Transformational Coaching for Equity to Impact Teacher Efficacy in Foundational Reading Instruction for School Improvement

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Abstract

This paper delineates the co-constructed action research case of one mid-size California public school district, a local private university sponsored literacy project, and research support from one faculty from a large public university to cultivate teacher efficacy and reignite early student literacy during COVID-19 contexts. The paper outlines context of the long-standing district and project collaborative partnership, the grounding study frameworks in continuous improvement and transformational coaching for equity, and the model for and content of the ongoing teacher leader professional development in transformational coaching

and support for foundational reading instruction. The case study findings highlight considerations related to overall school improvement and literacy specific teacher effectiveness.

1. Introduction

1.1 Ensuring the Right to Read post-COVID

Reading, as a fundamental human right (International Literacy Association, 2024), is central to social justice-oriented school improvement efforts as students, particularly those historically underserved, have not received equitable instruction to demonstrate on-level reading by third grade, an important predictor of later high school graduation (Lesnick et al., 2010). Furthermore, the educational context surrounding COVID-19 has continued to exacerbate these inequities in reading across the United States and internationally (Furjanic, Ives, Fainstein, Kennedy, & Biancarosa, 2024; Lewis et al., 2021; Shaul, Lipka, Tal-Cohen, Bufman, & Dotan, 2024). Though California's approach to ensuring the right to read for all students is comprehensive literacy that includes explicit instruction to support foundational reading skills (Yopp, Spycher, & Brynelson, 2016), the state also shows continued post-pandemic reading inequities for students (Hough & Chavez, 2024).

The purpose of the study was to understand the benefits of one California public school district and a private university literacy project partnership to impact teacher efficacy in literacy instruction as well as impact transformational coaching for increased student foundational reading success as a school improvement plan for social justice. The project aim, centered on the right to read, also aligned with the International Literacy Association (2024) Tenants Six and Ten, where "Children have the right to supportive reading environments with knowledgeable literacy partner" and "to benefit from the financial and material resources of governments, agencies, and organizations that support reading and reading instruction."

1.1.1 California Reading and Literature Project

The California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP), as a subset of the broader content area focused California Subject Matter Projects overseen by the University of California, Office of the President, fosters teacher efficacy and leadership for impacting preK-12 student literacy (CRLP, 2025). The work of CRLP is grounded by the California Department of Education's asset-based, whole-child frameworks in language, literacy, and learning that have historically guided the development of signature programs to embody current research and reflect best practices for equitable access to reading for social justice. As reflected in the mission and vision, CRLP aims to cultivate "a community of educators working together to reimagine literacy practices for a better world" by providing "professional learning in Reading/Literacy … [for] high-quality, rigorous, and comprehensive literacy instruction that meets [students'] individual needs" (CRLP, About, 2025).

1.2 Problem of Practice in the Study Context

County offices, districts, and school sites across California have faced difficult circumstances

over the last 5-years. The top two challenges continue to be: 1) meeting the needs of students most adversely impacted by distance learning—research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately impact African American, Indigenous, multilingual, and English Learner students (Goldberg, 2021); and, 2) supporting teachers with professional development as they address shifts in student learning trajectories due to interrupted traditional in-person schooling for social justice. It is in this environment that the mission of CRLP was crucial for statewide programming, including the study context within CRLP, Region 8.

CRLP Region 8, serving four central California coastal counties, is noted for the demographic diversity of its students, where, on average, 72% of the population is from traditionally underrepresented populations. Mixed geographical settings of urban, suburban, and rural agricultural areas throughout this region provide an expansive and diverse service area where 96 school districts serve over 422,000 students, according to 2023-2024 enrollment data (Ed-Data, 2024). Thus, the high-quality implementation of one signature program, *CRLP Results Foundational Skills* (Results), was central to reaching the project goals in five of the seven preK-5 partnership district school sites.

As part of the initiative, the regional CRLP, along with the site and district leadership, identified previously Results trained teachers with exceptional instructional skills–Results teacher leaders (teacher leaders). These teacher leaders were invited to voluntarily participate in the partnership coaching initiative to support school improvement by becoming trained in one instructional coaching model with ongoing support from the regional CRLP over two years. Volunteers understood this work was in addition to their teaching assignment and would require contacting teachers at their school sites to support efforts in increasing high-quality foundational reading instruction through developing teacher efficacy in CRLP Results instruction. Teacher leader coaches received a grant-funded stipend to honor the extended time beyond the workday. The regional CRLP provided a dedicated *new initiative coordinator*, and the district provided a full-time literacy coach for the ongoing support of these teacher leader coaches.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

Teacher efficacy in literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011) and transformational coaching for equity (Aguilar, 2020) framed this study.

1.3.1 Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is the self-perception of one's ability to successfully instruct others (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and, especially when developed collectively, is positively correlated to student learning (Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Teacher efficacy can be developed in various areas, including literacy, as validated in *The Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction* (TSELI; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Increased efficacy in literacy instruction shows a strong relationship to higher student reading achievement (Poggio, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Thus, concerning the case study, capturing teacher efficacy in foundational

reading instruction was central to understanding the benefits of the coaching initiative for school improvement in student literacy. The goal of instructional coaching, in this case, was to cultivate intentional, collaborative teacher conversations through a transformative approach for student literacy equity, as supported by ILA (2024) advocacy for a child's right to read from well-trained, equity-centered practitioners.

1.3.2 Transformational Coaching for Equity

The tenet of a transformative coaching framework in education is to facilitate conversations that not only shift practice but also assist the teacher in seeing the practice through a new paradigm regarding the instructional context and becoming increasingly aware of how they "show up" in the space related to the change (Aguilar, 2013). Aguilar (2013) highlights this frame as the Three B's–behavior, beliefs, and being–developed in part from the foundation of Hargrove's (1995) transformative growth model of Triple Loop Learning. Coaching transformational change aims to facilitate adult learning beyond superficial components of basic changes in practice alone to deeper sustainable shifts based on critical reflection for how the individual comes to see and experience the context of the change and how that shapes their further interactions related to the change (Aguilar, 2013).

Taking one further step, Aguilar (2020) introduced Transformational Coaching for Equity, whereby the coaching relationship is built upon mutual trust and honest asset-based dialogue to facilitate professional growth for culturally responsive classroom environments (Aguilar, 2020). Transformational Coaching for Equity was central to this case study as the implementation of CRLP Results is rooted in foundational reading routines to ensure literacy for all students, supporting the larger aim of CRLP to transform educator beliefs, behaviors, and being as it relates to literacy as a conduit for social justice. Equity-centered conversations require the coach to transform in their own cultural competency while also harnessing skill sets to facilitate potentially challenging conversations in safe spaces with their collaborating teacher.

1.4 Research Questions and Expected Outcomes

An instrumental case study (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010) was conducted to understand how aspects of this unique case for school improvement in literacy could inform a larger scholar-practitioner audience in similar contexts. Specifically, the following questions guided the research presented in this paper:

(1) *What is the impact of professional development on teacher leader coaches in transformational coaching for equity over time?*

(2) *What is the benefit of instructional coaching on teacher efficacy in foundational literacy instruction for CRLP trained teachers?*

Prior to commencing this research, it was expected that the transformational coaching for equity (Aguilar, 2020) peer coaching initiative would positively impact teacher self-efficacy (Poggio, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011) in foundational skills reading instruction as well as benefit the professional growth of peer coaches as teacher leaders. The case study

was designed to include iterations of training with reflective practice on coaching skill development. These cycles were expected to enhance the participants' perceptions of teaching foundational reading skills and facilitating adult learning. The teacher leader coaching design within the case study was also expected to benefit the school district by building internal teacher capacity without removing qualified teachers from classrooms as with traditional coaching models. Ultimately, the broader intended outcome was to understand how the case design for teacher professional development could impact elementary literacy rates more effectively and efficiently in similar contexts across the broader educational landscape.

2. Method

To answer the research questions, the researchers used two separate instruments with unique procedural designs: a longitudinal Pre-Mid-Post cohort mixed methods self-report survey (Johnson & Christensen, 2017) on Transformational Coaching for Equity to answer RQ1 and an intervention-inactive control single-phase mixed-methods survey (Higgins et al., 2020) on Teacher Efficacy in Literacy Instruction to answer RQ2.

2.1 Transformational Coaching for Equity Survey Instrument

The 24-item self-rating and open response survey was researcher adapted from Aguilar's (2020) Transformational Coaching Rubric. The survey captured the growth over time using a Pre-Mid-Posttest design with the following domains (Aguilar, 2020): (1) Strategic Planning, (2) Active Listening, (4) Responding, (5) Beliefs About Coachees, (6) Equity, and (7) Emotional Intelligence. The first 18-items (3 questions for each respective domain) were self-rating from least comfort (1) to most comfort (3) across three associated but respective subconstructs based on Aguilar's rubric (2020; see Table 1). Questions 16 through 18 were open ended responses on perceived strengths and areas for growth as a coach. Questions 22 through 24 included three required questions for delimitation: regularly used reading instructional routines (check all that apply), grade level span (K-2, 3-5) and years of teaching experience (4 or less, 5-9, 10-14, 15+) for delimitation. Gender and race/ethnicity were not collected to maintain participant anonymity.

Table 1. Transformational coaching for equity researcher adapted survey constructs and subconstructs

Domains	Associated Subconstructs		
1-Strategic Design & Planning	Coaching Work Plans	Sense of Impact	Conversation Planning
2-Listening	Active Listening	Using Silence	Using Non-Verbals
4-Responding	Coaching Others	Varying Coaching Approaches	Fluency
5-Beliefs About Coachees	Mindset	Adult Learning	Transformational Change
6-Coaching for Equity	Shifting Limiting Beliefs	Socio-Political Consciousness	Cultural Competence
7-Emotional Intelligence	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Management

2.1.1 Participant Characteristics

Transformational Coaching for Equity Survey participants were delimited to include 18 teachers working within partnership case study district. These teachers were principal recommended or self-identified through the application process and then, CRLP selected to become peer coaches to support foundational skills implementation at their current elementary school site of employment within the school district. Additionally, teachers selected as participants must have had previous training in and extensive experience with CRLP Results Foundational skills. Furthermore, the participant teachers also must have had experience using the CRLP reading assessments and instructional routines on a regular basis prior to the study.

2.1.2 Sampling Procedures, Recruitment, Ethical Considerations, and Participation Rates

After IRB approval (minimal risk status) was obtained through the sponsoring university with support from the partnership district, the survey was sent over three intervals initiative (T1, early February 2021; T2, mid-December 2021; T3, late May/early June 2022) via individual district email to all eighteen teacher leaders participating in the transformational coaching for equity training initiative. The emails were provided to the researcher per the district-CRLP partnership MOU and approved research protocol. The teacher leader emails were added to the university sponsored password protected web-based survey tool, Qualtrics, with informed consent built into the first page of the survey. Each survey interval had a 2-week response window, with reminder emails sent to non-respondents at days 7, 12, and 14 to increase response rates. Participants were not compensated directly for responding to the survey.

To mitigate the minimal study risk, volunteer participants could skip questions as desired and could choose to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participant names remained confidential, all identifiers were redacted through the reporting process, and raw data was never provided to the partnership district. To ensure increased levels of anonymity, demographic information only included grade level and years of teaching spans so no single participating teacher could be identified in their current roles. The survey received

exceptional voluntary participation rates by time as follows: (T1) 12 of 18 participating teachers (66.7%), (T2) 10 of 18 participating teachers (55.6%), and (T3) 12 of 18 participating teachers (66.7%). Validity and reliability is reported in 2.3 below.

2.1.3 Research Design

All participants in this longitudinal Pre-Mid-Post cohort mixed methods self-report survey (Johnson and Christensen, 2017) continued teaching in their school site of original employment coaching teaching within their respective school sites (See Figure 1).
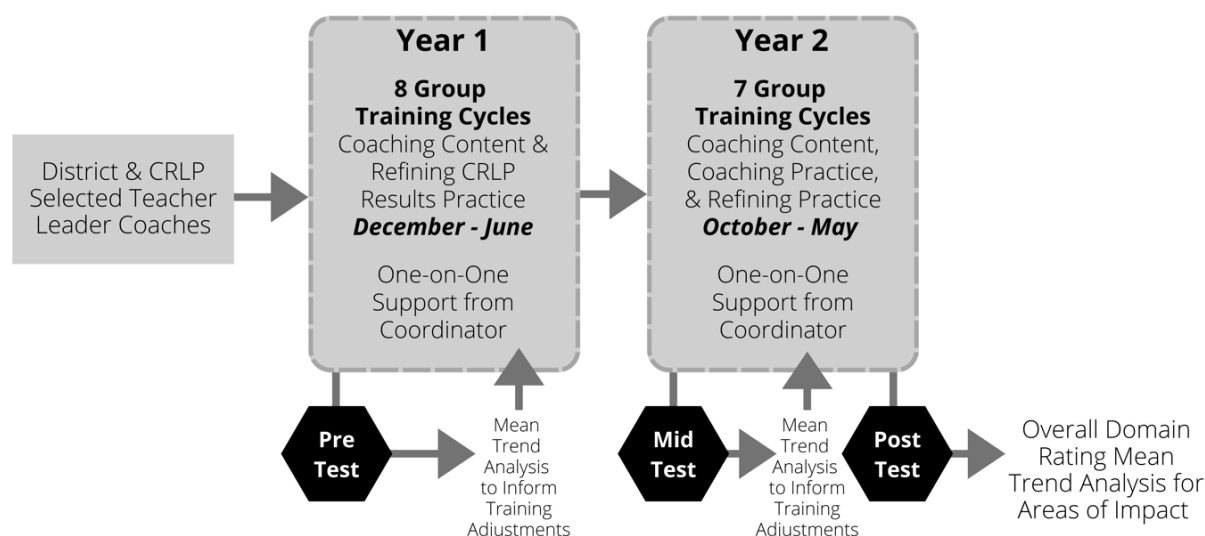

Figure 1. Longitudinal Pre-Mid-Post mixed-methods survey design

Conditions for all participants were manipulated only through ongoing training as an intervention for the overall case study (see section 2.4) and at Pre-Mid-Post points of time. The research design related to the transformational coaching for equity self-report survey was between-subjects as the focus was on comparing the overall growth of the voluntary participant groups by time interval rather than within individuals. Variations of exposure to the intervention also existed depending on training attendance and other natural individual factors (i.e. outside of work stressors) beyond the researchers' control.

2.2 Teacher Efficacy in Literacy Instruction Survey Instrument

The 18-item Likert-style and open-ended response survey instrument was developed by adapting selected questions on Teacher Self-Efficacy in Literacy Instruction (Tschanen-Moran & Johnson, 2011) from an existing instrument with permission. The instrument is a Likert survey created to capture elements of teacher efficacy specific to areas of reading, writing, and language instruction (Tschanen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). For the purposes of this study, only elements related to reading instruction were collected, with contexts revised as appropriate for the foundational reading context. All efficacy author developed stems were not adjusted. The 12 Likert questions on Teacher Efficacy in Reading

Instruction used a 9-point perceptual reporting scale from *none at all* to *a great deal.* Questions 13 through 15 were open-ended responses regarding teacher perceptions on efficacy in CRLP Results Foundational Skills implementation and what could strengthen their practice. The final three questions were demographic in nature to better understand the participant group in relation to the target population, including regularly used reading instructional routines (check all that apply), grade level span (K-2, 3-5) and years of teaching experience (4 or less, 5-9, 10-14, 15+). Gender and race/ethnicity were not collected to maintain participant anonymity.

2.2.1 Participant Characteristics

Voluntary teacher participants for the Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction included an intervention and inactive control group. The intervention target population included all 75 prek-6 teachers within the intervention district. The control target population consisted of 45 preK-6 teachers in a neighboring school district with similar student and teacher demographics. The intervention and inactive control group had both been trained in CRLP Results Foundational skills in the past 3-years and responses were delimited to include those reporting regular use of the foundational instructional routines and assessments with 5 or more years in teaching for study participant experience alignment. The inactive control group, however, did not receive the transformational coaching for equity initiative intervention.

2.2.2 Sampling Procedures, Recruitment, Ethical Considerations, and Response Rates

Minimal risk IRB approval was obtained through the sponsoring university with support from the partnership district and inactive control group school administration. The survey was sent via individual district email to all eighteen teacher leaders within the intervention group. The emails were provided to the researcher per the district-CRLP partnership MOU and approved research protocol. The teacher leader emails (intervention group) were added to the university sponsored password protected web-based survey tool, Qualtrics. For the control group, the researchers sent the approved introductory email to respective site principals stating the study purpose and request to forward the pre-drafted recruitment email with the Qualtrics survey link to their site teachers. Informed consent was built into the first page of the survey. Participants were not compensated directly for responding to the survey.

To mitigate the minimal study risk for both groups, volunteer participants could skip questions as desired and could choose to withdraw at any time without penalty. For the intervention group, participant names remained confidential, all identifiers were redacted through the reporting process, and raw data was never provided to the partnership district. The links provided to the control group via the recruitment email were anonymous. To ensure increased levels of anonymity for all participants, demographic information only included grade level and years of teaching spans so no single participating teacher could be identified in their current roles within respective intervention or control group districts. The response rates were similarly good for both groups with multiple participation requests: intervention (N = 75, n = 36, 48.0%) and inactive control (N = 45, n = 23, 51.1%).

2.2.3 Research Design

The intervention-inactive control model (Higgins et al., 2020) allowed the researchers to collect cross-sectional data for two groups of CRLP Results trained teachers (one group with access to the teacher leader coaching intervention over 1.5 years and the other without the intervention) at one point in time (end of study). Figure 2 provides a visual design overview.
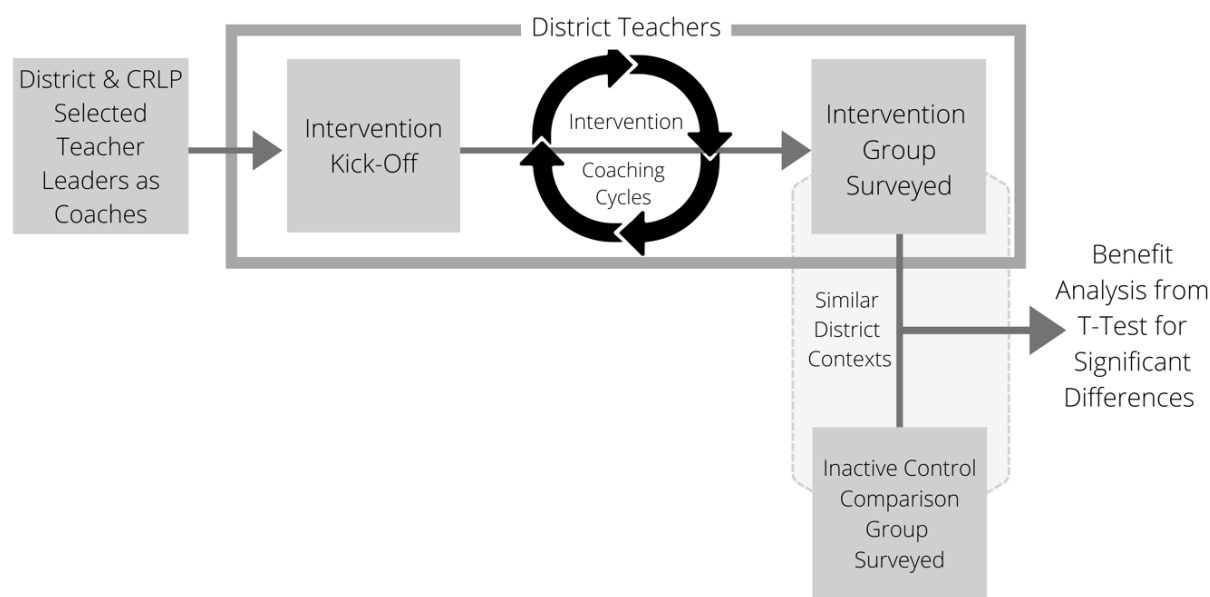

Figure 2. Single phase intervention-inactive control group model

Conditions for all participants were manipulated only for the intervention group with access to voluntary coaching support in foundational reading intervention by trained CRLP teacher leaders teaching in the same school during the length of the study. The between-subjects research design to understand the intervention benefits allowed for group comparisons of overall mean teacher efficacy in reading instruction. Natural variations of exposure to the intervention existed depending on how often participants accessed coaching support and individual factors (*i.e.*, outside of work stressors) beyond the researchers' control.

2.3 Measures and Covariates

The complete case study included triangulation of mixed-methods data collection across a broad range of sources over 1.5 years, including surveys, participant journals, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups. For this report, only the surveys related to the presented research questions are delineated.

For the Transformational Coaching for Equity self-report survey, a Pre-Mid-Posttest design was essential for capturing the trained teacher leaders' observed growth trends at three points in time through the length of the project to increase validity of the findings. Construct validity was maintained by adapting the survey from Aguilar's (2020) published work on the aspects

of Transformational Coaching for Equity. Survey reliability for the overall construct of transformational coaching for equity is strong reporting good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.869$) using Cronbach's Alpha with confidence interval of 95% (0.827, 0.904). See Table 2 below for internal consistency by domain.

Table 2. Transformational coaching for equity internal consistency by domain

Domain	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability	95%CI	
			LL	UL
1-Strategic Design & Planning	0.685	Marginal	0.560	0.785
2-Listening	0.718	Acceptable	0.602	0.811
4-Responding	0.708	Acceptable	0.586	0.804
5-Beliefs About Coachees	0.748	Acceptable	0.639	0.830
6-Coaching for Equity	0.764	Acceptable	0.660	0.841
7-Emotional Intelligence	0.878	Good	0.836	0.911
Overall	0.869	Good	0.827	0.904

For Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction one-time self-report survey, the intervention-inactive control group design (Higgins et al., 2020) provided a way to understand the benefits of the intervention on teacher efficacy related to teaching early reading skills without excluding teachers within the same district from ongoing access to coaching support. Instead, the inactive control group included teachers from a neighboring district with similar instructional contexts without a partnership contract to access to the same coaching support. To strengthen study validity, both groups had been exposed to the same CRLP Foundational Skills trainings prior to the study commencement which was one control for content and skill knowledge that also impacts the teacher efficacy in reading instruction.

After robust statistical analyses to ensure construct validity and survey reliability, Tschanen-Moran and Johnson (2011) reported high internal consistency for the overall 22-item Teacher Self-Efficacy in Literacy Instruction Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.960$) with a confidence interval of 95%. With the researcher adaptations to focus on teacher efficacy specific to reading instruction alone, there was also good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.859$) using Cronbach's Alpha with confidence interval of 95% (0.828, 0.886).

2.4.1 Intervention-Transformational Coaching for Equity Training

Site administration from each district elementary school recruited two interested teachers with at least 5-years of classroom experience and high levels of implementation in CRLP Results Foundation Skills assessments and instructional routines. Recruited teachers were

invited to participate in the coaching initiative based on both leadership recommendation, years of experience, strong rapport with colleagues, willingness to engage in reflective practices, and representing primary or upper grade general education while also bringing diverse perspectives. Teachers who accepted the invitation received high quality professional development with a third-party provider designed to provide a foundation in Transformational Coaching for Equity in February 2021. After the initial training, CRLP leadership provided these teacher leader coaches on-going training every 2-weeks with specialized content focused on preparing for successful and meaningful transformational peer coaching facilitation with other educators at their respective school sites across grade levels. Training content was adjusted as needed based on teacher feedback and the Pre-Mid-Post survey results. The initiative spanned two years with recruitment in the October 2020, and the training intervention commencing in January 2021 as a 1.5-year teacher leader commitment through to June 2022. For their participation in required training and teacher support activities, the coaches received a $1,080 annual honorarium. See Appendix A for an overview of the CRLP provided bi-monthly training content.

2.4.2 Intervention-Foundational Skills Coaching Support

To achieve a high-quality CRLP Results Foundational Skills implementation at each school site within the partnership district, all elementary teachers had access to a trained teacher leader coach. The coaching model was job-embedded and differentiated to meet the unique needs of respective teachers and school sites. Each site had access to two coaches during planning hours built within the contractual school day. The planning time included modified early release school days once per week as well as 30 minutes before and after school. Some sites also had provisions for administration to cover the coach's class to provide real time support in the requesting teacher's room. Access to coaching was voluntary, though by the second semester of year two (January 2022), most coaches were comfortable reaching out monthly to all teachers rather than waiting for teachers to request their support. The CRLP office also provided virtual "office hours" during early release afternoons to supplement the coaching support with technical aspects of the CRLP Results Foundational Skills assessments and instructional routines.

2.4.3 Condition-Previous CRLP Results Foundational Skills Training

The condition for the inactive control group selection, beyond similar district demographics and service area, was previously receiving the same training as the intervention group–CRLP Results Foundational Skills. Teachers participating in this CRLP Results Foundational Skills 4-day professional learning institute developed a comprehensive understanding of the content and sequential development of the four key developmental reading foundational reading skills: print concepts, phonological awareness, word recognition, and fluency (CRLP, 2020). Participating teachers received training on the implementation and analysis of foundational reading assessments to accurately determine individual student proficiency and form targeted instructional reading groups. Participating teachers also learned how to apply reading instructional routines using state-adopted beginning reading curriculum to ensure student mastery of the essential foundational skills.

3. Results

The results are summarized by survey study in the order presented in section 2: 1) Transformational Coaching for Equity Survey and 2) Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction Survey. Ancillary data is also presented on the publicly available partnership district-wide annual state reading assessments for grade 3 as an additional measure for overall consideration in relationship to the survey findings.

3.1 Transformational Coaching for Equity Data Analysis

First, in relation to the Transformational Coaching for Equity self-report by time interval and overall growth using mean response trend analysis as applying techniques for statistical significance lacks power and presents potential error with the low sample sizes (T1, n=12; T2, n=10; T3, n=12). Additionally, the mixed method survey design also included short open response items which were analyzed using word and phrase frequencies using word clouds to illuminate findings.

3.1.1 Mean Response Trend Analysis

Response data on the 3-level scaled responses from least (1) to most (2) comfort were organized and processed in Excel to observe mean trends across domains and subconstructs by each time interval and from T1 to T3. Incremental overall transformational coaching for equity positive mean growth is observed (+.38) for the cohort participants from the pre-survey in February 2021 (1.41, SD = .188, n = 12), mid-survey in early December 2021 (1.56, SD = .231, n = 10), and post-survey in late May/early June 2022 (1.79, SD = .279, n = 10).

Participants reported the most growth (+.57) in Domain 7, Emotional Intelligence (pre = 1.41, mid = 1.56, post = 2.07) and the least growth (+.23) in Domain 1, Strategic Design and Planning (pre = 1.14, mid = 1.20, post = 1.37). Reported growth for the subsequent domains by most to least growth were as follows: 2, Listening (+.43; pre = 1.44, mid = 1.67, post = 1.87); 5, Beliefs About Coachee (+.41; pre = 1.69, mid = 1.80, post = 2.10); 6, Coaching for Equity (+.34; pre = 1.36, mid = 1.53, post = 1.70), and; 4, Responding (+.32; pre = 1.31, mid = 1.40, post = 1.63).

Table 3. Transformational coaching for equity survey mean scale responses and growth

Domains	Pre, n = 12	Mid, n = 10	Post, n = 12	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Pre-Post +/-
1-Strategic Design & Plan	**1.14**	**1.20**	**1.37**	**+.23**
Conversation Planning	1.00	1.10	1.00	no change
Coaching Work Plans	1.00	1.20	1.20	+.23
Sense of Impact	1.42	1.30	1.90	+.48
2-Listening	**1.44**	**1.67**	**1.87**	**+.43**
Active Listening	1.50	1.80	2.00	+.50
Using Silence	1.42	1.60	1.70	+.28
Use of Nonverbals	1.42	1.60	1.90	+.48
4-Responding	**1.31**	**1.40**	**1.63**	**+.32**
Coaching Others	1.33	1.40	2.00	+.67
Varying Approaches	1.17	1.30	1.30	+.13
Fluency	1.42	1.50	1.60	+.18
5-Beliefs About Coachee	**1.69**	**1.80**	**2.10**	**+.41**
Mindset	1.25	1.50	2.00	+.75
Adult Learning	1.50	1.70	1.80	+.30
Transformational Change	2.00	2.22	2.50	+.50
6-Coaching for Equity	**1.36**	**1.53**	**1.70**	**+.34**
Shifting Limiting Beliefs	1.08	1.20	1.30	+.22
Socio-Political Consciousness	1.42	1.50	1.70	+.28
Cultural Competence	1.58	1.90	2.10	+.52
7-Emotional Intelligence	**1.50**	**1.77**	**2.07**	**+.57**
Self-management	1.50	1.90	1.80	+.30
Social Awareness	1.58	1.70	2.30	+.72
Relationship Management	1.42	1.70	2.10	+.68
Overall	**1.41** (.188)	**1.56** (.231)	**1.79** (.279)	**+.38**

Participation in the ongoing Transformational Coaching for Equity trainings impacted teacher leader coaches most in the areas of Emotional Intelligence, Listening, and Beliefs as each indicated growth above .40. This was expected as much of the initial training concepts focused on the interpersonal nature of coaching to facilitate adult learning, supporting the adult from where they are and want to grow, rather than directing behaviors. It was surprising that area of Strategic Design and Planning had the least growth for teacher leaders,

particularly because structuring the coaching conversation was a central part of the training sequence. However, based on the internal consistency, this construct was only marginally reliable as subconstructs may not accurately reflect the overall construct.

Within domain results also indicate interesting impact trends that would go unnoticed without disaggregated review and results at or above .40 mean growth were considered most impacted by participation in the training. Though Domain 1 presented the least overall growth for participants, the subconstruct, Sense of Impact, was positively impacted with growth of +.48. Clearly, as training went on, teacher leaders sensed growth in their ability to impact other adults through the coaching process. For Domain 2, Active Listening (.50) and Use of Nonverbals (.48), were areas of more impactful growth. Domain 4 was dominated by overall mean growth in confidence of Coaching Others (.67), as the other two constructs showed limited teacher leader impact (Varying Approaches, .13; Fluency, .18) which are more abstract skills that may be more challenging for new coaches. Teacher leader Mindset (.75) and confidence in their role for Transformational Change (.5) were the largest areas of growth in Domain 5, while perceived growth was less prominent in understanding Adult Learning (.30). In Domain 6, the largest impact was observed in Cultural Competency, participants reporting a mean growth of .52. The largest areas of impact within Domain 7 was seen in the perceived mean growth for Social Awareness (.72) and Relationship Management (.68). The largest subconstruct for perceived growth across all domains was Mindset related to the teacher leader beliefs about those they are coaching (.75). Social Awareness as part of emotional intelligence was the subconstruct with the second largest perceived mean growth for participating teacher leaders (.72). On the other hand, participating teachers perceived little to no impact in Developing Coaching Plans (.00), Varying Approaches to coaching (.13), and Fluency in coaching which had little or no observed mean growth across all subconstructs.

3.1.2 Open-ended Response Gist and Word/Phrase Frequency Analysis

After an initial reading of all open-ended responses by question topic (perceived natural coaching strengths, perceived learned coaching strengths, and perceived areas for continued coaching growth) to understand the gist (Wolf, Dandignac, and Reyna, 2019), the responses were deconstructed into key words and phrases in Excel. From there, the key words and phrases were synthesized to use the same grammatical structures and synonyms were paired. The process allowed for the list of key words and phrases to be processed in a word cloud for analysis by frequency in relationship to one another. Frequency dependent generated word clouds show how coaching terminology became more precise and in line with the concepts and skills presented in trainings over time. The word clouds highlight the frequency rates using larger font sizes to emphasize words and phrases used more in relationship to the other terms used. These were generated by respective topic to understand the most salient coaching abilities that were seen as part of the teacher leader's natural skill set, learned through training, and needing growth.

Based on the gist readings related to natural skills, initially participants felt they came to coaching with many attributes that were also required in the classroom such as compassion,

help, and experience. These initial responses on natural skills were framed in a seemingly unintentional deficit mindset for others, with the underlying belief noted across responses that coaching was a way to "fix" other teachers, albeit with compassion. At the mid-test, responses showed a shift in mindset, moving away from deficit framing to see the practice of coaching as a facilitator of learning based on the CRLP Results Foundational Skills content. By the post-test, the participants demonstrated asset lens shift, framing coaching as facilitating adult learning based on the self-identified needs of the teacher–not the coach. Figure 3 illuminates the growth over time in mindset of what the participants believed were important natural coaching skills revealed by the gist analysis.

Figure 3. Gist of growth overtime in natural coaching skills for facilitating teacher growth

The Pre-Mid-Post word clouds related to perceived natural coaching skills highlighted how the participants used more precise coaching terminology overtime to highlight their innate abilities (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Pre-Mid-Post word clouds for perceived natural coaching skills

Though empathy remains a listed natural ability, the frequency diminished over time, with increased emphasis on the innate skill to listen and then actively listen by the end of the study. The emphasis on empathy is replaced by other ways the teacher leaders show up as coaches for teachers. Such identified natural skills included the collaborative, encouraging, and calm

attributes to help with struggles at the mid-point. By the end, there were close to equal frequencies across a range of precisely name of skills related to fostering a collaborative coaching conversation such as making others feel comfortable by being positive, flexible, active listeners who can also use silence as an innate skill to facilitate teacher growth.

Related to learned coaching skills, gist reading showed participants had little to share in the pre-test, which was expected since the teacher leaders had not yet been exposed to the coaching trainings; however, asking what the participants believed were learned attributes at the start of the case study was important to find a baseline rooted in the current group understanding of instructional coaching. The initial response frequencies emphasized active listening as a learned skill along with recognizing the need to learn coaching stems. The way the participants explain active listening over time highlight a shift in purpose for listening in line with the deficit to asset-based mindset shift around the purpose for coaching revealed in the natural skills analyses (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Gist of growth overtime in learned coaching skills for active listening

The word cloud analysis further expanded how to understand what shifted in learned skills related to the nuances in active listening over time (Pre-Mid-Post; see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Pre-Mid-Post word clouds for perceived learned coaching skills

Active listening is threaded through each point in time, with clarifying language related to aspects of the learned skill through the duration of the coach training intervention. Participants recognized that while listening was a natural skill, active listening required attributes that could be learned over time, even prior to receiving training. As the teacher leaders developed through the course of the intervention, they were able to shift away from naming a coach-centered to coachee-centered approach to active listening. This followed the same growth in understanding of the purpose for coaching, as aforementioned.

Notably, coaching stems were named as both a natural skill and one that could be learned at the start of the study. This coaching attribute also evolved overtime, as participants highlighted the learning of facilitative question stems by the mid-test to facilitating conversations with intentional active listening. Many also uplifted the learned concept that coaches did "not need to show up as experts" as they now understood they were not entering the coaching practice to "fix" others.

Areas for continued growth in coaching practice emphasized the ways participating teacher leaders desired support over time. The gist analysis illuminated how the coaches recognized the need for coaching tools to assist these new coaches in developing fluency through increasingly challenging coaching situations (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Gist of participant needs overtime for coaching skill growth

Participants identified the skill of setting opinions aside as an area of growth at the pre- and mid-test intervals but shifted to seeing the need to practice coaching across a variety of situations. Word cloud analysis showed how setting opinions aside linked with the desire to learn how to facilitate conversations, especially with differing personality types at the pre-test. By the mid-test, participant needs became more nuanced, with high phrase frequencies showing desired support in facilitating a range of conversations particularly with the most challenging people. At the post-test, participants most frequently named areas of growth around practicing, planning, and reaching out for coaching conversations centered on active listening with intention. Building courage for those conversations held similar frequency weight and some added learning to facilitate hard conversation around issues of student equity (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Pre-Mid-Post word clouds for perceived learned coaching skills

Participants frequently noted active listening as a continued area for growth though it was also noted as a natural skill. This would suggest participant understanding that innate skills can be refined with support. This understanding is a tenant of mindset, previously reported as the subconstruct of Transformational Coaching for Equity with the largest perceived mean growth from pre- to post-test.

3.2 Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction Survey Data Analysis

Response data on the 9-point perceptual reporting scale from *none at all* to *a great deal* were collected in May 2022. While good response rates indicated 36 intervention group participants and 23 inactive control group participants, some participants did not meet the condition requiring participation in the CRLP Results Foundational Skills training. This left usable responses from 33 intervention group and 12 inactive control group participants for data analysis. Demographics showed a range of grade level teaching assignments through fourth grade and a variety of years of experience encompassing new to veteran teachers across both participant groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. Teacher efficacy in reading instruction demographics by group

Demographics	Intervention Group (n = 22)	Control Group (n = 13)
Years of Experience		
4 or less	2	2
5-9	3	4
10-14	1	0
15+	13	6
Prefer not to say	3	1
Grade Level		
TK-1	12	4
2-3	4	5
4	3	3
Prefer not to say	3	1

Regarding the results of the Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction survey, there was no significant difference (t (33) = -.591, p = .279) in mean overall teacher efficacy in foundational reading instruction between those training in CRLP Results without access to teacher leader coaching (5.84) and those with access (6.03; see Table 5).

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for teacher efficacy in reading instruction by group

TE in Reading Instruction Constructs	M (SD)	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Using a Variety of Assessments			
Intervention	6.91 (1.109)	6.26	7.52
Control	6.77 (1.301)	5.15	7.40
Adjusting Instruction			
Intervention	6.68 (1.086)	6.20	7.13
Control	6.46 (1.266)	6.00	6.92
Supporting Struggling Student Needs			
Intervention	6.09 (1.377)	5.67	6.40
Control	6.00 (1.780)	5.00	7.00

Supporting English Learner Needs			
Intervention	5.86 (1.320)	5.32	6.40
Control	*6.00 (1.225)*	5.00	7.00
Using Instructional Routines			
Intervention	*6.23 (1.510)*	5.68	6.62
Control	*6.15 (1.463)*	5.30	7.00
Helping Students Monitor Reading			
Intervention	*5.41 (1.623)*	5.03	5.79
Control	*5.15 (1.405)*	4.51	5.79
Planning Reading Lessons			
Intervention	*6.32 (1.492)*	5.81	6.83
Control	*6.23 (1.301)*	5.50	6.96
Using Decodable Books in Whole Groups			
Intervention	*5.95 (1.647)*	5.34	6.56
Control	*5.31 (1.888)*	4.24	6.38
Using Decodable Books in Small Groups			
Intervention	*6.86 (1.207)*	5.95	6.97
Control	*6.46 (1.198)*	5.80	7.12
Help Students with Unknown Words			
Intervention	*6.68 (1.171)*	6.17	7.20
Control	*6.08 (1.320)*	5.22	6.94
Motivating Students to Read			
Intervention	*5.41 (1.403)*	5.04	5.90
Control	*5.69 (1.494)*	5.16	6.22
Selecting Instructional Texts			
Intervention	*5.91 (1.477)*	5.49	6.33
Control	*5.46 (1.506)*	4.78	6.14
Overall TE in Reading Instruction			
Intervention	***6.03 (0.938)***	**5.49**	**6.33**
Control	***5.84 (0.854)***	**4.78**	**6.14**

The result was the same for each response item (see Appendix B for *p values* by construct). An observed difference does exist between the two groups, showing higher reported overall

Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction for the intervention ($M = 5.49$) versus the control ($M = 4.78$) group. The same observed differences are found respectively across 11 sub-constructs, where the intervention group participants reported higher response means than the control group. Using a Varity of Assessments, Adjusting Instruction, and Helping Students with Unknown Words showed the most benefits to the intervention group ($M = 6.26$; $M = 6.20$; $M = 6.68$ respectively) as compared to the inactive control group ($M = 5.15$; $M = 6.00$; $M = 6.08$ respectively). One area—Motivating Students to Read—was an exception where the mean efficacy rating was slightly higher for the inactive control group ($M = 5.69$) than the intervention group ($M = 5.41$).

4. Discussion

The study aimed to understand the impact coaching training on teacher leader coach growth in Transformational Coaching for Equity and the benefit of access to the CRLP Results Foundational Skills coaching intervention on Teacher Efficacy for Reading Instruction. The theoretical frameworks of Transformational Coaching for Equity and Teacher Efficacy underpinned the broader goal of uncovering more efficient and effective ways to coach teachers in reading instruction for greater student results. Coaching is associated with increased levels of student learning and, as collaborative endeavor, can develop teachers in aspects related to teacher efficacy (Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). In turn, teacher efficacy in literacy instruction is related to higher levels of student reading achievement (Poggio, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

Though incremental, the teacher leader coach professional development positively impacted cohort perceptions on observed growth trends in transformational coaching for equity, particularly in emotional intelligence and active listening. As part of shared leadership through teacher-led coaching, these areas are necessary to foster the same type of trust and honest dialogue related to school environments that positively impact student learning (Aguilar, 2020; Mayger & Hochbein, 2021). Furthermore, the collaborative conversations focused on developing teacher efficacy in foundational reading instruction to address a reading equity gap, which has established associated benefits for student achievement (Poggio, 2012; Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

Though not statistically significant, those trained in the school improvement initiative, CRLP Results, with access to teacher leader coaching, benefited in overall teacher efficacy for foundational reading instruction, especially in helping students with unknown words, selecting appropriate texts for foundational reading instruction, and using decodable texts in small and whole group settings. This result corroborates with the literature demonstrating that instructional coaching is associated with increased teacher efficacy (Houssemand & Meyers, 2013). When the coaching supports literacy instruction, as with the area of foundational reading, the same correlation exists in the specific construct (Poggio, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). The unexpected observed finding of the control group teachers perceiving minimally higher mean efficacy in motivating student to read than the intervention group requires further investigation in a future study.

While case study research cannot be generalized (Johnson & Christensen, 2017), and the participant numbers in this study were small, the findings highlight that teacher leaders, who remain in the classroom full-time, can grow as transformational coaches for equity to benefit other teachers' efficacy in the classroom. Specifically, this can be done to impact foundational reading instructional practices to impact school improvement for social justice (CRLP, 2023; ILA, 2024).

This has suggested implications for school leadership, as all students deserve high-quality reading instruction from well-trained teachers to ensure the fundamental right to read (ILA, 2024). Leaders should consider how to incorporate a peer coaching initiative that does not require exemplary teachers to leave the classroom setting; instead, with appropriate compensation, voluntary participation, and ongoing professional development, these teacher leaders can remain in classrooms to serve students while also working to develop skills in support of intentional teacher collaboration to increase teacher efficacy in pursuit of social justice through reading.

An area for further research left unresolved is related to the overall impact to student reading achievement. During the timeframe of the study, publicly available statewide reading achievement data was not available to encompass the student groups instructed by participating teachers for both interventions. This is a critical next step, closing the feedback loop from teacher intervention to student foundational reading ability. Understanding how the case intervention design can impact student reading achievement will ultimately provide a researched-based teacher professional development model for social justice in literacy attainment.

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Appendix A

Teacher Leader Coaching Initiative Professional Development Overview

Session Date	Year One, 2020-2021: Training Content
(1) January 2021	**Coaching Content**: What is transformational coaching? (definition, goals, benefits, tools, using the metaphor of a bridge) **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: Assessment (Basic Phonics Skills Test IV)
(2) February 2021	**Coaching Content**: Who are you? (considering the 3 B's [behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being)], reflecting on one's core values and sociopolitical identities) **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice:** Lesson planning for the Alphabetic Level and Spelling Pattern Level of instruction based on assessment data
(3) February 2021	**Coaching Content**: What is your coaching vision? How will your coaching vision guide and empower you as a coach? What is going on at your school site in terms of literacy instruction (site context)? **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: Exploring the tasks in the Polysyllabic-Morphemic Level instructional routines
(4) March 2021	**Coaching Content**: What are the three steps of a coaching conversation? (listening, thinking, responding) How can you cultivate expansive listening? What are the mind journeys you take when you are listening to someone? **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: Using progress monitoring to adjust instruction
(5) March 2021	**Coaching Content**: What are the two coaching stances and when should you take these stances? (facilitative and directive) How can you use coaching stems to help you listen with compassion and curiosity? **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: How to assist the Literacy Support Team staff at each site with implementing the Results instructional routines
(6) April 2021	**Coaching Content**: How can you effectively implement the thinking tools of Spheres of Influence during the second step of a coaching conversation? (to understand, interpret, hear, and make sense of what someone is saying) **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: Reviewing the Results teaching and learning cycle, exploring the yearly planning template and data templates
(7) May 2021	**Coaching Content**: What is asset-based or strengths-based coaching? How can we get other people to do something, stop doing something, or do something different? How can you use the Mind the Gap thinking tool to characterize strengths and identify where the gaps are? **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: Reviewing how Results assessments and instructional routines align with the district's MTSS practices
(8) June 2021	**Coaching Content**: Recapping our learning for the year (the principles of transformational coaching, creating a coaching vision, the three steps in a coaching conversation, cultivating expansive listening, understanding strengths-based coaching, utilizing the thinking tools of the Spheres of Influence and Mind the Gap) and planning for coaching opportunities the next school year **CRLP Results, Refining Our Practice**: Reflecting on this past year and planning for assessment and instruction for the upcoming school year

Session Date	Year Two, 2021-2022: Training Content
(1) October 2021	**Coaching Content**: What is the transformational coaching model, and what are some of the tools we began to explore last year? What can you offer to your school site as a teacher, leader coach? **Coaching practice in breakout sessions:** (site-based groups) What is your school-site definition of coaching? What is the purpose of coaching at your site? What is your role as a site-based teacher leader coach?
(2) December 2021	**Coaching Content**: What are the three steps of a coaching conversation in a strengths-based model of coaching, and how do you use the Mind the Gap tool? **Coaching practice in breakout sessions:** (mixed trios: coach, client, observer) Use the Mind the Gap tool to frame questions while role-playing coaching a partner with a specific scenario
(3) January 2022	**Coaching Content**: Share *Small Change Ideas* from the coaching logs and discuss site-based concerns (meeting with site administrators, consistent implementation of assessment protocols and instructional routines, meeting with intervention staff and new teachers, establishing instructional groups across the grade level teams) **Refining Our Practice:** Discuss articles about phonemic awareness and how to share the concepts with teachers across grade levels **Coaching Check-ins:** Ask coaches to sign up for a one-on-one meeting
(4) February 2022	**Coaching Content**: How do you use specific coaching stems in conjunction with the Mind the Gap tool to determine where a client's gaps are? **Coaching practice in breakout sessions:** (mixed trios: coach, client, observer) Use the coaching stems and Mind the Gap tool to frame questions while role-playing coaching a partner with scenarios created by the coaches **Refining Our Practice:** Share small change ideas for facilitating small group reading time and how to reach out to and meet with teachers
(5) March 2022	**Coaching Content**: When and how do you use the supportive/non-judgmental coaching stems during coaching conversations? Share highlights from the recent special session held for partnership district Administration. **Coaching practice in breakout sessions:** (mixed trios: coach, client, observer) Use the new coaching stems to frame questions while role-playing coaching a partner with scenarios created by the coaches **Refining Our Practice as Coaches:** Share results from the transformational coaching survey done December 2020 and February 2022. Where do we see growth? Ask coaches to participate in the upcoming "Results Reunions" review sessions for partnership district teachers.
(6) May 2022	**Coaching Content**: What is the third part of a coaching conversation? (responding) What is the facilitative coaching stance? (supportive, cathartic, catalytic) How do emotions affect coaching conversations? How can you help a client navigate emotions? **Coaching practice in breakout sessions:** (mixed trios: coach, client, observer) Use the facilitative coaching stance and coaching stems to coach a partner using another scenario created by the coaches. **Coaching Check-ins:** Ask coaches to sign up for a one-on-one meeting
(7) May 2022	**Coaching Content**: What are the seven Coaching Lenses? How do these lenses help you to look at evidence from various perspectives? How can you use the lenses to plan

	coaching conversations, and during the conversations, address different challenges and dilemmas?
	Coaching practice in breakout sessions: (mixed trios: coach, another coach, observer) Use the Lens of Adult Learning and coaching stems to coach a partner using another scenario created by the coaches. This time, you will be a coach working with another coach.
	Coaching Tasks to Complete: Coaching log and final rubric, rewatch session and complete Google Form for missed sessions, submit class data (your own class and other teachers), complete final transformational coaching survey.

Appendix B

Teacher Efficacy in Reading Instruction Survey Significance by Subconstruct

Subconstruct	t value	df	Sig (1-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Use Variety of Assessment	-0.338	33	0.275	-0.14	0.414
Adjust Instruction	-0.545	33	0.295	-0.22	0.404
Struggling Student Needs	-0.169	33	0.433	-0.091	0.537
ELL Needs	0.303	33	0.382	0.136	0.45
Use Instructional Routines	-0.141	33	0.445	-0.073	0.522
Help Students Monitor Reading	-0.472	33	0.320	-0.255	0.541
Plan Lessons	-0.175	33	0.431	-0.087	0.499
Use Decoables Whole Group	-1.064	33	0.148	-0.647	0.608
Use Decoables Small Group	-0.955	33	0.173	-0.402	0.421
Help Students with Unknown Words	-1.409	33	0.084	-0.605	0.429
Motivate Students to Read	0.564	33	0.288	0.283	0.502
Select Appropriate Foundational Texts	-0.86	33	0.198	-0.448	0.520
Overall TE in Reading Instruction	**-0.591**	**33**	**0.279**	**-0.188**	**0.318**

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Authors Contributions

Dr. Walsh was responsible for the study design, data collection, and manuscript drafts and revisions. Ms. McCormick and Ms. Stoll were responsible for securing the project grant and district partnerships, designing and delivering the interventions, and providing manuscript details related to the study context and interventions. All authors participated in data analysis as well as read and approved the final manuscript.

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No additional data are available.

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