that coaches use that the teachers find most beneficial.

Christ and Wang (2013) also explored if having on-site coaching improved vocabulary teaching and learning in a Head Start classroom. The issue that brought about this study was that "Early childhood teachers tend only to explain vocabulary meanings in the moment, as children seem to need these explanations, but rarely intentionally plan

for vocabulary instruction or teach particular words in ways that would support children's development" (Christ & Wang, 2013, p. 352). Christ and Wang (2013) used five different strategies when working with the teachers and assistants within the Head Start classroom. These were: (1) sharing personal stories and building rapport with teachers, (2) being present on-site consistently and interacting with teachers and children frequently, (3) inviting all of the teachers to participate in the planning and implementation of the instructional methods, (4) extending practices that were already used in the classroom first and then introducing new practices, and (5) negotiating goals for preschoolers' learning and methods of instruction through the process of reflection with the teachers.

Some of the research methods used were providing embedded definitions, asking vocabulary eliciting questions, asking a child to point to the vocabulary concept, and asking a non-eliciting question. In this classroom, the children's vocabulary knowledge improved significantly, compared to the control classroom at the end of the eight weeks of professional development (Christ & Wang, 2013). These strategies were also used in a study discussed earlier by Riley and Roach (2006), coaches observed teachers in their classrooms, recorded their observations, and shared observations with teachers immediately after the observation. Coaches were trained on six elements: (1) build a trusting relationship; (2) shape promising practices; (3) generalize effective practices; (4) provide conceptual labels; (5) link practices with research-based knowledge; and (6) Encourage teacher's self-exploration (Riley & Roach, 2006). These studies support the effectiveness of coaching, especially in the case of in-person coaching, and are relevant to my research, as I investigate effective strategies for coaches to increase teacher literacy practice and student achievement.



In the previously mentioned study by McLeod et al. (2019), both teachers and coaches shared that the following practices were used during the coaching process: adult learning principles, knowledge of coaching practices, classroom teaching experience, interpersonal skills, and accountability. Specific practices used by coaches, from most used to least used, were providing information about practices through readings or videos, providing help in the classroom, and modeling teaching practices. The strategy of role-playing was used quite a bit less than the others with 34% of participants noting the practice was used during their coaching sessions, while the other practices were used in 87-93% of sessions (McLeod et al., 2019). Constructive feedback was used in most coaching sessions, which included the development of action plans and solving classroom problems. The majority of teachers, coaches, and administrators in this study stated that coaching was very effective and almost all administrators found it beneficial for teachers.

Many coaching strategies were utilized throughout these studies and those discussed in previous sections. Strategies such as modeling, giving feedback, and problem solving were found in most of the studies in this section, along with Fox et al. (2011). In the Romano and Woods (2018) study, the interventionist also met with the teacher prior to the observation occurring to discuss the teacher's plan for the upcoming lesson. Reflection and goal setting were also common themes throughout many of these studies including, Fox et al. (2011) and Romano and Woods (2018). This section highlights coaching strategies that were used most often in these coaching programs. Teachers' perspective on how effective these strategies were to their practices was not included in these studies; my research will contribute to fill this gap.

**Coach and teacher conversations.** To understand more clearly what occurs during a coaching session, Jayaraman et al. (2015) explored conversations between coach and teacher during coaching sessions. They also examined how the coach's behaviors related to the teacher behaviors during the conversations. The 21 early childhood coaches were trained on principles and behaviors that led to successful coaching. Coaching sessions with the 24 teachers occurred between one to four times per month, and lasted 30-60 minutes. One of these coaching sessions with each teacher was videotaped and then coded using the Early Childhood Coaching Conversations coding system to see which behaviors were used during the session.

From the videos, the top three behaviors that occurred during conversations from the coaches were *verbal acknowledgments*, *non-verbal acknowledgement* and *clarifying intent* which occurred once every one to one-and-a-half minutes (Jayaraman et al., 2015). *Sharing information*, *asking questions for input or reaction*, *introducing new topics*, *promoting joint planning*, and *sharing inferential observations* were used less frequently at once every two to four minutes. Other behaviors that *encouraged connections between conversational topics*, *established or re-established a relationship*, *used feedback or shared specific observations* were only used by the coaches once every 5-10 minutes. Looking at the teacher behaviors, the most frequently used, once every minute, were *contributing or elaborating on coach input* and *using verbal acknowledgment*. During the training, coaches were taught specifically on *using question*, *sharing information*, *providing suggestions and joint planning*, and *feedback and inferential observations*. There was quite a difference in the amount that the behaviors were used during the coaching sessions. Teachers *asked questions or made requests*, *proposed new ideas*,

*participated in the relationship, and introduced new topics* far less than the other strategies.

The researchers noted that there was a relationship between how the teachers participated in the relationship and the coaches' ability to establish or re-establish the relationship. Furthermore, the teachers' contributions, input, and proposal of new ideas were associated with the coaches' ability to establish those relationships. There were many other positive associations between the coaches' and teachers' behaviors but there were also negative associations found in the data. Negative associations were found in the "coaches' introduction of new topics and teachers' introduction of new topics, coaches' use of feedback and teachers' proposal of new ideas and coaches' sharing observations and teachers' use of questions/request" (Jayaraman et al., 2015, p. 332). This study shows specific behaviors that occur during a coaching session, and what may make a coaching session productive based on behaviors displayed by both the coach and the teacher. This information is useful for my research as it is one of the few studies that examines what happens during a coaching session. As a part of my research, I want to explore more of the behaviors or strategies that the coaches use during coaching sessions to build a well-rounded view on how coaching can be most effective for both coaches and teachers.

**Challenges.** Challenges that occurred during the coaching process was the fifth theme in Jayaraman and colleagues' 2015 study. Some of the challenges included time that the teachers wanted the coach to be more available and finding time to have coaching conversations. Teacher discomfort was another challenge in which it was difficult for them to have the coach in the classroom and the teachers were nervous to hear any criticism. Teachers also found it hard to apply the strategies the coaches shared, they felt

they needed more modeling and feedback (Knoche, Kuhn, & Eum, 2013). Overall, the Knoche et al. (2013) study ties right into the topic I want to explore on what supports were involved in the coaching process and which were most beneficial for the teachers. Exploring the supports that the coaches perceived they need to be effective is another step that I would like to take to get an overall view on how to make coaching work for all parties involved.

The coaches in the McLeod et al. (2019) study mentioned, noted that they needed more support and training in certain practices such as challenging behaviors as well as with observation and data collection tools. Other areas that coaches needed more support were training, mentoring, collaboration, and professional development. Time was a constraint for coaches being most effective, along with the location of their classrooms and large caseloads. Coaches also mentioned that the number of teaching practices that were required of them to coach and the teachers to implement, was overwhelming (McLeod et al., 2019). This study ties into my current research of coaching in early childhood as it shows the benefits that many stakeholders see in the coaching process. It also gives an idea of what practices coaches use most and least frequently. Finally, this study sheds some light on the supports coaches need to be most successful and effective with their teachers and how difficult it can be to implement a coaching program statewide.

**Summary.** These studies gave examples of the strategies coaches used during coaching sessions and the responses that teachers gave on the strategies and coach characteristics that were most helpful for them. The first study by Knoche et al. (2013) also highlighted the difficulties that the coaches had while working with teachers and

working through the coaching process themselves. The second study by Bean et al. (2010) highlighted what activities coaches did during their workday. It described some teacher views on how they felt supported, or not, by their literacy coach. The third study by Koh and Neuman (2009) again highlights specific strategies the coaches used to help increase literacy instruction in the classroom and which of those strategies were most effective from the teachers' point of view. The fourth study by Jayaraman et al. (2015) discusses what occurs during coach and teacher conversations within coaching sessions highlighting how the relationship between a coach and a teacher is critical to having open and successful coaching sessions. The final study by Christ and Wang (2013) looks at coaching strategies during the coaching process that led to improvements in teacher practice and gains in children's literacy knowledge. Separately, these studies help to define specific strategies and difficulties that occur during the coaching process and collectively describe some of the same strategies that they found to be helpful in working with teachers.

These studies are similar in the methods they used to collect data; almost all of them used focus groups, interviews, and observation notes. Bean et al. (2010) also collected data through a survey that was sent to teachers. These studies focus on what strategies coaches used during these literacy coaching sessions. Observation, giving feedback, sharing strategies, and setting goals with the teacher are common themes that have continued in all three of the sections of the literature review. Jayaraman et al. (2015) dove deep into the specific behaviors that occur in a coaching session and the data continue to support the findings in the studies in this literature review. Those behaviors include verbal and non-verbal acknowledgment, sharing information and feedback. These

literacy coaching studies go into detail on specific strategies used by coaches such as room arrangement, repurposing materials and behavior exhibited by the coach. It is important to note that even though the coaching differed according to the specific topic, the overarching strategies remained the same.

The relationships developed between the coaches and teachers have been a common thread throughout the studies as well. This brings to light the importance of the relationships and the time necessary for coaches to build that relationship. In the previous section, the discussion on time spent coaching was important. After considering the findings from this section, it seems that time could have a major impact on the coaches' abilities to form relationships with their teachers. This point was highlighted by Bean et al. (2010) when the researchers discussed that coaches were able to do more intense coaching because they already had a relationship developed with the teachers. In the Bean et al. (2010) study, the coaches were then not having to spend time on building rapport, rather they were able to focus on implementing more strategies, using new materials and approaches, and brainstorming with the teacher on how to change activities.

The quality of the coach-teacher relationship appears to influence how successful the coaching program is for teachers and students. Knoche et al. (2013) found that the relationship between teacher and coach was important to the coaching process from the teacher's perspectives. Jayaraman et al. (2015) also found establishing and re-establishing the relationship to be an important behavior that occurred often in coaching sessions. The findings from Riley and Roach (2006) also support the importance of building a trusting relationship with the teacher as one of the coaching strategies. The teachers in the study stated that the trust, mutual respect, and partnership that occurred in the relationship with

the coach were important to the success of the coaching program. Relationship building is further supported by Trivette et al. (2009) who described coaching as a, “Cyclic process that improves knowledge and skills, self-confidence, and collegial relationships as a result of ongoing coaching episodes” (p. 2).

Throughout these studies, it is clear that coaching is a valuable professional development tool that can improve teaching practices and child outcomes. Finding specific strategies that coaches can use to be successful is important. This literature review explored some ways that coaches can be intentional with their time working with teachers. More investigation is needed into the support that both coaches and teachers need to make a coaching program effective. A summary table of the studies is included in Appendix D.

## **Research Gap**

After reviewing the above research on coaching in early childhood and specifically literacy coaching, it is clear that there is still a gap in the research. While there are studies that explore the content that should be discussed in literacy coaching sessions, there is a lack of research on the strategies that coaches should use to deliver that content. The last section of research highlights the specific strategies that coaches have used with teachers and how they have affected their teaching practice and student outcomes. In the previous two sections, the research did not include strategies that the coaches or mentors used to support the teachers. When developing a coaching program to help teachers and students, it is imperative to know precise strategies and supports that are most effective in improving teaching practices.

This is where the gap in research lies as most of the studies do not include this information and very few include perspectives from the coaches and teachers. It is important to include the perspective of the teachers and what they felt were the most effective strategies the coaches used. This is important to know how the coaching affected their teaching in order to make coaching effective. The supports that the coaches needed to be successful is also an important avenue to explore. If they are not properly trained and supported, they may have a difficult time being successful throughout the coaching process. Overall, I will be exploring the supports coaches and teachers need to be successful and what strategies the coaches use that are most beneficial while working with early childhood teachers on literacy skills and practices. This research will help bridge the gap in current research and give future programs a well-rounded idea of what supports and resources are needed for coaches and teachers to be successful in a coaching program.

### **Pertinent Policies, Standards and Organizations**

#### **Michigan Laws and Policies**

Literacy in early childhood is an extremely ‘hot topic’ throughout much of the country as many states have adopted laws in connection to student reading scores. In 2016; Michigan enacted the Read by Grade Three Law (Act 306 of 2016: MCL 380.1280f) which states that by the end of third grade all students need to be reading at grade level. If students are not reading at grade level, or within one level, they have the possibility of being held back or remaining in third grade, for another year beginning in the 2019-2020 school year. Before reaching third grade, the law requires that schools identify those learners who are struggling in reading and writing and provide them with



additional help. This has created great concern for all educators and the trickle-down effect is now being felt in early childhood. This continual push down has made literacy a top priority for early childhood teachers and school districts. Literacy coaching with early childhood teachers is one avenue taken by many districts to help improve children's literacy scores before they enter kindergarten.

To help with the enormous task of ensuring all third graders in the state were proficient readers by the end of the school year, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators' (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) developed the Early Literacy Task Force. This task force developed the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy, which outline 10 literacy practices that can be done daily in classrooms to improve children's literacy skills (MAISA, 2016a). There are five documents broken down by age group to give specific details on what can be done within those practices at each age group. Those groups are birth to age three, prekindergarten, grade K to grade three, grades four to five, and grades six to 12. An Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices in Literacy document was also created that describes systematic practices that can be put into place within schools or day care centers to help impact children's literacy development (MAISA, 2016c). Another document that the task force created was the Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy which outlines what effective literacy coaching looks like at the elementary level (MAISA, 2016b). However, this can be translated to early childhood with minor changes to fit the needs of early childhood teachers and students (MAISA, 2016b).

After the Read by Grade Three Law was enacted, the state developed Michigan's Action Plan for Literacy Excellence for 2017-2020. Within the plan it states that the

current and future education workforce “deserve continuous support to grow their instructional skills in literacy” (Michigan Action Plan, 2017, p. 19). The plan goes on to state:

Michigan will be able to leverage the continuum of essential instructional practices in literacy for this effort. Michigan can provide current educators with opportunities to gain knowledge of the practices through increased access to literacy experts who are equipped with the knowledge of the essentials. Efforts to define a workforce pathway across the early childhood continuum from birth to third grade will provide educators with clear options for growing in their practice and committing to educator careers. [...] In addition, Michigan can better ensure that the essential practices are being effectively and efficiently utilized with instructional coaching. (p. 19)

In 2018, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) developed the Early Literacy Coaching Model which describes how literacy coaching can improve teaching practices, which will in turn improve student achievement scores. Within this document, the coaching outcomes are described as, “Literacy coaching can provide powerful job-embedded ongoing professional development with a primary goal of enhancing classroom literacy instruction through improving teacher expertise” (MDE, 2018, p. 5).

### **National Laws and Policies**

**Head Start.** This federally funded preschool program has been a focus of many policy changes since its beginning in the 1960s. In 1998 the Head Start Act, part of the funds that Head Start programs receive were to be allocated to providing staff training around the topic of language and literacy growth for the children in the program to promote school readiness (H.R. 4241, 1998). This act notes that children need to have a minimum level of literacy to be ready for school and that family literacy services need to be integrated into programs. Head Start began incorporating literacy and language skills

as part of their Child Outcomes Framework released in 2000 and revised in 2003 and 2007 (U.S. Department Health and Human Services, 2003).

**Third grade reading legislation.** Literacy is an issue across the nation as only “Thirty-five percent of fourth-grade students perform at or above NAEP Proficient level on the reading assessment in 2019” (NCES, 2020). Michigan is not the only state implementing third grade reading laws as other states have implemented similar laws. There are 16 other states, plus D.C., that have similar laws to Michigan that require retention if third grade students do not meet the requirements for being a proficient reader.

There are other states that do not require, but allow for, students to be retained if they do not meet the appropriate benchmarks (National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 2019). For example, in West Virginia, the early literacy legislation focused on the supports that the state and counties need to put in place to help close attendance and reading gap along with maximizing family engagement (West Virginia Legislature, 2017). In Minnesota, retention is not required under the Reading Proficiently No Later Than the End of Grade 3 statute (Minnesota Legislature, 2019). Within this statute, districts should encourage family engagement, much like West Virginia, even after third grade interventions need to continue for the student and local school districts were to design their own literacy plan (Minnesota Legislature, 2019). Michigan’s Read by Grade Three Law also encourages schools to engage with parents through creating a ‘read at home plan’, although school districts do not have the flexibility that West Virginia and Minnesota must make local plans (Act 306 of 2016: MCL 380.1280f, 2016).

## **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

### **NAYEC's Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development**

Systems notes,

State policies should create an integrated system of professional development that crosses the early childhood sectors. [...] Integrated policies intentionally promote the building and support of an efficient cross-sector system that decreases duplication of efforts and increases sustainability. (2008, p. 11)

The policy continues noting that all those in early childhood should have the same opportunity and access to professional development to further their knowledge and skills within the classroom (NAEYC, 2008). The blueprint also mentions that there should be state policies that allow and support people entering the early childhood field from other fields and among the education field (NAEYC, 2008). Within this document, federal policies are also mentioned. The Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS), which was the early childhood portion of No Child Left Behind, emphasized the need for training for both early childcare providers and parents (NAYEC, 2008). Within GSGS, the states are required to develop guidelines for early learning and professional development that connect to the state's professional standards (NAEYC, 2008).

When Head Start was reauthorized in 2007, the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care was developed which "Increased requirements for program staff qualifications and ongoing professional development, and a requirement for each full-time employee to have an individual professional development plan" (NAYEC, 2008, p. 9). The National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center) noted that centers can use Title I funds for high quality professional development that helps improve teaching practices that

match with the state's content standards. In addition, the funds can be used for coaching preschool teachers who are in a public school that serves low-income families (PDW Center, 2014).

In a position statement with the International Reading Association (IRA, 1998), NAEYC stated that a, "Professional preparation system is badly needed in every state to ensure that staff in early childhood program and teachers in primary schools [...] that informs them about developmental patterns in early literacy learning" (p. 10). The position statement goes on to note that professional development is imperative for teachers to stay updated on new strategies to use while working with young children to improve their learning outcomes (IRA/NAEYC, 1998). An increase of public funding to "Ensure access to high-quality preschool and childcare program for all children who need them" is another portion of this position statement (IRA/NAEYC, 1998). Resources for childcare centers, teachers, and families are also included as important to positively impacting children's language and literacy development (IRA/NAEYC, 1998).

## **Summary**

Throughout this literature review it is apparent that literacy is considered to be of high importance not only in the state of Michigan, but across the nation. While professional development trainings can be somewhat effective in increasing teacher practices, coaching can be far more effective in further improving teacher literacy knowledge and practice and children's literacy outcomes. A foundation of specific strategies and supports that coaches and teachers need can help coaching programs to be effective. The Essentials Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy (MAISA, 2016b) document provides strategies for elementary literacy coaches to support teachers with

their literacy practices. There is not yet a document to provide preschool literacy coaches with strategies to utilize while working with preschool teachers.

To help close this research gap, I explored the support that coaches and preschool teachers need while navigating through a coaching program. I also examined what coaching strategies teachers and coaches find most effective. Through this research, I will be able to give concrete examples of what coaches and teachers need to be successful when going through a coaching program. This information will be valuable to those who develop professional development opportunities at the local and state level to show which strategies are most effective when working with coaches and teachers.

In this chapter, I found theories pertaining to adult learning and learning through social interactions. These connect to the coaching strategies and techniques that were used in the research I found on the topic of coaching and literacy coaching in early childhood. Table 2.1 below summarizes the theories and research discussed in this chapter. Through my dissertation, I explored these foundational ideas on how to make early childhood coaching successful by gathering the experiences of coaches and teachers who participated in an early literacy coaching program to document the program's successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Data that I gathered helps to inform other coaching programs, even those not focusing on literacy and possibly those who are not working in early childhood.

Table 2.1 Theory and Coaching Strategies Comparison

Theory	Coaching Strategy
<p>Adult Learning Theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connect pre-existing knowledge to new concepts (Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino, 1999)</li> <li>- Learners have control of learning and progress (Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino, 1999)</li> <li>- Embed opportunities to practice and plan new strategies (Knowles, 1980)</li> <li>- Learner needs to feel valued, accepted, and supported (Knowles, 1980)</li> <li>- Teacher reflection (Trotter, 2006)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goal setting, developing an action plan, working with what teacher already does, providing constructive feedback, importance of relationship (Fox et al., 2011; Knoche, Kuhn, &amp; Eum, 2013; Koh &amp; Neuman; 2009; McLeod et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2010b; Riley &amp; Roach, 2006)</li> <li>- Importance of relationship between the coach and teacher (Christ &amp; Wang, 2013; Bean et al., 2010; Jayaraman et al., 2015; Knoche, Kuhn, &amp; Eum, 2013; Romano &amp; Woods, 2018)</li> <li>- Providing information through readings and videos (Landry et al., 2000; McLeod et al., 2019)</li> </ul>
<p>Vygotsky Space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning is an ever-evolving process</li> <li>- Occurs at individual and societal levels (Gallucci, 2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaching can be tied with training to help teachers take what they have learned in training and apply it to their classroom (Fox et al., 2011; Hindman &amp; Wasik, 2012; Neuman &amp; Cunningham, 2009; Rezzonico et al., 2015; Weber-Mayrer et al., 2018)</li> </ul>

Table 2.1 Theory and Coaching Strategies Comparison Continued

Theory	Coaching Strategy
<p>Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The distance between what an individual can do on their own and what they can do with support (scaffolding, Bruner, Woods, and Ross, 1995) (Vygotsky, 1978)</li> </ul>	<p>- Coaches providing modeling and real time support for teachers during lessons (Bean et al., 2010; Christ &amp; Wang, 2013; Hindman &amp; Wasik, 2012; Landry et al., 2000)</p> <p>- Planning with teachers and showing them how to use the strategy (Christ &amp; Wang, 2013; Fox et al., 2011; Weber-Mayrer et al., 2018)</p> <p>- Coaches providing their expertise and perspective for teachers (Christ &amp; Wang, 2013; Knoche, Kuhn, &amp; Eum, 2013)</p>
<p>Social Learning Theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children and adults learn from interacting and watching those around them</li> <li>- Modeling and reinforcement</li> <li>- Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997)</li> </ul>	<p>- Coach modeling practices and strategies for the teacher (Bean et al., 2010; McLeod et al., 2019; Romano &amp; Woods, 2018)</p> <p>- Building up the teacher's belief that they are effective and good teachers, they can help their students (McLeod et al., 2019; Riley &amp; Roach, 2006; Romano &amp; Woods, 2018)</p>
<p>Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning is based on experiences in which we learn and relearn based on our past experiences</li> <li>- Learning about specific concepts to help in problem solving, creativity, and decision making</li> </ul>	<p>- Coaches helping teachers to find new strategies to use in their classrooms (Bean et al., 2010; Koh &amp; Neuman, 2009; Landry et al., 2000; Powell et al., 2010a)</p> <p>- Allowing for experiences where the teacher can learn, through watching the coach model or role playing a scenario with the teacher (Landry et al., 2000; Rezzonico et al., 2015)</p>



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### **Overview and Research Questions**

Coaching has been used for many years as a way of supporting the professional development of educators. As discussed in Chapter One, there is a great emphasis on ensuring children's literacy proficiency. Coaching can be a strategy for encouraging teacher development that supports students' literacy needs. There are many moving parts when developing a coaching program. As noted in the research gap in Chapter Two, prior research did not explore teacher perspectives in coaching programs and including them in this study will create a better picture of the program. This research aims to understand the experiences of coaches and teachers who participated in an early literacy coaching program in Oakland County, Michigan, with a focus on strategies and relationships that affect coaching implementation.

The following are the research questions I have posed:

- (1) What strategies were reported as being effective for coaches and teachers?
- (2) How did the relationships between the teachers and coaches impact the success of the coaching program?
- (3) What positive learning and development did the coaches and teachers experience during the coaching program?
- (4) What difficulties did coaches and teachers face during the coaching program?
- (5) What resources do coaches and teachers need to fully participate in the literacy coaching program?

## **Research Design**

The research questions were answered using a case study design with mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative. The case is of a single Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP), in which a group of teachers and coaches in Oakland County, Michigan participated. The data were collected in the program's second year of implementation. As discussed in Chapter Two, dosage and program design impacted teacher and coach success in the Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP). In 2020-2021, schools implemented COVID-19 protocols. For health and safety reasons, there were three teachers that shared they were required to teach remotely, others who did not participate may have also taught remotely, while others were in-person. Those teaching in-person had to work around restrictions, one of which was not having visitors in the building. The literacy coaches were thus unable to observe classrooms in-person. This led to changes to the original design of the EELCP. That is, while half of the teachers were supposed to receive in-person, all coaching had to be done virtually until the spring when, and if, buildings allowed coaches to come into the building. Only 13 out of 30 teachers stated in the survey they received in-person coaching.

The data that were collected yielded the study participants' perspectives on what tools and strategies were needed for the coaching to be effective in adding to teachers' literacy practices. This research was a case study design due to the "In-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project" (Simons, 2009, p. 21). Collecting data from the perspectives of the teachers and coaches through multiple data types provided an in-depth look at supports that coaches and

teachers needed in this Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP). Stake (1995) noted that case studies are completed within a “bounded system”. I found that this study fit this criterion as I delve into the EELCP developed and piloted in one southeast Michigan county. The initial plan for data sources was from surveys, focus groups, and existing data and an in-depth examination was conducted to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2015). Challenges in forming focus groups and the use of interviews will be discussed later in this chapter. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods through the surveys and focus groups “complemented each other to create a meaningful whole according to the object and purpose of the investigation” (Sagadin, 2004, p. 89).

### **Positioning Statement**

As the researcher of this study, my involvement and viewpoint on the topic is important to note as it may affect the interpretation of results. I support the use of coaching for teachers, especially early childhood teachers who may not have an educational background focused on young children’s literacy development. With the state of our nation’s reading scores with most children scoring below 50% throughout all grade levels (NCES, 2020), I find literacy coaching and professional development to be important to teachers who support children’s development. During the 2019-2020 school year, I was a member of the Oakland Schools’ Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP) advisory committee. I helped to provide feedback and ideas on how Oakland Schools could improve teacher practices and outcomes and interpret the results of their own study, the EELCP. During the current research, I was no longer a part of the advisory committee.

Due to my knowledge of this project and the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) prior to this study, I approach this research with a strong insider perspective (Starman, 2013). However, I was not directly involved in the Early Literacy Essentials Coaching project data collection and implementation of the coaching activities. Table 3.1 details my involvement in each of the projects discussed here and in Chapter One. A timeline of these projects and data collection instruments included for this study is in Figure B.2 in Appendix B. Therefore, I remained as a third-party objective evaluator, neutral observer, and researcher.

## **Study Participants**

### **Participant Recruitment**

All 41 teachers and nine coaches who participated in Oakland Schools' Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP) study were invited to participate in the research. Recruitment emails were sent out to coaches via the Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program coordinators during their monthly coach meetings. The emails included a description of the study, and the IRB approved information sheet. Recruitment emails were sent to teachers.

The Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program coordinators also shared information about this study with teachers during their final training meeting. Recruitment for focus groups was completed by using the last question of the survey which was a prompt that asked for contact information if interested in participating in a focus group.

Table 3.1 Researcher Involvement in Prior Related Research

Research Project	Year	Researcher Involvement
<i>Essentials Pre-K</i> Training of Trainers (ToT) Evaluation Project	2018-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of evaluation team</li> <li>• Participated in the Training of Trainers</li> <li>• Conducted Focus Groups during trainings with ToT participants</li> <li>• Completed literacy evaluations in Pre-K classrooms in Oakland County</li> </ul>
Oakland Schools' EELCP	2019-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member of Advisory Committee: giving feedback and ideas to project coordinators</li> <li>• No involvement in coaching or trainings</li> </ul>
Pilot Study with Oakland Schools EELCP	2020-2021	Conducted focus groups with coaches

A group of five coaches and ten teachers who completed the survey volunteered to share their experiences in focus groups. Due to scheduling conflicts and the number of participants who agreed to participate in a focus group, these sessions turned into interviews. Two coaches were interviewed together, and two teachers were interviewed together. A total of three coaches and five teachers were interviewed. Some of these coaches may have been a part of my pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) in which coaches were gathered in focus groups and discussed the support they needed during the first year of the coaching program.

Since this data collection occurred during the summer, an incentive was offered for teachers and coaches to participate in the survey and the interviews. A total of ten, \$10 Amazon gift cards were given to randomly chosen participants who filled out the survey. All the participants in the interviews, received a \$25 Amazon gift card. These gift cards were sent electronically to the participants using the email they provided in the survey and confirmed if they participated in an interview.

### **Participant Characteristics**

There were 41 teachers who received coaching, however only 38 of them had an email that worked. A total of 31 responses were recorded by Qualtrics XM®. While going through the responses, I noticed there were duplicate survey answers from five participants. I took their first answer and did not use the second response for any of my data. There were five that only answered the first question. My final data set consisted of 21 respondents. Five of the teachers (or 24% of the participants) were also interviewed (two were interviewed together).

**Teacher demographics.** All the teachers were female, aged between 28 to 63 years, with an average age of 48 years. Over half of the teachers, 62%, were White, 33% were African American and 5% were Asian. All the teachers were non-Arab and Non-Hispanic/Latino. One teacher chose to abstain from answering the demographic questions. The teachers who participated had a variety of educational backgrounds, from associate degrees in early childhood to education specialist degree in early childhood. Table 3.2 shows the specifics of the educational background of the teachers who answered the survey. Table 3.3 shows the types of classrooms that the teachers taught in during the 2020-2021 school year. Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is a state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children whose family meets certain criteria known as risk-factors. These risk-factors include income eligibility, diagnosed disability or delay, abuse or neglect, teen mother, parents incarcerated, and others (MDE, 2020). Head Start, a federally funded preschool program for three and four-year-old children also has eligibility requirements like GSRP, but the income eligibility is lower. One teacher worked in Head Start, but no teachers worked in home-based daycares. The teachers had a wide range of years of experience and Table 3.4 shows the breakdown in years of teaching experience.

**Coach demographics.** Five out of the nine coaches responded to the survey (55% participation rate), and four out of the five coaches participated in interviews (80% participation rate). All five coaches were females, between the ages of 36 and 72 years old, with an average age of 49 years. Four identified as white and one as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Table 3.2 Teacher Education Level

Highest Level of Education	Number of Teachers
Associate in early childhood	2
Bachelor's degree in elementary education	2
Bachelor's degree in psychology	1
Bachelor's degree in early childhood	11
Master's degree in early childhood	3
Human service degree	1
Education specialist degree in early childhood	1

Table 3.3 Teacher Classroom Type

Classroom Type	Number of Teachers
GSRP	13
Head Start	1
GSRP/Head Start Blend	4
Tuition-based private preschool/childcare	1
Tuition-based district preschool	2



Table 3.4 Teacher Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching	Number of Teachers
3 - 5 years	4
6 – 10 years	3
11 – 15 years	5
16 – 20 years	4
20+ years	5

One coach began their position in fall of 2020, while the other four began in the fall of 2019, meaning that those four had coached in this program for two years. This may impact the experience, knowledge, and skills that they discuss in the survey as they can compare coaching in the first and second year of the program.

The first year of the program, 2019-2020, was designed to have half of the teachers with in-person coaching and the other half received virtual coaching with some in-person sessions. This design had to be adjusted due to COVID-19 impact in which coaching and teaching were completed virtually from March, 2020 until June, 2020. The coaches held other leadership positions in education including Early Childhood Specialist, trainer, staff developer, center director, and grade level leader for content areas.

All coaches had taught in the classroom prior to becoming a coach. Two taught for as little as one to three years while two others taught twenty or more years. All of the

coaches taught children from birth to prekindergarten, while only one taught kindergarten through fifth grade. This is important to note because their teaching experience may have affected how they coached and how they supported their teachers, and whether they have “been in their shoes” before. Four of the coaches held a master’s degree in early childhood and one coach held a Ph.D. in early childhood. Table 3.5 shows the breakdown of the types of classrooms in which the coaches worked in during the year of my data collection. All coaches worked with multiple teachers who worked in a variety of classroom types.

Table 3.5 Classroom Types Where Coaches Worked with Teachers

Classroom Type	Number of Coaches
GSRP	5
Head Start	1
GSRP/Head Start Blend	3
Tuition-based private preschool/childcare	1
Tuition-based district preschool	1
Home based childcare	0

## **Data Collection Procedures**

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

The IRB for the current study was a modification of a previous IRB approval dated May 2020 as it included the same coaching program and some of the same participants. The Legacy and Modification IRB approvals are included in Appendix A. IRB approval was granted for the study titled: Supports for Early Childhood Literacy Coaches and Teachers (project ID number: 1560636-1). The current research was conducted from June 2021 to October 2021.

### **Participant Consent**

The IRB approved information sheet in Appendix A was emailed to the participants. Coaches were informed of the study in their final coaches' meeting, and I contacted them through their emails with a written description of the study, data collection processes, and information sheet. At the beginning of each survey a description of the study and the information sheet was included as a link. The participants were required to agree to participate in the survey before starting the survey. At the time of scheduling and a day before the focus groups, I emailed the participants the information sheet along with the questions that we would be discussing. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded them of the purpose of the study, asked for their consent to record the session, and asked participants to refer to each other with only their first names to ensure privacy.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected using a survey, followed by interviews. As discussed in a previous section, initially focus groups were going to be held but due to

conflicts in scheduling and the small number of participants, interviews were conducted. Dates for the data collection were determined after conversations with EELCP project coordinators at Oakland Schools, an intermediate school district in southeast Michigan. A timeline of these projects and data collection instruments included for this study is in Figure B.2 in Appendix B.

**Surveys.** The first instrument used to collect data were two different surveys, one for teachers and one for coaches. These surveys will be referred to as the Teacher and Coaches' Experiences, Teacher (TCE-T) Survey and Teacher and Coaches' Experiences, Coach (TCE-C) Survey hereafter. The survey was online and was developed and distributed using a web based Qualtrics XM® software. The survey included demographic information, questions pertaining to the relationship between the coach and teacher, coaching strategies used, and how coaching was effective for them. Nine demographic questions gathered information on the program the teachers worked in, highest level of education, years teaching, along with age and ethnicity questions. These were followed by 13 open-ended questions with two closed-ended and three Likert-scale questions (Creswell, 2015). Questions for the surveys are included in Appendix E. Surveys were sent out using Qualtrics XM® software beginning on June 25, 2021. Weekly or bi-weekly reminders were sent until mid-August. In mid-September and October, surveys were sent via my school email to try and reach more participants in case their email had blocked the Qualtrics XM® link.

**Focus groups and interviews.** After collecting these data, focus groups were set up to gain further insight into the participants' perspectives about how coaching can be most effective for everyone involved. Those teachers and coaches who volunteered to be

a part of the focus groups were contacted through the email they provided. Teachers and coaches were in separate focus groups and interviews to encourage open discussion.

Focus groups were scheduled for up to six participants for each time. Only one or two participants signed up for the dates which led to the focus groups becoming interviews. On the TCE-T survey, 11 teachers left their contact information to participate in a focus group. There was attrition with those who said they would participate, seven signed up for a date and two that did not show up for the time they picked. Due to the scheduling issues, three of the teachers' and one of the coach's focus groups had only one participant for a given date and time, leading to interviews being conducted instead of focus groups. These participants were emailed multiple times throughout July, August, and October to possibly get them to participate.

Due to restrictions for in-person meetings due to COVID-19, the interviews took place virtually via Zoom. The interviews were video recorded using the Zoom video conferencing software and audio recorded using a separate device to ensure that no data were lost. These were then transcribed using the Zoom software and I checked them for accuracy prior to coding.

In total, between June and October, I collected five coach (TCE-C) and 21 teacher (TCE-T) survey responses and interviewed three coaches (two in one group and one in another) and five teachers (two in one group and three individual). Focus groups would have helped to gather the perspectives of many coaches and teachers through interaction and communal dialogue (Creswell, 2015). While there was not enough participation for focus groups, the interviews provided an in-depth conversation with the coaches and teachers (Creswell, 2015).

Questions used for the interviews are in Appendix F. More in-depth questions were developed for the focus group and questions were added or adjusted from the survey results. One of the questions added was about role-play as a strategy used by the coaches as it was noted by many teachers that they would have liked it to occur more often. Questions were added for both the teacher and coach focus groups to find out what role-play meant to them and if they thought it would be an effective strategy or not. These questions were based on the questions I posed and the data I collected in my pilot study on coaching support (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021). The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 60 minutes, with an average time of 45 minutes.

**Existing data.** I used existing data to triangulate the data I collected (Creswell, 2015). One source was from a pilot study which collected the experiences of the coaches during the first year of the EELCP during the 2019-2020 school year. The coaches' perspectives were gathered in focus groups in which coaches shared what support they needed from teachers, directors, and program coordinators along with the difficulties they faced during coaching (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021). A second source of existing data was the end of the year coach and teacher surveys from Oakland Schools' Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP). Questions in the EELCP surveys asked about how coaches supported their implementation of the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a), how the experience could be improved, areas of their literacy practices that improved, and what contributed to their growth. These questions align with several questions from the current study on coaching strategies, impact on literacy practices, and improvements needed.

The EELCP existing data was from surveys sent out at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, completed from June 15, 2021 to July 22, 2021. Separate surveys were sent out to coaches and teachers with similar, but somewhat different questions using Google Forms. Responses were collected from 10 coaches and 30 teachers. The data from these surveys were sent to me by one of the project coordinators via Excel sheets, along with the survey questions in Google Forms in a PDF document. This data included open and closed-ended questions, including some Likert scale questions. Likert scale questions about the quality of supports from their coach, relationship and communication with their coach were used to compare with the qualitative data gathered from in the newly collected TCE T & C survey and interview data. Five of the open-ended questions were used to triangulate data found in the survey and interviews. These data sources answered my research questions in the following ways as shown in Table 3.6.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

#### **Data Sources**

The types of data gathered from the differing sources included both qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, the TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys included both open-ended questions, Likert rating scale questions, and items that asked for demographic information. Open-ended survey answers were also analyzed using Dedoose™ software and in-vivo coding to find recurring categories and themes (Creswell, 2015).

Table 3.6 Data Sources for Research Questions

Research Question	Current Research	Existing Data
1) What strategies were reported as being effective for coaches and teachers?	TCE-T Survey (Questions 17-20, 29-31) TCE-C Survey (Questions 34-36) Interviews with teachers and coaches	Pilot study data (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) EELCP survey data – open and Likert scale questions
2) How did the relationships between the teachers and coaches impact the success of the coaching program?	Interviews with teachers and coaches TCE-T Survey (Questions 24-28) TCE-C Survey (Questions 21-26)	EELCP survey data – Likert scale questions
3) What positive learning and development did the coaches and teachers experience during the coaching program?	Questions 10-12 on the TCE-T Survey and 20 on the TCE-C Survey and in the focus groups.	Pilot study data (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) EELCP survey data – open-ended questions
4) What difficulties did coaches and teachers face during the coaching program?	TCE-T Survey (Questions 21, 23, 32) TCE-C Survey (Question 37) Interviews with coaches and teachers	Pilot study data (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) EELCP survey data – open-ended question
5) What resources do coaches and teachers need to fully participate in the literacy coaching program?	TCE-T Survey (Questions 33, 34) TCE-C Survey (Questions 27-31) Interviews with coaches and teachers	Pilot study data (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) EELCP survey data – open-ended question



After checking the accuracy of the interview transcriptions produced by Zoom, I uploaded the transcriptions into Dedoose™ coding software. In the existing EELCP data, there were also open-ended questions and Dedoose™ with in-vivo coding were also employed with these data.

The qualitative items in the TCE-C (coach) and TCE-T (teacher) surveys data were analyzed in Qualtrics XM® using the tables and charts that it developed. The demographic information data were exported and analyzed in an Excel sheet. Likert scale items from the EELCP data were not able to be formatted correctly for Dedoose™ and were therefore analyzed in Excel documents and within the Qualtrics XM® system for the survey data. Questions from the TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys about specific strategies, how often they were used during coaching sessions and how often they would have liked to use them or have them used by their coach were included in the strategies theme.

### **Qualitative Data**

The overall analysis of the data was conducted using an inductive strategy and grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I then used in-vivo coding to extract the participants' words in response to each of the questions in the interviews. These were coded, grouped into categories, larger domains and ultimately themes. As I coded, I created codes and categories. For example, one of my questions asked about the strategies coaches used during the program. The parent code I created was coaching strategies and one of the child codes was to break down the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a). Codes and categories underwent numerous iterations during initial and subsequent coding.

One example of the coding is outlined in Table 3.7, giving specific excerpts from survey and focus group data, the in-vivo codes, and subsequent “Coaching Strategies” category. The in-vivo codes mainly identified strategies that the coaches used, so I combined them with the coaching strategies category. Then, I compared the data from each of the surveys to see if there were any overlapping trends found across surveys. The data from both the surveys and the focus groups were used to find patterns in the data (Yin, 2018). These data were triangulated with the existing data from Oakland Schools’ EELCP to answer the research questions stated in the data collection section. Table 3.8 shows how triangulation occurred through excerpts, codes, and then categories from the different data sources. In Table 3.9, codes from the TCE-C and TCE-T surveys, focus group, and existing data are described and how these data sources support and triangulate the findings.

Table 3.7 Coding of Teacher Qualitative Survey and Interview Data

Data Source	Excerpt	Codes	Sub-Category	Category
Interview	I liked it, same thing, it allowed me to pick what I wanted to focus on.	Allowed me to choose my focus	Individualize	Coach Strategies
Interview	They always met my needs, if I felt like I was struggling with one of the essentials, I was able to text her call her and say hey can you give me example exactly what they're talking about so she was able to do that	Coach gave idea when teacher struggled	Coach strategies Impact of Relationship	Coach Strategies
TCE-T Survey	Set goals and objectives, helped me focus my practices and activities, motivates me to follow through	Set goals and objectives Motivate	Individualize	Coach Strategies
TCE-T Survey	When we went back to in-person learning, my coach was able to come in and point out a few things that I was doing right and those things that I needed to work on. I was able to focus better and be more intentional on some of those areas I needed to focus on especially during read-alouds.	In-person impact Focus and intentional	Individualize Impact of relationship	Coach Strategies Difficulties

Table 3.8 Triangulation of Teacher Codes and Categories

Data Source	Excerpt	Codes	Category
TCE-T Survey	She was a great support by offering feedback, constructive criticism, and guidance.	Offered feedback Guidance Constructive criticism	Coach strategies
TCE-T Survey	Coach was able to point some of my weaknesses and give me feedback on how to improve!	Offered feedback Constructive criticism	Coach strategies
Teacher Interview	She helped a lot, she gave me really good feedback on my read-alouds.	Offered feedback	Coach strategies
Teacher Interview	Even though I wasn't in the classroom, I was online doing read-alouds and activities and things like that, she would give me really good feedback and she critiqued me really well.	Gave good feedback Offered feedback	Coach strategies
EECLP data	Provided feedback, provided concrete examples/activities, and helped identify strengths and room to grow!	Offered feedback Gave concrete examples Identified strengths and room to grow	Coach strategies
EELCP data	I was initially worried about time, but coach worked around my schedule and gave me valuable feedback and ideas.	Worked around my schedule Gave good feedback Offered feedback	Coach strategies
EELCP data	We did a video and she gave feedback.	Offered feedback	Coach strategies

Table 3.9 Coach Coding and Triangulation

Data Source	Excerpt	Codes	Category
Focus group 2	I did try and create knowing my teacher schedules, I tried to go when they would have a break of some kind, whether was even just taking the children outside where I could go outside with that teacher and debrief a little bit while they were still outside	Debriefing with teachers after observation Got to know teachers' schedules	Coach Strategies
Focus group 1	I gave them Mrs. Wishy Washy, wishy washy day. And I had written up a three-day plan that that High Scope never used and. We talked through the plan of how to take a read-aloud and then use it for writing you know you know use it as looking at the elements for writing. [...] We started to talk about those and how they were going to use it.	Gave teachers assignments to do 3-day writing plan Mrs. Wishy Washy	Coach Strategies
EELCP Data	Modeling, active listening reflection on tools used, resources provided	Modeling Active listening Reflection on tools use Resources	Coach Strategies
Pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021)	I reassure teachers that growth can be a small amount	Any growth is good growth	Coach Strategies
Pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021)	Talking with teachers that they aren't adding more things for them to do - just improving what they are already doing	Improving current practices	Strategies

## **Theme Development**

I exported my data from Dedoose™ into an Excel file, then wrote each of the categories on sticky notes, a different color for the teachers and coaches. These coach and teacher data sources were separated in two different projects in Dedoose™ to ensure proper triangulation, to see how well they would support each other when coding was finished. After I wrote out the teacher sticky notes, I looked to see which would go together, referencing the in-vivo codes as I went to ensure that the codes were complementing those that I was putting together. Then I wrote out the coach sticky notes and put them in the dominant category or theme that I began to create with the teacher sticky notes. Some of the categories were not included in the themes as they did not fit, and some were created off of Oakland Schools' EELCP existing data that did not apply to what I was examining in my research. I derived six themes: Coaching strategies, Impact of relationship on program experience, Difficulties, How coaches and teachers experienced success, Resources needed, and Implications. Table 3.10 illustrates the coding process and outcomes that led to the development of the six themes.

Table 3.10 Coding Process and Outcomes

Coding Process	Coding Outcome
In-vivo codes	Teacher: 579 codes Coach: 471 codes
Code applications	Teacher: 1878 Coach: 980
Category examples	Difficulties in program Impact of relationship on experience Relationship success with most connected teacher Lack of relationship – impact on teacher Support from teachers Support from administrators Support from OS program coordinators Needed to make experience better Role-play interpretations
Themes	Coach strategies How coaches and teachers experienced success Relationship Difficulties Resources needed Recommendations

## **Quantitative Data**

Close-ended or questions using the Likert scale were analyzed by aggregating the data from the teachers and the coaches and looking for patterns in their responses (Creswell, 2015). All close-ended questions from existing data were compared to the newly collected data, as applicable. This data was used to support findings from the qualitative data above and provide recommendations for future coaching studies.

## **Validation**

To ensure that coding and analysis was done correctly, 20% of the data was sent to two doctoral candidates. These individuals and I reviewed the codes and reached 95% agreement. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and when disagreement was difficult to resolve, the author made the final coding decisions. The results were sent to participants for member checking as a narrative form along with tables in Chapter Four using an emailed link to a Google Document. Participants were asked to check whether the analysis of the data aligned with their experience in the coaching program and reply to the email. Categories and themes were checked by my advisor and the two doctoral candidates and confirmed or negated. If disagreement occurred, discussions were held until full agreement was reached.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### **Research Questions and Analysis Approach**

As described in Chapter Three, the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of coaches and teachers who participated in an early literacy coaching program to document the program's successes, challenges, and lessons learned. To guide future coaching efforts, this overarching question was answered with five specific research questions. These questions will be answered from the experiences of both teachers and coaches as found in the research gap noted in Chapter Two. These questions are: (1) What strategies were reported as being effective for coaches and teachers?, (2) How did the relationships between the teachers and coaches impact the success of the coaching program?, (3) What positive learning and development did the coaches and teachers experience during the coaching program?, (4) What difficulties did coaches and teachers face during the coaching program?, and (5) What resources do coaches and teachers need to fully participate in the literacy coaching program?

This chapter will be organized by these research questions and themes created from the data. Theme development and triangulation of data sources discussed in Chapter Three will be used throughout this chapter. Through the analysis, I brought my unique insights from my background knowledge of the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) as discussed in Chapter Three.

## Coaching Strategies

Coaches used a variety of strategies while working with teachers, some of these strategies were aimed at specific pieces of the coaching program. In the TCE Coach (TCE-C) and TCE Teacher (TCE-T) Surveys (in Appendix E), teachers and coaches were asked about particular strategies based on the book study that the coaches completed, *The Art of Coaching* (Aguilar, 2013). These strategies were observation, reflection, analyzing data, modeling, developing an action plan, role-play, using video for feedback, problem-solving, and constructive feedback. In both the TCE-T (teacher) and TCE-C (coach) Surveys, participants were asked to rate the above coaching practices on how often they were used, how the practices impacted their teaching practices and how often they would have liked the practices to be used in their coaching sessions

Table 4.1 describes the percent of teachers and coaches that responded that a strategy has been used “all of the time” during coaching sessions. The strategy giving constructive feedback that improved the teachers’ literacy practices was rated by coaches (80%) and teachers (79%) as being used all the time during coaching sessions. Observing in multiple ways, analyzing data, and using role-play were used least often as noted by both teachers and coaches. The following sections describe how these strategies were used and this supports the gap in research stated in Chapter Two.

Although it is useful to know which strategies were used most often, it is also important to know which strategies coaches and teachers found to make an impact on teachers’ literacy practices. Table 4.2 describes the strategies rated as making the most impact by coaches and teachers.

Table 4.1 Percentage that the Strategy was Reported as Used “All the time” in the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys

Strategy	Coaches	Teachers
Observation in various ways and feedback	40%	37%
Guided teacher reflection	60%	53%
Analyzing student data	20%	26%
Modeling literacy practices	17%	53%
Creating an action plan	60%	63%
Role-play to demonstrate literacy practices	0%	26%
Use video to give feedback on teaching practices	40%	58%
Problem-solving to incorporate literacy practices	60%	55%
Constructive feedback to improve practices	80%	79%

Coaches felt that giving teachers constructive feedback and helping them problem-solve the ways to incorporate the literacy practices were most impactful. For teachers, constructive feedback was rated as the most impactful strategy. Teacher reflection, modeling literacy practices, role play, and analyzing student data were noted by coaches as the least impactful strategies. Thirty-seven percent of the teachers rated the strategy of analyzing student data as having no impact and 21% of the teachers rated role-play as having no impact, compared to 20% of the coaches rating both of these strategies as not impactful (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Strategies That Made the Most Impact From TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys

Strategy	Coaches	Teachers
Observation in various ways and feedback	40%	53%
Guided teacher reflection	40%	42%
Analyzing student data	20%	32%
Modeling literacy practices	40%	42%
Creating an action plan	40%	53%
Role-play to demonstrate literacy practices	0%	16%
Use video to give feedback on teaching practices	20%	42%
Problem-solving to incorporate literacy practices	60%	50%
Constructive feedback to improve practices	60%	63%

The final question of the survey asked how often coaches and teachers would have liked to have these strategies used. Coach and teacher perspectives on which strategy they would like to use the most in the future are described in Table 4.3. Giving constructive feedback and guiding teachers to reflect were scored the highest by coaches, wanting to use these strategies most often. For the teachers, constructive feedback was rated as the highest. Role-play was rated the lowest and analyzing student data was slightly higher, although coaches only wanted to analyze data a few times. For teachers, analyzing data and role-play also were not rated as highly as the other strategies, only one teacher noted she would never want to use those strategies. Table 4.4 provides a

summation of the highest and lowest rated strategies by coaches and teachers. The table shows which were used the most, made the most impact, and which should be used in the future. The following sections explain specific ways that coaches and teachers described these strategies used during the coaching program.

## **Observation**

Observation and subsequent discussion and guidance were mentioned by 19 teachers in the TCE-T Survey as a strategy that supported them during the program, and this was supported in the Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP) data. These observations were completed using the TORSH online video sharing system. Teachers uploaded or recorded a lesson to the TORSH website for their coach to watch and give feedback. Coach 1 shared in an interview that she had teachers tally the phonological activities they did during the day, “You want a lot of quick activities. Even transitional [...] and that was their homework and talked about how they could increase it or decrease it. And that was their next goal, though, and then tally again.” A struggle with doing observations this year was not having much one-on-one time with their coach. One coach chose to do group sessions virtually.

The virtual aspect of this year also made observations difficult for two teachers who struggled with using the TORSH system and without a set schedule of when they would meet with their coach. It was also noted that a coach did not give feedback in a timely manner, which got in the way of the teacher participating fully. In the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys, 17 teachers and four coaches felt that observation with discussion would be effective in increasing teachers’ literacy practices.

Table 4.3 Strategies Coaches and Teachers Reported Wanting to Use “All of the Time” during Coaching from TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys

Strategy	Coaches	Teachers
Observation in various ways and feedback	75%	72%
Guided teacher reflection	100%	72%
Analyzing student data	25%	56%
Modeling literacy practices	75%	67%
Creating an action plan	75%	83%
Role-play to demonstrate literacy practices	25%	56%
Use video to give feedback on teaching practices	75%	65%
Problem-solving to incorporate literacy practices	75%	78%
Constructive feedback to improve practices	100%	89%

Table 4.4 Summary of Strategy Ratings From TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys

Rating of Strategy	Teacher	Coach
Used all the time	Constructive feedback (79%)	Constructive feedback (80%)
Never used	Role-play (26%) Analyzing data (26%)	Analyzing data (60%)
Most impactful	Constructive feedback (63%)	Constructive feedback (60%) and problem- solving discussions (60%)
Least impactful	Analyzing data (37%)	Role-play (60%)
Wanted used the most	Constructive feedback (89%)	Constructive feedback (100%) and reflection (100%)
Wanted used the least	Role-play (44%) and analyzing data (44%)	Role-play (75%)

In the EELCP survey, Teacher 21 shared, “[my coach] got me excited about literacy even through this tough year!” This is an exciting finding as this GSRP teacher did not have any in-person sessions with their coach, showing the positive impact that virtual coaching can have on a teacher’s involvement in a coaching program. Teachers and coaches shared that during the first meeting, coaches asked about the classroom, what literacy practices were already being used, and what literacy materials were available to the teachers. Teacher 5 shared in an interview that their coach, “helped me see how much literacy I already did.” Coach 2 supported this idea and noted in the survey that the program was helpful, “to see how much literacy they were already doing in the room. I was then able to build and coach on the skills they already had and fine tune them.”

### **Communication**

A part of the observation strategy was to observe in various ways and give teachers feedback. Since coaching was done virtually this year, communication was a vital piece of the implementation of the coaching program. In the pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021), coaches described the lack of communication that led to misunderstandings for both the teachers and the building administrators. This was a recommendation made to the project coordinators for adjustment going into the second year of the EELCP coaching program.

In the current data, there was variability in the frequency of communication and contact between coaches and their teachers as shown in Table 4.5. Over half of the teachers were contacted monthly, some were contacted weekly, less were contacted bi-weekly, and no teachers were contacted several times a week. This contact was made



mostly through emails, Zoom calls, the TORSH online video system, and some through texts and phone calls. Data from the TCE-T Survey and EELCP survey described the type of contact teachers stated they had with their coaches, as specified in Table 4.6. This frequency was supported by the coaches in their survey responses.

Table 4.5 Amount of Contact from TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys

Contact with coach	Number of teachers
Monthly	10
Bi-weekly	5
Weekly	6
Several times a week	0

The video sharing system TORSH was used by coaches and teachers to share videos and receive feedback. Teachers were able to send coaches a recorded lesson and the coaches were able to give feedback directly on the video. Coaches shared in the TCE-C Survey that they also used TORSH to send their teachers videos of teaching practices being modeled to help better explain how literacy practices could be integrated into their classroom.

Table 4.6 Modality of Contact with Coach from TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys

Modality of contact	Number of teachers
Zoom	14
Email	18
TORSH	14
Phone Call	3
Text	5
No in-person visits	17
In-person 1-2 times	10
In-person 3-4 times	2
In-person 7-8 times	1

Coaches noted that communication modes and frequency varied depending on the reciprocal communication they received from their teachers. In the TCE-C Survey, Coach 4 noted, “Even though I scheduled weekly sessions this teacher often didn't show up or canceled. I ended up meeting a third of the time that I met with other teachers.” Coaches noted that teachers who were not consistent in meeting with their coach struggled in the program, compared to those who met regularly. Those teachers who were struggling may have had issues in their classrooms and were overwhelmed with all the tasks being asked

of them. Navigating changes in daily procedures due to COVID-19 also played a part in the burden put on teachers.

Teacher 2 in the interview shared, “I want to say, at one point in the fall, I was like there's no way I can do this, I was going to just opt out because I thought I can't take on one more thing.” Teachers also noted that staying connected to their coach, emailing about the next steps, and following up was important to their success. In the TCE-T Survey, two teachers mentioned that communication with their coach, a lack of interaction and long length of time for the coach to get in touch with them proved difficult. Communication helped coaches learn of areas teachers were struggling in and help even if it was not literacy focused, such as classroom management and other foundational pieces that needed to be in place before moving onto literacy. The dosage of coaching sessions and contact varied greatly for teachers, and this may have impacted their experience in the program overall.

## **Reflection**

Coaches encouraged teachers to reflect on their lessons and the strategies that they used. In an interview, Coach 1 shared that she gave her teachers assignments to do to keep them engaged and guided them to reflect on their current teaching practices. One way was having the teachers watch a video of a different teacher's lesson, then giving the teacher in the video two stars and two wishes, highlighting two things the teacher did well and two things that could be improved. Coach 1 noted that the items the teachers pointed out would likely be things that they needed to work on in their own classroom.

Another strategy this coach used was having the teachers give themselves two stars and a wish as they watched their own videotaped lesson due to them having a hard

time giving themselves positive accolades. She noticed some teachers had a hard time giving themselves positive accolades; rather they were more focused on the negative aspects of their teaching. The coach used this opportunity to guide the teacher to positively reflect on her teaching, while still supporting growth by having the teacher adjust the relevant teaching practices. Another activity given by Coach 1 was to have teachers watch a message board lesson and write down the literacy experiences that were embedded into the activity, then compare these to their own message board and how more literacy activities could be used. These activities supported her teachers' reflections on their literacy practices while trying new activities throughout the program.

### **Analyzing Data**

Analyzing data was not mentioned specifically as a strategy that coaches used while working with their teachers in the qualitative data. This is evident from the quantitative questions in the TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys as coaches and teachers rated the strategy as "not used often" and "not wanting to use it often". In the EELCP survey, Teacher 6 indicated that she learned how to analyze and apply new practices and learned about the meaning of print in books from participating in the program. Throughout the coaching program, teachers assessed their students, and these data were discussed during coaching sessions as teachers found increases in their children's literacy skills. For some teachers, they also found areas where they were not seeing improvement. Teacher 3 shared in the EELCP survey, "The coaching interactions and goal-setting kept me focused and alert to improvement and opportunities for improvement with the students."

This was echoed by Teacher 2 during an interview as she described how her coach helped her find other ways to meet her students' needs that differed from small

group writing lessons which the teacher had tried to use previously. They discussed issues, as the teacher was trying to reach students who were struggling and not gaining skills during small group, the coach proposed a change in setting. Teacher 2 shared,

One of my goals was actually to do writing with children individually like during rest time because I felt like it was a lost opportunity. [...] It just made me be more intentional and more focused during those other parts of the day when I couldn't do a traditional small group for one-on-one kind of things.

While the strategy was seen as being used less than half the time by six teachers and three coaches, nevertheless the goals developed and the coaching strategies used were based on data, primarily observational data gathered from videos and teacher observations.

### **Modeling and In-Person Support**

In the TCE-T Survey, 79% of the teachers commented that modeling and demonstrating literacy practices were used at least most of the time during their coaching sessions; however fewer coaches (60%) said that it was used some of the time. Coach 2 shared in an interview that modeling via Zoom or TORSH was more difficult compared to when she was able to be in-person and modeling practices in real time with the teacher's students. This was supported by Coach 3 who shared in an interview that she attempted modeling in the classroom without drawing attention to it, but her teachers did not quite understand what she was trying to show them. After noticing this she began, "video [taping] me in the classroom with the children. Then I went on tour and tell them right here, this is what I did [and] this is what I was thinking. Even though they would not upload their own videos I would upload videos of myself in their classroom." This information from the coaches leads to wondering how in-person coaching may be more effective for these teachers when modeling can be done with their students, instead of

using a family member to demonstrate with, as Coach 2 did. Modeling using a family member may be useful, but it does not include the complexities of working with multiple children and the classroom environment issues as experienced by Teachers 2 and 5 in the interviews.

When data from the open-ended questions in the EELCP survey and the TCE-T Survey were combined, a total of 14 teachers noted that they would have liked more in-person coaching opportunities although these were limited due to restrictions in the county and their buildings. Teachers shared that on Zoom their coach only got to see a snippet of what was happening in the classroom, but if the coach were in-person, they could have possibly seen other areas they were struggling in. In an interview, Teacher 5 shared,

I think it would have gone deeper. [...] You can only see so much with the video, but when you're in person, you see so much more, and I think [the coach] would have been able to do better if it was in person.

Having practices modeled with their students was also mentioned as possible with in-person coaching sessions but not virtual.

Coaches agreed that in-person made a difference to how they were able to coach teachers. Coach 2 shared, "I definitely have stronger communication with my teachers being in person." Building a relationship and certain coaching strategies, coaches felt would have been easier activities if they were in-person. Coaches noted that they did join into Zoom classrooms, when they were able, and modeled practices when it was appropriate. However, only one coach shared in the TCE-C Survey that they were able to do observations using Zoom; the other coaches had to rely on teachers sending them

videos on TORSH. This made modeling strategies with students in the teachers' classrooms extremely difficult for coaches.

Teacher 4 shared in an interview that she prefers when visitors just observe and do not interrupt her teaching, so the virtual coaching worked well for her, and in-person may not have made a difference. This preference to have coaching done virtually did not appear to be due to a poor relationship with her coach. She expressed in the TCE-T Survey and in an interview that her coach helped her adjust her literacy practices. This teacher had over 20 years of experience, which may have an impact on how she feels about visitors in her classroom. In the interview she expressed that she does not like visitors in her classroom and will not interact with visitors until the children are sleeping or gone for the day. Teacher 2 mentioned in an interview that having another person in the room could have impacted student behavior. "We noticed when people were in and out, and so we would have been a different dynamic in some ways, maybe not always positive after having another person visiting my room." This teacher also had a good relationship with her coach, although she noted in the TCE-T Survey that at first, she had difficulties connecting with her coach over Zoom meetings and recording her lessons. While most teachers responded that in-person would be beneficial, a further conversation with the coach and teachers would have helped to provide a better estimate for which modality of coaching would have had the best impact on the teacher's practices.

### **Developing an Action Plan**

Teachers appreciated their coaches giving advice, strategies specific to their students and areas they needed the most support in. In the TCE-T Survey and EELCP data, teachers noted that their coaches gave them a chart of questions to ask their students

along with information and resources they could give to families. Also, teachers appreciated when their coaches gave them specific examples of the *Essentials Pre-K* (MASIA, 2016). Teacher 8 shared in the TCE-T Survey what her coach provided, “[She] gave me personalized goals as well as the tools to be able to execute them. For example, [...] she dropped off pre-made books and supplies for an extension activity.” This statement leads into the individualization of the coaching program mentioned by both teachers and coaches in all the data sources; how coaches individualized the experience and used goal setting with their teachers.

**Individualization.** The individualization of the coaching program, including picking their focus and goals was mentioned as helpful by seven teachers in the TCE-T Survey and interviews. Coaches also appreciated the opportunity to be able to individualize their sessions based on what the teacher needed. Coach 2 shared,

It was a great program that was easy to coach and helped teachers to see how much literacy they are already doing in the room. I was then able to build and coach on the skills they already had and fine tune them.

Teachers noted that coaches helped them to narrow down their focus and let them choose the area they wanted to focus on. Teacher 22 shared in the TCE-T Survey that when they were in-person her coach was able to,

Point out a few things that I was doing right and those things that I needed to work on. I was able to focus better and be more intentional on some of those areas I needed to focus on, especially during read-aloud.

Coach 2 shared that when her teacher had an issue with how the video looked, how the teacher looked while she was teaching, or students in the camera, she had those teachers do an audio recording when needed. Another idea for teachers having difficulty with recording a whole-group lesson, Coach 2 shared in the TCE-C Survey, was for the



teacher to video tape small group or work time when they were using the literacy practices.

Coach 1 had an extensive background in literacy coaching and facilitating literacy coaching in Oakland County over the past 12 years and she shared in an interview an area that she saw teachers struggling in and how this shaped her interaction with her teachers. She shared, “I think our teachers get hung up on what a book is. [...] I think breaking down that barrier what writing looks like for preschoolers is one of the hardest barriers that I’ve run across with teachers.” This coach added,

When I [hold] writing classes with people I say how many of you would say you're a reader. [...] Almost 100% raised their hand and then I say how many of you think you're a writer, and maybe 1%. I think it's that fear that they're not a writer, so they don't know how to teach writing.

This coach went on to share that she felt the writing section of the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) was vague and lacked important information about how children become independent writers, and this adds to the difficulties teachers have to support their students’ writing development. With the training and coaching provided in the EELCP, the coaches were able to support teachers in areas they felt they struggled. For all but one, teachers reported that this program made a positive impact on their teaching practices. The teacher shared in the TCE-T Survey and EELCP survey that she already knew the information and did not feel this was a good use of her time.

**Goal setting.** Goal setting was a large part of their coaching protocol and six teachers mentioned in the TCE-T Survey and interviews that they appreciated being able to set their own goal. Teachers shared that their coaches provided resources, strategies, and support to help them reach their goals. Coaches used an Essentials Checklist (in

Appendix G) to pinpoint literacy practices that teachers were already using and those that were lacking in their classroom. This checklist was created by the evaluation team of the Training of Trainers for the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Pre-kindergarten (MAISA, 2016a) discussed in Chapter 1. It was originally designed as a document to evaluate the fidelity in which pre-kindergarten teachers were implementing the literacy practices. This evaluation also explored the differences between those teachers who had already been trained in the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) and how their scores compared to those who had not been trained yet. The document detailed each literacy practice and the specific materials and examples of activities that should be done to support each practice. There was a rating system for each practice (meets or exceeds expectations, meets with reservations, and does not meet expectations) and areas for the evaluator to specify how the teacher showed that piece of the practice or what needed to be adjusted.

In the current study, two coaches and one teacher mentioned the checklist during interviews as a tool that was helpful in figuring out what teachers were already doing and what their goals should be. This checklist was used throughout coaching to decide when teachers met their goals and what their next goal should be. With this year being virtual, teachers were able to self-evaluate items that the coach was not able to see in the videos sent via TORSH. When coaching was done in-person during the 2019-2020 school year, Coach 2 mentioned these were completed as the initial evaluation when they met in-person with teachers. Teacher 2 shared that it helped her understand what was expected for each practice and it highlighted what the teachers were already doing within their

classroom. The *Essentials Pre-K* Checklist, thus, gave a positive start to the coaching experience.

All the teachers who participated in interviews shared that they met the goals that they set with their coach. These five teachers noted that setting these goals helped them to implement the literacy practices and helped the practices become more natural to use. In the TCE-T Survey, Teacher 13 mentioned, “My coach encouraged me to grow and held me accountable to the goals I set. She pushed me out of my comfort zone and gave me a ton of new ideas.” Ten teachers in the TCE-T Survey shared that getting clarification, ideas, suggestions from their coach and their coach listening to them helped them to reach their goals. Setting goals also helped the teachers be accountable for doing the practices and helped them be intentional in their teaching. Teachers shared that setting goals and objectives helped them to focus their practices and motivated them to follow through. Teacher 2 shared in an interview that “Doing impromptu [lessons], not feeling it had to be a formal lesson” helped her reach her goals.

Conversations with colleagues who went through the coaching program the previous year also helped teachers to improve their practices and meet their goals. Coaches noted that they adapted goals based on the needs of the teachers. Coach 2 commented in the interview that she, “Chunked out really small goals so the teachers felt more successful the more goals that they hit. They were really small in the beginning [...] and now let’s move onto something a little bit more meat to it.” Coaching strategies differed based on the teachers’ knowledge level. Those who did not know the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) struggled some in the program. This will be discussed in more detail in the “Difficulties” section below.

## **Role-Play**

One strategy that was included in the quantitative data of the TCE-T Survey was the use of role-play and how it was not used often during coaching sessions, while ten teachers wanted it to be used often or all the time. During the interviews, I asked a couple of clarifying questions, what does role-play mean to them and if they felt it would have made an impact on their teaching practices. For some teachers and coaches, role-play meant modeling and demonstrating with the students, while others felt it was the teacher and coach acting out a scenario together. Since modeling was already a practice mentioned, role-play was defined by the participants as the coach and teacher playing parts and acting out a scenario. In the interviews, the teachers said that using role-play may have made somewhat of an impact on their teaching practices, but for Teacher 2 if the relationship was not solid it would not have worked. In an interview, Teacher 2 shared, “I guess to make it really beneficial, have a role play that would be based on that relationship, that feedback, that communication.” Personality differences and ground rules were also brought up by teachers as needed pieces if role-play was going to be used. Two other teachers in interviews stated that it would be difficult to role-play some situations due to the unpredictable nature of children. Teacher 5 commented, “It would be hard because it's so just unpredictable what they're going to say, what questions to ask.”

Teachers and coaches in the interviews did note that if role-playing was done during a training, that would work better, but not during their coaching sessions. Coaches 2 and 3 shared that role-playing a scenario with a teacher would be a bit juvenile and that type of strategy would be better used with a novice or beginning teacher. Coach 3 mentioned in an interview,

I usually reserve that for people who have no experience with it. They're active[ly] teach[ing], [...] I shouldn't have to role play with you, let me video you doing it, and I will tell you some places where you could be doing it differently or I'll model it [...] and still have more of an authentic experience.

Demonstrating or modeling were more useful strategies to use with seasoned teachers whose teaching practices just needed a slight adjustment. Overall, coaches and teachers felt that modeling would be a more impactful strategy to use than role-playing as shown in the quantitative data from items in the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys (see Table 4.4).

### **Using Video for Feedback**

Using the TORSH video system was helpful for some teachers to send videos and receive feedback from their coach. Six teachers commented that the TORSH system worked well for them to receive feedback from their coach; however, four teachers felt that it was difficult to learn. In the TCE-T Survey and EELCP survey, teachers mentioned they were not proficient in technology, and thus the system was not easy for them to manage. In the interviews, two teachers mentioned the lack of extra staff to help with technology issues made it difficult to complete all video uploads for their coach. Teacher 5 shared in an interview that she tried to use TORSH and it felt, “unnatural and disruptive to set up a laptop to tape yourself” and students became more interested in the laptop or phone instead of the lesson. It was also a challenge for coaches as they were trying to encourage teachers to use it, while struggling to explain and demonstrate this system virtually. Coach 1 mentioned that a strong relationship between the coach and the teacher was crucial before using TORSH, or it would not be effective.

When reflecting and giving feedback on TORSH, Coach 1 shared that she had the teacher watch the video of themselves teaching and self-reflect, then the coach would

watch it and take notes. Afterwards they would meet virtually and talk through the video together. This coach found that teachers tended to be very hard on themselves and they had a difficult time noticing the practices they were doing well. A few teachers mentioned that their coaches shared videos of exemplary teaching practices when they were not able to demonstrate themselves. Not only did teachers learn from their coach's advice and feedback, but they also learned from watching themselves teach in the videos they recorded.

### **Problem-Solving Discussions**

Teachers in the TCE-T Survey shared that they enjoyed the opportunity to work with their coach and it gave them a chance to talk through the practices. Teacher 7 shared in the TCE-T Survey, "I appreciate having another early childhood professional to work with and help me develop and grow in my profession to deliver the best instruction possible." Coaches noted that through building the relationship they learned when they needed to pull back from the content, for example if the teacher was struggling or when they could push them to move forward with new content. In the TCE-C Survey Coach 5 commented, "Having a trusting relationship with consistent communication is a must." Coach 1 shared in an interview that the confidentiality aspect of the program was important to building a relationship with her teachers, "They knew that it was completely confidential, they knew I was never going to share with another teacher. They had that deep trust in me to do that." Additionally, they trusted the coach would not go to their administrators with information on how the teacher was doing in the program.

The relationship with their coach was integral to teachers' ability to participate in the program. Eighteen teachers shared in the TCE-T Survey that their relationship with their coach was very important to their success. Teacher 10 shared in the TCE-T Survey,

I can't imagine being as successful without a good relationship with my coach. It is hard videotaping yourself and sharing specific examples when you know someone is there to tell you both positive and negative feedback. Building that relationship allowed me to feel comfortable as I knew she had my best interest in mind. At no point did I feel judged, she only ever supported me which is what allowed me to really immerse myself in the program.

The teacher-coach relationships helped build strong lines of communication to allow teachers to be open to showing areas they struggled in and being able to accept feedback. Further discussion on the importance of relationships will be discussed in a subsequent section, "Relationships".

Working with seasoned teachers was brought up in the TCE-C Survey and Interviews and how strategies may differ depending on the experience of the teachers they were working with. Coaches noted they had to be sensitive to the teacher's years of experience and they needed to show support for the work the teacher had already done. Also, showing those teachers that the coach learned new ideas and strategies right along with them was a beneficial approach. Coach 1 noted "It helped to frame it as you are their employee", and you are there to help them and just tweak what they are already doing. Two coaches noted in interviews that experienced teachers can be very sensitive about their life's work and that needs to be considered when working with them. Problem-solving discussions were rated by teachers and coaches on the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys as being used at least most of the time, if not during all coaching sessions. All of

the coaches and 85% of the teachers on the TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys felt that these problem-solving discussions had positively impacted teaching practices.

### **Constructive Feedback**

Constructive criticism, useful feedback, and well-developed critiques were mentioned by several teachers as strategies their coach used that worked well for the teachers. The teachers reported that they welcomed the follow-up, feedback, critique, and positives that the coaches shared. Teacher 6 shared in the TCE-T Survey, “It was a great support to have during this unprecedented year of teaching and it help[ed] me to be at ease and reassured me that the efforts that I made as a teacher were worthwhile.” Teacher 11 shared that her coach kept her positive and going till the end. Teachers in one building had a prior relationship their coach through literacy training prior to this coaching program. The coach noted that this prior relationship helped them jump into more in-depth conversations and the coach was able to readily give feedback.

Coach availability, passion, and feedback were at the top of the teachers’ list of what helped them the most during this program. Teachers appreciated their coaches’ kindness and overall support in helping them to succeed and stick with the coaching even though it was a trying year for everyone. Two teachers shared in the EELCP Survey that their coach was not in contact often and did not give feedback often. Pairing this answer with a later one of how they felt the program went, these two teachers scored their experience in the program as poor or fair. The availability and feedback from coaches did affect teacher buy-in and participation in the program. This was highlighted in the TCE-T Survey by Teacher 12, “It was good to know she was there if I needed anything to help me be a better teacher.” Ensuring that the teachers volunteer to be a part of the coaching



program paired with supportive coaches seemed to affect teacher motivation. Coach 2 noted this in the EELCP survey and in an interview stating, “Last year some of the teachers were told they had to participate, this year they volunteered. I could see a large difference in participation this year.” The encouragement and constructive criticism helped the teachers to reach their goals and persevere through a challenging year. Knowledge and a new perspective that coaches shared with their teachers made an impact on their experience as well. In the quantitative section of the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys, constructive feedback was rated as being used the most often by teachers and coaches; 90% of teachers and 80% of coaches felt that constructive feedback would make a lot of impact on teachers’ literacy practices.

## **Summary**

Individualizing the experience was at the center of this coaching program. The EELCP used Aguilar’s (2013) book, *The Art of Coaching*, which guided the strategies that coaches used. The foundation of these strategies was creating an action plan specific to the teacher’s needs. Aguilar (2013) stated that the first stage of coaching is exploration, “Exploration is essential: the underlying root causes of challenges must be surfaced in order for transformation and systematic change to occur” (p. 99).

As coaches built a relationship with their teachers, their chosen strategies were dependent on the teachers’ needs and goals. Teachers shared that coaches provided strategies and resources specific to their classroom and the strategies had a positive influence on their literacy practices. In the interviews, coaches shared how they chose the strategy they used while working with their teachers. Coach 1 said that it was a gut feeling when working with people. Choosing strategies to use for Coach 2 was based on

the relationships they built and what the teachers were comfortable with. Another coach said that it depends on how the teachers self-evaluate, how they can give confidence to the teachers, whenever they need support, and how far you may be able to go beyond their current practices. Coaches also chose strategies based on the teacher's literacy background and the number of years they had been teaching. Coach 3 shared in an interview that the goals the teachers set guided the strategies that she used with them. The opportunity for coaches to tailor their strategies and how they communicated with their teachers made this coaching program a unique experience for both teacher and coach.

### **Relationships**

“The relationship is everything! Without being comfortable with my coach, I wouldn't have been open to continuing the program,” Teacher 15 remarked in the TCE-T Survey. Eighteen teachers shared on the TCE-T Survey that their relationship with their coach made a positive impact on their success in the coaching program. Teacher 15 shared that she did not have a good relationship with her coach, but this teacher could see how a better relationship could have made a difference to their success during coaching. Further analyzing this teacher's data showed that she rated the overall experience in the coaching program and its impact on her teaching practices as poor. Teacher 7 commented in the TCE-T Survey that the bond they had with their coach was important, “The bond that I built with my coach was extremely important in the success of the training.” Teacher 5 shared that respect for the coach as a person and a professional was important and if there had not been that respect, the teacher would have dropped out of the program. Coach 2 shared in an interview that her connection got stronger when she stood up for her teachers by voicing concern to administration and project coordinators that the teachers

were overwhelmed and were not able to put a lot of energy towards coaching. This act showed that she ‘had their backs’ and wanted them to meet their students’ needs and focus on teaching, not trying to push the coaching when they were not able to commit. These open and positive relationships allowed the teachers to be real and honest and for coaches to meet the teachers where they were and support them even if it was not literacy centered.

### **Coach Qualities**

In the survey and interview data, the personality and behavioral qualities of the coaches were described in detail. Teachers appreciated that their coach was a great, active listener who answered questions whenever they came up. Teacher 4 shared in an interview, “My coach and I were professional, friendly, positive, supportive, and respectful. She also displayed vulnerability, empathy, and I always felt my work and our conversations were judgment free.” Teachers shared that their coach was accommodating to the level of participation they were able to give, and their coach helped them through a stressful year. Coaches were described as “approachable”, “attentive”, “flexible”, “genuine”, “patient”, and “sincere”. When coaches were encouraging, easy to talk to, and “did not try to take control of the classroom”, the teachers reported that they especially connected with them. In an interview Teacher 1 mentioned that her coach,

Was available, she was flexible, and she was so nice because you know it takes a certain personality to deal with people period. And she has that personality, and she was always open and friendly. I mean that helps a lot, that takes you a long way when you feel comfortable with someone.

Coaches noted that they were empathetic and a good listener, they validated the teachers’ feelings and tried to see things from their perspective. It is clear from the data that the

personality and characteristics of a coach matter just as much as the strategies they use. Teacher 1 commented in an interview, “I think [what] made it a positive like I was saying about her personality her just being outgoing and open, it just made a positive impact.” These qualities were important to the success of the program and the coaches used these to their advantage while they were building relationships with their teachers, which will be further explored in the following section.

### **Teacher Motivation and Buy-in**

Motivation and buy-in were issues discussed by trainers in the evaluation of a state-wide Training of Trainers (Wakabayashi et al., 2019) for the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a). These trainers shared their concern about how they would get teachers, especially experienced teachers, to adopt these practices into their daily routines. In the current study, all but one of the teacher participants immediately volunteered to participate in the EELCP experience once they were notified about the opportunity. Teacher 3 was asked three times before agreeing to participate in the program. She noted that she did not want to take someone else’s spot and was unsure she would have time available to participate fully. This is important to note because in the pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021), the coaches felt some of the teachers were assigned to the program by their administrators. Coach 6 shared in the EELCP Survey, “Teacher buy-in is imperative to this project working.” Two coaches noted that the teachers who were successful in meeting their goals and implementing teaching practices were those who wanted to do the program and they were also connected the most to their coach. In the EELCP Survey and interviews, three coaches mentioned teachers’ motivation impacted

the teachers' engagement and growth during the coaching sessions. Coach 2 shared in an interview,

I think you could really tell the teachers who [had] volunteered and who were voluntold that they were going to be completing [the coaching]. The teachers who really wanted to do it, you could tell were ready, they were the teachers that were engaged [...] and easy to get along with.

Bandura (1977) found that motivation and emotion were two of the factors that affected self-efficacy and that could have made an impact on outcomes for teachers in this coaching program.

While analyzing the data, emotion words stood out to me, and they were focused on teacher participation in the coaching program and what would be asked of them. Teachers shared that they were overwhelmed and worried in the beginning and felt nervous and vulnerable. In an interview, Teacher 2 mentioned how she felt vulnerable at the beginning, "someone in my room or someone watching me that closely or those pieces, so you kind of go through all those different feelings before you decide to say yes." Teachers were also nervous about getting critiqued and having to record themselves as it pushed them out of their comfort zone. Teacher 3 shared in an interview that she was hesitant to join the program; she was unsure she had the time to commit and did not want to take another person's spot. She went on to share that she was reminded that if you want to be a coach one day, you need to experience what it is like to be coached, this was the tipping point for her agreeing to be in the program. Another teacher noted she felt her coach was asking her to do something she felt was wrong and that made her lose respect for her coach because of her coach's lack of knowledge in certain areas. This could have

been an issue for other teachers who did not participate in the coaching program or those who did not participate fully, as will be noted in a subsequent section.

### **Building Relationships First**

Teachers and coaches noted the ways they built a relationship during the coaching program. Two coaches who participated in both years of the program commented that this year they took the first couple of months to build a relationship with the teachers and that made a positive impact on the outcomes of the sessions. Coach 5 shared in the EELCP Survey, “This year felt smoother and more impactful than last year. I think starting with relationships first helped a lot with that.” Teachers shared in the TCE-T Survey that their coach asked teachers questions throughout the program including questions about the classroom, getting to know their students and what they thought were some of the unique aspects of their classroom. Coaches asked questions to get to know the teacher beyond the classroom and then shared their background and pertinent personal information. Teacher 17 shared, “She got to know me on a professional and personal level to understand me and how I would like to be coached.” This connection helped them support each other and find similarities to build a bond, trust, and respect.

Coaches also noted that they built relationships with teachers at the beginning of the program and that was crucial to accomplishing success during coaching. Coach 1 shared in the TCE-C Survey,

Connection on a human level and starting each session on how they are doing. Teaching during a pandemic was stressful and the teachers sometimes needed a good listener. Also [...] clearly defining the role of a coach versus an assessor.

The coach being themselves and offering their perspective was important to the teachers. Teacher 25 noted in the TCE-T Survey and EELCP Survey that their coach did not do anything to build a relationship with them. This teacher shared that her coach was busy with other tasks and only observation via TORSH was used for interaction. However, this teacher did appreciate the training and time to bounce ideas off fellow teachers. Teacher 2 shared that her coach was so busy that she was not able to take time to ask personal questions of the teacher, which got in the way of them being able to build a relationship. This teacher had to initiate the personal questions to help build the relationship and she felt that if she had not done this, it would have been just business. Teacher 2 also commented in the focus group, "Where in person, you can kind of interchange more obviously seeing a classroom [in-person] I kept telling her how crazy my class, she would have had to see it [action], nobody would believe it." This sentiment was supported by three coaches who felt that they would have built a stronger relationship with their teachers if they had been able to meet in-person.

### **Impact on Teacher Success**

Coaches shared about the perceived impact that the lack of relationship had on teacher engagement, changes in literacy practices, and their self-confidence. They shared that for some of these teachers, coaching was not a priority, and they were not committed or had too many other issues and thus they could not focus on coaching. Coaches felt like they were nagging teachers to get an email response back and that it was a one-way street of attempted communication. Teachers who did not have a relationship with their coach made minimal progress and did not meet their goals. Coach 6 noted in the TCE-C Survey, "The experience varied depending on how strong the relationship with the

teacher was.” From the coaches’ perspective, having a relationship helped teachers to be more engaged, teachers were more willing to make changes, and it made it easier to start coaching practices. These statements illustrate how building a relationship needs to be a foundational step of any coaching program.

Coaches felt those teachers who did not follow through on their responsibilities and did not fully participate, gained less than those who fully participated. Two coaches noted that the stress of teaching virtually for some teachers may have resulted in their not being able to participate in the coaching. A positive relationship with their coach helped teachers to open up and feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable, and this was important to accountability and follow through for the teachers. When relationships were strong between the teacher and the coach, teachers were more engaged, and it made a positive impact on their overall experience. Specific impacts on teacher, student, and coach success are discussed further in the next section.

**Summary.** Qualities of the coach were an important factor in teachers’ reported relationship with their coaches. Teachers connected better when their coaches were open, flexible, good listeners, and empathetic. Taking time to build relationships in the beginning of the program helped to develop mutual trust and respect between the coach and teacher. When teachers volunteered to participate and were motivated to learn new literacy practices, they were more engaged, and they had positive experiences in the coaching program. Relationships had a positive impact on teacher success and implementation of new practices in their classroom.



## **Positive Learning and Development Experienced**

All teachers, except one teacher, shared that the coaching program met or exceeded their expectations, even when they had a hard year or struggled to use certain aspects of the technology. This teacher felt she already knew the information shared, but she did note in the EELCP Survey that the coaching had a slight effect on the literacy artifacts she included in the classroom and her extension of conversations with her students. The following sections describe how teachers, students, and coaches experienced success through this coaching program.

### **Teachers**

Throughout all data sources, including TCE teacher and coach surveys, interviews, and EELCP surveys, teachers shared how the coaching impacted them and what they took away from this experience. Three teachers in the EELCP Survey specifically mentioned an impact on their students' assessments, the teacher-scored COR Advantage by High Scope, which is conducted using observational anecdotal notes. Teacher 17 shared in the EELCP Survey, "A hundred percent worthwhile. I learned so much even being virtual. My children's COR notes have improved drastically and my overall teacher performance in teaching literacy. I truly appreciated the coaching experience." Teachers shared that they liked being able to collaborate with fellow teachers and share ideas. Most teachers commented in the TCE-T Survey, EELCP Survey, and interviews that the coaching was very beneficial for them and were thankful for the opportunity to have received coaching. Fourteen teachers (out of 21) shared that they gained new ideas, resources, and two commented that the coaching helped them with implementing their overall curriculum, not only in their literacy practices.

**Literacy practices impacted.** Teachers said that they learned how to better present literacy materials in ways that their students understood. Teachers also shared that their literacy practices changed. In the TCE-T Survey and the EELCP Survey, Teacher 8 shared, “I gained some more tools in my tool belt and was encouraged to think beyond what I was teaching. I have grown professionally, and my students were more engaged, and their literacy skills were much higher even with a pandemic.” Teacher 2 noted in an interview that she learned how to change the way she taught small group and began working one-on-one with some students, which had a large impact on the students. Two teachers commented in an interview and in the EELCP Survey that they would have missed valuable teaching opportunities if they had not participated in coaching, especially this year with all of changes and adjustments they had to make. This demonstrates how the coaching program was able to positively impact literacy practices specifically, even for those who were teaching virtually.

**More intentional and focused.** Through coaching, teachers reported becoming more intentional and focused with their lessons and that this program helped them improve their lessons and better plan read-alouds. Improvement in read-aloud techniques and practices were mentioned in the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys, interviews, and in the EELCP data. A great example of this is a teacher who taught virtually and was able to make her small group read-alouds interactive. She shared how she expanded on the book she was reading through vocabulary words such as “afraid”, students giving personal examples of these words, students drew a picture and shared it with the class. Teacher 24 shared the following in the EELCP data,

My experience with the literacy essentials training is that it has made a difference in my own approach to the read-aloud time in the classroom, the way I pick the books, the way I prepare for the read-aloud, the way I choose the vocabulary words to teach and use in the classroom. The way I check for comprehension and the way I extend children's learning by asking open-ended questions. I can truly say that the children in my classroom enjoy our read-aloud time the most, more than any time of the day. We hold amazing conversations during this time. [...] I have seen that this has also translated into how they related and interact with each other. They have more confidence in talking to their friends.

Teachers learned more on how they can share literacy ideas with parents and give them tips on how to support their child at home. Coaches were able to support teachers to become more intentional and focused with their lessons and how they taught literacy skills to their students.

**Gained confidence.** Beyond learning new practices, teachers gained confidence in their teaching skills. Teacher 13 shared in the EELCP Survey, "This experience gave me the confidence to incorporate and grow in the essentials and put them into daily use." While Teacher 30 commented, "I read with more confidence and expression to my students now." The trainings and professional learning opportunities helped teachers to understand the literacy practices and how to incorporate them naturally throughout their classroom.

## **Students**

Although it was not part of my original research questions, child success and the impact of the coaching on their development were mentioned 28 times across the different data sources. Teachers found their students had an increase in their overall literacy, alphabetic awareness, story comprehension and wanting to write. More specifically, stories of children who had not been able to identify letters at the beginning

of the year and wrote their own story at the end of the year were shared by both coaches and teachers. As shared in an earlier section, teachers noted that the coaching resulted in perceived changes in their literacy practices that positively impacted their students' assessment scores. In the EELCP Survey, Teacher 11 shared, "All of the children in my class scored very high on alphabetical knowledge in COR. This isn't typical from what I have seen in previous class years."

While teachers and coaches spoke of challenges faced this year, they perceived that implementing coaching and the literacy practices made a bigger impact than had been the case in their typical literacy practices. Teachers shared that their students were more engaged in read-alouds, they connected more to the stories, and were able to recall them much better at the end of the year. They also shared that their students' confidence grew in their writing and communication skills. Teacher 22 noted in the EELCP Survey, a student "Had low confidence in her writing. She would get really down on herself. By the end of the year, she had confidence and joy in her writing and even helping other children with their writing." Teachers and students gained skills, practices, and especially important an increase in their confidence around literacy even during an abnormal year and while learning virtually for some.

### **Coaches**

Coaches noted that teachers were able to use the practices they learned with different age groups than just what coaching had focused on. Coaches noticed that assistant teachers were more aware of the literacy practices and used them at times. Although there were difficulties while working with assistant teachers which will be discussed in the "Difficulties" section. Coach 5 shared in the EELCP Survey that teachers

mentioned both, “Children’s interest in literacy has grown and parents’ buy-in has grown as well.” Coaches were able to see teachers move to being self-sustaining after they had been running alongside them. In the EELCP Survey Coach 3 noted,

The lead teacher I coached, she expressed that she fundamentally teaches differently now. She is aware of the importance of early literacy skill development and now has the skills and strategies to implement them even with a range of student abilities in her class.

All the coaches reported that they believe their teachers learned new concepts that affected their teaching practices, including how to meet their students’ needs at their current level. Coaches also commented that teachers were more aware of literacy development in young children and how they could support them with these *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a). Coaches shared in the TCE-C Survey some characteristics of teachers who were most successful in the program. They perceived that these teachers were transparent, continuously learning, motivated to learn and implement new practices, open to receiving feedback, and were intrinsically motivated. The most successful teachers attended trainings, reflected on their lessons, and had a passion for teaching. Coaches’ views of teacher growth mirrored what the teachers shared about what they learned from the coaching experience, changes in their teaching practices, understanding of literacy development, and growth in confidence in their teaching.

For themselves, coaches felt that the book studies they participated in during the monthly coaching meetings helped them to be better coaches and gave them strategies to use with their teachers. In the EELCP Survey Coach 7 commented, “During coaching meetings the project coordinators unknowingly modeled the relationship I could have with my teachers.” Coach 8 shared, “This project allowed me to reflect on my work as a

whole.” Coaches mentioned that they learned how to build stronger connections with their teachers over Zoom. This year coaches came up with ways to make TORSH fun and not as intimidating for the teachers to use. Two coaches shared in the TCE-C Survey that this experience helped them with their confidence to support professionals by being able to dive deeper to broaden their knowledge and skill set. During the year, coaches were able to find small, but meaningful ways to make improvements and hone their skills even during a difficult year for themselves and the teachers. Coach 2 shared,

This project made me have to slow down! Being virtual it was far outside my comfort zone. I had to dig deep to make strong connections with teachers over Zoom. I had to push just the right amount to help teachers come out of their comfort zone.

**Summary.** Coaches, students, and teachers gained valuable skills and knowledge from participating in this coaching program. Both teachers and coaches shared that teaching practices were positively impacted through coaching. Teachers were more intentional and focused when they planned their lessons and when they taught their students the literacy concepts. Throughout the program, teachers’ confidence grew in teaching literacy skills specifically with read-alouds and writing. Students gained new literacy skills and had an increase in their confidence around reading and writing according to the teachers’ perspective. Coaches also described how they learned new techniques in working with teachers and their confidence increased as well.

### **Difficulties**

While there were many positive and impactful pieces to this coaching program, difficulties did come up for both coaches and teachers. Five teachers (24%) mentioned that they were not able to be as effective compared to others in the coaching program

because of the difficulties in their classroom. Teacher 7 shared that they were not able or available to commit to their coach's requests. Coaches shared that a lack of communication with the teachers and drive to meet their goals made coaching difficult at times. Lack of communication from directors and administrators was also brought up with coaches and teachers. Another struggle the coaches noted in the TCE-C Survey was that teachers wanted to set goals before they were trained on the practices. Coaches and teachers struggled not having structure provided by project coordinators for the occurrence and scheduling of coaching sessions. Both parties felt some type of a schedule set up for how often sessions and recordings should occur, whether developed by either coaches or the EELCP project coordinators would have been helpful.

### **Classroom and Building Issues**

Difficulties were felt by some teachers in both their classrooms and in their buildings. Teachers mentioned in the interviews that they had issues within their classroom with their students and that limited their ability to focus on coaching during the year. Teacher 2 shared in an interview that she was constantly worried about students who were possibly leaving their GSRP program at a moment's notice and her concern for their well-being. Coaches saw behavior and other student issues and noted in an interview and in the EELCP data that they had to help teachers with these issues first before they could move into literacy. Coach 4 shared in the EELCP Survey, "Although, I was not there for that particular reason there is no way we could have accomplished anything if the behavior wasn't addressed." Lack of staff was an issue for many facilities, and this led to teachers being pulled into other rooms to work which took away from their ability to practice and create routines in their own classroom. Coach 2 noted in the TCE-C Survey

a teacher who was moved into another room, but she switched, “his goal around so he could be a little more successful using the Essentials in all classrooms.” Internet and technology issues were discussed in all data sources and inhibited teachers from recording and uploading lessons for their coach. These difficulties needed attention from coaches before beginning to focus on literacy items and the technology issues plagued some teachers and made certain aspects of receiving coaching more difficult for them.

### **Assistant Teachers**

Assistant teachers felt they could not use the resources fully due to being the assistant and not the lead in the classroom. Teacher 13 shared in the EELCP Survey, “My coach was amazing, but I didn’t feel like I utilized her resources fully because it’s not my classroom.” Coach 3 also noticed this struggle for assistants saying, “It didn’t feel like they could overstep the lead teacher and implement some of the changes, even though the lead teacher had also been through the training the year before.” Two coaches in the TCE-C Survey and EELCP Survey noted that assistants may need separate training or go through the coaching with their lead teacher. Assistants and lead teachers going through the coaching together would create consistency of implementation in the classroom and may open communication on the literacy practices used throughout the day.

### **Virtual Coaching**

Seven teachers in the TCE-T Survey revealed that doing virtual coaching made it difficult this year and it would have been an overall better experience if had been a normally functioning year. In the EELCP Survey, 11 teachers out of 30 shared that the program would have been improved by having in-person coaching. Coaches shared that some teachers were not open to observations on Zoom or other first-hand opportunities.



This made it difficult for coaches to give useful feedback and modeling in the moment or quickly after the lesson. Teacher 5 shared in an interview,

My second goal was doing more phonological awareness kind of just activities throughout the day, so a lot of work time activities and to record, those are so hard because it just happens, naturally. So it's really hard to get those videos in and to get feedback with that.

Most coaches agreed with this sentiment and shared that they would have been more useful if they were in-person. Coaches also commented that some teachers did not share videos and did not allow them on a Zoom call with them, so they were unable to coach effectively. Coach 1 noted in an interview that she did not think it would have mattered being in-person, but that was because she already had a relationship with the director and knew the teachers from previous trainings. While in another interview, Coach 3 shared the impact that in-person had on one teacher she worked with, “Once I was able to be in person with her, that’s when things went sky high in terms of her meeting her goals and changing practices.”. Designing a coaching program as the EELCP was designed to have both virtual and in-person aspects appeared to be important to meet the learning styles and needs of the teachers and coaches involved in the program.

### **Teacher Knowledge**

Coaches found it difficult to work with teachers in these literacy practices when the teachers did not have a foundational knowledge of the overall curriculum they used in their classroom. In the EELCP data, Coach 5 shared, “Teachers need to have some knowledge in the curriculum they are using. When we as coaches are trying to give a new technique or strategy, it is hard for us to coach effectively.” Those teachers who did have that knowledge were able to dive deeper into topics than the beginning teachers. First

year teachers were overwhelmed while participating in coaching. Coaches felt that this type of coaching was better suited for teachers who had a couple of years of experience and knowledge of their classroom curriculum.

In addition, teachers who were already familiar with the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) were able to take away more from the trainings and implement practices more quickly than those who were new to the practices. Coach 9 shared in the EELCP Survey, “Certainly when the teacher has a strong background, you tend to move quicker and deeper” into implementing the literacy practices. In the EELCP Survey, Teacher 23 commented she already knew the information from the trainings, so she felt it was a waste of her time. This teacher noted that this would have been more useful for beginning teachers. While these two views are contrasting, it is important for teachers to volunteer for these coaching opportunities in areas that they need support along with coaches scaffolding material to help improve teacher practices even for those who are familiar with the practices.

**Summary.** Coaches and teachers shared difficulties they faced throughout the program. Creating a schedule for videos and communicating more with directors was mentioned by coaches and teachers. A lack of staff and technology issues posed a problem for teachers uploading videos for their coaches in a timely manner. The assistant teachers who participated in coaching struggled with implementing the new practices they were learning since they were not fully in charge of the classroom. Coaching virtually made it difficult for some coaches and teachers to connect and having activities modeled for the teacher. Some teachers’ lack of knowledge of their curriculum and the

*Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) kept them from diving deeper into the practices compared to those who had a good foundational knowledge.

### **Resources**

A variety of resources were discussed as being necessary for teachers to be fully involved in the coaching program. Teachers shared about items that they brought in from home or bought themselves to add to their classrooms to use while teaching, including puppets and books. Their coaches shared articles, books, and videos with them to help with their lessons. Only two teachers said they lacked money for materials. Interestingly these two teachers were GSRP teachers who worked for the same organization, although in different locations. Teacher 5 commented on the TCE-T Survey and in an interview that her classroom needed more money for technology as her laptop was not functioning and made it very difficult to record videos for her coach. The other teachers shared they had materials that supported the implementation of the practices; however, they were not specific on the exact materials they had in their classroom or building.

### **Literacy Materials**

The *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) mentions specific materials that should be in classrooms, including a variety of books that reflect children's culture and home language which Teacher 5 mentioned in an interview as a resource she needed with the diversity of her classroom.

I would have liked a list of websites, where we could print out books that are written in different languages, because I have five different languages in my classroom and that took me a while to find books that were free [...] or even like poetry or something.

Other materials needed for the implementation of the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) were digital and recorded books, comfortable spaces for children to read, labels, alphabet charts, and writing materials. In the EELCP Survey, Teacher 14 elaborated that their coach provided “Literacy materials (writing utensils, notepads, recipe and index cards) in the dramatic/house area [which] encouraged a lot of writing in that area, from recipes to grocery lists and party invitations.” There were many materials needed to implement the literacy practices and most teachers felt they had enough between what they brought and what was given to them by their administrator and coach.

### **Available Staff**

Teachers shared in the TCE-T Survey that they needed staff available to help with videotaping when needed, more money for materials to purchase, and newer technology. Time to meet with their coach and to focus on the training were mentioned as challenges by twelve teachers out of 21 in the TCE-T Survey. Teacher 13 shared in the TCE-T Survey that being at home teaching virtually hindered the resources that were available to her, compared to what she would have had if she were teaching in her classroom. In an interview, Teachers 3 and 4 discussed how difficult it was to videotape their lesson because they were the only person in each of their classrooms, but they had no extra staff to help and that hindered their ability to record more videos for their coach. “It would have been helpful, maybe having somebody else in the classroom to take the videos instead of me having to prop everything up,” Teacher 3 noted. This may have been an issue for other teachers who were alone in their rooms, and it is important for future program directors to be aware of this if coaching is to be done virtually.

## **Work Time**

Time and availability to work with their coaches, record videos, and develop new lessons were important for teachers to be successful in the program. Two GSRP teachers specifically noted they had Fridays to work on items for their coaches and that helped them to fully participate. While eight other teachers who were at daycare centers, Head Start, and GSRP classrooms noted that having time to dedicate to the coaching program was something that helped them to fully participate fully. Although there were no specifics on what that time looked like and how they were able to get that time if it was during their break or if staff was made available in order for them to work during the day.

## **Administrative Support**

Teachers shared that they needed specific support from their administrator to fully participate in coaching, including allowing for uninterrupted time for observation and a substitute or extra staff to give them time to meet with their coach. In the TCE-T Survey, Teacher 7 shared, “My director worked with my coach on the areas that needed [to be] strengthened and she provided the resources needed for me to be more successful.” Providing time for assignments, feedback, and reflection were important pieces that were needed from the perspectives of teachers and coaches. Teacher 21, who worked at a district-based tuition preschool noted that she had a substitute teacher come in to help her. This support needed from building administration gave the teacher the needed time to complete coaching assignments during their work day. Verbal support from their administrator such as asking how they are doing in the program and providing positive reinforcement and support was appreciated by teachers. Some teachers noted that their administrator was not involved at all and provided no support for them while they

received coaching. Teacher 3 noted in the TCE-T Survey, "I think if I would have reached out to those mentioned [director or administrator], they would have referred me back to my education manager. The chain of command is highly recommended at this program." Coaches also shared that a supportive environment was crucial to succeed in the program, which included the director or administrator and the co-teacher or assistant.

While a couple of directors were not directly involved in the coaching, both teachers and coaches felt it would be beneficial for them to understand what is being asked of the teachers and resources they may need to be successful. In the TCE-T Survey, 11 teachers shared that their director or education manager was a support to them in the ways described above, ranging from providing time and resources to giving encouragement to the teachers. Three coaches noted they had positive support from directors, but there were some who were not responsive or not involved. Teacher 14 shared one of these less positive experiences in the TCE-T Survey, "I did not feel that the training was worth my time. They [directors] said I was already enrolled, and it was almost over and to stick it out." This comment leads back to the importance of teacher motivation and buy-in, with the lack of support this teacher felt to her not gaining new skills, as she described in the TCE-T Survey. This teacher needed further support from her coach to individualize the experience to be able to challenge her beyond the basics of these literacy practices. This large amount of administrative support was an improvement compared to the first year of the EELCP, as the coaches noted then that not as many directors were involved and supportive of their teachers (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021).

## **Support Needed for Coaches**

For coaches, they shared they could have used more support from the EELCP program coordinator regarding issues they saw in classrooms. This ranged from behavioral issues to specific needs for the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a). More structure could have been developed by the project coordinators for the coaches on what coaches should be doing each month, as Coach 4 mentioned in the TCE-T survey “I felt like I wasn’t doing enough.” Monthly coaching meetings were valuable for the coaches as this gave them encouragement, support, they learned strategies to help teachers, and built strong relationships with the project coordinators. In the TCE-C Survey, Coach 5 shared it would have been beneficial to get more ideas, “From other coaches, examples of how you supported teachers on the different essentials, photos, videos, suggestions for books/materials, etc.” These difficulties lessened some of the effectiveness of the EELCP but will provide a learning opportunity for future coaching programs.

**Summary.** Coaches and teachers noted there was a range of materials they needed to fully participate. Teachers and coaches brought in books, puppets, and other materials into the classrooms that supported the literacy practices being developed during coaching. Staffing was a resource that was mentioned by teachers to help them efficiently record their lessons to share with their coach. Teachers shared that having time to work on the tasks for their coach was helpful. For those teachers in GSRP and Head Start this was the already included planning day and other teachers had substitute teachers available to support them. Administrative support was mentioned by teachers that some had, while others wanted their director to be more involved. Coaches needed more training on how to support teachers in areas other than literacy, such as behavior

management. Meetings with their fellow coaches were valuable for coaches to learn new strategies and techniques to use with their teachers. This array of resources mentioned by coaches and teachers provides a picture for implementing a successful coaching program.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### **Introduction**

This study was created to understand the experiences of coaches and teachers who participated in Oakland Schools' Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP), a program implemented by the Early Childhood division of an intermediate school district in southeast Michigan. This research was designed to document the program's successes, challenges, and lessons learned. I collected information through TCE-C (coach) and TCE-T (teacher) Surveys and interviews with the coaches and teachers and triangulated the newly collected data with the data from the pilot study and EELCP's existing survey data to answer my research questions. These data sources included the perspectives of both teachers and coaches, which was found as a gap in the research in Chapter Two. Through the analysis, I brought my unique insights from my background knowledge of the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a) which helped strengthen my understanding of literacy practices expected of the teachers. The research questions were: (1) What strategies were reported as being effective for coaches and teachers?, (2) How did the relationships between the teachers and coaches impact the success of the coaching program?, (3) What positive learning and development did the coaches and teachers experience during the coaching program?, (4) What difficulties did coaches and teachers face during the coaching program?, and (5) What resources do coaches and teachers need to fully participate in the literacy coaching program?

This school year was atypical for the teachers and coaches, which led to the use of new strategies and the need for different support and resources. Constructive feedback, helping to problem-solve, and creating an action plan were some of the most used strategies noted by teachers and coaches. This feedback and problem solving was done using video systems that allowed coaches to share ideas synchronously with Zoom and asynchronously with TORSH in ways that may not have been possible in prior years. Coaches found new ways of connecting and sharing ideas with technology, such as modeling using their family members or sharing videos of other teachers' lessons. Coach 1 used multiple virtual strategies to help her teachers reflect on their practices and build their confidence while watching themselves teach which are useful tools that should be continued to be used. Utilizing technology to coach virtually was helpful for some teachers, while others found they did not learn well through that medium. Coaching virtually was not a complete hinderance and may be able to be used with some in-person support after the visitor restrictions are lifted due to COVID-19.

Teachers appreciated the concrete examples coaches shared when working through certain literacy practices. These examples supported teachers in becoming more intentional and focused when they developed their lessons and as they taught them to their students. The individualization that the program provided helped teachers focus on areas they chose and this ability to choose positively impacted their engagement in the program. Discussions at the beginning of the year, or program, should include what the teacher needs and their coaching style preferences. Technology issues, lack of staff, and lack of materials were some of the difficulties that were faced by teachers.

Relationship was a theme found throughout the data. When teachers felt they had a strong relationship with their coach, they also reported increasing their literacy teaching practices and their overall confidence in teaching literacy. If there was not a strong relationship with their coach, teachers were not engaged and struggled to complete activities required of the coaching program. When there was a strong relationship between coach and teacher, literacy practices seemed to be positively affected which also led to students' improvement in teacher observed literacy skills. While the strategies used were important, without a solid relationship with their coach, these strategies were almost useless. This was also found in Johnson et al.'s (2018) study, "Teachers who perceived a more positive relationship with the coach implemented the intervention with greater frequency" (p. 413). Both teachers and coaches noted that the experience would have been better if there were opportunities to meet in-person and for the coach to observe the classroom instead of using video. Overall, this data can support other coaching programs with ideas on how to structure time and activities for teachers and coaches which will be discussed in this chapter.

### **Coaching Strategies**

The strategies that coaches used appeared to have affected teacher literacy practices and the relationships they developed. During coaching sessions, coaches helped teachers to problem-solve areas they were struggling in and created an action plan that teachers used to improve their practices. Coaches discussed the literacy practices they had learned during trainings in detail, and they gave specific examples of what these practices looked like in action. They also provided materials and books for teachers to add to their literacy artifacts. Coaches gave constructive criticism, feedback, and ideas for

teachers to use while teaching literacy concepts to their students. Riley and Roach (2006), Bean et al. (2010), and Fox et al. (2011) found that coaches used the same strategies when working with their teachers in an individual setting during coaching sessions. Due to COVID-19, restrictions were in place countywide and within school buildings that limited visitor access for much of the year. Only in April 2021 did a couple of coaches do in-person coaching.

### **In Person Coaching**

Since coaching was done virtually for most of the 2020-2021 school year, feedback and ideas were shared through emails, video calls, and an online video sharing system. While this was effective for some teachers, teachers shared that additional in-person would have been beneficial in being able to model and demonstrate new practices for teachers. These opportunities for coaches to give in the moment and immediate feedback could have made a larger impact on teachers' literacy practices. A coach and teacher both shared how the teacher reached their goals quicker, and their literacy teaching practices were affected more when they were able to do in-person coaching. Utilizing in-person coaching was a strategy that many teachers and coaches noted would have helped them learn more than only digitally communicating and getting feedback. This could be because these teachers learn more through hands-on demonstrations and modeling.

### **Virtual Coaching**

While ten teachers requested more in-person coaching, Teacher 3 commented in an interview that the virtual format fit her learning style and that in-person would not have made a difference for her. Powell et al. (2010a) and Snyder et al. (2018) also found

that in-person and virtual had different impacts on teacher practices, but both modalities positively changed teaching practices. In the current study, the teachers video recorded themselves teaching a lesson and uploaded it to the TORSH system online. Coaches gave feedback to teachers on literacy practices they saw being used and feedback specific to the teacher's goals. Teachers who were able to navigate the TORSH system enjoyed getting feedback this way since the coaches were able to give detailed feedback throughout their video instead of having to wait until the end of the lesson if they had been in-person. Coaches also used this online system to send teachers videos of other teachers, which gave them concrete examples of how to implement certain literacy practices. Coach 1 of this study spoke about how she used this system to help teachers reflect on their teaching; the teachers watched their video before meeting with her to discuss the coach's feedback.

Considering the nature of teaching in an early childhood, specifically pre-kindergarten classroom, the day is mostly child-directed or learning through child centered activities. Elementary classrooms are more teacher-directed possibly leading to the ability to video record lessons easier as the lessons are usually more structured and whole group based (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In a pre-kindergarten classroom, much of the learning is done through play and teachers are providing opportunities for children explore concepts and scaffold the children as they explore (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The nature of early childhood classrooms presented difficulties in recording for some teachers, but also challenged them to become more creative in their available teaching opportunities.

Transitioning back to in-person coaching was mentioned as desirable by both teachers and coaches. Using a video sharing system to give feedback may be beneficial to use even with in-person visits, however. This could increase the amount of feedback teachers get and allow coaches to respond quicker than having to schedule travel and time for in-person visits. Sharing lessons and conducting coaching sessions virtually may be what works best for some teachers who learn that way rather than in-person modeling and in the moment coaching.

### **Individualization**

Individualization was an important finding from this research. As Trotter (2006), NAEYC and NACCRRA (2011) discussed, coaching should be focused on goal setting at an individual level to support their development. Knowing their teacher's coaching and learning preferences was a key strategy for coaches. This was developed while building relationships with teachers, which was also highlighted in Christ and Wang's (2013) study. Coach 1, in an interview, shared that she gave her teachers activities to keep them more engaged, and the coach was able to see which strategies would work best for each teacher. These relationships led to the ability to individualize the coaching sessions for each teacher's needs and the area they wanted to focus on.

This individualization was developed by unique goals and specific strategies used based on the teacher's experience, content knowledge, and the Essentials Checklist. In this study, goal setting was initiated using the Essentials Checklist discussed in Chapter Four (included in Appendix G). Since this year began with only virtual coaching, teachers self-evaluated to find what they already did in their classroom and the areas they were lacking and discussed with coaches to develop initial goals. Coaches also used the

checklist when watching videos of teachers as they taught their students to determine when the teacher met their goal. Goal setting and reflection were used often in coaching programs researched by Fox et al. (2011) and Romano and Woods (2018). While there were strategies that most teachers and coaches found impactful to literacy practices, it is important for future coaches to build relationships with their teachers. Then find out how each teacher wants to be coached, and what strategies work best for each teacher. This will provide a strong foundation for the coaching sessions before diving into coaching content.

### **Role-Play**

Role-play was discussed in both this study and in McLeod et al. (2019) and it was the least used strategy in both studies. Coaches and teachers in the TCE-C and TCE-T Surveys and interviews agreed that role-play would be less beneficial than modeling. In interviews, coaches shared that role-play seemed like a technique that would be useful for beginning teachers and during trainings, not during one-on-one coaching sessions. Using modeling and showing videos of high-quality teaching practices would be more impactful when working with experienced teachers. Role-play may be beneficial in some settings, but it leads back to the previous section on individualizing coaching sessions to what the teacher needs or wants to do during their time with their coach.

### **Problem-Solving Discussions**

Problem-solving discussions were not specifically identified as a strategy used in the studies reviewed in Chapter Two. However, the researchers mentioned that coaches and teachers discussed how teachers can implement new literacy strategies in their classroom (McLeod et al., 2019; Riley & Roach, 2006; Romano & Woods, 2018).

Teachers in the current study shared how they appreciated having discussions with fellow early childhood educators to figure out how to improve their teaching practices. These discussions proved as a useful strategy due to the strong relationships between coaches and teachers.

### **Relationships**

The foundational piece of this coaching program were the relationships formed with the coaches and teachers. Without this relationship, the strategies mentioned in the section above may not have made an impact on the teachers' practices. When there was no trust, respect, and open communication with their coaches, teachers reported not feeling motivated to participate and complete activities for their coach. Several studies in the literature review pointed to how important the relationship between the coach and the teachers was to a coaching program. Wasylyshyn's (2003) study found that the top characteristic for an effective coach was, "The ability to form a strong connection" with their client (p. 98). Teachers in the present study shared how their coaches were great listeners, flexible, understanding, empathetic, and approachable. These qualities impacted the teachers' ability to be open and honest when going through the coaching program.

### **Teacher Motivation and Buy-in**

Teacher motivation and buy-in was not examined in the studies in the literature review. Combining data from the pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) and newly collected data, teacher motivation and buy-in emerged as being highly important to the engagement and productivity of the teachers during the coaching program. Teachers who did not feel supported by their administrator and did not have a strong relationship with their coach had less of an improvement to their teaching practices. This was noted



through further analysis of their EELCP survey data, noting teachers' perceived changes in their teaching practices. Teachers need to volunteer to participate in coaching programs and systems need to be in place to ensure that they feel supported by both their administrator and their coach.

### **Build Relationships First**

The relationship between the coach and the teacher was mentioned throughout the data as an integral part of teacher and overall program success, as was found in Christ and Wang (2013). Building on these findings, in the current study coaches noted that when there was not a strong relationship with the teacher, there was less of an impact on the teacher's literacy practices. Coaches reported that those teachers who had a strong relationship with them met their goals. One difference noted between this research and the pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021) was the time set aside for coaches to focus strictly on developing the relationship. Coaches shared they took the first month of coaching to ask teachers about themselves and their classroom. Teachers commented that their coach got to know them as a person, beyond their professional life, and this was important in building trust and respect. This proved advantageous as the coaches noted it made the program run smoother.

Coaches shared that teachers' willingness to be transparent in their conversations and being receptive to feedback helped to build the relationships further. Teacher 2 discussed in the interview how she asked her coach about her personal life and that helped their relationship grow stronger. The trust, mutual respect, and partnership were important pieces found in Knoche, Kuhn, and Eum's (2013) study of coaching programs as well. Being vulnerable when recording their teaching and receiving constructive

criticism effectively was able to take place only after the relationship had a strong foundation.

### **Impact on Teacher Success**

When there was not a strong relationship between the teacher and coach, there was less communication which led to less engagement in coaching. Ultimately, those less connected and engaged teachers did not meet their goals and the program had less of an impact on their literacy teaching practices. Jayaraman et al. (2015) also found this association in their study. More specifically when teacher-coach relationships were not strong, teachers were not contributing to conversations which led coaches to spending more time on re-establishing a relationship during their sessions. Whereas if teachers and coaches had a strong relationship, even with the difficulties of not being able to meet in-person; teachers made greater gains and they implemented more literacy practices in their day. This finding, mentioned by both coaching and teachers, was supported in Riley and Roach's (2006) study that found starting with building a trusting relationship led to higher quality classrooms. Teachers in the current study shared how their teaching practices had changed due to participating in the coaching program. This study demonstrated the ability of coaching to impact teacher literacy practices through digital modalities. Even for those teaching their pre-kindergarten students virtually, which had not been previously studied. The relationship between the coach and teacher provided a strong foundation for teachers to accept feedback from their coach that they perceived improving their teaching practices.

## **Learning and Development Experienced**

Teachers shared that their literacy teaching practices improved, and they grew professionally through this experience. Coaches supported teachers in implementing both literacy practices along with their overall curriculum. Many teachers reported becoming more intentional and focused when planning their lessons, specifically mentioning the impact coaching had on their read-aloud lessons. This finding aligns with Landry et al. (2009), Neuman and Cunningham (2009), and Rezzonico et al.'s (2015) studies that found both teachers' planned instruction and strategies used during read-alouds improved after being coached. They learned how to present literacy materials in ways that made it easier for their students to understand, which may have positively impacted the students' literacy skills. Coaches noted how their teachers taught "fundamentally differently" at the end of the coaching program. Hindman and Wasik (2012) also found that teachers' instructional interaction changed after participating in coaching and training on literacy practices.

Teachers also gained more confidence in their teaching skills and how to incorporate literacy into their classrooms, this aligns with growth of teacher confidence found by Romano and Woods (2018). Coaches also saw their teachers' confidence increased throughout the year as they became independent in trying new activities with their students. Growth in students' literacy skills was also noted through observational assessments and classroom literacy activities. Studies completed by Hsieh et al. (2009), Hindman and Wasik (2012), and Rezzonico et al. (2015) support this finding. They noted that student literacy growth was found in their research. Throughout the program, coaches grew their skill set in coaching virtually, broadened their knowledge, and gained

confidence in supporting professionals. This coaching program supported growth for all parties involved, teachers, students, and coaches.

### **Difficulties**

While the coaching program had many positives, there were also challenges that came up throughout the experience. Communication with coaches and building administrators provided a challenge in keeping teachers on track with the program. With most of the coaching being done virtually, technology issues arose including a lack of staff to record lessons and equipment difficulties. For some teachers, equipment was not working properly or was not updated enough and this took away from the effectiveness of the program. Recording lessons was difficult for teachers and it took away from the authenticity of what was going on within the entire classroom. These issues along with teacher nervousness and discomfort in hearing criticism was found in Knoche et al.'s (2013) study as well. Coaches and teachers needed more structure to the coaching sessions when they would occur and consistency with what was expected of them. As was found in McLeod et al. (2019), when teachers were overwhelmed with all the tasks being asked of them, they were not as engaged or were not as successful in the coaching program. Teachers in the current study dealt with technology issues when they were teaching virtually, which was not explored in prior studies. Some of the teachers taught virtually for the whole year on Zoom and coaches had difficulties being able to observe their teaching on this platform.

Including assistant teachers was only mentioned by one of the studies reviewed, Christ and Wang (2013), although specifics were not shared if lead and assistant teachers went through the coaching at the same time. Gallucci's (2008) interpretation of Vygotsky

space discusses a process in which learning evolves from individual changes to then sharing this new knowledge with those around them. Including assistants and lead teachers in the coaching, together, could change practices and procedures used in the classroom. This change could also affect an entire building if all teachers get training and coaching as was the case in the EELCP study. The overall goal of the Essential Early Literacy Practices (MAISA, 2016a) was to make a change in the community to improve children's literacy skills. This aligns with the final stage of Vygotsky space, moving the learning from the training to teachers adopting the new practices, and those practices impacting their students and the community (Gallucci, 2008). For these changes to make a larger impact, all pre-kindergarten teachers need to be trained on these literacy practices. This will have a ripple effect on children and families in the county. Coaches and teachers found ways to persevere and learn how to adapt their practices to meet the needs of students.

### **Resources**

Resources to run the program effectively came in the form of materials, time, and staff. Kohn and Neuman (2009) and Knoche et al. (2013) also found this range of resources needed in the coaching programs they explored. Teachers brought in books and other resources from home. Coaches shared books and other materials for the classroom along with articles and videos that were shared digitally. In Bean et al. (2010) and Snyder et al. (2018), there was a variety of tangible and digital materials provided by the coaches to support their teachers.

In the current study, money from centers was needed for more literacy materials and newer technology was needed for the digital format of coaching this year. Some of

the resources in the current study differed as technology became the primary modality that coaching was completed. While staffing issues have been an issue for some time, this year staff shortages greatly affected childcare centers. This led to assistant teachers being moved to different classrooms, which disrupted the normal structure and procedures that occurred in those classrooms. The need for teachers to record their lessons proved difficult when they did not have another adult in the room to run the technology for them.

Support from directors in the form of checking in and giving positive reinforcement was lacking for many. Teachers wanted to have their director involved in these aspects to understand what they were going through in the program. Expectations needed to be made clear to the directors of the buildings to ensure teachers were given the time and materials they needed to fully participate in the coaching program. This range of resources would provide teachers and coaches with valuable tools that would positively impact their ability to fully participate in the coaching program.

### **Limitations**

There were a few limitations to this study. The number of participants was a limitation as only 60% of the teachers answered the TCE-T Survey and fewer than 25% of those teachers participated in the interviews. The teachers who participated in the study may not have included the majority of experiences felt by all of the teachers in the coaching program. These participants may not have been a representative sample of the entire teaching staff in the program, although utilizing the EECLP data ensured that a larger participant group was used to triangulate data. Oakland Schools provided demographic data that included most of the teachers that participated. While 11 teachers responded to the TCE-T survey, four of them also responded to the EECLP survey. Out

of the seven teachers who are unaccounted for, half were assistants and half were lead teachers and all had under eight years of experience. The classrooms that these teachers worked in varied, including tuition center and district based, GSRP, and Head Start. Teachers who did not participate may not have had an overall positive experience as those who volunteered for the study. This bias in self-reflection may have limited the generalizability of the study findings.

Another limitation of this research was that the interviews had been designed to be conducted as focus groups. If focus groups had been feasible, they would have gathered information in a conversational setting with teachers and coaches sharing information and having communal dialogue (Creswell, 2015). While the interviews provided an in-depth discussion with participants in a one-on-one or one-on-two setting, having the conversations occur within a focus group may have brought out thoughts or memories of experiences that they had forgotten. The timing of the research may have also hindered the number of teachers and coaches who participated in the TCE-T and TCE-C Surveys and interviews. The EELCP just finished up their end-of-the-year survey for teachers and coaches. The TCE-T Survey may have felt redundant, and teachers could have experienced survey fatigue with both being sent almost back-to-back. Since the TCE-T Survey was sent out at the end of June, teachers may have already wrapped up their school year and COVID-19 could have impacted their end of the year exhaustion as they dealt with implications of added sickness and regulations. Sending the TCE-T Survey out in May could have resulted in more teachers and coaches participating. With these in mind, this research can provide a basis for further research on this topic which is discussed in the next section.

Another limitation was not pairing coach and teacher responses. This would have provided a way to compare specific experiences of the teachers and coaches to see if there were similarities or discrepancies. The comparison would be especially useful when examining coaching strategies and the relationship between the coach and teacher. This investigation could have found specific relationship building strategies and other coaching strategies that affected perceptions of success.

### **Directions for Future Research**

This research provides a foundation for program design in addition to future research to explore how to design a coaching program, specifically for promoting literacy teaching practices. When buildings and counties return from the COVID-19 pandemic and coaching can resume in-person, similar research should be completed to explore strategies that are effective for promoting literacy teaching practices. In the pilot study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021), the EELCP project coordinators designed the coaching to have two separate treatment types, completely in-person and a combination of virtual and in person. However, after three months into the program, with COVID-19 pandemic closing schools in March of 2020, the coaching was not able to continue as planned. This leads to an idea for future research, to design a coaching program that has teachers receive either completely in-person or virtual. This would enable a better comparison of each treatment type of in-person and virtual, since EELCP's second year had been mostly virtual, with some in-person visits. The current study was also conducted when some teachers were teaching virtually and that made this data even more unique.

Another idea for future research would be to add observations of coaching sessions to the data source, as was done in Jayaraman et al. (2015). Researchers could



explore the relationship between the coach and the teacher and how the coach individualizes strategies for each teacher. This would lead to investigations into both the importance and impact of the relationship between the coach and the teacher, in addition to the specific strategies coaches used during their sessions. Teachers and coaches in the current study discussed that the ability to make the program tailored to the individual was an important piece that affected teachers' successes.

If coaching is done virtually, teachers need a lot of extra support in using technology and connecting with their coach virtually. Checking on technology for each school and teacher would have been valuable as some did not have the necessary internet, technology, and knowledge to implement the systems appropriately. Some coaches noted that if tools were not used by the teacher as they were asked, the coaching was not as effective for them. There needs to be more support for teachers on how to share videos of themselves teaching certain lessons such as read-alouds to be able to get the best feedback from their coaches. An issue for many teachers was the virtual nature of coaching this year and the lack of coaches' knowledge of what the classroom environment and culture felt like. That knowledge would have helped them relate more to the difficulties the teacher was having and allow the coach to possibly adjust what they were asking of the teacher. Conducting coaching virtually could be impactful in improving teacher practices if implemented with sufficient technological support, communication, and interaction with their coach.

A final way to complete further research into coaching would be to use focus groups as was intended, to gather teacher and coach experiences. This may have revealed ideas and topics that were not discussed during the interviews with more teachers and

coaches participating in these discussions. All these ideas would be good foundations of future research projects to find out more about coach and teacher experiences in coaching programs.

### **Recommendations**

Findings from this study illuminate the possibilities of what could be done in a future coaching program that could increase the impact on teacher practices. As mentioned in Chapter Four, many teachers felt that if they were able to do coaching in-person, that would have made a difference in their experience and an impact on what they gained from coaching. Coaches mentioned that being able to be in-person would have allowed them to give feedback right after observations and that would have been beneficial. Visiting other classrooms and more opportunities to share with fellow teachers to gain ideas on what to do were also brought up as other ways to learn new practices.

### **Virtual Coaching**

When using technology, all parties should be properly trained before being required to use any new system, along with providing the appropriate materials needed for the teachers and coaches to be able to implement the programs. Putting this in the perspective of virtual coaching, ensuring that all those participating have the proper supplies and knowledge to be able to complete the activities required of them. If programs are implemented at the beginning of the school year, it would be advantageous to provide training for them before it begins and allow time for teachers and coaches to explore the tools, ideally together, prior to using them for coaching.

When virtual coaching is used, teachers need more training to be proficient with the systems being used and appropriate technology available to record lessons. Using

recorded lessons helped coaches give feedback in a timely manner along with allowing teachers to reflect on their own practices, showing it was a valuable tool to use in coaching programs. Also, creating a schedule for coaches and teachers for when videos should be uploaded and when feedback should be given would be helpful to keep everyone on track and productive throughout the year. Providing time for teachers to participate, send recordings, and practice their skills would be vital if coaching is operating virtually.

### **Relationships**

Developing a program that is based on relationships is imperative. Time should be allocated at the beginning for coaches and teachers to build relationships, develop trust and respect before beginning on the content portion of coaching. Training for coaches should include the importance of relationships and strategies that could be used to build the trust and respect with their teacher. Developing activities for coaches and teachers to do together in the beginning to get to know each other would further help the relationships to develop and would support coaches who may not know how to start that process.

To build partnerships and consistency between classrooms and programs, teachers and coaches shared an idea of connecting with other teachers. Having the lead and assistant teacher participate in the training together could help with the continuity of the classroom to implement the new practices. Another idea teachers shared was being partnered with a peer who had already been through the training to use for support. Some teachers felt that their coach needed to break down the *Essentials Pre-K* (MAISA, 2016a)

more for them. Those teachers who did not have exposure to these practices before coaching struggled grasping the concepts and implementing them in their classrooms.

### **Training**

Coaches participating in training was also mentioned by the teachers, as it would build continuity with the training and coaching sessions. A program suggestion from the coaches was to have the training and coaching happen simultaneously or alternating training and coaching bi-weekly. The EELCP program was front-loaded with literacy training to give teachers knowledge before they fully began working with their coach. When developing a new coaching program, a schedule that alternates training and coaching sessions would allow training and coaching to focus on one or two literacy practices at a time. This would allow coaches and teachers to set goals for each literacy practice as they were taught in the trainings. This may help teachers to not feel overwhelmed by learning many practices and then trying to revisit those months later in coaching.

### **Communication**

Communication was vital for everyone involved in the coaching program. Coaches and teachers need to have open lines of communication that are built on a trusting and respectful relationship. Administrators also need to be involved in the process so they understand what is expected of their teachers and materials or resources they may need. For GSRP teachers, they had an Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) who evaluated and provided support to them as GSRP requirement, however they were not connected with the literacy coaches. Teacher 4 shared in an interview that having their ECS and coach communicate with each other would have helped as they were setting

goals for the teacher and it was hard to navigate that situation. “They did not connect, there was no communication between the two of them. [...] I was doing videos for both of them, like the same stuff, but they didn’t know anything about each other’s positions.” These recommendations support the concerns and difficulties that coaches and teachers felt during this coaching program and taking these into account for a future program will help the implementation of the program.

This study was completed as a case study, utilizing only the participants in the Essential Early Literacy Coaching Program (EELCP) during the 2020-2021 school year. These recommendations build on the implementation of the EELCP that was adjusted to COVID-19 restrictions and safety measures. When creating a new coaching program, these recommendations should be taken into consideration.

### **Conclusion**

While this research began with focusing on strategies used by coaches and appreciated by teachers, the experiences of coaches and teachers pointed back to relationships. Gathering perspectives from both coaches and teachers fulfilled the research gap found in the literature review in Chapter Two. Coaches started the program building relationships with teachers to create trust and mutual respect that allowed teachers to be open and available to feedback on their teaching. Strategies were chosen based on what the coaches learned about their teachers, including how they taught, what areas they struggled in, their knowledge level, and their teacher self-efficacy. School districts and other programs that want to implement coaching to impact their teachers’ practices should develop a foundation by helping coaches build relationships with their teachers before pursuing content advancement. Relationships were the cornerstone of

these coaching interactions and this needs to be the foundation of future coaching programs as well.

When designing a coaching program, it would be imperative that teachers volunteer to be in the program and that their administrator understands what will be asked of them while participating. Coaching virtually can be very useful when used to share videos, give feedback, and to help teachers reflect on their practices. This can also provide an example of how teachers can interact with their students while teaching them virtually. Allowing for a mix of in-person and virtual sessions would be an ideal option for many teachers. This would allow for teachers who learn best virtually and who may not want visitors in their room, to receive guidance that fit their learning style. For those teachers who learn best hands-on and in-person, they would have the opportunity to get the immediate feedback from their coach and their coach could model activities with their students. Mixing both virtual and in-person could be beneficial to cut down on travel time for coaches and allowing them to view more teaching and give feedback more often.

This year provided challenges due to COVID-19, but it also showed there were ways to impact teacher practices and ultimately students' skills, even when coaching and teaching virtually. These teachers and coaches proved that during difficult times, there is always a way to make an impact on those you are working with. Teaching pre-kindergarten children in a virtual setting was a new challenge that many were not prepared for, but with the support of their coach, they were able to positively impact their students' literacy skills through using technology. Just as relationships are the base for teaching children, coaching adults also needs to begin with relationships; how strong the relationships are can determine the outcome of the coaching program. "The coaching

relationship is not just a critical success factor in coaching. It may be the most important one” (Bluckert, 2005, p. 340). This research showed that even through a treacherous year, overcoming so many obstacles that we have not had to do before in education, these relationships helped the teachers preserve and helped them support their students’ literacy skills in new ways.

APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL LETTERS



## Original IRB Approval for Pilot Study (Bishop & Wakabayashi, 2021)



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

DATE: February 27, 2020

TO: Melissa Bishop, MAT  
FROM: Oakland University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Supports for Early Childhood Literacy Coaches  
REFERENCE #: 1560636-1  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: February 27, 2020

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption Category 2(i)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Oakland University IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

The exempt submission includes the following:

- Application
- Information Sheet Version 02/27/2020 which has been published as a Board Document under Reviews in IRBNet. **The IRB approved information sheet MUST be used in recruitment and consent of participants in the research**
- Field Project Participant Invitation
- Focus Group Questions
- Interview Questions

The exemption is made with the understanding that NO CHANGES may be made to the project until such changes have been reviewed by the IRB. Please contact me to determine appropriate revision form(s) that may be needed. Do not collect data while the revisions are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used.

Please retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.

If you have any questions, please contact Kate Wydeven M.S. at (248) 370-4306 or [kwydeven@oakland.edu](mailto:kwydeven@oakland.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Oakland University IRB's records.

## IRB Approval Letter: Modifications for Present Study



June 17, 2021

Protocol #: 1560636-1

Research Team:  
Melissa Bishop  
Tomoko Wakabayashi

The IRB has reviewed the Modification submission and determined that the changes listed below do not affect the exemption status of the study. The following study, "Supports for Early Childhood Literacy Coaches" remains Exempt per federal regulations.

The approved modifications are the following:

- Change in participant population: Addition of teachers as a research population.
- Addition participants: 50 teachers added to project for a new total of 60 participants
- New procedures: Online survey (20 minutes) for teachers and coaches. Focus group (was previously approved, 45 minutes) with modified questions for teachers and coaches.
- Additional recruitment process: email to teachers
- Additional recruitment documents (2): email for teachers and new recruitment document to re contact coaches for a second survey.
- New consent process: The information sheet is online prior to the beginning of the survey, Prior to the focus groups, the PI will send the information sheet to the participants and discuss it at the beginning of the online focus group.
- New consent document included for new participant population
- Change of incentive: Adding incentives for participants to complete the survey and participate in the focus groups. PI will randomly select 10 participants who completed the survey to receive a \$10 electronic Amazon gift card. All participants in the focus groups will receive a \$25 electronic Amazon gift card

This submission includes the following documents:

- Email participant Invitation
- Previous participant invitation
- Information Sheet Version 6/17/2021
- Survey and Focus group questions

The NEW IRB approved (date-stamped) teacher consent document has been published under Attachments in the Submission Details page. Please download the IRB date stamped consent and use it in consenting participants.

You are approved to implement the aforementioned modifications. Please retain a copy of this notification for your records.

This letter can also be found in Cayuse under the Letters tab in the Submission Details page.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office.

Thank you.

The Oakland University IRB

APPENDIX B  
LITERACY TIMELINES

Figure B.1 Michigan's Literacy Timeline

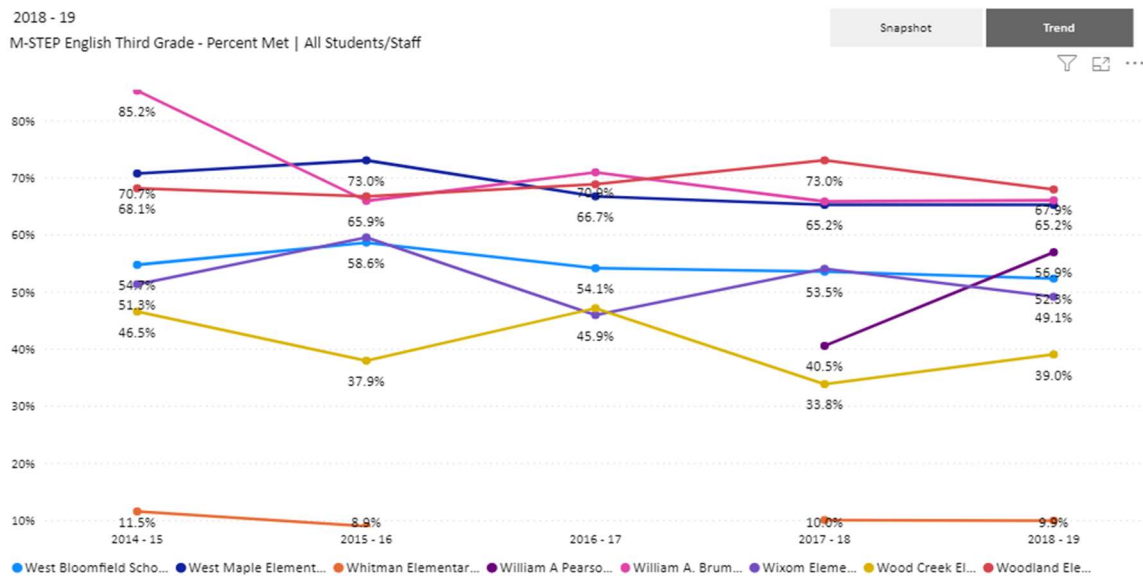


Figure B.2 Literacy Project Timeline



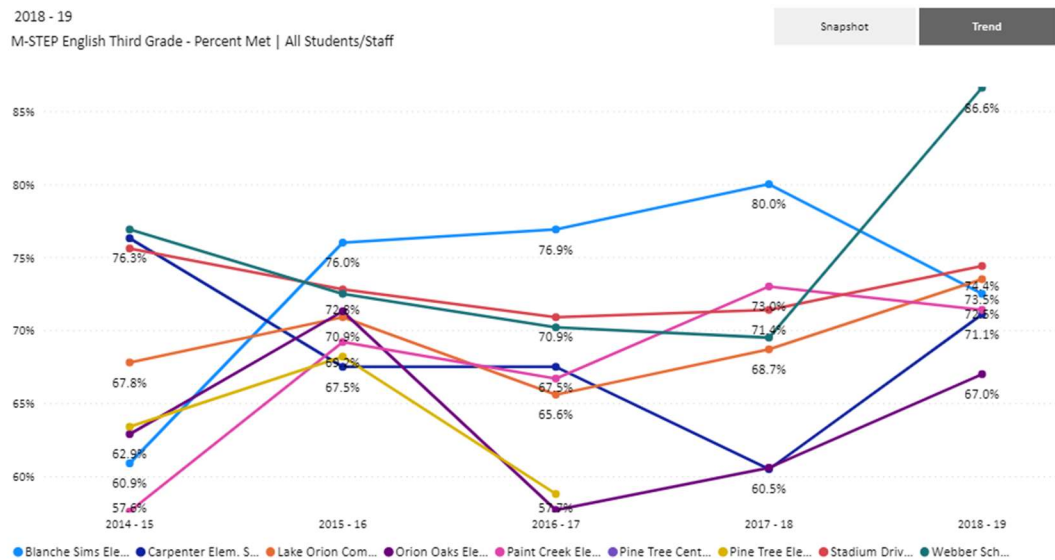
APPENDIX C  
M-STEP SCORES IN OAKLAND COUNTY

**Figure C.1. Oakland Schools M-STEP Data**



(State of Michigan, 2021).

**Figure C.2. Lake Orion School District M-STEP Data**



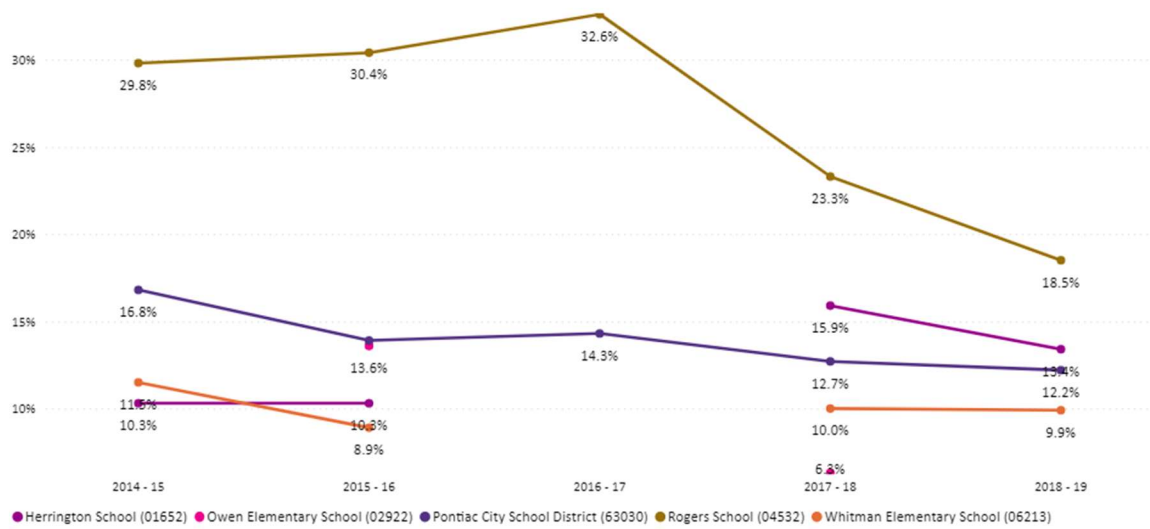
(State of Michigan 2021).

**Figure C.3. Pontiac School District M-STEP Data**

2018 - 19

M-STEP English Third Grade - Percent Met | All Students/Staff

Snapshot Trend



(State of Michigan, 2021).



APPENDIX D  
TABLE OF STUDIES FROM CHAPTER TWO

Table D.1 Coaching in Early Childhood Studies

Study	Participants	Method	Findings
McLeod, R., Hardy, J., & Grifenhagen, J. (2019). Coaching Quality in Pre-kindergarten Classrooms: Perspectives from a Statewide Study.	94 coaches, 947 teachers and 189 administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survey sent out to all stakeholders</li> <li>- Collecting information on coaching practices, dosage and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings occurred monthly (other than new teachers which was bi-weekly) lasting 30-60 minutes</li> <li>- Focus areas varied between coach and teacher responses</li> <li>- Almost all teachers and coaches felt coaching was positive and productive and almost all administrators found coaching beneficial for teachers.</li> <li>- Practices coaches used: sharing information on new practices, help in classroom, modeling, role-playing</li> </ul>
Fox, Hemmeter, Snyder, Binder & Clarke. 2011. Coaching early childhood special educator to implement a comprehensive model for promoting young children's social competence	3 ECSE teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers attended 3-day training</li> <li>- Coaching sessions included a 30-90-minute observation with 30 minutes of debriefing</li> <li>- Sessions included feedback, goal setting and developing an action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each teacher had a different focus for coaching in social-emotional development</li> <li>- 2 teachers reached 80% implementation level of practices. The other teacher's practices improved but did not reach the 80% level.</li> </ul>
Romano, M. & Woods, J. (2018). Collaborative coaching with early head start teachers using responsive communication strategies	3 teachers and 3 children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborative coaching style</li> <li>- 2 times a week, 30-45 minutes over 2-3-month period</li> <li>- Interventionist and teacher met before session with child then observed teacher interacting with the child. Afterwards teacher and interventionist met to discuss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All teachers increased use of strategies</li> <li>- Children increased communication skills</li> <li>- Teachers felt empowered to help the child.</li> <li>- Teachers found coaching helpful to set goals.</li> </ul>
Riley and Roach 2006	31 childcare centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observe teachers, record observations and share notes with teachers immediately after observation</li> <li>- Teachers trained in 6 elements including building a trusting relationship, linking practices with research and self-exploration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers had higher quality beliefs, sensitivity and interaction with children which results in higher quality classrooms.</li> </ul>

Table D.2 Early Childhood Literacy Studies

Study	Participants	Method	Findings
Weber-Mayrer, M., Piasta, S., Ottley, J., Justice, L., & O'Connell, A. (2018). Early childhood literacy coaching: An examination of coaching intensity and changes in educators' literacy knowledge and practice.	65 Early Childhood educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 30 hours PD on environment, play, oral language, early reading and early writing</li> <li>- ELLCO, CLOP, coaching log, teacher questionnaires</li> <li>- Coaching was intended for 90 minutes, once a week across 8 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Longer period of coaching: more knowledge gained from PD</li> <li>- Most hours of coaching: less change in overall literacy knowledge growth</li> </ul>
Rezzonico, S., Hipfner-Boucher, K., Milburn, T., Weitzman, E., Greenberg, J., Pelletier, J., & Girolametto, L. (2015). Improving Preschool Educators' Interactive Shared Book Reading: Effects of Coaching in Professional Development.	32 preschool teachers with children 4-5 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speech-language pathologists working as coaches to improve children's language development</li> <li>- 4 workshops and 5 coaching sessions lasting one hour</li> <li>- Video recorded small group and discussed strategies for teacher to work on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaching increased teacher questioning which positively impacted children's language.</li> <li>- Children were able to better connect stories to their lives.</li> </ul>
Neuman, S.B. & Cunningham, L. (2009). The Impact Of Professional Development And Coaching On Early Language And Literacy Instructional Practices.	128 family childcare providers, 304 total teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 45-hour, 3-credit course on language and literacy at a local community college</li> <li>- Weekly coaching sessions: 15 weeks aligned with course and continued for 17 more weeks after course completion</li> <li>- ELLCO and CHELLO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher knowledge: no difference between control and treatment group</li> <li>- Teacher practice: those in coaching and training group had higher scores on the quality of their language and literacy practices. No difference between those who had just training and control group.</li> </ul>

Table D.2 Early Childhood Literacy Studies Continued

Study	Participants	Method	Findings
Hindman A.H. & Wasik, B.A. (2012). Unpacking an Effective Language and Literacy Coaching Intervention in Head Start: Following Teachers' Learning over Two Years of Training.	Head Start Centers 1 control 2 intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers got 2 years of coaching and training on language and literacy development and instruction</li> <li>- PD happened each month with coaching cycle occurring each week following training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intervention group high gains on ELLCO in year 1 and on CLASS in both years</li> <li>- Children knowledge gain: vocabulary more in year 2 than year 1, alphabet and sound awareness gains but not higher in year</li> <li>- Teachers gained in year one in language and literacy environment and instructional interactions. In year 2, gains in instructional interactions, language modeling and feedback.</li> </ul>
Powell, D.R., Diamond, K., Burchinal, M., & Koehler, M. (2010a). Effects of an Early Literacy Professional Development Intervention on Head Start Teachers and Children.	88 classrooms in 24 Head Start Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intervention lasted one semester – either onsite or remote</li> <li>- Teachers had 16 hours of training</li> <li>- 7 coaching sessions during 15-week intervention period</li> <li>- Onsite coaching sessions lasted 90 minutes</li> <li>- Remote coaching involved 15-minute long video of teaching and coach giving feedback</li> <li>- ELLCO and ECERS and student evaluations as well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intervention group teachers larger gains on ELLCO in classroom environment, language, literacy and curriculum. Larger gains in code-focused instruction. No difference in promoting vocabulary or children's talk.</li> <li>- Children in intervention group gains in letter knowledge, concepts of print, blending and writing. No gains in receptive language, letter-word identification or initial sound matching</li> <li>- Onsite coaching teachers had gains in code-focused instruction and remote teachers had larger gains on vocabulary and initial sound matching skills.</li> </ul>
Landry, S.H., Anthony, J.L., Swank, P.S., Monseque-Bailey, P. (2009). Effectiveness of comprehensive professional development for teachers of at-risk preschoolers.	262 early childhood teachers in Ohio, Maryland, Florida and Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Computer facilitated progress monitoring (PDA) for two groups and one of those also got coaching.</li> <li>- Paper and pencil progress monitoring done by teacher for two groups and one of those groups got coaching.</li> <li>- One control group</li> <li>- Facilitators mentored teachers twice a month for 2 hours each visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentoring plus PDA teachers had higher quality teaching than control. No mentor or detailed feedback led to poorest teaching quality.</li> <li>- Mentored teachers had higher quality of phonological awareness instruction.</li> <li>- Online teachers had higher quality of writing instruction and of those online and mentored had more engaging writing activities. Online teachers also had higher quantity and quality of print and letter knowledge instruction than paper and pencil group.</li> </ul>

Table D.3 Coaching Strategies Studies

Study	Participants	Method	Findings
Knoche, L., Kuhn, M., & Eum, J. (2013). More Time. More Showing. More Helping. That's How It Sticks: The Perspectives of Early Childhood Teachers	20 early childhood coaches and their teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaches were interviewed</li> <li>- Teachers answered 4 open-ended questions on 2 occasions, 2 months apart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality of a good coach: knowledge and expertise, experience working with young children and providing a fresh perspective</li> <li>- Resources coach gave: ideas, strategies, PD, physical presence</li> <li>- Coach-teacher relationship: reciprocity, open communication, feedback, empowerment</li> <li>- Teacher transformation: improvement of practice, transformation of emotions, perception, and self-concept</li> </ul>
Bean, R., Draper, J., Hall, V., Vandermolen, J., & Zigmond, N. (2010). Coaches and Coaching in Reading First Schools: A Reality Check.	20 reading coaches in Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaches interviewed 5 times over 2-3-week period, 2 calls back to back</li> <li>- Asking what the coaches had done in the previous 24 hours – who they worked with, what they did, why they did it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaches spent most of their time working with teachers followed by management, school related tasks, planning and organizing, working with groups of teachers and then working with children.</li> <li>- Intensity of coaching – most coaches were at the highest level of intensity (55%) while 7% in the lowest level.</li> </ul>
Koh, S., & Neuman, S. B. (2009). The Impact of Professional Development in Family Child Care: A Practice-Based Approach.	128 family childcare providers, 304 total teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 45-hour, 3-credit course on language and literacy at a local community college</li> <li>- Weekly coaching sessions: 15 weeks aligned with course and continued for 17 more weeks after course completion</li> <li>- Focus groups with coaches, observation notes and interviews with providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaches gave suggestions on how to adjust environmental arrangement to help children's learning.</li> <li>- Coaching increased provider's use of verbal encouragements and positive responses to children.</li> <li>- Coaches gave new strategies and ideas to put into existing practices.</li> </ul>

Table D.3 Coaching Strategies Studies Continued

Study	Participants	- Method	- Findings
Jayaraman, G., Marvin, C., Knoche, L., & Bainter, S. (2015). Coaching conversations in early childhood programs: The contributions of coach and teacher.	24 teachers: 11 preschool teachers, 10 childcare providers and 3 parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaches had 3-day training on how to be a successful EC coach</li> <li>- Coaching happened 1 to 4 times a month lasting 30-60 minutes</li> <li>- Coaching meetings were videotaped one time for each teacher</li> <li>- Meetings coded using ECCC looking for coach and teacher behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verbal and nonverbal acknowledgements, and clarifies intent were used most frequently by coaches.</li> <li>- Teachers' frequent behaviors were contributed or elaborated on coach input and verbal acknowledgement.</li> <li>- Teacher participation linked to the coach establishing a relationship.</li> </ul>
Christ and Wang 2013		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews, videos, fieldwork log and reflective field notes</li> <li>- 12 total weeks: 2 weeks observing classroom, 8 weeks conducting research, 2 weeks analyzing data</li> <li>- 5 types of professional development done with teachers included: building rapport, consistency of interactions with teachers and children, and introduced new practices and extended currently used ones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children's vocabulary knowledge improved</li> </ul>

APPENDIX E  
TCE TEACHER AND COACH SURVEY QUESTIONS

## TCE Teacher Survey Questions

Questions 17-19 Adapted from Bright Morning Consulting, The Art of Coaching (Aguilar, 2013)

1. Professional title, Organization name, city of organization
2. What type of classroom do you work in? Choices: GSRP, Head Start, GSRP/Head Start blend, tuition-based district preschool, tuition-based private preschool/childcare home-based daycare, other (please explain)
3. How many years have you been teaching in an early childhood setting? How long have you been teaching in your current position?
4. What is your highest level of education: Choices: GED, High School Diploma, Child Development Associates (CDA), Bachelor's Degree Elementary Education, Bachelor's Degree Early Childhood Education, Master's Degree Early Childhood, other (please explain)
5. Sex, Race, Ethnicity
6. How many years have you been teaching?
7. How many times were you asked to participate in the coaching program before you agreed?
8. Since Fall 2020, how many times did you have contact with your coach? (several times a week, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) In what ways did you have the contact? (email, text, calls, other) (changed these to multiple choice and 2 separate questions)
9. Describe how the coaching program was a positive experience for you.
9. Describe what you would change about the coaching program to make it a better experience for you.
10. What support did you receive from your director and/or administrator that helped you in the coaching program?
11. What support did you NOT receive from your administrator/director that would have helped you in the coaching program?
12. Describe the relationship you had with your coach.
13. What did your coach do to build a relationship with you?
14. How important was the relationship with your coach to your success in the program?
15. What support did you receive from your coach that helped you in the coaching program?
16. Which of those supports were the most helpful to you? Why?
17. Please rate how often the following practices throughout the coaching program. (never used – all of the time)
18. Please rate the following practices in terms of the impact on your teaching practices. (no impact – biggest impact)
19. Please rate the following on which of these practices you would have liked your coach to use while working with you. (would not want – want every time) Only 3 point likert scale



(These questions will be in a chart with a 5-point Likert Scale that would differ in wording for each question)

1. Your coach observed you in various ways and offered feedback.
2. Your coach guided you to develop the ability to reflect on your practices
3. Your coach engaged you in analyzing data such as student work and assessments.
4. Your coach modeled literacy practices for you.
5. Your coach helped you create an action plan working towards your goal.
6. Your coach used role-play to demonstrate literacy practices.
7. Your coach used video to give feedback on your teaching practices.
8. Your coach used video to share new teaching strategies with you.
9. Your coach helped you problem-solve ways to incorporate the literacy essentials in your classroom.
10. Your coach gave you constructive feedback that improved your literacy practices.
20. What struggles did you encounter within the coaching program?
21. What resources made it possible for you to participate in the coaching program? (ex. Time, materials, money, etc.)
22. Were there any hindrances to your ability to participate in the coaching program? (Ex. time, materials, money, etc.)
23. We will be conducting focus groups to gather more of your perspective on your experience during the coaching program. If you would like to participate, please leave your name, and email address. Those who participate in the focus group will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card.

## TCE Coach Survey Questions

Questions 22-24 Adapted from Bright Morning Consulting, The Art of Coaching (Aguilar, 2013).

1. Professional title, organization name, city of organization
2. How many years have you been in this coaching position? (multiple choices)
3. What other leadership positions in education have you held (now or in the past)?
4. Have you taught in the classroom? Age/Grade? How many years? (broken up into 3 questions with some multiple choices)
5. What is your highest level of education: Choices: High School Diploma, Child Development Associates (CDA), Bachelor's Degree Elementary Education, Bachelor's Degree Early Childhood Education, Master's Degree Early Childhood, Ph.D. in Early Childhood, other (please explain)
6. What type of programs do you work within your coaching position? GSRP, Head Start, GSRP/Head Start blend, tuition-based district preschool, tuition-based private preschool/childcare home-based daycare, other (please explain)
7. Sex, Race, Ethnicity
8. Describe how the coaching program was for you.
9. For the next 3 questions, think about your experience with the teacher you connected with the best. How often did you have contact with this teacher? In what ways did you have this contact?
10. How important was the relationship with this teacher to their success in the program?
11. What did you do to build a relationship with your teachers?
12. For the next 3 questions, think about your experience with the teacher you had the most challenge connecting with. How often did you have contact with this teacher? In what ways did you have this contact?
13. What prevented you from building a relationship with the teacher?
14. How did this lack of relationship hinder this teacher's success?
15. What support did you receive from the literacy project coordinators that helped you in the coaching program?
16. What support did you receive from the director and/or administrator of the teachers you coach that helped you in the coaching program?
17. What additional support from the literacy project coordinators would have helped you in the coaching program?
18. What additional support did you need from your director and/or administrator of the teachers you coach that would have helped you in the coaching program?
19. Were you a coach last year, during the 2019-2020 school year? How did the support you needed last year for coaching change this year? (If they did not participate, skip)
20. What support did you provide to teachers to help them be successful in the coaching program?
21. How did the teachers support your coaching efforts?
22. Please rate if you did the following practices throughout the coaching program. (never used – all of the time)

23. Please rate the following practices in terms of impact on your teachers' practices. (no impact – biggest impact)

24. Please rate the following on which of these practices you would have wanted to use while working with teachers, but did not. (would not want – want the most) only 3 point likert scale

1. You observed your teachers in various ways and offered feedback.
2. You guided your teachers to develop the ability to reflect on their practices
3. You engaged your teachers in analyzing data such as student work and assessments.
4. You modeled literacy practices for your teachers.
5. You helped your teachers create an action plan working towards their goal.
6. You used role-play to demonstrate literacy practices.
7. You used video to give feedback on your teachers' teaching practices.
8. You used video to share new teaching strategies with your teachers.
9. You helped your teachers problem-solve ways to incorporate the literacy essentials in their classrooms.
10. You gave your teachers constructive feedback that improved their literacy practices.

25. With the previous question in mind, what barriers made you unable to use these strategies while working with your teachers?

26. What struggles did you encounter within the coaching program?

27. We will be conducting focus groups to gather more of your perspective on your experience during the coaching program. If you would like to participate, please leave your name, and email address. Those who participate in the focus group will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card.

APPENDIX F  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Focus Group Questions for Teachers

1. Reflect on your experiences in the coaching program. How would you describe this experience? What did you learn?
2. In what ways, if any, did it meet your needs or expectations?
3. In what ways did it not meet your needs or expectations?
4. Think about the goals you set with your coach. Did you meet the goal, or goals, that you set with your coach? What helped or hindered your ability to reach your goal?
5. Think about your participation in the coaching program. Were there times you were not fully engaged with your coach? If so, what led to you not being able to fully engage?
6. What resources did you have, or not have, that impacted your ability to fully participate with your coach? (ex, time, money, materials, etc.)
7. Think about your relationship with your coach. What was that like? How did your relationship with your coach affect your experience in the coaching program? What would have helped you build a better relationship with your coach?
8. How did your coach help you to implement the literacy practices you learned from training into your classroom?
9. What more could your coach have done to help you? This could be that they did not do, or did not do often enough?

## Focus Group Questions for Coaches

1. What was most useful in preparing you to be a literacy coach?
2. What additional support did you need from centers or schools?
3. How did the coaching this year compare to last year? Virtual coaching, year of experience, and knowledge.
4. How did you decide which strategies to use with each teacher? For example, if a teacher was a willing enough participant, but not very motivated to change their practice. What strategies do you use to get and keep him motivated and engaged?
5. What types of support have you gotten from other coaches that have been helpful?
6. How did your relationship with your teachers affect the teacher's success in the coaching program? What happened when the relationship was strong? What happened when the relationship wasn't strong?
7. What do you wish you could have done but can't because of constraints, barriers or, limitations? (For centers/schools? For teachers? For other coaches?)

APPENDIX G  
ESSENTIALS CHECKLIST

**Essential 1: Intentional use of literacy artifacts in dramatic play area throughout the classroom**

*Reading and writing materials are not only present but used throughout the classroom environment.*

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations
- ☐ Meets expectations with reservations
- ☐ Do not meet expectations

Within daily opportunities for dramatic play, the teacher provides, models use of, and encourages children's engagement with appropriate literacy artifacts, such as (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Order pads, menus, and placemats for a pizza parlor</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Traffic signs, maps, blueprints, and building-related books in the block/construction area</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Envelopes, stationery, postcards, stamps, and actual mail for a post office</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Waiting room reading material, a schedule, and prescription pads for a doctor's office</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A copy of books, such as <i>The Little Red Hen</i>, labeled puppets and objects from the story</i>	

**Essential 1: Intentional use of literacy artifacts in dramatic play area throughout the classroom (continued)**

Within centers and other areas of the classroom, children are encouraged to interact with reading and writing materials, such as (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Books related to construction or building in the block or construction area</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Simple recipes for making snacks</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Labels that indicate where items go</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Children's names, for example on cubbies and sign-in sheets, which may vary over time (e.g., first with photos, then, later, without photos)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Writing materials in each area of the classroom, for drawing and writing about objects being observed in the science area</i>	

Additional notes on Essential #1:



Essential 2: Read aloud with reference to print

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations  
☐ Meets expectations with reservations  
☐ Do not meet expectations

Daily read alouds include verbal and non-verbal strategies for drawing children's attention to print (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Running finger under words</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Noting specific features of print and letters (e.g., "that is the letter D like Deondre's name")</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Asking children where to start reading</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Counting words</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Pointing out print within pictures</i>	

Additional comments on Essential #2:

Essential 3: Interactive read aloud with a comprehension and vocabulary focus

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations  
☐ Meets expectations with reservations  
☐ Do not meet expectations

The teacher reads aloud age-appropriate books and other materials, print or digital, including sets of texts that are thematically and conceptually related and texts that are read multiple times, with (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Higher-order discussion among children and teacher before, during, and after reading</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Child-friendly explanations of words within the text</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Revising of words after reading using tools such as movement, props, video, photo, examples, and non-examples, and engaging children in saying the words aloud</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Using the words at other points in the day and over time</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Teaching of clusters of words related to those in the text, such as vocabulary related to the garden or gardening</i>	

Additional comments on Essential #3

#### Essential 4: Play with sounds inside words

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations  
☐ Meets expectations with reservations  
☐ Do not meet expectations

Children are supported to develop phonological awareness, or conscious awareness of sounds within language, and especially, a type of phonological awareness called phonemic awareness, which involves the ability to segment and blend individual phonemes within words, through various activities, such as (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Listening to and creating variations on books with rhyming or alliteration</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Singing certain songs(e.g., Willoughby, Walloughby... ”; “Down by the Bay”; “The Name Game”; “Apples and Bananas”)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sorting pictures and objects by a sound or sounds in their name</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Games and transitions that feature play with sounds (e.g., alliteration games, a transition that asks all children whose name begins with the mmm sound to move to the next activity)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>“Robot talk” or the like (e.g., the teacher has a puppet say the sounds “ffff” “iii” “shhhh” and children say fish)</i>	

Additional comments for Essential #4:

Essential 5: Brief, clear, explicit instruction in letter names, the sound(s) associated with the letters, and how letters are shaped and formed

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations
- ☐ Meets expectations with reservations
- ☐ Do not meet expectations

Instruction that has been shown to be effective in fostering development of letter-sound knowledge is supported by tools such as (check if observed):	
Examples from the Essentials:	What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>A high-quality alphabet chart</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Card with children's names</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other key words to associate with letter-sounds (e.g., d is for dinosaur)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Alphabet books with appropriate key words</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reference throughout the day (e.g., "That sign says the store is open. The first letter is o. It makes the "oh" sound: ooopen.")</i>	

# of children naming 18 or more upper case letters \_\_\_\_\_ 15 or more lower case letters \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments for Essential #5:

## Essential 6: Interactions around writing

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations
- ☐ Meets expectations with reservations
- ☐ Do not meet expectations

Adults engage in deliberate interactions with children around writing. Opportunities for children to write their name, informational, narrative, and other texts that are personally meaningful to them are at the heart of writing experiences. These deliberate interactions around writing include the use of interactive writing and scaffolded writing techniques (check if observed):	
Examples from the Essentials:	What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Interactive writing involves children in contributing to a piece of writing led by the teacher. With the teacher's support, children determine the message, count the words, stretch words, listen for sounds within words, think about letters that represent those sounds, and write some of the letters. The teacher uses the interactive writing as an opportunity for instruction, for example regarding the directionality of writing, purposes for writing, and specific letter-sound relationships.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Scaffolded writing involves the individual child in generating a message the child would like to write. The message is negotiated and repeated with the child until it is internalized. The teacher draws one line for each word in the message using a highlighter or pen. The child writes one "word" per line, where "word" might be a scribble, letter-like forms, random letter strings, one or a few letters within the word, or all sounds within the word, depending on the child's writing ability. The teacher and the child read and reread the message.</i>	

Additional comments for Essential #6:

Essential 7: Extended conversation

☐ Meets or exceeds expectations

☐ Meets expectations with reservations

☐ Do not meet expectations

Adults engage in interactions with children that regularly include (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Responding to and initiating conversations with children, with repeated turns back and forth on the same topic.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Encouraging talk among children through the selective use of open-ended questions, commenting on what children are doing, offering prompts (e.g., "Try asking your friend how you can help"), and scaffolding higher-order discussion, particularly during content-area learning.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Engaging in talk, including narration and explanation, within dramatic play experiences and content-area learning including intentional vocabulary-building efforts.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Extending children's language (e.g., The child says "Fuzzy"; the adult says, "Yes, that peach feels fuzzy. What else do you notice about it?")</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Stories of past events and discussions of future events</i>	

Additional comments for Essential #7:

Essential 8: Provision of abundant reading material in the classroom

- ☐ Meets or exceeds expectations  
☐ Meets expectations with reservations  
☐ Do not meet expectations

The classroom includes (check if observed):		
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A wide range of books and other texts, print and digital, including information books, poetry, and storybooks accessible to children</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Books and other materials connected to children's interests and that reflect children's backgrounds and cultural experiences, including class- and child-made books</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Recorded books</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Books children can borrow to bring home and/or access digitally at home</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Comfortable places in which to look at books, frequently visited by the teacher(s) and by adult volunteers recruited to the classroom</i>	

Additional comments for Essential #8:

Essential 9: Ongoing observation and assessment of children’s language and literacy development that informs their education

☐Meets or exceeds expectations

☐Meets expectations with reservations

☐Do not meet expectations

The teacher engages in (check if observed):	
Examples from the Essentials:	What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>observation and assessment that is guided by:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>an understanding of language and literacy development</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>the Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten (2013) and, if applicable,</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (2015)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Observation that occurs in multiple contexts, including play</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Use of assessment tools that are considered appropriate for prekindergarten contexts</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Books children can borrow to bring home and/or access digitally at home</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Use of information from observations and assessment tools to plan instruction and interactions with children</i>	

Additional comments for Essential #9:

## Essential 10: Collaboration with families in promoting literacy

☐ Meets or exceeds expectations

☐ Meets expectations with reservations

☐ Do not meet expectations

Families engage in language and literacy interactions with their children that can be drawn upon and extended in prekindergarten. Prekindergarten educators help families add to their repertoire of strategies for promoting literacy at home including (check if observed):			
Examples from the Essentials:		What you observed/equivalent opportunities observed (describe):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Incorporating literacy-promoting strategies into everyday activities such as cooking, communicating with friends and family, and traveling in the bus or car</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Reading aloud to their children and discussing the text</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Encouraging literacy milestones (e.g., pretend reading, which some parents mistakenly believe is “cheating” but is actually a desired activity in literacy development)</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Speaking with children in their home/most comfortable language, whether or not that language is English</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Providing literacy-supporting resources such as:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Books from the classroom that children can borrow or keep <input type="checkbox"/> Children’s magazines <input type="checkbox"/> Information about judicious, adult-supported use of educational television and applications that can, with guidance, support literacy development <input type="checkbox"/> Announcements about local events <input type="checkbox"/> Passes to local museums (for e.g. through <a href="http://www.michiganactivitypass.info">www.michiganactivitypass.info</a> )	

Additional comments for Essential #10:



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