The Effect of Individualized Coaching on the Perception of Efficacy of School Leaders

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Dedication

I dedicate this capstone project to my children, Julia, Gianna, and Anthony. Your support, patience, and love have sustained me through this work. I hope you are inspired to fulfill your goals and dreams knowing that hard work and persistence are the keys to success. I love you very much.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

Stability in educational leadership plays a crucial role in the success of K-12 public schools. Ensuring the retention of school leaders requires robust support systems that enhance leadership skills and self-efficacy. This research study investigated the effect of individualized leadership coaching on self-efficacy among school leaders, focusing on principals and assistant principals in the Franklin Regional School District. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study utilized both qualitative and quantitative survey instruments to assess self-efficacy perceptions before and after the coaching intervention. The research encompassed six building-level leaders and analyzed shifts in self-efficacy linked to coaching sessions. The findings revealed modest changes in self-efficacy scores between the pre- and post-coaching assessments. Data triangulation concerning the length of service, frequency of coaching sessions, and coach choice did not significantly influence self-efficacy outcomes. The study examined whether a series of coaching sessions would impact the self-efficacy levels of school leaders; additionally, it explored which specific self-efficacy domains were affected by coaching. The results were inconclusive, indicating a need for further research. Future studies may benefit from utilizing a more comprehensive self-efficacy measure and extending the duration of coaching interventions. The implications of this research extend to the development of a structured, supportive coaching program within the Franklin Regional School District. Targeted coaching aimed at enhancing skills such as capacity building, vision development, and fostering a culture of connectedness is anticipated to yield significant benefits for the district's leadership stability and overall school success.

CHAPTER 1

Effective school leadership is critical for the success of K-12 public schools. Twenty-first century school leaders are tasked with ever-increasing responsibilities and constantly evolving challenges. These intense factors lead to high turnover rates in school leadership that can result in instability and uncertainty in schools. To combat this issue, school leaders require supportive professional development to grow in their roles and maintain their positions over time. To be a successful leader in any field, the development of leadership skills is essential. Public education is no exception. All leaders must be able to feel effective, connected, and supported to stay motivated. If this does not occur in schools, leaders tend to become frustrated and may consider changing school districts or changing occupations altogether. Strategies that build a sense of efficacy in school leaders are extremely important to create stability for public education in our country.

Leadership coaching is a strategy that initially focused on those in the corporate realm. However, due to the evolving challenges facing school leaders, a coaching model has the potential to support educators as well. Historically, school leaders were mainly tasked with management duties and instructional concerns in schools. However, as societal stressors continue to mount, the leadership of schools has evolved to include issues such as mental health, violence, poverty, lightning-speed advances in technology, threats of litigation, pandemic management, and other critical needs for students and communities. These challenges are beyond the scope of existing school leader preparation programs and addressing them requires the support that can be provided by a leadership coaching framework that builds a sense of efficacy for those in the field.

The Effect of Individualized Coaching on the Perception of Efficacy of School

Leaders

Individualized leadership coaching, primarily used in the corporate realm, is an

approach that could provide support and help retain school leaders. There is very little

existing research on the effect of executive coaching on the sense of efficacy in school

leaders and the resulting likelihood of retention of their positions. The current research

will focus on data related to the degree to which school leaders perceive themselves as

effective before and after individualized coaching. The coaching will focus on building

self-awareness, interpersonal skills, strategies for dealing with stress, and all other aspects

of the leadership role.

School leaders who feel more effective after coaching are better equipped to

support and guide their teachers (Shutler, 2023). They can provide targeted feedback,

identify areas for growth, and implement strategies to enhance teaching practices. This, in

turn, can lead to improved teacher performance, increased motivation, and better student

outcomes. A positive and empowering school culture is essential for student engagement

and success. When school leaders feel more effective, they can foster a sense of

collaboration, open communication, and trust among staff, students, and parents. This

helps in creating a cohesive school community that works together towards shared goals.

Effective school leaders are more adept at identifying areas that need

improvement and allocating resources accordingly. They can advocate for necessary

funding, professional development opportunities, and specialized support programs to

address the specific needs of their school and its students. Engaged and effective school

leaders tend to involve parents and the community more actively in the educational

process. By building strong partnerships with families and community organizations, they can create a support network that reinforces learning both inside and outside the classroom. Effective school leaders are more likely to focus on evidence-based practices and data-driven decision-making. By setting clear academic goals, monitoring progress, and providing resources and support to teachers, they can foster a more productive learning environment. As a result, student achievement and overall learning outcomes may improve. When school leaders feel more effective after coaching, it can lead to a positive ripple effect throughout the entire school community. School leaders are more likely to remain in their positions when they feel a sense of efficacy and this translates into increased stability for schools (de Haan et al., 2016).

In my role as the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education and Support Services in the Franklin Regional School District, I have worked with the superintendent and other administrators to develop a leadership coaching program focused on addressing school leader development and retention. This program will require financial resources to cover assessment tools, facilitator fees, workshop materials, coaching resources, and administrative support. Existing ARP-ESSER funds are being used to provide coaching certification for five cabinet level administrators at a cost of $4,195 per participant. Each school leader participant in the coaching program will engage in the Leadership Circle Profile at a discounted educational cost of $285 per person. Approximately 35-40 staff members including principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders will participate in the coaching program.

Indirect costs will include approximately thirty hours for each of the five cabinet level administrators, five hours of administrative support by the executive assistant for

registration, ordering, and organization, and three to five hours per school leader who participates in the coaching program and the surveys related to this research. No further costs will be incurred for supplies or overhead since the coaching program will occur during the workday and the Leadership Circle Profile will be conducted through an online portal. This researcher will be one of the five cabinet-level certified coaches.

By investing in the development of our administrators, teacher leaders, and aspiring administrators, we will create a district-wide leadership culture that promotes excellence, collaboration, and continuous growth. The use of the Leadership Circle Profile within a comprehensive program will provide the foundation for transformative leadership development. School leaders will be surveyed before and after coaching to collect data on their perceptions of efficacy. Using the data from the pre- and post-surveys, trends in areas of self-efficacy perceptions will be analyzed to determine to which degree each domain changes. This research will have implications for coaching programs for current school leaders as well as aspiring school leaders.

Research Question #1: How does the perception of efficacy change for school leaders after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

Research Question #2: Which areas of perception of efficacy change the most and least after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

History of Leadership Coaching

The history of leadership coaching involves a combination of multiple disciplines, each contributing to its development and advancement. Around the mid-20th century, sports and performance coaching entered the forefront of the coaching field. Rather than focusing on the techniques of a sport as a whole, the focus changed to the athlete as an individual (Koopman et al., 2021). This focus on transforming the individual to impact performance was a critical change. Coaches realized the importance of providing supportive feedback to athletes that led to improved performance. The idea that guidance based on a specific athlete's needs could result in performance enhancing behavior became interesting to other fields.

The other main disciplines that developed coaching methods include both organizational management and psychology. Through the application of research in these fields, the concepts of motivation, feedback, and human development began to inform coaching approaches. However, this early form of coaching was only focused on improving problematic work behaviors and was often considered an intervention for employees (Brock, 2009). The 1980's were a period of change in the field and a move from one-sided performance appraisals to coaching relationships occurred. The focus remained on the outcomes and tasks of the workplace as noted in recommendations of a consultant from that time, "coaching emphasizes the job, not the person" (Allenbaugh, 1983, p. 23). As organizations realized that a need existed for more collaborative and people-centered leadership over time, a change from a directive leadership style to a coaching-oriented leadership approach occurred. This shift was an important moment in

the history of leadership coaching, as it acknowledged the value of individual growth, building self-awareness, and enhancing performance through coaching methodologies. Together, the evolution of theory and practice in these disciplines have shaped the field of leadership coaching.

The study of human behavior, motivation, and development in these domains contributed essential insights that informed coaching approaches. Concepts like goal setting, feedback, and individualized development plans drew from management theory, while principles of human psychology influenced coaching techniques that focused on self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and behavior change. As coaching evolved, these psychological and managerial building blocks continued to shape its methodologies and practices, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the field (Brock, 2009).

Leadership Development and Behavioral Coaching

The combination of leadership development and behavioral coaching had a powerful effect on the field of leadership coaching. Coaching methods that were used as a means to cultivate leadership growth, with the addition of behavioral coaching techniques, altered leadership development. Behavioral coaching introduced systematic approaches to address leadership challenges. An emphasis on self-awareness, behavioral goal setting, and sustainable behavior change became the focus (Kilburg, 1996). Using these behavioral coaching techniques, leadership development programs became more effective in addressing specific leadership behaviors that resulted in the increased effectiveness of leaders. Leaders involved in coaching became more aware of their behaviors and their impact on organizational success. This type of coaching decreased

"the frequency with which (leaders) act(ed) out based on their emotions in the workplace" (Ducharme, 2004, p. 217).

As methods of coaching continued to focus on nurturing leadership growth, principles such as active listening, open-ended questioning, and goal setting were applied to empower leaders to self-reflect, gain insights, and improve their leadership skills. Leaders engaged in the process of setting clear, measurable behavioral goals and actively working towards modifying their actions and responses. Those "with specific, challenging goals reliably outperform(ed) those with do-your-best goals because the latter type of goal is interpreted too subjectively" (Locke & Latham, 2019, p. 97). This precision allowed leaders to make lasting changes to their behaviors that showed tangible improvements in their organizational effectiveness.

Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches in Coaching

As leadership coaching models developed into the 1990's, practitioners began to use cognitive-behavioral theories in their work. While these theories developed in the realm of therapeutic use, the focus on leveraging psychological principles to enhance self-awareness, emotional regulation, and behavior modification for work-related tasks took hold. In leadership coaching, cognitive restructuring and goal-setting techniques emerged as valuable tools. Cognitive restructuring focuses on identifying and challenging unhelpful thought patterns and beliefs that may hinder leadership effectiveness. By replacing these cognitive distortions with more rational and constructive thinking, leaders can enhance decision-making and problem-solving skills (Manz & Neck, 1991). Additionally, goal-setting techniques in cognitive-behavioral coaching allow leaders to set specific, measurable, and achievable goals, providing them with a clear roadmap for

personal and professional development. The integration of these cognitive-behavioral approaches into coaching empowers individuals to gain greater control over their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, resulting in improved leadership capabilities and overall performance (Passmore et al., 2013).

Transformational Coaching and Positive Psychology

As leadership coaching continued to develop into the early 2000's, movement occurred toward a focus on individuals' innate and unique ability for growth. Transformational coaching, rooted in positive psychology, places a fundamental emphasis on individuals' strengths, resilience, and self-actualization. This approach shifts the focus onto "enhancing resources, strengths and competencies, and building positive qualities rather than resolving problems, eliminating weaknesses, or only repairing the worst things in life" (Passmore et al., 2013, p. 427). Fostering a resilient mindset that enabled leaders to navigate adversity and change effectively began to help leaders not only achieve their goals but also to take a journey of self-discovery and personal fulfillment, ultimately leading to more meaningful and transformational life experiences. "Leadership involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning" (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 24). Empowering others is not necessarily an expert "leading a novice into an area of content expertise" (Ray, 2017, p. 29). Rather, specific content knowledge is not necessary to be a successful coach.

Integration of Emotional Intelligence in Coaching

The incorporation of emotional intelligence into coaching theory represented an important enhancement in how leadership development is approached. By adding

emotional intelligence into coaching, individuals are not only equipped with the technical skills required for leadership, but are also able to navigate complex human behavioral dynamics with compassion and empathy. Pastor (2014) notes:

> High emotional intelligence generates the creation of stronger, more solid interpersonal relationships... and the higher level a person has in an organization, the more important it is to have emotional intelligence and, in contrast, the less important become technical skills. (p. 987)

Leaders who possess a heightened awareness of their emotions and effectively manage them are better equipped to lead with authenticity, build meaningful relationships, and navigate challenging situations with poise. "When leaders know and control their emotions, they are better able to address the problems in a more flexible way, to consider alternative scenarios and to avoid the effects of rigidity in decision making" (Pastor, 2014, p. 990).

This integration underscores the transformative power of emotional intelligence in shaping leaders who not only excel in their roles but also foster positive, inclusive, and emotionally intelligent environments within their organizations. Webb (2009) noted that:

> The key to improving performance seems to be vitally linked with the improvement of emotional competencies for managers and workers alike. In education, similar results demonstrate that the key to improving student performance is linked to improving emotional competencies for both students and teachers. (p. 38)

Webb (2009) also notes that Goleman's four key areas of emotional competences are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, all of which account for as much as 75% of success in work and social life. "Research indicates

that improvements in emotional intelligence are highly correlated with increased

performance in education and in the workplace" (Webb, 2009, p. 13).

Adult Development Theory in Leadership Coaching

The use of adult development theory in relation to leadership has been detailed

through the work of Robert Kegan and has its origins in the work of Piaget. Kegan

delineates the progress of an adult through the stages of development that require

increasing complexity of thought and what he coined as the constructive-developmental

framework (Kegan, 1980). The various stages of adult development, cognitive growth,

and socioemotional progress include movement from a social construct that implies

success when those around us are pleased and satisfied with our work to a more self-

authoring and self-transforming mind. These further stages require adults to make

meaning of complicated systems and act upon them in ways that are unique and

transformative to the organization. Piaget explored the subject-object relationship in

young children, and Kegan applies it to development across the lifespan. "As adults

become more able to "emerge from embeddedness" and see one's actions, reactions and

sensations as something they are able to become objective about" (Kegan, 1982, p. 47)

they become more able to self-author or create well-thought responses to situations.

Applying this knowledge during leadership coaching enables strategies to be

tailored to the specific developmental needs of leaders. By recognizing that leadership

growth is an ongoing, lifelong process influenced by various factors, including age,

experience, and context, the application of adult development theory in leadership

coaching provides a framework for targeted intervention. This approach acknowledges

that one-size-fits-all coaching models are insufficient and, instead, promotes a more

nuanced and effective coaching process. By customizing coaching to match the unique developmental pathways and needs of leaders, organizations can optimize the potential growth in its members.

Coaching in Educational Leadership

The role of coaching in educational leadership is relatively new and developed from the same theories discussed in previous sections. As the focus of the school leader has evolved from building management and instructional leadership to transformational leadership, the needs of the school leader have changed as well. "Instructional leaders focus on school goals, the curriculum, instruction, and the school environment. Transformational leaders focus on restructuring the school by improving school conditions" (Stewart, 2006, p. 4). The challenges facing school leaders require them to be able to provide strategic direction, encourage collaboration, and enhance their leadership skills to drive positive change. It makes sense, then, for school leaders to engage in coaching since it has shown to be effective in other fields when leaders face similar challenges. Coaching can develop the skills in educational leaders and can be used by the leaders to develop skills in their teachers and staff.

Rather than using top-down directives and traditional hierarchical models, educational leaders can use coaching as a means of guiding and empowering their staff. As noted by Stewart (2006), there are three goals of transformational leadership in education: "helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; fostering teacher development; and helping teachers solve problems together more effectively" (p. 17). Coaching principles emphasize active listening, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging self-reflection, all of which contribute to

leadership that is more effective. By using these principles in their work, educational leaders create an environment where continuous improvement, open communication, and professional growth become the norm for both themselves and those around them.

Educational leaders are increasingly seeking their own professional development in the form of coaching to enhance their own skills, hone their leadership styles, and manage the complex challenges of their professions. As the demand for leadership coaching continues to rise, educational institutions and organizations are investing in coach training programs and partnerships to allow leaders to access resources that help them grow and develop in their roles (Fullan, 2001). This trend reflects a recognition that strong leadership is an evolving journey, and coaching serves as a valuable means to support leaders as they navigate the constantly evolving landscape of education.

"As the burden of school leadership continues to increase in complexity, the need for reflective, collaborative leadership surges in tandem. The collaborative approach of educational leadership coaching develops school leaders and teacher leaders into meta-cognitive, reflective practitioners" (Ray, 2017, p. 29). The unique demands and contexts faced by each leader and leadership team can be supported by a collaborative coaching approach. Whether it is a focus on curriculum development or the navigation of complex policy changes, tailored coaching plans enable leaders to receive guidance and support that directly addresses their professional needs as individuals and teams.

Areas of Focus in Educational Leadership Coaching

Ray (2017) outlined the many challenges for leaders in the educational setting as they navigate internal and external expectations:

School leaders face a daunting challenge as they lead groups of individuals toward the common goals of increased student achievement, increased skill, and knowledge development while balancing political pressure and providing differentiated professional development to the adult learners under their leadership. (p. 30)

Communication and interpersonal skills are fundamental components of effective leadership, and they play a pivotal role in the realm of educational leadership coaching. One key focus within this domain is coaching for improved communication with staff, parents, and stakeholders. Educational leaders are often tasked with navigating complex relationships within their educational communities. Coaching programs provide leaders with the tools and strategies needed to foster open, transparent, and productive communication channels. Whether it involves addressing concerns with staff, collaborating with parents to support student success, or engaging with stakeholders to build trust and support for educational initiatives, coaching helps leaders refine their communication styles and adapt them to diverse audiences.

Furthermore, educational leadership coaching emphasizes the development of active listening, conflict resolution, and relationship-building skills. Spillane (2001) notes that:

Leadership involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning. This definition supports a transformational perspective on leadership, defining it as the ability to empower others. (p. 24)

Active listening enables leaders to truly understand the perspectives and concerns of those they interact with, fostering a culture of empathy and respect. Conflict resolution skills empower leaders to address disputes and challenges constructively, transforming conflicts into opportunities for growth. Relationship-building skills help leaders forge strong connections with their teams, creating a sense of unity and shared purpose. By enhancing these communication and interpersonal competencies, coaching equips educational leaders with the capacity to inspire trust, resolve disputes, and cultivate a positive and collaborative educational environment for all stakeholders involved.

Culturally responsive and emotionally intelligent leadership has become increasingly critical in the context of today's diverse educational settings. Coaching programs guide educational leaders to develop a heightened awareness of cultural differences, enabling them to create inclusive and equitable learning environments where every student feels valued and respected. Additionally, coaching focuses on the development of self-awareness, encouraging leaders to explore their own biases, beliefs, and perspectives. This self-awareness is instrumental in promoting culturally responsive leadership as it enables leaders to authentically connect with and support individuals from diverse backgrounds.

"Effective leadership behavior depends crucially on the ability of a leader to solve complex social problems that arise in organisations" (Pastor, 2014, p. 986). In the realm of culturally responsive and emotionally intelligent leadership, coaching serves as a catalyst for leaders to gain a deeper understanding of diversity within educational settings. Culturally responsive and emotionally intelligent leaders are adept at recognizing and managing emotions, a skillset that is honed through coaching. "Coaching

as leadership development has the ability to transform teachers and principals into effective leaders and systems thinkers who believe in human potential, envision positive outcomes and understand the importance of student success" (Ray, 2017, p. 30).

Effectiveness Measures of Educational Leadership Coaching

Evaluating the effectiveness of educational leadership coaching involves multifaceted considerations, with a focus on leadership competencies and behaviors at the forefront. Whether school leaders are ready for this process depends on several factors related to adult development. Brown et al. (2021) found that those leaders who have entered a phase of development in which they are ready to experience coaching will often by characterized by viewing challenges or disruptions as learning events. Additionally, a willingness to seek feedback about performance is another developmental sign that leaders are ready for coaching. Kilpatrick (2022) noted that:

> organizations make the assumption that regular feedback is not necessary for senior leaders [because] they feel that asking for feedback will be seen by others as a sign of weakness and lack of confidence; and yet it is also suggested that being able to ask for feedback in fact signifies confidence. (p. 89)

Creating a culture of support is important when asking leaders to engage in coaching so they can see it as a positive event and feel empowered by it.

Effective coaching should lead to lasting changes in leadership practices and behaviors, ensuring that the improvements continue long after the coaching engagement concludes. Evaluating the sustainability of coaching effects often involves tracking leadership growth over an extended period and assessing the enduring impact on educational institutions. By comprehensively evaluating these measures of effectiveness,

educational leadership coaching programs can continuously refine their approaches to best serve the development and success of educational leaders and the institutions they lead. Coaching also "develops alignment between organizational values and personal ones, thereby developing trust in each coaching relationship" (Ray, 2017, p. 31). Effective leadership coaching should not only impact individual leaders but also ripple through an educational institution, fostering a positive and growth-oriented culture. By assessing the shifts in leadership competencies and behaviors alongside their influence on school culture, organizations can gain valuable insights into the overall impact and efficacy of their coaching programs, helping to shape more effective and transformative leadership practices.

Sustainability of Coaching Effects

The sustainability of coaching effects in educational leadership is a vital aspect of assessing the long-term impact of coaching programs. This evaluation delves into several critical dimensions. First, it involves investigating the long-term sustainability of coaching outcomes to determine if the advantages derived from coaching endure beyond the coaching engagement itself. This entails examining whether coaching leads to lasting changes in leadership practices and behaviors, ensuring that the growth experienced during coaching persists over time. Secondly, the role of coaching program design in sustaining effects must be explored, focusing on how coaching methodologies and program structures can be optimized to foster enduring leadership development. Additionally, the importance of follow-up sessions and continuous support mechanisms needs to be examined. These post-coaching elements provide ongoing guidance and

reinforcement, helping leaders integrate newfound skills and behaviors into their long-term leadership practices.

Perception of Efficacy for Educational Leaders

One of the major ways to measure the sustained effectiveness of coaching programs is through the perception of efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that one is capable of successfully performing a specific behavior (Bandura, 1986). Perceived efficacy in leadership holds immense importance as it influences an individual's confidence and belief in their ability to achieve desired outcomes. Leaders who perceive themselves as efficacious tend to exhibit greater motivation, resilience, and a proactive approach to problem solving. Bandura and Cervone (1986) found that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy worked even harder to meet the goals they set, while those with low self-efficacy did not. This perception also affects their interactions with others, influencing their communication, decision-making, and overall leadership style. "The higher a person's self-efficacy, the more confident he or she is about success in a particular task domain" (Prussia et al., 1998, p. 524).

Leaders who believe in their capabilities are more likely to exhibit behaviors that inspire confidence and trust among their teams. They tend to set high standards, communicate effectively, and take calculated risks. This confidence and proactive approach often results in improved team performance, higher levels of motivation for the leader and the staff, and enhanced overall leadership effectiveness. In Baron and Morin's research (2010), "a professional development program that included executive coaching favored the self-efficacy related to the ability to facilitate the development of one's subordinates" (p. 32). Conversely, leaders who doubt their abilities may display cautious

or risk-averse behaviors, which can hinder their ability to lead teams effectively and achieve desired outcomes.

Self-Assessment and Peer/Subordinate Assessment of Leadership Efficacy

Leaders often engage in self-assessment and seek feedback through peer or subordinate assessment of their leadership efficacy. This comprehensive approach helps leaders gain a more holistic understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Self-assessment and peer/subordinate assessment of leadership efficacy provide a useful approach to understanding and improving leadership effectiveness. Using self-assessment tools brings awareness to the level of leadership efficacy each leader experiences. Some may have backgrounds that have built internal competencies already and others may have strong social networks that provide them feedback. "Participants come in[to] the coaching sessions with various levels of self-efficacy derived from earlier experiences of person competencies and social support" (Brandmo et al., 2021, p. 202).

These tools allow leaders to reflect on their own abilities, strengths, and areas for growth, providing valuable insights into their self-perceived efficacy. However, investigating the accuracy of self-perceptions in leadership effectiveness is equally important. "An aspiring leader's self-efficacy may also be impacted by the verbal persuasions of others – the feedback or encouragement or even criticism that is received, internalized, and used to shape beliefs" (Abernathy, 2018, p. 54). Research has shown that while self-assessment can be insightful, it may also be subject to biases and blind spots. This highlights the significance of using peer and subordinate assessments to gauge leadership efficacy. Colleagues and team members can offer unique perspectives on a leader's performance, providing a more comprehensive view. Peer assessments allow

leaders to receive feedback from those in similar roles or with complementary expertise, offering a well-rounded perspective. Subordinate assessments, on the other hand, capture the experiences and perceptions of those directly influenced by a leader's decisions and actions. These assessments provide leaders with a comprehensive view of their leadership efficacy, highlighting areas of alignment and areas where discrepancies may exist between self-perceptions and external perceptions.

When leaders receive feedback from peers, subordinates, or superiors, they can identify patterns and gaps in how they perceive their own leadership and how others perceive it. This comparative analysis is invaluable for leaders seeking to enhance their effectiveness. It not only highlights areas for improvement but also fosters a culture of openness and continuous improvement within educational organizations. And since "positive self-efficacy perceptions were significantly related to subsequent performance," (Prussia et al., 1998, p. 535) combining self-assessment with external assessments can allow leaders to develop a more accurate and nuanced understanding of their leadership efficacy, which in turn contributes to their growth and development as effective educational leaders.

Impact of Coaching and Organizational Climate on Efficacy Perceptions

The impact of coaching and organizational climate on efficacy perceptions of educational leaders cannot be understated. Coaching interventions shape leaders' self-efficacy perceptions and confidence. Through personalized guidance, feedback, and skill development, coaching empowers leaders to recognize their strengths, address their weaknesses, and build the self-assurance needed to tackle complex leadership challenges. Leaders who undergo coaching often report increased confidence in their abilities,

leading to more assertive and proactive leadership practices. The self-reflection that occurs through the coaching process allows clients to better deal with challenges since they know their strengths and weaknesses, which then results in increased efficacy beliefs (Baron & Morin, 2010).

Coaching provides leaders with a safe and constructive space to reflect on their abilities, set goals, and receive targeted feedback. Through this process, leaders begin to recognize their competencies and develop a sense of mastery over the challenges they face. As coaching progresses, leaders often experience a positive shift in their self-efficacy beliefs, as they witness tangible improvements in their leadership skills and behaviors. The guidance and support provided by coaches help leaders build the confidence needed to navigate the complexities of educational leadership effectively. "Developing self-efficacy for school leadership is closely connected to sharing experiences and reflections related to daily leadership practice" (Brandmo et al., 2021, p. 206). Having a trained coach guide one through the reflection process is vital. As events occur in the workplace, the coaching space becomes one that allows the leader to use self-awareness to evaluate his or her responses and plan future actions. Experiences of mastery are important in order to build self-efficacy in executives and the reflection on them during the coaching sessions can solidify this new learning. "Coaching can affect the cognitive processes before and after these experiences to help executives evaluate their performance on tasks through increased self-awareness" (Moen & Allgood, 2009, p. 71).

Educational leaders often grapple with the demands of their roles, and coaching offers them the tools and strategies to confront these challenges with assurance. "Coaches

can play an important role in supporting leaders to understand and develop self-confidence and in turn enable them to enhance their performance across a range of leadership skills" (Kane et al., 2021, p. 7). Coaches empower leaders to develop self-assurance by honing their decision-making abilities, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. This newfound confidence not only improves leaders' day-to-day interactions but also enables them to take on larger leadership responsibilities and advocate for positive change within their organizations.

The organizational climate also plays a pivotal role in shaping leaders' self-efficacy perceptions. A supportive climate that values professional growth, provides opportunities for skill development, and fosters a culture of collaboration and trust can significantly boost leaders' self-efficacy. In such environments, leaders are more likely to feel empowered to take on new challenges, experiment with innovative approaches, and continually improve their leadership practices. The assurance of support from colleagues and superiors can reinforce leaders' self-efficacy beliefs, resulting in increased confidence in their ability to lead effectively. Shutler (2023) notes that:

> If we look at other successful organizations, from corporations to professional sports teams, the majority of them make investments to support leadership and performance coaching to strengthen their organizations. Public education has historically been slow to adopt new methods for strengthening their professional talent. (p. 99)

Creating an environment in which leaders are supported through coaching has the potential to encourage new educational leaders to enter the field and to retain existing ones.

Self-efficacy beliefs are not only influential in the short term but also have a profound impact on the long-term leadership trajectories of educational leaders. Leaders with strong self-efficacy beliefs tend to set ambitious goals, persist in the face of setbacks, and view challenges as opportunities for growth. Over time, these leaders are more likely to achieve sustained success in their roles and make a lasting impact on their educational organizations. Their self-efficacy beliefs serve as a driving force that propels them forward on their leadership journeys, enabling them to adapt to changing circumstances and continually strive for excellence. "Leadership coaching is an appealing approach to addressing the challenges of school leadership development in that leaders receive expert assistance in a personalized focused and more embedded environment that meets their unique needs" (Klar et al., 2020, p. 543).

When individuals are aware of how their personal goals and motivations are aligned with personal values, they experience higher levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing (Lent, 2004). A supportive organizational climate that influences leaders' self-efficacy perceptions and aligns with these same values fosters trust, autonomy, and a growth mindset that provides a fertile ground for leaders to nurture their self-efficacy beliefs. Analyzing how self-efficacy beliefs influence long-term leadership trajectories highlights that leaders with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to set ambitious goals, persevere in the face of adversity, and chart long-term success in educational leadership. Baron and Morin (2010) found that "executive coaching…was positively and significantly associated with self-efficacy at the end of [a] leadership development program. The higher the number of coaching sessions, the greater the increase in the manager's self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 30). "This result suggests that the more an individual

feels emotionally connected to his organization, the more he develops his skills when the organization gives him the opportunity" (Baron & Morin, 2010, p. 31). The combination of coaching and a supportive organizational climate creates a powerful synergy that not only boosts leaders' self-efficacy perceptions but also contributes to their sustained growth and impact as educational leaders.

This self-perception is a critical factor that can either empower or limit a leader's capacity to lead effectively and make a positive impact in their educational role. The study by Prussia et al. (1998) showed that self-efficacy perceptions are enhanced as a result of training in the area of self-leadership strategies. These strategies include behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought patterns, all of which create a "perception of control and responsibility which positively affects performance outcomes" (p. 524). When school leaders feel they can have a positive impact and effectively guide their schools, they are more likely to stay in their roles and encourage others to join their ranks. In the current reality of public education, schools need effective and empowered leaders now more than ever.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The Literature Review chapter provided information on educational leadership and its evolving demands and requirements. The chapter also provided research on the progression of leadership coaching in the realm of education and the potential it holds to support principals and other educational leaders. The literature revealed that in order to support leaders in schools and retain them in their positions, it is critical to put structures in place that build a sense of efficacy and success. While corporate leaders have benefited from structures like these that involve executive leadership coaching practices for some time, educational leaders have not had access to this. Educational leaders require the same support, if not more, to maintain stability in school systems as they deal with the growing challenges of public education.

Public educators have expectations for continued growth and development set out by each state as well as the fulfillment of mandated trainings on an annual basis. Some of these include trainings in safety and security, child abuse, and suicide prevention, among others. Additionally, educators must become certified annually in state testing protocols. Aside from these mandates, school districts are also responsible for providing opportunities for professional learning for staff that is meaningful and impactful. In order to accomplish this, principals and other educational leaders often provide book studies, professional learning modules, and courses for teachers and support staff. While this work benefits these education professionals, educational leaders must often look outside their school districts for their own professional learning options.

All newly certified principals are required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to complete an approved induction program within five years of initial

certification. This requirement allows principals to convert their Administrative Level One certification to a permanent Administrative Level Two certification. Following the completion of the induction program, principals are required to complete 180 hours of Act 45 Continuing Professional Education during every five years of service. These hours can be completed through participation in a variety approved Act 45 courses. Some researchers have studied the effect of the induction program and Act 45 requirements on principals. Rogers and VanGronigen (2021) note that induction activities during the first three years of a principal's tenure can influence a principal's effectiveness and support retention. However, recent data shows that almost 15.4% of principals left Pennsylvania schools between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. The 4.2% increase is the highest since accurate employment records existed and coincides with the Pennsylvania teacher turnover rates of 7.7% in 2022-23, 6.2% in 2021-22 and 5.4% in 2020-21 (Hill, 2023). While the exact reasons for the increase in educator turnover continue to be debated, attempts to remedy the crisis must be made.

Following principal induction coursework, leaders must find their own opportunities for professional learning. The choices are varied in their focus and effectiveness with no structure other than the Act 45 approval process. Some principals may seek to fill gaps in their content knowledge while others seek further degrees. This coursework is focused on educational leaders as a whole, rather than individualized to leadership needs. While many other industries provide leaders with executive coaching options, public schools and state systems rarely do so. This may be in part due to budgetary constraints and time limitations. However, the argument can be made that

educational leaders are tasked with such a variety of high-stress challenges that this type of coaching would be essential to their success and longevity in the field.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to address the critical need for effective leadership in K-12 public schools and the ever-evolving challenges and responsibilities faced in the 21st century. High turnover rates among school leaders contribute to instability and uncertainty within schools, necessitating supportive professional development to aid leaders in maintaining their positions over time. Traditionally, leadership development in education has focused on managerial and instructional skills, but modern challenges such as mental health, technology, and pandemic management require a more nuanced approach. This study seeks to explore the impact of individualized leadership coaching, primarily utilized in corporate settings, on the perceived efficacy of school leaders. By assessing changes in self-perception before and after coaching, the research aims to identify areas of growth and improvement, ultimately enhancing leadership effectiveness and retention. Effective school leaders play a crucial role in supporting teachers, fostering collaboration, engaging stakeholders, and driving student growth and achievement. Through this research, insights gained will inform the development of coaching programs tailored to the needs of school leaders, thus contributing to a more stable and empowered educational environment.

This type of study has never before been conducted in the Franklin Regional School District. It is important for district administrators to understand the impact of coaching on the perceptions of efficacy in principals and other school leaders for several reasons. As mentioned previously, retaining school leaders can be a challenge and leadership changes can be detrimental to staff and students. While this study hopes to

shed light on the effectiveness of coaching as a professional development model in general, the district-level goal is to retain and support its current leadership team. This area of research directly impacts this researcher's roles and responsibilities as Assistant Superintendent within the Franklin Regional School District. Work in the areas of district level strategic planning, goal setting, and evaluation of professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators can be directly influenced by individualized coaching sessions. The information gained from this study will provide insight into methods of support for school leaders and their level of effectiveness that can be utilized by district leadership in planning support for the current team and preparing to support incoming leaders in the future.

The following questions were developed and investigated as a means to facilitate this research:

Research Question #1: How does the perception of efficacy change for school leaders after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

Research Question #2: Which areas of perception of efficacy change the most and least after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

The research questions directly align with the purpose of the study by focusing on the impact of individualized coaching on the perceived efficacy of school leaders. The first research question delves into the overarching question of how perceptions of efficacy evolve following coaching sessions, providing insight into the effectiveness of the coaching program in enhancing leadership capabilities. This aligns with the purpose of the study, which seeks to understand the influence of coaching on leadership self-efficacy and, therefore, the ability of leaders to address the challenges faced by

contemporary school leaders. Furthermore, the second research question complements this by examining specific areas where perceptions of efficacy experience the most and least change post-coaching. These focal points include goal setting, confidence levels, task performance, and overcoming obstacles. By identifying these proirities, the study aims to pinpoint areas of strength and need, thereby contributing to the development of targeted coaching interventions tailored to the needs of school leaders. Ultimately, this work will foster a more stable and empowered educational environment.

Setting and Participants

This mixed methods research study was conducted in the Franklin Regional School District, a suburban public school system in southwestern Pennsylvania that serves the communities of Delmont, Export, and Murrysville. The District enrolls approximately 3,400 students and is served by a staff of 450 individuals including educators and support personnel. The District is governed by a nine-member, publically elected Board of School Directors. There are four schools that comprise the District including Franklin Regional Senior High School serving Grades 9-12, Franklin Regional Middle School serving students in Grades 6-8, Franklin Regional Intermediate School serving students in Grades 3-5, and Franklin Regional Primary School serving students in Grades K-2. The district employs seven building level principals and assistant principals. One principal and two assistant principals at the high school, one principal and one assistant principal at the middle school, and one principal at each of the elementary buildings. Six of these principals make up the participants of this study.

The tenure of these principals in school administration varies from three to twenty-two years. Several began their administrative careers in other school districts and

some transitioned from teaching positions outside of or from within the district as noted

in Table 1. These school principals participated in a variety of professional development

opportunities over the years, as most administrators do. In June 2023, this researcher

proposed the use of a leadership coaching model for professional development, after

experiencing personal growth through individual coaching outside of the district. A

proposal was made to the school board in collaboration with the district superintendent.

The school board approved the proposal and planning began in August 2023.

Table 1

Participants in the Study

Participant Number	Years of Overall Administrative Service	Years of Service in Current District (Franklin Regional)
1	22	22
2	3	3
3	13	7
4	4	4
5	14	13
6	11	4

The proposed district-wide leadership development program aims to enhance the

skills and abilities of administrators, teacher leaders, student leaders, and aspiring

administrators within the school district. This program is driven by the use of the

Leadership Circle 360 Profile, a powerful tool for fostering self-awareness, personal

growth, and effective leadership. The Leadership Circle Profile is a research-backed

assessment tool that provides valuable insights into an individual's leadership

competencies, strengths, and areas for improvement (Leadership Circle, 2022). By utilizing this tool within a comprehensive leadership development program, leaders are empowered to reach their full potential and drive positive change.

The program objectives include developing self-awareness, enhancing leadership competencies, fostering collaboration, networking, and cultivating a leadership pipeline. The Leadership Circle Profile enables participants to gain a deep understanding of their leadership style, strengths, and blind spots as noted in the 2022 white paper entitled, "How does the leadership circle profile compare to other 360 degree assessments?"

> The Leadership Circle Profile is designed to measure behavior and assumptions simultaneously. In this way, it connects patterns of leadership behavior with habits of thoughts. The LCP measures inner assumptions, well researched by cognitive psychologists that are giving rise to high and low 360 results. In this way, the LCP helps the client get beneath the behavior to the automatic thought processes that underlie behavior. It facilitates far deeper insight, and as a result, more possibility for transformation. (p. 4)

Through this awareness, leaders can make conscious efforts to leverage their strengths and address areas for improvement. The program provides targeted training and workshops to enhance leadership competencies such as communication, emotional intelligence, decision-making, problem solving, and strategic thinking. By honing these skills, leaders can effectively inspire and motivate their teams. The program also creates opportunities for leaders from different schools and departments to come together, share experiences, and collaborate on common challenges. Building a strong network of leaders within the district fosters a culture of support, shared learning, and continuous

improvement. By eventually including aspiring administrators in the program, a pipeline of talented individuals can be developed for leadership roles in the future. This approach ensures the continuity and sustainability of effective leadership within the district.

Each participant underwent the Leadership Circle Profile assessment to gain insights into their leadership competencies. The assessment has been validated through research studies as an effective model for leadership development (Anderson, 2015). There are two parts to completing the Leadership Circle Profile: a self-survey and an evaluator survey. The self-survey has the leader answer approximately one hundred questions about their leadership. This takes fifteen to twenty minutes to complete and questions are in Likert scale format. Each statement focuses on an attitude, mindset, or behavior and ranks how often the leader engages in it on a scale of one to five, with five being "always" and one being "never." Participants are able to return to previous questions if needed, but are encouraged to answer as quickly as possible as they move through the assessment. Samples of these questions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Leadership Circle Profile Sample Questions

Sample Questions from Leadership Circle Profile Self-Assessment	Open-Ended Questions from Evaluator Survey
I am quick to seize opportunities upon noticing them.	What should this leader stop doing?
I articulate a vision that creates alignment within the organization.	What should this leader start doing?
I balance community welfare with short-term profitability.	What should this leader keep doing?
I provide feedback focused on professional growth.	In your opinion, what is this person's greatest leadership asset, skill, or talent, and what suggestions do you have for leveraging this?
I work too hard for others' acceptance.	In your opinion, what is this person's greatest leadership challenge or area for development, and what suggestions do you have for handling this?
	What have you observed about this person about which you would like to provide additional feedback to him/her that may not have been previously addressed in this assessment?

The evaluator survey contains the same questions as the self-survey and an additional section to gather open-ended feedback. The Leadership Circle recommends that each leader completing the profile receive feedback from at least ten evaluators. These evaluators can include the leader's boss, peers, direct reports, and "other". Once the leader and their evaluators have completed the 360-degree assessment, the leader

receives a report containing percentile scores, comparisons of self-scores to evaluator scores, and de-identified, open-ended feedback.

Once participants completed their self-assessment and their chosen evaluators completed assessments of the leader, the Leadership Circle Profile system generated reports that aggregated the data. The reports show results for the individual leader that are normed against the Leadership Circle database that includes over four million other profiles gathered internationally. The reports are received by the assigned coach and then sent to the participant prior to the first coaching session. The reports include a circle graph (see Appendix A) that illustrates the percentile scores of the participant's self-assessment as well as a compilation of the evaluator assessments across twenty-nine dimensions of leadership. The dimensions are separated by creative and reactive tendencies, and these areas are delved into in more detail during the coaching sessions.

In the research study, trained facilitators then provided personalized feedback and supported participants in creating development plans. These trained facilitators are current cabinet level administrators who obtained certification through the Leadership Circle Profile Coaching Certification Program. Participants had access to coaching and mentoring opportunities to support their individual growth and development. Trained coaches provided guidance and accountability, ensuring the application of new skills in real-life situations. Each participant engaged in either one, two, or three coaching sessions throughout the duration of the study. The number of sessions was dependent on scheduling availability.

The leadership development program requires financial resources to cover assessment tools, facilitator fees, workshop materials, coaching resources, and

administrative support. Existing ARP-ESSER funds were utilized to provide coaching

certification for five cabinet level administrators at a cost of $4,195 per participant as

noted in Table 3. Additionally, each participant in the coaching program engaged in the

Leadership Circle Profile at a discounted educational cost of $300 per person. The overall

goal of conducting these profiles with 35-40 staff members will be accomplished

throughout the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. The principals included in this

study are the first set of those staff members to participate. By investing in the

development of administrators, teacher leaders, and aspiring administrators, a district-

wide leadership culture that promotes excellence, collaboration, and continuous growth

will be created. The use of the Leadership Circle Profile within a comprehensive program

will provide the foundation for transformative leadership development.

Table 3

Costs of Leadership Circle Profile

Type of participant	Number of participants	Cost per participant	Total cost
Coach	5	$4,195	$20,975
Principals	7	$300	$2,100
Teacher Leaders (future participants)	38	$300	$11,400
		Total Overall Cost	$34,475

Research Plan

The research plan aimed to investigate the influence of individualized coaching

on enhancing the perceptions of efficacy among school leaders in K-12 public schools.

Given the critical role of effective leadership in ensuring the success of educational

institutions, particularly in the face of evolving challenges and high turnover rates, this study sought to address the need for supportive professional development strategies tailored to the unique demands of school leadership. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative questions and qualitative open-ended questions, the research assessed changes in school leaders' perceptions of efficacy before and after participating in individualized coaching sessions. Participants were surveyed to gather insights into their experiences with coaching and its impact on their leadership capabilities.

Mixed-method research requires an integration of both types of data as well as the integration of potential results (Mertler, 2022). This research study utilized a convergent parallel mixed methods design, which means that the quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously from the same participants. Subsequently, the data was analyzed together and compared and related to each other, followed by an interpretation that drew "inferences reflective of both data sets" during a combined analysis (Mertler, 2022, p. 148).

Appropriate sample sizes are recommended when using surveys in a research study (Mertler, 2022). Due to the small sample of principals, all responses were considered carefully during analysis. By analyzing both quantitative data, such as pre- and post-coaching survey responses from Likert scale questions, and qualitative data, such as responses to open-ended survey questions, the study aimed to identify which areas of efficacy perception experienced the most significant change following coaching, thus informing the development of effective coaching programs tailored to the needs of school leaders. The research plan outlined a timeline for data collection, budget

considerations, and the overarching objective of promoting stability and excellence in public education through transformative leadership development initiatives.

Research Design, Methods and Data Collection

The research design of this project is a mixed methods study that collected both qualitative and quantitative data in a convergent parallel design. The surveys used in the project collected quantitative data through Likert scale questions about leadership self-efficacy as well as qualitative data from open-ended questions as shown in Table 4. The open-ended questions provided participants the opportunity to offer specific feedback regarding their leadership experiences. Participants completed the surveys before and after the coaching sessions using Google Forms that were collected by the researcher and analyzed in the data analysis process.

Table 4

Survey Questions

Survey Questions	Response Types
I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
I believe I can succeed at almost any endeavor to which I set my mind.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	Likert Scale 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
Please answer each question in relation to your work as a school leader: What experiences in your professional life as a leader have made you more confident in your leadership ability? Please explain why these experiences made you feel more capable as a leader.	Open-ended
Please answer each question in relation to your work as a school leader: What experiences in your professional life have lowered your confidence in your leadership ability? Please explain why these experiences made you feel less capable as a leader.	Open-ended

On August 3, 2023, the application for approval was made to the Institutional

Review Board detailing the research plan. A request for further explanation regarding the

details of the coaching model and consent parameters was made by the IRB on August

28th. Following the provision of these clarifications by the researcher, IRB granted approval (Appendix B) on September 13, 2023 with stipulations that required the coaching sessions to be separate from and occur regardless of participation in the study, such that the study would consist solely of the pre- and post- surveys. The researcher confirmed that this was indeed the case for this study through the final IRB submission. Additionally, a signed letter from the Franklin Regional School District was received by the researcher on June 30, 2023 (Appendix C).

The research aimed to examine the impact of individualized leadership coaching on the perceived efficacy of school leaders and their likelihood of retaining their positions. Employing a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were simultaneously collected to comprehensively address the research objectives. Quantitative data was gathered through pre- and post-coaching surveys administered to school principals. These surveys utilized Likert scale questions to gauge changes in perceived effectiveness before and after participating in the coaching program.

Using Google Forms, two separate surveys that complied with IRB approval parameters were provided to participants. The first was sent to the seven district principals on December 11, 2023, and six principals completed it. This was considered the pre-survey as coaching had not yet begun. The second survey was sent on May 16, 2024 as shown in Table 5. This was considered the post-survey that followed the coaching sessions. Both surveys included information about the research study, informed consent, and the opt-out option if a participant wanted to withdraw from participation at any time. All participants are familiar with the format of Google Form surveys as the district uses the Google platform.

Table 5

Data Collection Timeline

Anticipated Collection Date	Data Collected	Actual Data Collection Date
December 2023 – January 2024	Pre-Survey on Google Form	December 2023
April – May 2024	Post-Survey on Google Form	May 2024

Statistical analyses were conducted to determine if differences in perceived efficacy occurred. Complementing the quantitative data, qualitative insights were obtained through analysis of open-ended responses with a selected group of school leaders who have undergone the coaching program. These questions looked into their experiences with coaching, perceived changes in leadership efficacy, and factors influencing their retention in their positions. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns that emerged from the qualitative data. Additionally, financial data related to the coaching program, including expenses for assessment tools, facilitator fees, workshop materials, coaching resources, administrative support, and participant certification, was collected for cost analysis. Through this comprehensive data collection approach, the study sought to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of individualized leadership coaching in enhancing school leader efficacy and retention.

Validity

The research placed an emphasis on various types of validity to ensure the reliability and accuracy of its findings. Hendricks (2017) emphasizes the importance of educational research and its potential to increase understanding about teaching and learning. Valid findings are, therefore, critical to increasing this knowledge base for

educators. Content validity was prioritized through careful selection of survey items, drawing from a validated instrument, the General Self-Efficacy Scale from Chen et al. (2001). These researchers noted that the use of the scale "may contribute to the development of more effective selection and training systems, since it predicts SSE {specific self-efficacy} across different task domains" (77). The open-ended questions were adapted from Gale et al. (2021) to elicit responses related to experiences that contributed to the increase or decrease in self-efficacy in educators.

Internal validity was examined as it pertains to this study. The pre- and post-surveys were conducted within three months of one another with a small sample of school leaders. Therefore, issues of maturation and history were likely not factors in affecting the internal validity. Participants may have had pre-existing differences among them, which could have contributed to variability in their response data. These known differences were considered during the data analysis phase of the research (i.e., number of years as an administrator). Additionally, other factors may have influenced the internal validity, such as personal life changes or stressors.

External validity was also examined as it relates to the ability to generalize the findings of the study to other settings. The participants were reflective of the current administrative team at the Franklin Regional School District during the time of the research study. This sample could be viewed as representative of other similar sized suburban school district leadership teams in Pennsylvania. However, the sample cannot be considered representative of all school leadership teams in various types of school settings and the findings cannot be considered highly valid and repeatable without further research. Additionally, the offering of an executive leadership development opportunity

could have been highly motivating to the participants of the study, which may also not be repeatable in other settings and therefore effected the external validity.

At the conclusion of the research, all data will be printed and filed and stored in a confidential, locked location to which only the researcher will have access. The Google Form data and any connected Google Sheets will be deleted permanently.

Summary

The Literature Review chapter provided insights into educational leadership and its evolving demands and requirements. It also presented research on the development of leadership coaching in education and its potential to support principals and other educational leaders. The literature revealed that establishing structures to foster a sense of efficacy was critical for supporting school leaders and retaining them in their positions. While corporate leaders have benefited from executive leadership coaching practices for some time, educational leaders require similar support to maintain stability in our school systems.

The research plan was designed to explore how individualized coaching impacted the perceptions of efficacy among school leaders in K-12 public schools. Recognizing the pivotal role effective leadership plays in the success of educational institutions, especially amidst evolving challenges and high turnover rates, this study aimed to address the necessity for tailored professional development strategies to meet the unique demands of school leadership. Employing a mixed-methods approach that integrated quantitative inquiries and qualitative open-ended questions, the research evaluated changes in school leaders' perceptions of efficacy pre and post participation in individualized coaching

sessions. Participants were surveyed to glean insights into their coaching experiences and the influence it had on their leadership capabilities.

The study aimed to address the pressing need for effective leadership in K-12 public schools amidst evolving challenges, high turnover rates, and the critical role of supportive professional development for school leaders. It investigated the impact of individualized leadership coaching traditionally utilized in corporate settings on the perceived efficacy of school leaders. Through pre- and post-coaching surveys the research examined changes in school leaders' perceptions of self-efficacy.

The next chapter will review the results of the data analysis as it relates to the two research questions. As noted in Mertler (2022), "the primary concern in action research is typically the improvement of practice" (p. 167). The analysis of the data in this research aimed to improve the professional development for school leaders in the Franklin Regional School District. The validity of this data is specific to the setting and participants in this study, and the quantitative and qualitative data results provided insights that can guide decisions for that group of school leaders.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis and Results

Chapter IV presents the data analysis and results of the research project as it relates to the two research questions. The research project was designed to address the need for effective leadership development in K-12 public school systems. The research utilized qualitative and quantitative survey data gathered before and after leadership coaching sessions with principals to determine whether perceptions of self-efficacy are impacted by a coaching model. This chapter includes an explanation of the data analysis process and specific results for each research question. Additionally, the chapter includes a discussion of the results and a summary that leads into the final recommendations in Chapter V.

Data Analysis

This research project provides valuable data to support the continued growth of the district's leadership development program. The following questions were investigated as a means to facilitate this research:

Research Question #1: How does the perception of efficacy change for school leaders after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

Research Question #2: Which areas of perception of efficacy change the most and least after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

To gather data related to these two research questions, two identical surveys were conducted. The first survey gathered data from six principals and assistant principals in January 2024, prior to any coaching sessions. This Google survey consisted of eight

Likert scale questions and two open-ended questions. Following the collection of this data, principal and assistant principal participants were provided with their Leadership Circle Profile results. Each of them attended a whole group meeting during which they were provided with details about how to read and interpret the profile results. This meeting was facilitated by the five district coaches. Following this meeting, each participant was given the option to choose his or her coaches for the first coaching session. Participants were able to choose any number of the five coaches to work with. The choices are indicated in Table 6. Participants chose either one, two, or three coaches and some chose to work with their direct supervisor while others did not.

Table 6

Coaching Choices

Participant	# of coaching sessions	# of coaches	Coached by direct supervisor
1	3	1	Y
2	2	2	N
3	2	3	Y
4	2	2	N
5	1	1	Y
6	1	2	Y

Participants engaged in the number of coaching sessions shown in Table 6 during the months of March, April, and May 2024. Following these sessions, participants completed the post-coaching survey in May 2024. This survey was identical to the pre-coaching survey. Data was collected via Google survey for each participant. Each Likert scale question and each open-ended question was analyzed for trends and themes related to the research questions. Data was triangulated using this quantitative and qualitative data along with years of leadership service for each

participant, the number of coaching sessions, and whether the participant was coached by his or her supervisor.

Results

Both the pre- and post-coaching quantitative data was collected via eight Likert scale questions. The Likert scale scores began at 1, which equaled "strongly disagree" and ended with 5, which equaled "strongly agree". The participants were provided with the meaning of each number as they responded to each question as it related to their school leadership. Specifically, 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. Pre-coaching data summarized by the entire cohort of participants is found below. Figure 1 shows responses to the first statement on the survey.

Figure 1

Pre-Survey Question 1

*I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.*
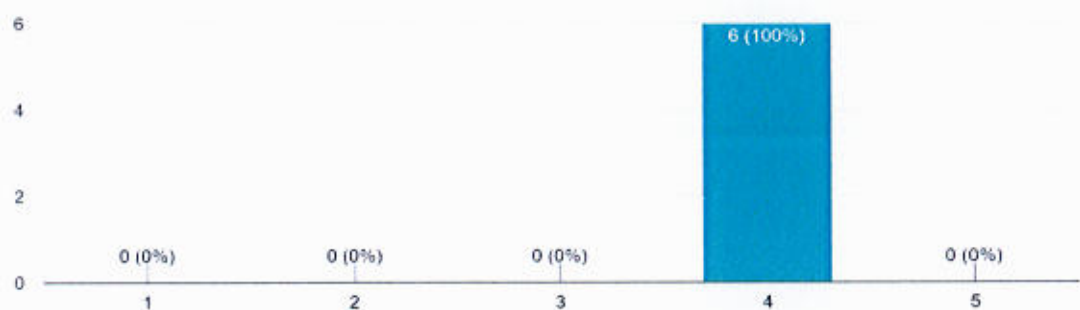
Question One asked participants to rate their response to the statement: I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set out for myself. All six participants rated

themselves with a score of 4 on the Likert scale, indicating an "agree" response to this statement. Figure 2 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 2

Pre-Survey Question 2

When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
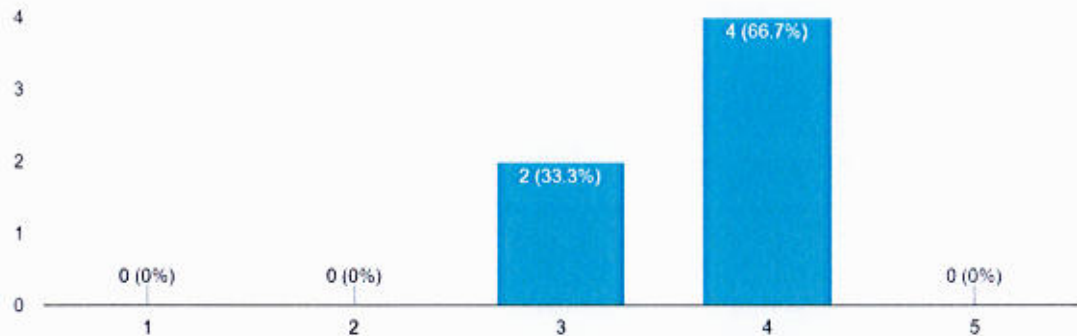
Question Two asked participants to rate their response to the statement: When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them. Four participants chose a score of 4 on the Likert scale, indicating an "agree" response to this statement and two chose a score of 3, indicating the response choice "neither agree nor disagree". Figure 3 shows the responses to the next survey question.
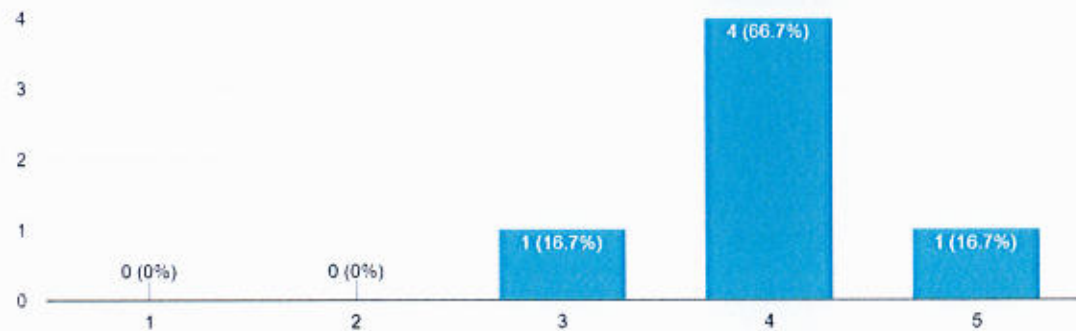
Figure 3

Pre-Survey Question 3

In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
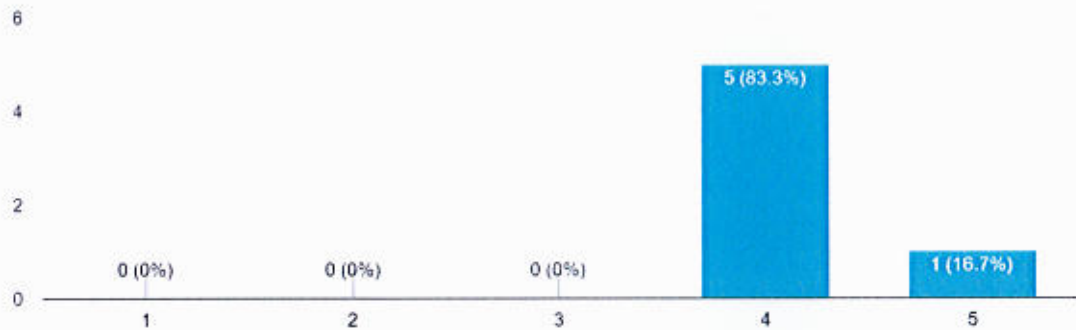
Question Three asked participants to rate themselves on the statement: In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me. Five participants answered with a score of 4 "agree" and one participant chose a 5 "strongly agree" for the response. **Figure 4 shows the responses to the next survey question.**
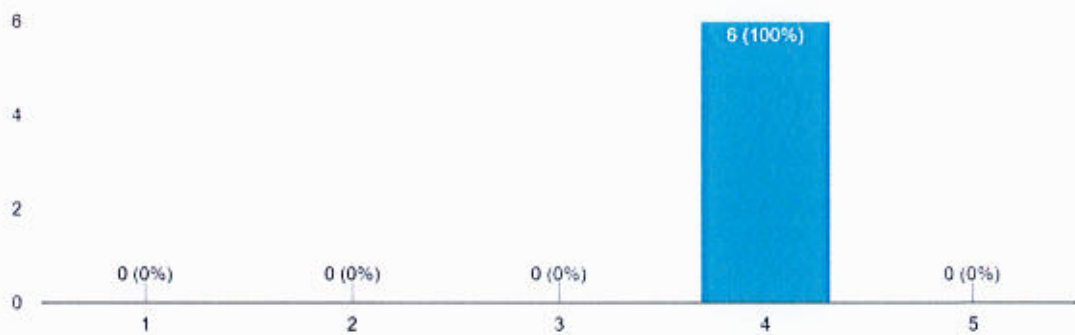
Figure 4

Pre-Survey Question 4

I believe I can succeed at almost any endeavor to which I set my mind.

In Question Four, participants were asked to rate the following statement: I believe I can succeed at almost any endeavor to which I set my mind. Four chose "agree", one chose "neither agree nor disagree", and one chose "strongly agree". Figure 5 shows the responses to the next survey question.
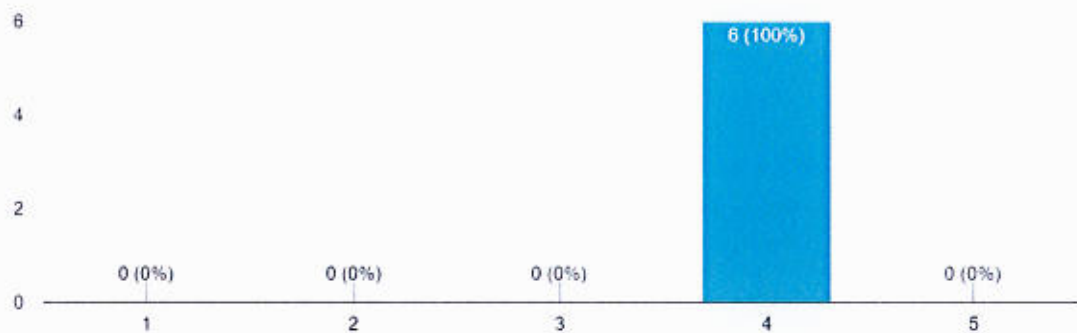
Figure 5

Pre-Survey Question 5

I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.

All six participants chose "agree" for the statement: I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges. Figure 6 shows the responses to the next survey question.
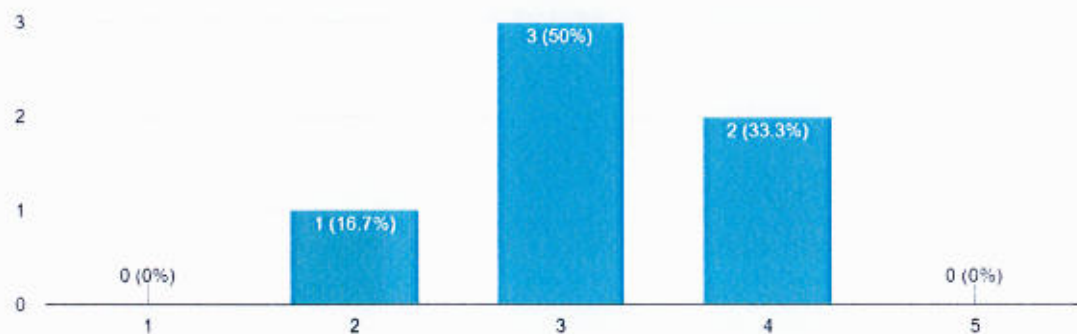
Figure 6

Pre-Survey Question 6

I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.

All six participants chose "agree" for the statement: I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks. Figure 7 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 7

Pre-Survey Question 7

Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.

For Question Seven, one participant chose "disagree", three chose "neither agree nor disagree" and two chose "agree" related to the statement: Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well. Figure 8 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 8

Pre-Survey Question 8

Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.
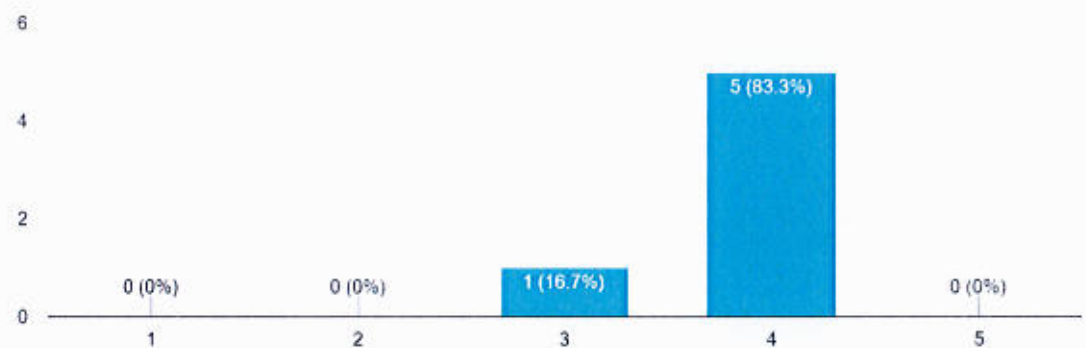
Question Eight asked participants to rate themselves on the statement: Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well. One participant chose "neither agree nor disagree", and five chose "agree".

The pre-coaching survey also included two open-ended questions. Responses from these questions were collected within the same Google Form survey as the Likert scale questions.

Open-ended question #1: Please answer each question in relation to your work as a school leader: What experiences in your professional life as a leader have made you more confident in your leadership ability? Please explain why these experiences made you feel more capable as a leader.

Several themes emerged from the responses to this question. Participants noted that they feel more confident in their leadership abilities when they are able to build capacity in others, feel a sense of connection and shared vision with those around them, and see results of their work.

One participant stated that "helping to build capacity in [these staff members] has made me confident that I can help foster this growth in others." Further comments included "rallying stakeholders around a common goal and see[ing] results" and "distributive leadership and building capacity...has supported my role when it comes to solving problems". Another participant noted that "visible progress and positive impacts on the school, curriculum, students, etc. help me to see the impact that I can have on our school/community". The importance of visible results on school leaders' confidence was also evident from the participant who noted that "earning positive results as a building (staff and students) after implementation of research proven practices have made me more confident". Additionally, the need for connection and shared vision was clearly stated by a participant who noted that "maintain[ing] the support of staff...gives me confidence in my ability to lead groups of people [and] unite them in a common focus". Further supporting the need for connection, one participant stated the importance of "having people to work closely with that are supportive of my vision and leadership".

Open-ended question #2: Please answer each question in relation to your work as a school leader: What experiences in your professional life have lowered your confidence in your leadership ability? Please explain why these experiences made you feel less capable as a leader.

Participants identified several experiences that lowered confidence in leadership ability through the survey responses. These included negative relationships, lack of knowledge or inability to solve problems that arise, and lack of alignment in values and vision with supervisors and staff. One participant noted, "I question my abilities when I am unable to solve a problem". Another stated, "a lack of growth [in staff] negatively affects the climate of the school" and still another noted that having supervisors "fail to support or recognize gains or successes" lowers confidence levels. Several participants attributed a lowered sense of confidence to areas in which they feel less knowledgeable, such as technology, dealing with difficult parent situations, and being unclear about roles. Finally, responses indicated that being on "different pages" with district leadership can also lead to lowered leadership confidence.

The post-coaching survey was identical to the pre-coaching survey. The summarized results from all participants can be found below. Again the Likert scale provided the following scoring options for each statement: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. Figure 9 shows the responses to the first post-survey question.

Figure 9

Post-Survey Question 1

I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.
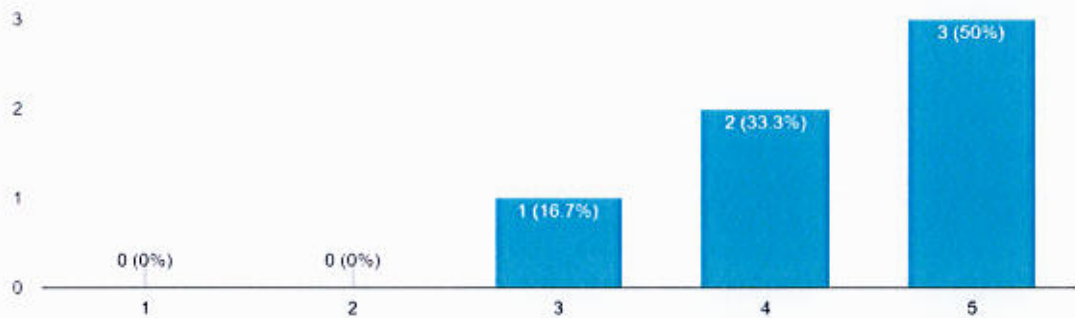
One participant rated themselves with a score of 3, indicating a "neither agree nor disagree" response to this statement, two chose "agree" and three chose "strongly agree". Figure 10 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 10

Post-Survey Question 2

When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
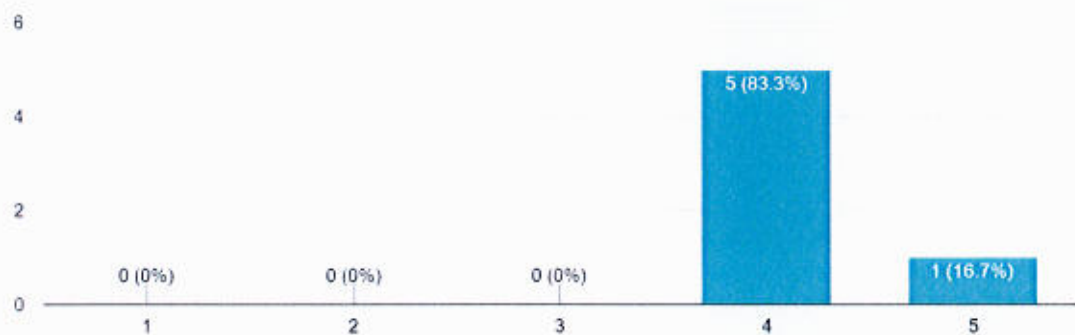
For question two, five participants chose "agree" and one chose "strongly agree".

Figure 11 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 11

Post-Survey Question 3

In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
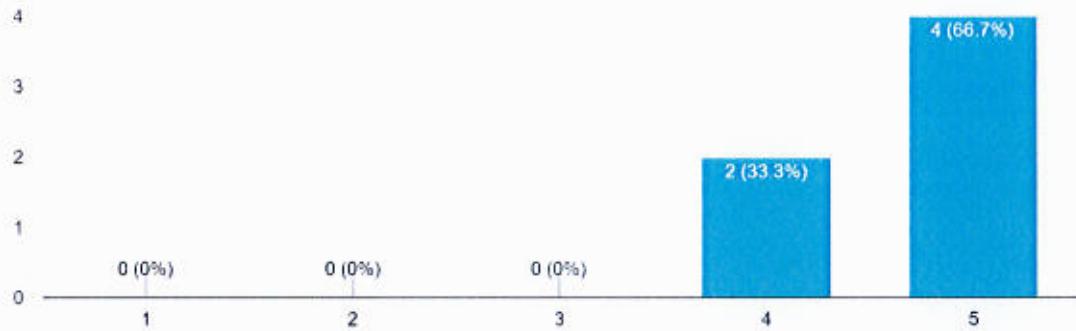
Two participants chose "agree" on question three, and four chose "strongly agree". Figure 12 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 12

Post-Survey Question 4

I believe I can succeed at almost any endeavor to which I set my mind.

Three participants chose "agree", and three chose "strongly agree" for question four. Figure 13 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 13

Post-Survey Question 5

I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.
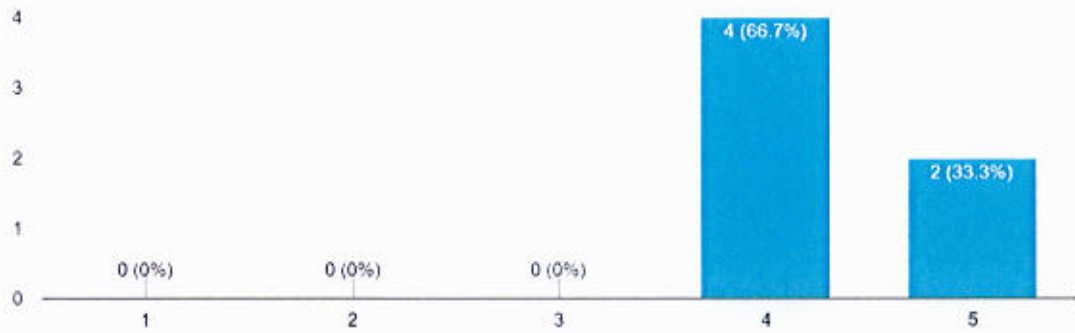
Four participants chose "agree", and two chose "strongly agree" for question five.

Figure 14 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 14

Post-Survey Question 6

*I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.*
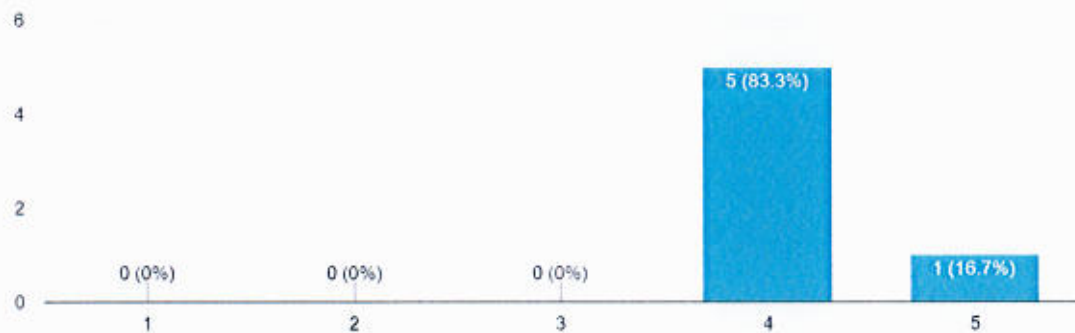
On question six, five participants chose "agree", and one chose "strongly agree".

Figure 15 shows the responses to the next survey question.
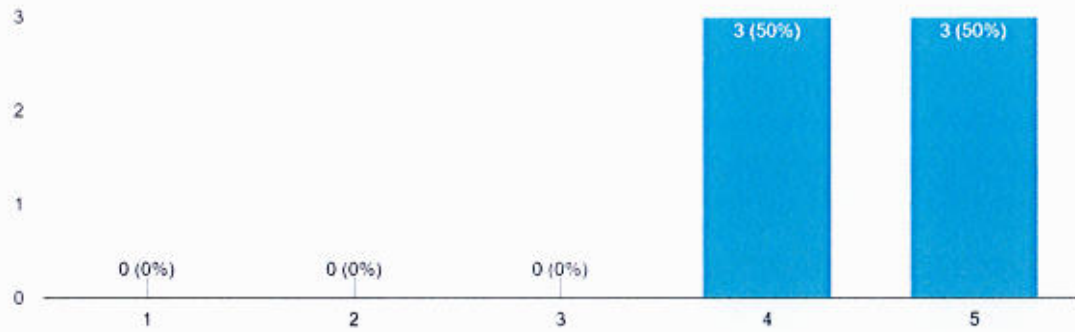
Figure 15

Post-Survey Question 7

Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
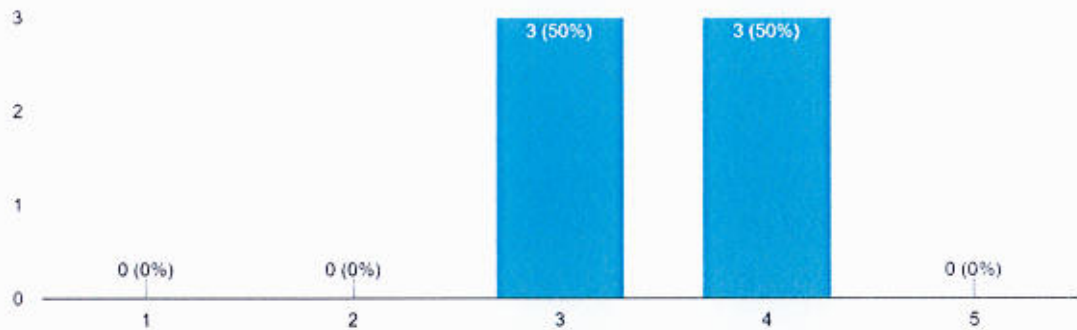
Three participants chose "neither agree nor disagree", and three chose "agree" for question seven. This question received the highest number of "neither agree nor disagree" choices of any of the post-coaching questions. Figure 16 shows the responses to the next survey question.

Figure 16

Post-Survey Question 8

Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.
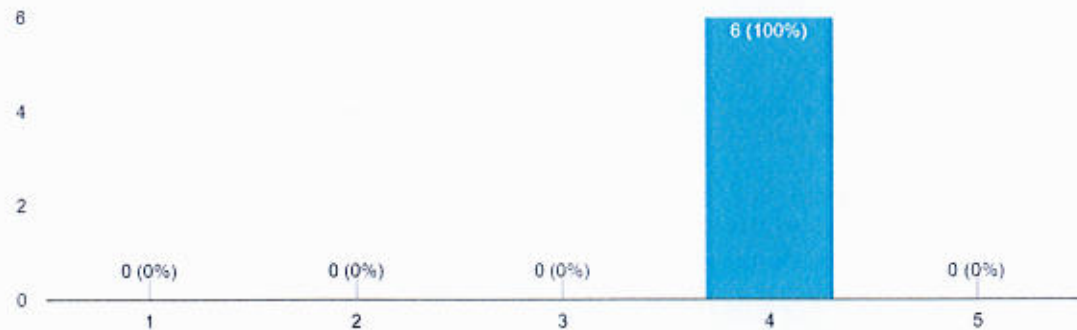
The final question showed all six participants choosing a score of four, indicating "agree".

The two open-ended questions were included in the post-coaching survey as well. Themes that developed from these responses were very similar to the initial survey responses. Confidence building experiences were noted to include vision alignment, seeing results from combined efforts, repeated practice at solving problems, and feeling connected. Those experiences identified as lowering confidence in leadership ability included feeling ineffective, misalignment with supervisors and staff, and lack of shared vision.

Analysis of the quantitative data included a comparison of pre-coaching survey scores and post-coaching survey scores triangulated with several factors. Table 7 shows the number of questions, out of eight total, that had an increase in score for each participant. Of the six participants, one chose to be coached by someone other than his or her supervisor and saw a decrease in Likert scale scores on two questions. The other five participants chose to be coached by their supervisors and saw an increase on anywhere from one to seven of the eight Likert scale questions.

Table 7

Results for Number of Questions by Type of Coach

Coached by supervisor	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions	Coached by someone other than supervisor	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions
P1	Increase on 3 Questions	P4	Decrease on 2 Questions
P2	Increase on 2 Questions		
P3	Increase on 5 Questions		
P5	Increase on 1 Question		
P6	Increase on 7 Questions		

Table 8 illustrates the comparison of pre-coaching survey scores and post-coaching survey scores triangulated with years of leadership service. This data shows very little pattern. The two participants with zero to five years of leadership experience had differing results; one had an increase of scores on two questions, and one had a decrease. Those with ten to fifteen years of leadership experience increased on one, five, or seven questions. And the leader with more than 20 years of experience increased scores on three questions.

Table 8

Comparison of Results by Years in Leadership

0-5 Years in Leadership Role	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions	10-15 Years in Leadership Role	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions	Greater than 20 years in Leadership Role	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions
P2	Increase on 2 Questions	P3	Increase on 5 Questions	P1	Increase on 3 Questions
P4	Decrease on 2 Questions	P5	Increase on 1 Question		
		P6	Increase on 7 Questions		

Table 9 shows the comparison of pre-coaching survey scores and post-coaching survey scores triangulated with number of coaching sessions. Participants who engaged in one session with their coach or coaches experienced an increase in scores on either one or seven questions. Those who engaged in two coaching sessions had an increase of two or five question scores, and one participant experienced a decrease in scores. The participant with three sessions of coaching during the study had an increase of scores on three questions.

Table 9

Comparison of Results by Number of Coaching Sessions

Number of Coaching Sessions = 1	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions	Number of Coaching Sessions = 2	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions	Number of Coaching Sessions = 3	Increase or decrease in scores on Likert Scale questions
P5	Increase on 1 Question	P2	Increase on 2 Questions	P1	Increase on 3 Questions
P6	Increase on 7 Questions	P3	Increase on 5 Questions		
		P4	Decrease on 2 Questions		

Table 10 references the data points of years of leadership experience and number of coaching sessions and triangulates those with the pre- and post-coaching Likert scale scores of 4 or 5, indicating "agree" and "strongly agree". Three participants reported an increase in the amount of answers that indicated either an "agree" or "strongly agree" response. These participants included one with 0-5 years of leadership experience, one with 10-15, and one with more than 20. These same participants engaged in one, two, or three coaching sessions. The participant who experienced a decrease in the percentage of scores of 4 or 5 across the surveys had 0-5 years of leadership and two sessions of coaching. Those with no change in percentages both had 10-15 years of leadership experience and one or two coaching sessions. Of note, all six participants reported between 63-100% of "agree" or "strongly agree" on the initial survey of how confident they rate themselves in terms of leadership self-efficacy. On the final survey, this rose to a span of 75-100% with three participants indicating 100% "agree" or "strongly agree" scores.

Table 10

Comparison of Results by Multiple Factors

Participant	Years in Leadership Role	Number of Coaching Sessions	Number of Pre-Coaching Survey Scores of 4 or 5 (Percentage)	Number of Post-Coaching Survey Scores of 4 or 5 (Percentage)	Increase or Decrease in Percentages of Scores of 4 or 5 from Pre to Post Coaching Surveys
P1	More than 20	3	7/8 (88%)	8/8 (100%)	Increase
P2	0-5	2	5/8 (63%)	7/8 (88%)	Increase
P3	10-15	2	8/8 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	No Change
P4	0-5	2	8/8 (100%)	6/8 (75%)	Decrease
P5	10-15	1	7/8 (88%)	7/8 (88%)	No Change
P6	10-15	1	5/8 (63%)	8/8 (100%)	Increase

Table 11 shows the percentage of responses to each Likert scale survey question that received scores of 4 "agree" or 5 "strongly agree" from participants. Notably, all of the questions except Question 7 received 100% "agree" or "strongly agree" scores on either the pre-coaching survey, the post-coaching survey, or both. Responses to Question 7 were in the Likert Scale 4 or 5 category only 33% of the time for the initial survey and 50% for the final survey. Question 7 is the only question that asked respondents to compare themselves to others rather than rate themselves on their own abilities and confidence levels.

Table 11

Percentage of Agree and Strongly Agree Responses

	Survey Questions	Number of Pre-Coaching Survey Scores of 4 or 5 (Percentage)	Number of Post-Coaching Survey Scores of 4 or 5 (Percentage)
1	I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.	6/6 (100%)	5/6 (83%)
2	When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	4/6 (67%)	6/6 (100%)
3	In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	6/6 (100%)	6/6 (100%)
4	I believe I can succeed at almost any endeavor to which I set my mind.	5/6 (83%)	6/6 (100%)
5	I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	6/6 (100%)	6/6 (100%)
6	I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	6/6 (100%)	6/6 (100%)
7	Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	2/6 (33%)	3/6 (50%)
8	Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	5/6 (83%)	6/6 (100%)

Discussion

This research project investigated the following questions related to school leadership self-efficacy:

Research Question #1: How does the perception of efficacy change for school leaders after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

Research Question #2: Which areas of perception of efficacy change the most and least after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

The data analysis of the results of the two surveys conducted with six school leaders included a convergent parallel mixed methods design process. The results showed that

the school leaders who participated in the study reported a relatively high level of self-efficacy prior to the coaching sessions. These participants rated themselves in the higher range with "agree" and "strongly agree" scores on almost all of the Likert scale questions. The one question that was an outlier with much lower scores asked participants to compare themselves to others. It is possible that these school leaders exhibited humility in responding to this item and did not rate themselves as highly because they felt they have room for growth in relation to others. In regard to the open-ended questions, the participants were able to identify experiences that raised and lowered their confidence levels as school leaders on the initial survey. The post-coaching survey did not show a change in those themes, but rather reinforced them.

Overall, small changes were noticed between the pre- and post-coaching survey results, but many factors may have contributed to this. The triangulation of data related to years of leadership service, number of coaching sessions, and coach choice did not appear to have a significant effect on the self-efficacy results of the participants in this study. Research question one focused on whether a series of coaching sessions would have an effect on the level of self-efficacy of school leaders, and this question will require further investigation as the results of this study were inconclusive. Research question two focused on which areas of self-efficacy are effected by coaching, and this would also require further investigation. It is likely that a new measure of self-efficacy and a much larger number of coaching sessions will need to be utilized to determine a more detailed answer to these questions.

Summary

This chapter provided information about the data analysis process involved in this study and the results of that analysis. This research study utilized a convergent parallel mixed methods design, meaning that the quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously from the same participants. Data from Likert Scale and open-ended survey questions were analyzed together and compared and related to each other. Years of leadership service, number of coaching sessions, and coach choice were all data points compared to the pre- and post-coaching survey results. Additionally, open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify common factors affecting confidence and self-efficacy in school leaders. Finally, interpretation of the data gathered provided possible insights and recommendations for further action steps in the development of school leader self-efficacy. These recommendations will be outlined in detail in Chapter V.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

School leaders are faced with ever-increasing responsibilities and constant change in the K-12 public education realm. Franklin Regional School District's administrators are no exception and require supportive leadership development to feel effective and motivated to stay in their positions. This capstone project was developed to gain insight into the effects of leadership coaching on the perception of self-efficacy in school leaders. The goal of the project was to establish an effective leadership development program that would increase perceptions of self-efficacy and support current and future leaders.

The mixed method research design set out to answer two main questions regarding leadership coaching and its effects on perceptions of self-efficacy. Six principals and assistant principals from the Franklin Regional School District participated in the research study. Data was collected before and after a set of coaching sessions utilizing quantitative and qualitative questions through a Google Form survey. Chapter III outlined the research design and methods for data collection along with a review of the validity of the research. This chapter also included an overview of the fiscal implications of the research study. Chapter IV reviewed the results of the data collection, an analysis of the data, and a discussion regarding that analysis. In the current Chapter V, conclusions and recommendations are presented based on this data analysis. The conclusions are specifically connected to the defined research questions, and limitations are noted. Finally, this chapter will also outline recommendations for future research based on the results and interpretation of the data from this study.

Conclusions

This research study aimed to determine whether leadership coaching sessions would have an effect on school leaders' perceptions of self-efficacy in order to provide support for a leadership development program in the Franklin Regional School District. This section provides conclusions related to each of the research questions as well as specific details related to the effectiveness of the coaching sessions. Finally, this section outlines how the information gained from this research study will be applied to the district's plans and the fiscal requirements to do so.

The first research question investigated ways in which the perception of efficacy changed for school leaders after a series of individualized coaching sessions.

Research Question #1: How does the perception of efficacy change for school leaders after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

The results of a comparison of Likert scale scores from the pre-coaching survey to the post-coaching survey indicated a positive change for five of the six participants. It is important to note that school leader participants rated themselves in the "agree" or "strongly agree" range on these self-efficacy questions prior to any coaching sessions at a range of 63-100%. This means that school leaders in the Franklin Regional School District already felt efficacious in their roles before engaging in any coaching sessions. Following the coaching sessions, the range raised to 75-100% of the questions receiving "agree" or "strongly agree" scores. Three of the participants experienced an increase in the number of questions they answered this way, two had no change, and one had a decrease.

Since the change in perception of self-efficacy was slight, other factors were compared to determine whether there were effects from within the study's parameters. The scores were compared based on whether school leaders chose to be coached by their supervisors or not. The five participants who chose to be coached by a supervisor as the sole coach or as part of the coaching team all reported increased scores. However, these increases ranged from one question having increased scores or up to seven questions having increased scores. The sole participant who chose not to be coached by his or her supervisor reported a decrease on two questions. While this result may be important for future consideration, the conclusions that can be drawn are limited. It is possible that school leaders rated themselves as feeling more effective after being coached by their supervisors because that actually felt that way. But it is also possible that the participants were more likely to rate themselves as feeling more effective because they wanted to please their supervisors and give them credit for coaching.

Participants are aware that this data was confidential and they would not be identified, but it is still possible that the responses were influenced by a sense of indebtedness to their supervisors. Additionally, it is possible that there was a greater connection between coach and participant due to the act of vulnerability and building of trust that occurred during the coaching sessions. The coaching sessions between participants and supervisors may have relieved some pre-existing self-doubt for principals when their supervisors reinforced the positive attributes and made them feel more confident.

Other factors that were analyzed to determine their potential impact were the years of leadership service and number of coaching sessions. No pattern emerged from

these two factors. Increases and decreases in self-efficacy scores were seen in those with varying years in leadership and those with varying numbers of coaching sessions. No clear conclusions can be drawn from this data triangulation other than a need for a larger sample size with more coaching sessions over time. With more robust data, patterns may emerge that show whether these factors play a significant role in growing school leaders' perceptions of self-efficacy through coaching sessions.

The final analysis of the quantitative data from the Likert scale questions focused on the responses to each specific question. When school leaders were asked whether they thought they could achieve goals they set for themselves, 100% of the participants responded positively with "agree" or "strongly agree" answers even prior to coaching. One of the participants answered "neither agree nor disagree" following the coaching sessions, taking this question's positive percentage down to 83%. The general interpretation related to this goal-achieving question is that school leaders do feel capable of doing what they set out to do. This is supported by the 100% positive responses, both pre- and post-coaching, to the questions about obtaining important outcomes, overcoming many challenges, and performing effectively on many different tasks. The two questions that saw an increase in the number of participants rating themselves positively focused on accomplishing difficult tasks and performing well even when things are tough. Due to the fact that the responses were mostly positive even prior to coaching, it cannot be determined whether the coaching sessions had an effect on self-efficacy perceptions in school leaders using this data.

Only one of the Likert scale questions received noticeably different scores. The question asked whether school leaders felt they can do most tasks very well compared to

other people. Only two of the six participants answered with a positive "agree" or "strongly agree" rating prior to coaching, and one even chose "disagree", which marked the only time a negative response was recorded during either survey. Only three of the six answered in the positive range after the coaching sessions, with the other three choosing "neither agree nor disagree". One interpretation of this data could include that school leaders tend to answer with humility when presented with this type of question. It is the only item on the scale that asked participants to compare themselves to others. The rest of the items were solely focused on the participants' evaluation of themselves. It is possible that the participants did not want to appear to think more highly of themselves than of those around them and chose to respond to this item with humility.

The second research question investigated which areas of perception of efficacy had the most or least change following a series of coaching sessions.

Research Question #2: Which areas of perception of efficacy change the most and least after a series of individualized coaching sessions?

As noted in the conclusions related to the first research question, it is not clear that any area of perception of efficacy changed significantly during this study. However, the open-ended responses provided a wealth of information regarding areas that school leaders identified as having positive and negative effects on their sense of confidence and efficacy. The themes that emerged for school leaders when asked to identify experiences that have increased confidence included three main areas. Being able to build capacity in others, feeling a sense of connection and shared vision, and seeing the results of their work emerged as the most common themes. While the data did not show an increase in these areas of perception of efficacy, likely due to the short timeline and small number of

coaching sessions, this is critical information for future planning. It was not surprising that school leaders would feel more confident when those around them are all focused in the same direction and working together in unison. Further consideration can be given to ensure school leaders are aware of this and how they can operationalize these important confidence boosters.

The experiences that were identified by school leaders as lowering their confidence in leadership ability are equally important to consider. The themes that arose from this open-ended question included negative relationships, lack of knowledge and inability to solve problems, and lack of alignment in values and vision. Not surprisingly, these themes are inversely related to those areas that raise confidence levels. These themes are certainly not limited to school leaders' experiences but rather point to a more general human phenomenon. When confusion, misalignment, and disconnection are the main influencers in an environment, it is more likely that a lack of self-efficacy and control over the environment abounds. These themes also need to be operationalized in future work to determine exactly what this looks and feels like for school leaders so they can be assisted in addressing these areas.

The results of this study can be applied to the Franklin Regional School District's plans for the development of a supportive coaching structure for school leaders. Knowledge regarding the levels of self-efficacy and themes that raise and lower confidence is extremely helpful in designing this critical structure. Providing targeted, individualized coaching for school leaders on areas such as building capacity and buy-in, developing a shared vision, and creating a culture of connectedness is a noble cause and is one that will pay dividends for the district moving forward.

The fiscal implications of the research study included the cost of training the coaches and the purchase of the Leadership Circle Profiles for the participants. The funding from ARP-ESSER was utilized for this purpose and includes access to additional profiles for future school leaders. The leadership development plan within the district anticipates providing the profiles and coaching sessions for teacher leaders, aspiring principals, and cabinet level administrators in the 2024-2025 school year. These funds have already been allocated, and no future costs are anticipated. District-level coaches will incorporate the coaching sessions into their typical workdays and will use the focus areas determined through this study to individualize these sessions.

Limitations

All research studies include limitations, and this one is no exception. Logistical limitations include a short, three-month timeline during which a limited number of coaching sessions occurred. It is challenging to experience a change in self-efficacy levels over this short period of time as it requires a depth of work that includes the building of self-awareness and skill-focused practice to do so. The sample size of six school leaders is another limitation. While the experience levels were varied across the sample, a larger number of participants from each range of years of leadership service would provide more robust data. Further limitations include the particular coaching methods utilized by each coach as well as the intervals between sessions. It is possible that each coach took a slightly different approach to the coaching sessions, even though all five coaches were trained in the same certification course for the Leadership Circle Profile. These changes could all effect the results of the study.

Additional limitations to this research study include external factors. The impact of the timing of the surveys, events in the personal and professional lives of the participants, and prior experiences could each have had an effect on the results. The surveys were provided on weekdays in December and May. Any number of reasons could play a part in the reasons for school leaders to answer in the manner they did. It is possible that participants were experiencing work and life events that effected their self-efficacy ratings. Holidays and year-end events in schools can often effect the most confident of school leaders. Participants may have had recent positive or negative interactions with teachers, parents, students, supervisors, or peers that could have effected their scores.

The self-efficacy scale and open-ended questions utilized in this study could be considered a limitation. Since the results indicated a generally high level of positive scores on the scale for the participants, the questions may have been too vague to capture a significant change in a short amount of time. The open-ended questions were valuable in gathering important themes related to confidence but did not measure a change over time. A more specific set of questions that targeted skills related to self-efficacy may have been a more effective tool in measuring change during this study.

Finally, the results of this study are limited to the setting and participants herein. Participants in this study are employed by the Franklin Regional School District and have specific sets of experiences that are a direct result of this employment. The results of this study can be interpreted within the setting of the district and cannot be extrapolated to apply to other settings. It is possible to make some generalized interpretations about the

needs of school leaders as they relate to self-efficacy, but the specific results and recommendations for the future are focused on the identified setting in this study.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be made following the conducting of this research study. Some of these recommendations apply to future research, and others are applicable to the next steps for the Franklin Regional School District's plans for a leadership development program. Each of the recommendations is based upon the data analysis, conclusions, and limitations noted in this chapter. This study provided a great deal of helpful information related to creating a sustainable structure for supporting school leaders.

Based on the findings, data analysis, and conclusions from this research study, several key recommendations are proposed to guide future research efforts and inform the next steps for the Franklin Regional School District's leadership development program. These recommendations are aimed at enhancing the structure and support for school leaders to foster sustainable and effective leadership practices.

First, future research should consider extending the timeline for data collection. A lengthier period will allow for a more comprehensive capture of data and a deeper understanding of the longitudinal impacts of leadership development initiatives. This extended timeline is crucial for observing the progression and sustainability of leadership efficacy over time. Additionally, there is a significant need for developing a more specific and nuanced tool to measure leadership efficacy. Future studies should focus on creating or refining measurement tools that can accurately capture the detailed aspects of

leadership effectiveness and confidence, particularly in response to targeted professional development and coaching interventions.

Additionally, increasing the number and duration of coaching sessions dedicated to leadership development could provide more robust support for school leaders. Future research should explore the impact of more frequent sessions on leaders' efficacy and overall development. Another area of focus for future studies is operationalizing the themes identified as influencing leadership confidence. This involves developing precise methods to gather evidence on these themes and understanding their practical applications in daily leadership tasks.

Tracking how perceptions of leadership efficacy evolve over the academic year is another crucial area for investigation. Research should aim to understand the dynamics of efficacy changes in response to repeated practice in specific areas of need, direct professional development, and varying positive or negative events. Insights from such studies can inform more responsive and timely support strategies for school leaders. Additionally, focused research should examine how repeated practice in areas of need, such as problem-solving or building staff capacity, influences leadership efficacy. This could involve using staff climate surveys and other feedback mechanisms to gauge progress and identify ongoing challenges.

The Franklin Regional School District can also benefit from leveraging the areas of the Leadership Circle Profile to identify specific focus areas for research. Studies should examine how targeted interventions in these areas impact perceived leadership efficacy, both from the leaders themselves and their colleagues' perspectives. For the district specifically, providing school leaders with the themes they identified that raise or

lower their confidence can help in setting personalized coaching goals. By focusing on these areas, leaders can work on improving specific aspects that directly impact their sense of efficacy, with progress measured to adjust support as needed. Professional learning opportunities should be tailored to build and share skills among school leaders, focusing on themes like building capacity, data analysis, repeated problem-solving practice, strengthening connections with peers, supervisors, and staff, and measuring buy-in and fostering a shared vision.

It is also essential to develop strategies to mitigate factors that lower leadership confidence, such as lack of connection, absence of shared values and vision, unclear roles and responsibilities, and gaps in knowledge and solutions, or misalignment with supervisors. Implementing professional development that is directly aligned with the identified needs and challenges of school leaders is critical. Using evidence from staff climate surveys and other tools can help tailor these opportunities to address the specific areas where leaders seek improvement. By integrating these recommendations, the Franklin Regional School District can more effectively support and enhance the leadership capabilities of school leaders, leading to more sustainable and impactful educational outcomes.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the conclusions and recommendations based on the data analysis related to the research questions. The conclusions are specifically connected to the defined research questions and limitations are noted. The chapter also outlined recommendations for future research based on the results and interpretation of the data from this study. School leaders in K-12 public education face mounting responsibilities

and the need to continuously adapt to changes. This is particularly true for the administrators at Franklin Regional School District, who require robust leadership development to maintain their effectiveness and motivation. To address this need, this capstone project was initiated to explore how leadership coaching influences school leaders' self-efficacy perceptions. The primary aim was to design and implement a comprehensive leadership development program that enhances these perceptions, thereby providing essential support for both current and future leaders in the district. While this research project encountered limitations in its design and implementation, it did provide direction for next steps with a focus on this important leadership development support structure.

Stability in educational leadership is vital for the success of K-12 public schools, and retaining effective school leaders depends on robust support systems that enhance their skills and self-efficacy. This research investigated the impact of individualized leadership coaching on the self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals within the Franklin Regional School District. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study assessed changes in self-efficacy among six building-level leaders before and after a series of coaching sessions through both qualitative and quantitative surveys. Despite the focus on how various factors such as the length of service and coaching frequency might influence outcomes, the findings indicated only modest changes in self-efficacy scores, with no significant effect attributable to these variables.

The research aimed to determine if coaching could enhance specific domains of self-efficacy among school leaders. However, the results were inconclusive, suggesting the need for further investigation. Future studies might consider employing a more

extensive measure of self-efficacy and extending the coaching period to yield more definitive insights. The implications of this study highlight the potential benefits of a structured coaching program within the Franklin Regional School District, particularly in areas like building capacity, developing vision, and fostering a culture of connectedness. By implementing targeted coaching, the district could significantly improve leadership stability and the overall success of its schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Sample Leadership Circle Profile

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

PennWest
UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
250 University Avenue
California, PA 15419
instreviewboard@calu.edu
Melissa Sovak, Ph.D.

Dear Jennifer DiFulvio,

Please consider this email as official notification that your proposal titled " The Effect of Individualized Coaching on the Perception of Efficacy of School Leaders" (Proposal #PW23-013) has been approved by the PennWest Institutional Review Board as amended with the following stipulations:

Issues identified in the previous review have all been addressed adequately except the following:

-It is still not completely clear what "coaching" refers to. The consent form merely states that surveys will be given "…before and after coaching sessions with a certified leadership coach" and later "…Coaching sessions will occur between [October 2023 and … March 2024]…"No further details are provided in the consent form.

--The critical issue here is whether these "coaching sessions" are:

1) something that the participants are already doing as part of their position as school leaders (and will occur regardless of whether they choose to participate in this study or not) OR

2) whether the sessions are solely part of the study and only individuals that choose to participate in the study will receive the coaching sessions.

Conditional approval:

a) If the coaching sessions are separate from and will occur regardless of participation in the study, such that the study consists solely of the pre- and post- surveys—[case (1) above] then I approve.

b) If the coaching sessions will occur only as part of the study [case (2) above], then significantly more detail needs to be provided in the IRB application about what will happen, who the "certified leadership coach" will be etc.(and must all be explained in the consent form) before approval can be given.

Once you have completed the above request you may immediately begin data collection. You do not need to wait for further IRB approval. At your earliest convenience, you must forward a copy of the changes for the Board's records.

The effective date of the approval is 9/13/2023 and the expiration date is 9/12/2024. These dates must appear on the consent form.
Please note that Federal Policy requires that you notify the IRB promptly regarding any of the following:

(1) Any additions or changes in procedures you might wish for your study (additions or changes must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented)
(2) Any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects
(3) Any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in (2).
(4) To continue your research beyond the approval expiration date of 09/12/2024 you must file additional information to be considered for continuing review. Please contact instreviewboard@pennwest.edu. Please notify the Board when data collection is complete.

Regards, Melissa Sovak, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

District Level Support Letter

FR

FRANKLIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Striving for Excellence

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
3170 School Road
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456

**FRANKLIN REGIONAL
SENIOR HIGH**
3200 School Road
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456 X5005

**FRANKLIN REGIONAL
MIDDLE SCHOOL**
4660 Old William Penn Highway
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456 X2003

**FRANKLIN REGIONAL
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**
4125 Sardis Road
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456 x5002

**FRANKLIN REGIONAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL**
4121 Sardis Road
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456 X3002

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
3200 School Road
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456 X5013

FACILITIES DEPARTMENT
3200 School Road
Murrysville, PA 15668
724-327-5456 X5030

June 30, 2023

Ms. Jennifer DiFulvio
4291 Trouthaven Drive
Murrysville, PA 15668

Dear Ms. DiFulvio:

I am pleased to write a letter in support of your doctoral capstone project entitled, "The Effect of Individualized Coaching on the Perception of Efficacy of School Leaders." The proposed research has significant value to the Franklin Regional School District. Stable and consistent school leadership are critical for the success of K-12 public schools. In order to retain and develop school leaders, strategies must be implemented to increase their ability to identify strengths, weaknesses and goals that lead to a sense of efficacy. Individualized coaching can be used to achieve this goal.

I have reviewed the project proposal and understand the following relate to participation:

- School leader participation involves completion of pre- and post-intervention surveys.
- Participation will be voluntary and school leaders may withdraw from the study at any time.
- Data collected will be kept confidential and secure via electronic files.
- Potential risks are minimal and include no more than daily living risks.

Please accept this letter as my formal consent and support of the district's participation in the proposed research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gennaro R. Piraino, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools