

IMPACT OF COACHING TOOLBOX ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF A COACHING TOOLBOX ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Instructional coaching supports teachers in curriculum, behavior, classroom management, and emotional aspects. In special education, roles such as behavior specialists, teacher coaches, and supervisors often function as instructional coaches. While various coaching methods are documented in education literature, specific strategies for communication, documentation, and challenging conversations in special education coaching are scarce. This study explores the effectiveness of a coaching toolbox in enhancing professional development and support for educators. It integrates principles of business psychology, emphasizing individual personalities, diverse human interaction perspectives, and interpersonal skill development. A mixed-methods design, employing both quantitative and qualitative data, was used to measure the impact of the coaching toolbox. The study involved a pre and post-intervention design for the participants. Assessments measured participant satisfaction, perceived impact, and changes in mindset and gathered qualitative insights. Observational data from coaching sessions focused on the application and effectiveness of specific coaching tools. This research aims to create a comprehensive model for training special education staff in coaching, from direct instruction to implementation, enhancing the effectiveness of coaching methodologies in special educational settings.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my daughter Madison. I want you to know how important it is to achieve what you put your mind to. You have always been a special gift to us, and your presence has brought me balance, joy, and purpose in my life.

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I want to express my deepest gratitude to my husband and daughter, who have been instrumental in my journey to complete this degree. This accomplishment would not have been possible without their unwavering support, encouragement, and understanding. To my husband, thank you for your patience and for picking up all the extras around the house. To my daughter, your smiles and love have been a constant source of motivation.

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Onward and Upward always!

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Instructional coaching is a method of professional development that provides support and improves the instructional practices of educators, namely teachers in the field of education. The instructional coach's goal is to support staff in the classroom setting with all aspects of their role, including curriculum, behavior, classroom management, and, at times, emotional support for teachers. Several positions in the field of special education lend themselves to this role of instructional coach, namely behavior specialists, teacher coaches, support teachers, and supervisors. Literature exists regarding different coaching methods in the field of education; however, specific research that targets communication, documentation, and challenging conversations in special education coaching has not been conducted widely. While each component is found in the literature, the challenge lies in integrating all these components to create a comprehensive coaching model.

Applying business psychology principles has proven instrumental in implementing a coaching model to train staff effectively. This approach considers individual personalities, diverse perspectives on human interaction, and the development of interpersonal skills. There is growing interest in extending these practices from the business realm to the field of education, where they can be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of coaching methodologies. In this researcher's professional experience, transitioning from program coordinator to program director revealed the challenges of implementing coaching strategies in an educational setting. The frustration from encountering staff members who failed to adhere to previously provided guidance accentuated the need for a more comprehensive approach to coaching. This transition necessitated a shift towards a more introspective examination of coaching methodologies and the

development of a tailored model that facilitated genuine progress and meaningful conversations. This experience prompted an extensive exploration of relevant literature, including works by Brené Brown (2012) as a social researcher and other organizational psychologists. However, the existing resources are needed to fully address the need for active listening, reflection, and questioning within the coaching context. Subsequently, efforts were directed toward integrating diverse perspectives and establishing a dedicated team to facilitate bi-weekly training sessions. Practical demonstrations and direct engagement with staff members were employed to reinforce the imperative of face-to-face communication and the prioritization of meaningful interactions. The culmination of these initiatives resulted in the formulation of pre-coaching and post-coaching surveys and the introduction of tailored coaching sessions to address specific barriers and challenges. While drawing upon existing literature, such as *The Coaching Habit* (2012) and *The Advice Monster* (2019) by Michael Bungay Stanier, it became apparent that further exploration and refinement were necessary to fully align coaching practices with the specific needs of the special educational environment. This acknowledgment signified the commencement of a deeper, more nuanced journey toward the evolution of effective coaching practices within the described context.

The Need for Coaching

Training for preparing and retaining coaching staff is critical to the success of a coaching program, in addition to mentors being assigned to coaches, as a mentor's primary task relates to coaching. It is also crucial to consider how to be an effective coach when one may lack the necessary skills to guide someone. The need for mentoring or coaching in instructional programs is evident in the current literature. Boer's (2023) article emphasizes the necessity of a coaching model for training new teachers and highlights the *Instructional Coaching Model* used in other

professional development areas (pp. 231-234). Boer also points out that coaching can help lower the risk of burnout (p. 231). One of the challenges mentioned in her paper is training such coaches in this model. Her perspective involves integrating mentoring and instructional coaching programs for new teachers. Creating an instructional coaching model can help support new teachers, alleviate feelings of burnout, and retain staff.

Components of Instructional Coaching

The intricacies of instructional coaching are discussed in a review of literature by the University of Oklahoma (K20 Center, n.d.). Instructional coaches work directly with teachers and other building staff, providing direct access to everyday classroom practices that principals or administrators may lack. Instructional coaching aims to enhance classroom practices and student learning and improve classroom management to decrease student behaviors. Unlike a workshop, instructional coaching involves working one-on-one with teachers and establishing a direct relationship with them. The review stresses that instructional coaches are highly trained in their areas and are seen as models for teachers rather than as supervisors. They can be viewed as peer mentors (p. 4).

The K20 Center's (n.d.) review highlights the positive effects of instructional coaching with teachers. Coaching has been found to help to retain teachers and decrease burnout. Pairing coaching with other forms of professional development has also proven effective, enabling teachers to translate one-day workshops into practice with the help of instructional coaches. The need for instructional coaching training is reiterated. Similarly, Kraft et al.'s (2019) research on instruction and achievement found specific positive effects of instructional coaching. It emphasized the importance of keeping coaching programs much smaller to pay attention to detail rather than larger coaching models. Additionally, it was not found that there were equally

effective models compared to those presented in this literature review. This model was chosen over others because it encompasses all the necessary components of instructional coaching, such as working directly with teachers, building foundational knowledge on topics like behavior and classroom management, and requiring high-quality training to ensure its effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

Instructional coaches or other related staff are hired in special education to support classroom staff. There is no significant research on how to train these staff to support the needs of a special education teacher or classroom team. There is also a lack of research on using an integrated model incorporating communication when one experiences difficulties, documentation of coaching sessions, and coaching in a special education setting. A model incorporating these factors does not currently exist for staff coaching in special education classrooms.

Research Questions and Sub Questions

1. What are the effects of implementing instructional coaching within a unique education setting?
 - 1.1 What instructional coaching model can be implemented to train coaches effectively in this setting?
 - 1.2 How does the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox influence educators' professional growth and instructional practices?

Definitions of Important Terms

Behavior-Specific Praise: Positive reinforcement targeted at specific behaviors to encourage repetition of desired actions in the classroom (Dufrene et al., 2014, pp. 567-580).

Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) Model: A coaching approach that includes observation, feedback, and instructional improvement strategies, focused on enhancing classroom management and teaching techniques (Reddy et al., 2017, pp. 46-54).

Coaching Habit: A set of seven essential questions designed to facilitate meaningful conversations and promote learning and self-discovery during the coaching process (Bungay Stanier, 2016, pp. 186-190).

Coaching Toolbox: A set of personalized tools and resources designed to facilitate professional growth and support for educators, focusing on communication, documentation, and challenging conversations in special education settings (Boer, 2023, pp. 231-234).

Evidence-Based Practices: Teaching methods or interventions that are proven to be effective based on rigorous research and data (Stahmer et al., 2015, pp. 182-185).

Feedback Loops: Regular check-ins between coaches and educators to provide and receive feedback, facilitating continuous improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, pp. 81-112).

Fixed Mindset: The belief that abilities and traits are static and unchangeable, often leading to avoidance of challenges (Dweck, 2006, pp. 203-205).

Formative Assessment: An ongoing evaluation process used during instruction to monitor student learning and adjust teaching methods accordingly (Reddy et al., 2017, pp. 46-54).

Grit: The combination of passion and perseverance in pursuit of long-term goals, emphasizing resilience in the face of challenges (Duckworth, 2016, pp. 1-2).

Growth Mindset: The belief that intelligence and abilities can develop through effort, perseverance, and feedback (Dweck, 2006, pp. 203-205).

Instructional Coaching: A professional development approach where instructional coaches support teachers to improve their instructional strategies, classroom management, and curriculum through feedback and reflection (Connor, 2017, pp. 78-83).

Problem-Solving Coaching: A coaching model focusing on developing the skills necessary to identify, analyze, and resolve challenges in the classroom or educational setting (Leighton et al., 2018, pp. 39-48).

Reflective Practice: The process of educators analyzing their teaching methods and classroom interactions to improve instructional effectiveness (Vaughan Smith, 2020, pp. 14-15).

Summative Assessment: A method of evaluating student performance after instruction has been completed, often used to determine final outcomes (Knight, 2012, pp. 75-76).

Unique Education Setting: In this dissertation, the term "unique education setting" refers specifically to the Watson Institute, a specialized educational non-profit organization that serves children and young adults with a variety of special needs, including autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, neurological impairments, and other developmental challenges. The Watson Institute provides individualized education programs and therapeutic services designed to address the diverse needs of its students, focusing on fostering independence, enhancing life skills, and improving academic outcomes. Through its comprehensive approach, which includes educational, psychological, and social support, the Watson Institute aims to create inclusive environments that enable students to thrive academically and socially (The Watson Institute, n.d.).

Visible Learning: A model developed by John Hattie that emphasizes making learning outcomes visible and measurable, guiding teaching strategies to optimize student success (Knight, 2019, pp. 1-16).

Significance of the Problem

The State of Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education has implemented a program called Attract, Prepare, and Retain (Bureau of Special Education). This model stemmed from the concern regarding the number of applicants in the state's field of special education teachers.

Baseline data from the year one report states that:

Data from the Pennsylvania Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) show that the number of initial special education licenses issued by the state decreased from 2014 to 2020, ranging from a high of 2,225 in 2015 to 1,663 in the most recent year (2020).

(Theobald et al., 2023, p. 1)

With these staggering numbers, the state initiative was needed. Early feedback from the current programs and future analysis will determine whether the programs that have been implemented have been beneficial in retaining staff. In addition, staff report leaving the field because they were not properly trained or understood the needs of students in special education.

A critical facet of this initiative is the allocation of additional funding and resources to support school psychologists and teachers in special education, while fostering career exploration and learning opportunities to attract individuals to the field. Moreover, the initiative also encompasses networking and mentoring prospective teachers (Bureau of Special Education n.d.). However, it is crucial to critically consider the measures in place to retain existing special education staff and adequately equip new teachers with the requisite skills and administrative acumen for managing a special education classroom. While the current initiative offers multifaceted support, examining whether it genuinely addresses comprehensive staff support in special education is imperative.

Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) noted that while there has been a rise in instructional coaching over recent years, there are many coaching approaches available. They discuss five approaches in coaching, including “technical coaching, problem-solving coaching, reflective practice coaching, team-building coaching, and reform coaching” (p. 159). The authors further discuss that in some educational institutions, there is training specific to instructional coaches; however, formal coaching is absent in day-to-day academia. Instead, instructional coaches may attend workshops and learn tools to use on their own time. What is also challenging is that each individual providing the training can have different approaches to coaching. It can be very daunting for instructional coaches to learn what might work best for them in the long run when working with other educators. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) make light of formalizing training programs for instructional coaches, thereby providing a means to certify them for instructional coaching. They emphasize the importance of developing coaching models, validating models for effectiveness, and generating research questions for coaching models (p. 171).

Basic Assumptions

Effectively implementing a coaching toolbox will positively impact both the educational staff involved in coaching training and those receiving this training in the classroom. The coaching toolbox is personalized to support specific variables found in the unique education setting and, therefore, needs to be more effective than standard coaching methods. The coaching toolbox will serve teachers who work with various students by age, grade, and program within the school setting. The different educational environments will support learning about the coaching toolbox and its implementation over the school year. Educators will also benefit from reflective practices in the coaching toolbox, improving instructional skills and thus student

outcomes. Moreover, the adaptability of techniques and strategies from business psychology and coaching to the educational context is a reassuring factor in the study's approach.

Basic Limitations

This study was conducted across multiple programs at the school. The sample size was limited and specific to the programs at the school, which could affect the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of educators. Differences in participants' prior experience, motivation, and engagement levels could influence the outcomes, introducing variability that was difficult to control. The timing of the study was also limited to the school year, or nine months. There were also time constraints on those involved in the coaching and training. In-person follow-up is also challenging during the school year as the writer is an administrator as part of the program. Factors outside the scope of the study, such as changes in school policies, external professional development opportunities, or personal life events of participants, could influence the results. Data limitations were also evident. The information gathered from self-reported surveys and feedback forms may be biased. Additionally, the effectiveness of implementing coaching tools may differ based on the availability and quality of resources and support in various settings.

Summary

This study explored the effectiveness of implementing a coaching toolbox as part of professional development in a special educational setting. It presents a unique approach that enhances professional development and support for educators in roles where coaching practices are utilized. Specifically, it aimed to create a model for teaching special education staff to coach through direct instruction, training, and implementation of the model. While existing literature discusses various coaching methods in education, this study's focus on integrating

communication, documentation, and handling challenging conversations into a cohesive coaching model is a novel contribution. Drawing from fields such as business psychology, this study created an effective coaching model that considers interpersonal skills and personality types, applying these principles to the educational context. In summary, this study addressed an essential absence in the current body of literature by providing a comprehensive coaching model tailored to special education settings. This model integrates essential components such as communication and problem-solving skills, potentially enhancing professional growth and instructional effectiveness.

In the following chapters, readers will find a structured exploration of the coaching toolbox's development, implementation, and impact on special education settings. Chapter II offers a detailed review of the literature, examining the theoretical foundations and key models of instructional coaching with a focus on their relevance to special education. It delves into existing research on coaching strategies, including resilience, growth mindset, and the unique needs of educators working in specialized environments. Chapter III describes the methodology used in this study, outlining the mixed-methods design, participant selection, and data collection process, as well as the step-by-step implementation of the coaching toolbox within the school. Chapter IV presents the results of the study, providing both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to highlight the effectiveness of the coaching toolbox on professional growth and instructional practices. Finally, Chapter V discusses the implications of the findings, offering conclusions and recommendations for future research, with a focus on refining and expanding coaching practices in special education to foster meaningful progress for educators and their students. With a foundation established on the need for an effective coaching toolbox in special education, we now turn to an examination of existing literature. Chapter II will explore various

theoretical frameworks and coaching models, providing insights that inform the design and implementation of this study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction to Coaching Models in Education

Instructional coaching has long been seen as a practical approach in educational settings, a means to develop the practices of current teachers, and a way to support new teachers welcomed into schools for the first time. Coaching plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher practices and enhancing student outcomes. Instructional coaches are on the front lines and have direct access to teaching staff and teams daily; this approach helps administration and supervisors understand what is happening in classrooms and the needs of the classroom staff. Such proximity allows them to provide valuable insights to administration and supervisors about classroom dynamics and emerging needs.

Sweeney, Knight, and Aguilar

Perspectives from Diane Sweeney, Jim Knight, and Elena Aguilar regarding instructional coaching models are also explored. Diane Sweeney's model, Student-Centered Coaching, is considered the reverse of instructional coaching, where student outcomes are the priority. She uses a formative assessment framework to highlight her model as goal-driven on student needs. She relies upon a "continuum" for this coaching model where clear and measurable goals are established and skill sets are targeted. Thus, this is where coaching is targeted (Sweeney, 2010, p. 9). Collaboration is present within this model for coaches and teachers to work together for the collective good of the student (p. 26).

In her work, coaching takes place in cycles. These cycles last approximately one school quarter, or nine weeks, involving data collection, analysis, and planning (Sweeney, 2010, p. 31). Additional work was involved ahead of time when working in the school building, including

meetings with the principal, establishing expectations with all of those involved, and conversations with teachers regarding their thoughts on coaching. When moving to a coaching model that focuses on students, the core components of this model focus on teaching the staff what they will need to learn in order to support the students in their classroom. Data drives decision-making instead of an emotional reaction or perspective on students (Sweeney, 2010).

In her work, Sweeney also addresses the need for training staff who become coaches (Sweeney, 2010, p. 161). In Chapter 9 of *Student-Centered Coaching*, Diane Sweeney emphasizes the essential need for structured support systems to help instructional coaches effectively transition from classroom teaching. Coaches often feel isolated or face unclear roles and challenging school cultures, and Sweeney proposes targeted professional development to meet these needs. Her approach includes coaching-focused sessions on data analysis, change management, and collaboration with principals, all of which foster a shared understanding of best practices. She also discusses the value of small-group observations, where coaches gain insights from one another, and personalized one-on-one coaching for new coaches to help them acclimate to their roles. Additionally, Sweeney advocates for “coaching labs” as a way for coaches to observe and reflect together, promoting ongoing growth. Strong district-level support, she notes, is vital for aligning communication and measuring the impact of coaching, with an emphasis on treating coaching as a growth-centered, evolving process rather than a one-size-fits-all solution (p. 161-180).

Building on prior discussions of effective coaching practices, Jim Knight (2007) outlines a collaborative coaching model that emphasizes building partnerships with teachers to foster effective instructional practices and enhance student learning outcomes. Knight operates under the “Partnership Philosophy” where teachers and coaches work together and support the teacher

in being autonomous in this process of coaching. There are seven principles included in this practice, each of which guides the overall philosophy (pp. 37-56). While working on this partnering philosophy, Knight was simultaneously involved in “Focusing on the Big Four;” “behavior, content knowledge, direct instruction, and formative assessment (p. 139). Knight parallels Diane Sweeney’s student-centered coaching approach in its strategic and outcome-oriented focus. Both Knight and Sweeney emphasize the importance of using targeted, impactful areas to drive instructional improvement. Knight focuses on specific teacher instructional practices, whereas Sweeney’s work goes further into student outcomes (Knight, 2007, pp. 139-178).

Building on the targeted focus of both Knight’s and Sweeney’s models, Elena Aguilar’s (2024) *Transformational Coaching* approach expands the coaching lens to include a strong emphasis on building emotional resilience and promoting equity. Aguilar’s model addresses instructional growth while also deeply supporting teachers’ well-being and personal development, especially in navigating broader systemic issues. Elena Aguilar describes her approach to coaching as a holistic, relational process focused on supporting both teachers’ professional growth and personal well-being. This model, Transformational Coaching, is rooted in addressing what she calls the “Three Bs”: behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being, reflecting her belief that actual change occurs when coaches help teachers explore underlying assumptions and emotional needs, not just instructional techniques. Aguilar highlights that many traditional coaching models overlook the complexity of teachers as full human beings, which she argues is essential for meaningful change. Central to her philosophy is the belief that every person—teachers, students, and all community members—deserves to thrive. Transformational Coaching, therefore, focuses on fostering connection, equity, and compassion, and positions coaching as a

tool not only for instructional improvement but also for building resilience, emotional intelligence, and community within schools (Aguilar, 2024, p. 21-56)

Applications of Instructional Coaching Across Subject Areas

Building on Aguilar's perspective that effective coaching requires a holistic approach to support both personal and professional growth, research on literacy coaching further underscores the importance of specialized knowledge in fostering student development. Similarly, extensive research has been conducted into the role of literacy coaches, particularly in understanding child development and the processes by which language skills evolve in students. Gallucci et al. (2010) examined such experiences with a literacy coach. The study found that while administration and supervisors look to instructional coaches as the "experts," this is not necessarily the case; instead, their research found that instructional coaches are continually learning (p. 921). While the study focused on one literacy coach, it followed the coach's learning process through a specific model. It also demonstrated that while the literacy coach was seen as an expert in this area, additional coaching was set up for him to learn this process. His process, however, focused on literacy strategies as training at the school district supported him (Gallucci et al., 2010, p. 951).

The same can be said for the field of mathematics. West (2017) conducted a study on a mathematical coach. Specifically, West (2017) discusses content coaching. Initially centered on math, content coaching now applies to all subjects. It is based on Lauren Resnick's knowledge-based constructivism theory, which emphasizes building on prior knowledge. The coaching process includes "a three-part cycle: preconference, lesson implementation, and post-conference," each about 45-60 minutes long (West, 2017, p. 314). This cycle involves planning, teaching, reflecting, and refining lessons based on student outcomes.

Digital Technology and Coaching

Expanding on the problem-solving theme, Leighton et al. (2018) also explored this approach within the context of coaching, specifically involving digital technology. Problem-solving coaching is a structured approach to helping individuals or teams develop their ability to identify, analyze, and resolve challenges effectively. This type of coaching focuses on building problem-solving skills through guided practice and feedback. Leighton et al. (2018) suggested that technology can assist in problem-solving such issues as time constraints. One way to involve technology is to have online meetings or digital chat when there are time limitations (pp. 39-48).

While technology offers practical support, the concept and implementation of instructional coaching itself can differ widely across districts. For instance, coaching models and approaches vary, as seen in Mangin and Dunsmore's (2015) study, which focused on using a literacy coach. Literacy coaches were given instruction and support on enacting and supporting district teachers. While the training focused primarily on instruction for the literacy coaches, what happened was surprising. They found that even if the coaches thought the approach was not working or they were not supporting those they were to be coaching, they continued with the coaching taught to them. The participants struggled to be flexible within the model. Therefore, district goals, training, and practice must be aligned (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015, pp. 182-186). Instructional coaching is critical to teacher development, providing ongoing support and professional growth opportunities for new and experienced educators. The research underscores the effectiveness of coaching in various fields, from literacy to mathematics, demonstrating that while coaches are viewed as specialists, they are also engaged in continuous learning. Effective coaching models, such as content and problem-solving coaching, emphasize planning, teaching, and reflective practices, fostering better lesson design and student outcomes. The integration of

digital technology further enhances problem-solving coaching by mitigating time constraints. However, for coaching to be truly effective, there must be alignment between district goals, training, and practical implementation, allowing for flexibility and adaptability to meet the evolving needs of educators and students.

Exploring Resilience and Growth: Insights from Brené Brown and Related Works

To truly understand coaching, or how to coach, one must begin to explore working with people—specifically, the concepts of shame and resilience, growth mindset, grit, and dignity. Hicks (2018) explores the idea of dignity in her book aptly titled *Leading with Dignity*. In it, Hicks (2018) states that “Vulnerability is where the truth lies” (p. 5). This suggests that vulnerability is the essential starting point for effective coaching.

Building on this foundation, Brown, in several of her books, discusses the critical role of addressing and understanding shame. She argues that by acknowledging our shame, we can lead more authentic lives, further reinforcing the importance of vulnerability in the coaching process (Brown, 2007). Brené Brown (2012) draws inspiration from Theodore Roosevelt's famous speech "The Man in the Arena," using the phrase "being in the arena" to underscore the bravery required to fully engage in life's challenges, even when failure and criticism are potential outcomes. She employs this metaphor to emphasize the value of vulnerability and the willingness to take risks, acknowledging that such efforts often come with discomfort and complexity (Brown, 2012).

Circling back, Hicks's (2018) quote on vulnerability, therefore, supports our understanding that being vulnerable and having real and honest conversations with others is where the work in and of itself genuinely lies. It is the heart of learning how to interact with others when we can be our true, authentic selves with one another. However, knowing the art of

communicating and giving feedback is essential to coach and coach successfully. Thereby, “Leading with dignity demands that we pay close attention to the effects we have on others” (Hicks, 2018, p. 9). In the role of coaching, coaches can have a profound effect on others; however, with this responsibility comes the knowledge and awareness that they, in and of themselves, are the model in the school building and with the teacher they are working with. How we speak to another human being, how we carry ourselves, and how we present ourselves all have to be at the forefront of our instruction in coaching. We must understand how we treat others and their impact and know that we treat them with dignity.

In Hicks’s (2018) book, she presents the idea of the balcony perspective, proposing that effective leaders should metaphorically step onto the balcony to gain a wider view of their interactions and understand the broader impact they have on others. This perspective encourages leaders, including coaches, to observe from a distance, reflecting on their behaviors, communication styles, and the overall dynamics of their coaching engagements. By adopting this viewpoint, coaches can cultivate greater awareness of how their actions influence others' dignity and growth. Hicks (2018) asserts that this introspective approach fosters empathetic leadership and facilitates more effective coaching relationships built on trust and mutual respect. Thus, integrating the balcony perspective into coaching practices enhances self-awareness and promotes a deeper understanding of the principles of dignity and a growth mindset in professional interactions (Hicks, 2018, pp. 108-115).

Although Hicks's (2018) work is primarily focused on leadership rather than coaching, the practices she outlines are nonetheless crucial and transferrable to instructional coaching. Hicks (2018) created a model identifying key elements of dignity, such as “acknowledgment, inclusion, safety, fairness, independence, understanding, giving the benefit of the doubt, and

accountability” (p.12). These elements are essential for fostering dignity in interpersonal and organizational interactions, underscoring the significance of recognizing each person's inherent worth and cultivating environments where everyone feels valued and respected. The model that Hicks (2018) has developed provides an understanding of how to be present with others and how to treat other human beings, but it is more than just how to treat them. There are elements to interactions that make others feel as if they have been treated with dignity and other interactions that make individuals think otherwise. The interactions where others feel seen and heard, as well as understood, promote the concept of vulnerability because, inherently, an individual feels safe to share their information with another individual.

Hicks (2011) also identifies what she calls the “Ten Temptations to Violate Dignity.” These are common pitfalls that can undermine trust in relationships. Among these temptations are tendencies like avoiding conflict and resisting feedback. When we give in to these temptations, we create barriers in our interactions with others and avoid taking responsibility when aspects of the relationship need improvement. Instead, we avoid what is happening around us, not taking feedback and moving along as if everything seems fine.

In Hicks's (2018) book, she cites the work of Carol Dweck. Dweck's (2006) research centers on fixed and growth mindsets. A fixed mindset is characterized by the belief that abilities and traits are static and cannot be altered. These individuals tend to complain and do not involve themselves in a problem-solving approach. On the opposite end, a growth mindset means that individuals are optimistic. Failure is believed to be part of the growing process. Dweck's (2006) research set the stage for individuals to achieve at higher rates and be more successful by having a growth mindset. There are people with fixed and growth mindsets in all fields; Dweck (2006) gives examples of both mindsets in coaching and education. When a student in the classroom

seemingly is not completing work, and an educator has a fixed mindset that they will not change, the educator is less likely to see results. Instead, if the educator has a growth mindset and delves into a problem-solving approach with this student, they are more likely to see a change in outcomes for this student (Dweck, 2006, pp. 203-205). The same can be true of sports coaches. Hicks's (2018) work cites Dweck, stating, "It seems that there is a link between the consciousness of dignity and the growth mindset" (p. 76). Dweck (2006) believes that intelligence and abilities can be cultivated through effort. Hicks (2018) suggests through this quote that by incorporating and having a growth mindset are open to the challenges that face them and have a heightened awareness of the dignity of themselves and others. These individuals stay positive and create a nurturing environment for those around them.

Communicating the importance of a growth mindset is crucial and falls to those who lead and coach. When we revisit the idea of being the model, this falls into the understanding that, as an instructional coach, we would want someone in this position to work from a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset. By extension, those they are working with would wish the same in an individual to work on problem-solving instead of operating from a stance that things will never change. Therefore, we need to set the tone, as our behaviors and actions influence those around us (Hicks, 2018, p. 85). We are to create a safe space, honor dignity, welcome insights, and encourage feedback. Without the element of trust, there is no relationship. All of these insights lead to the development of trust within the relationship, which is the first element of being able to coach.

Duckworth's (2016) concept of grit aligns with Carol Dweck's growth mindset and connects to the consciousness of dignity, as explored by Hicks (2018). Duckworth describes grit as the combination of perseverance and passion for achieving long-term goals, highlighting the

importance of resilience and consistent effort in achieving success. Regarding Dweck's growth mindset, individuals with grit believe in their ability to improve and demonstrate the dedication and resilience needed to pursue their goals despite challenges. This perseverance can contribute to a strong sense of personal dignity as individuals persistently strive towards their aspirations, regardless of setbacks. Therefore, Duckworth's concept of grit reinforces the importance of effort and persistence in personal development, aligning closely with the belief that growth and dignity are intertwined through continuous effort and resilience (Duckworth, 2016).

In exploring vulnerability, dignity, growth mindset, and resilience, we uncover foundational principles for effective instructional coaching. These concepts not only lay the groundwork for building trusting relationships and fostering authentic dialogue, as highlighted by Hicks (2018) and Brown (2012), but also provide a framework for guiding professional development. Integrating Carol Dweck's insights on the growth mindset and Angela Duckworth's concept of grit into coaching practices equips coaches with tools to cultivate perseverance and a belief in continuous improvement among educators. Moreover, by prioritizing dignity in interactions, coaches create environments where everyone feels respected and valued, essential for nurturing professional growth. As we delve deeper into the theoretical foundations of instructional coaching, these principles serve as cornerstones that inform and enhance coaching strategies, ensuring they are practical and transformative in promoting educator development and student success.

Theoretical Foundations of Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching serves as a professional development approach to enhance educator practices. Primarily, it is used to support teachers in learning effective classroom management, instructional strategies, new methodologies, and evidenced-based practices tailored

to the classroom needs. It is a collaborative process that involves feedback, modeling, and self-reflection and fosters a role of continuous self-improvement. An instructional coach provides guidance and resources to navigate their needs and the needs of their students. By promoting collaboration and skill development, instructional coaching strengthens teacher efficacy and enhances overall school effectiveness and student achievement.

Connor's (2017) article reviews elements of instructional coaching models. While there are many models, and the models vary, common elements exist across the models. One element involves teachers' responsibility for student success (Connor, 2017, p. 78). Connor (2017) refutes this point, ensuring the audience understands that many things are outside a teacher's control regarding their students. The research suggests that even highly effective instruction supported by coaching may not be equally effective for all students (pp. 80-81). A second element discussed involved the communication between coach and teacher, implying that using professional learning communities and peer coaching were supportive with communication (pp. 79-80). The last element involved "Observation and feedback are active ingredients of effective coaching" (p. 80). While providing feedback and valuable feedback is necessary, Connor (2017) notes that being able to provide feedback is challenging for coaches, and coaches may not always know what practice would work best for the teacher (p. 82). This study is critical because while common elements exist among coaching models, more research is needed on how to train coaches to, in fact, coach effectively.

Integration of Formative Assessment and Coaching

Reddy et al. (2017) discuss the Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) Model as a coaching approach (pp. 46-54). This model utilizes the Classroom Strategies Assessment System (CSAS, another tool developed by the same authors) as part of their coaching model (p. 48). The

CSC model includes observing, creating plans, utilizing the CSAS, and providing feedback. Their model also considers adult learning theory and social and behavioral literature (Reddy et al., 2017, p. 47). In this article, a randomized controlled study found that elementary school teachers who received the CSC intervention significantly improved their implementation of targeted instructional and behavioral management strategies compared to a control group. Teachers in the CSC group also noted more significant advancements in their practices. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the necessity for further research to focus on specific aspects of coaching and its impact on student behaviors (p. 53). They also suggest more formative assessment methods and measuring student outcomes from instructional coaching in the classroom. Their research highlights how formative assessment, coupled with coaching, enhances educators' ability to monitor student progress, adjust teaching strategies in real-time, and foster a responsive teaching environment.

In parallel to this research is Knight's (2019) article on visible learning and coaching. Visible Learning is an educational concept developed by John Hattie, a prominent education researcher from New Zealand. Visible learning refers to making learning outcomes visible, measurable, and impactful (Knight, 2019, p. 2). Hattie conducted one of the most extensive educational meta-analyses, synthesizing data from over “800 meta-analyses composing around 80,000 students” (p. 2). His research aimed to identify which factors impact student learning and achievement most. Hattie identified several key factors that significantly influence learning outcomes through his work. These factors include teacher-student relationships, feedback, instructional strategies, classroom climate, and student self-beliefs. Hattie's research ranks these factors by effect sizes, providing educators with evidence-based insights into what best enhances student learning. Visible learning emphasizes the importance of teachers being evaluators of their

impact on student learning. It encourages educators to continuously evaluate and refine their teaching practices based on evidence of what works best. By making learning visible through effective assessment practices and feedback mechanisms, educators can better tailor their instructional approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners and optimize learning outcomes.

Knight (2019) offers a framework for instructional coaching based on Hattie's visible learning model. The paper asserts that instructional coaching is a powerful means of translating visible learning research into actionable strategies within the classroom. Coaches well-versed in the principles of visible learning can support teachers in setting goals aligned with these principles, implementing research-backed strategies, and continuously refining their practices. This method ensures the effective implementation of visible learning to boost student learning and engagement. The paper suggests that further research is needed to explore the specific impact of instructional coaching on the application of visible learning and identify the most effective strategies for integrating this framework into practical, goal-driven practices. Nonetheless, it concludes that instructional coaching is a highly effective tool for connecting educational research with meaningful classroom instruction (Knight, 2019, pp. 1-16).

Similarly, the article by Boer (2023) comprehensively reviews various instructional coaching models. Boer's review delves into the diverse methodologies and frameworks utilized in the field, offering insights into their effectiveness in fostering teacher growth and improving classroom practices. By integrating insights from various coaching frameworks, Boer highlights the necessity of flexible and evidence-based coaching methods tailored to meet the unique requirements of educators and educational institutions. This review complements the earlier discussions by contextualizing how instructional coaching models, including those focused on integrating formative assessment and visible learning strategies, are implemented and refined in

educational settings. Moreover, Boer's (2023) analysis encourages further exploration into refining coaching strategies to maximize their impact on professional development and student outcomes, aligning with the broader goals of improving teaching quality and enhancing student achievement in schools.

Critical Practices and Strategies in Coaching

Bungay Stanier's (2016) book is about transforming leadership and coaching through simple, effective habits. Bungay Stanier (2016) focuses on defining coaching first and foremost and teaching the core principles of *The Coaching Habit*. In his work, he narrows seven essential questions to ask and use when working with others. These questions are designed to help coaches and leaders facilitate effective conversations that promote learning, self-discovery, and action.

The questions include:

- "What's on your mind?" to focus the discussion on the coachee's agenda.
- "And what else?" to encourage deeper exploration and uncover additional insights.
- "What's the real challenge here for you?" to pinpoint the core issue.
- "What do you want?" to clarify goals and outcomes.
- "How can I help?" to offer support and empower the coachee.
- "If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?" to explore priorities and trade-offs.
- Finally, "What was most useful for you?" to foster reflection and learning from the coaching conversation.

These questions are succinct yet powerful tools for cultivating meaningful dialogue and driving positive change in personal and professional contexts (Bungay Stanier, 2016, p. 186).

Bungay Stanier's (2016) work sheds light on coaching in general from a business psychology perspective. While it may not directly reference the field of education or instructional coaching, the concept of coaching is still present. Part of coaching, of course, involves asking questions and listening. However, it is not just about asking questions but also about drilling down to the essential questions and letting the other person talk. It is about being intuitive and knowing what to ask next to lead the individual a coach is working with to where they want to get to or to elicit some insight or feedback from them on a specific matter. The art of coaching also involves the art of communicating. More specifically, instructional coaches should be taught to ask questions to get the needed answers. There are, of course, impacts and benefits to this model or approach that Bungay Stanier presents. He incorporates other theoretical workings into his book, including growth mindset and grit, and sustains the positives and outcomes of effective communication in a coaching role.

Bungay Stanier (2019) then produced his work on giving advice when coaching. Affectionately referred to as *The Advice Monster*, Bungay Stanier (2019) starts readers off with a quiz to identify their *monster* (pp. 3-12). An *advice monster* is when an individual thinks they know more than others. Reflecting more in-depth, when someone feels that they are better or knows more than the other person, it significantly affects their relationship for the worse. It hinders communication because of the assumption that one person knows more than the other, leading to the attitude of "I'm going to tell you what to do because I believe I know better." When used in coaching, we must "tame the *advice monster*" in a coaching role (Bungay Stanier, 2019, p. 31). In the coaching role, the coach's objective is not to dispense advice but to coach. Advice-giving is more aligned with direct instruction, which is not coaching. Direct instruction involves telling the other person what to do or offering personal opinions on what to do. As Bungay

Stanier (2019) explains, coaching is about asking questions and collaborating with the other person to understand what they need from the coach. He also outlines key strategies to prevent the emergence of the *advice monster*.

Bungay Stanier (2019) also filters back through his initial work on the coaching habit during this text. The coaching principles work simultaneously with giving advice; instead, after individuals take the quiz to discover the elements of their “advice monster,” the reader can match the profile with what to do with that profile. As he acknowledges throughout his text, it is challenging for people to be quiet. To listen to someone else, reflect on what they have said, and then ask a question to either follow up or a variety of questions to gain the needed information. While it is not common in education, this practice of active listening is found in the therapy field.

Vaughan Smith's (2020) work *Therapist into Coach* discusses this concept of therapists moving into the coaching field. Therapists move into coaching partly because they have already been trained to listen and work with others. They have “aspects of coaching” such as the model she describes, including “reflection, practice, and feedback” (p. 15). Therapists are trained to work with others, which starts with the art of practice, receive feedback on our practice, then reflect, and move right back into practice. It is not often found in the education literature that such a practice exists; therapists are inherently taught a continuous cycle to self-reflect and pivot. It is not necessarily the case that educators do not self-reflect; instead, it is not as familiar to them as it is to a therapist (Vaughan Smith, 2020, pp. 14-15).

Active listening is natural for a therapist in a coaching relationship. Because it first and foremost starts with the relationship. “As a coach, you will use all your skills in rapport building and establishing contact with the client, meeting the client from an orientation of empathy and positive regard” (Vaughan Smith, 2020, p. 53). This statement, in essence, describes the work of

Hicks (2018), Duckworth (2016), and Dweck (2006). Vaughan Smith's (2020) framework that encapsulates all of these described practices and Bungay Stanier's work. Coaching is also not therapy; "It is a different process with a different intention" (Vaughan Smith, 2020, p. 65).

Similarly, Wang (2017) found that the concept of "teacher-centered coaching" played a crucial role in effective coaching practices (p. 20). In her study, this approach focused on the thoughts and feelings of the teacher. The coach played several distinct roles during the debriefing sessions, including acting as a "facilitator, instructor, collaborator, and empowerer" (p. 28). The role of facilitator includes "providing scaffolding questions to support teachers through their thinking and reflecting" (Wang, 2017, p. 28). As an instructor, the coach shared specific teaching strategies and ideas. In the collaborator role, the coach and teacher brainstormed and problem-solved together. As an empowerer, the coach affirmed the teacher's decisions and progress (pp. 28-32). The teacher, then, was at the center of this process and fostered more meaningful growth for the individual.

In conclusion, instructional coaching is a powerful professional development strategy designed to enhance educator practices by providing tailored support in classroom management, instructional methodologies, and evidence-based strategies. This collaborative process involves feedback, modeling, and self-reflection, fostering continuous improvement for educators. Research, such as Connor's (2017) review, highlights common elements across coaching models, emphasizing teacher responsibility for student success, the importance of communication, and the challenge of providing effective feedback. Reddy et al. (2017) further demonstrate the efficacy of integrating formative assessment with coaching through the Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) model, significantly improving teachers' use of targeted strategies. Knight (2019) also underscores how instructional coaching can effectively implement visible learning

principles, translating research into impactful classroom practices. Boer (2023) conducts an extensive review of instructional coaching models, highlighting the importance of adaptable and evidence-based strategies to enhance professional development and improve student outcomes. This synthesis highlights the critical role of instructional coaching in bridging the gap between educational research and practical classroom practice, ultimately enhancing school effectiveness and student achievement. The next section of this literature review will explore various models and approaches to instructional coaching. This examination will provide a deeper understanding of how different frameworks and methodologies can be applied to support teachers effectively, ensuring that the benefits of instructional coaching are maximized across diverse educational contexts.

Improving Instructional Coaching Models

While visible learning encompasses a broad range of educational strategies and principles, its incorporation of formative assessment practices makes it a model that supports continuous improvement in teaching and learning. Therefore, while not solely a formative assessment model, visible learning integrates formative assessment as a critical element to enhance educational outcomes. Knight et al.'s (2015) research lays out an instructional coaching cycle. He termed “identify, learn, and improve” in his cycle of coaching (p. 10). The paper emphasizes the importance of precise and provisional explanations of teaching practices by coaches and the need for teachers to see the strategies being implemented through various forms of modeling, such as in the classroom, co-teaching, or watching videos (pp. 11-18). This model of instructional coaching pairs the coach and teacher, working together with the same end goal: student outcomes. However, it also considers specific teaching strategies and the modeling piece to learn them. This model thinks the setup of a coaching framework lacks instruction on how to

implement this model effectively, namely giving feedback, pairing with staff, partnering to create goals, and working together for the sustained outcome of student improvement.

Knight (2012), however, explores the cost of such programs and cites his instructional coaching model. Coaching is seen as a very costly model for professional development due to the time it takes to train both the coach and the educator. Knight's study included three different schools implementing the model in their setting. Grants were used to fund some of the instructional coaches in these schools. He put together a framework for district leaders to truly understand what is involved in implementing a coaching program and to have their framework to work from when implementing such models (Knight, 2012, pp. 75-76).

Another model mentioned previously was the Classroom Strategies Coaching model. The model is another type of formative assessment. Formative assessment evaluates progress while something is still in development. The reverse of a formative assessment is a summative assessment that looks at information after the fact, such as student test scores. Formative assessment examines ongoing coaching, teaching, and training through an instructional coaching model. Reddy et al. (2017) created an observation form for coaching as part of this model. Kettler et al. (2019) measured the effectiveness and reliability of this observation tool called the Classroom Strategies Assessment System- Observer Form (CSAS-O) (as cited in Reddy et al., 2017, pp. 46-54). This observer form looks at engagement but not based on how long a student is engaged. Instead, it seeks to document the interactions and what the teacher does to emphasize students' engagement in the classroom. This rating system is lengthy compared to other observation tools, but it examines behavior management and instructional management in the classroom setting (Kettler et al., 2019, p. 120). The feedback provided by this tool provides

additional opportunities for coaching. It also guides coaches to observe specific elements of a classroom setting, which can sometimes be challenging.

Reddy et al.'s (2019) earlier studies found that instructional coaching became more popular in education settings because of the need for ongoing professional development. More specifically, teachers need instructional coaching and real-time one-to-one interaction in their classrooms to help them effectively apply new strategies, address challenges, and enhance student learning outcomes. This study developed the CSAS and the CSAS observation form in researching and creating a framework to effectively measure formative assessment throughout the coaching process (Reddy et al., 2019, pp. 106-108). The study specifically looked at the instructional coaching assessment model, an online rating system that can be utilized by instructional coaches (p. 106). Overall, the instrument was supported in its validity and the implications of using technology as a support in coaching.

Recently, Poulou et al. (2023) examined the implementation of the CSAS and feedback from those involved in the process. This team translated this study into Greek elementary schools. Poulou et al. (2023) found that teachers and administrators rated the CSAS positively overall, finding it easy to use and helpful for informing professional development. Through the interviews, teachers expressed “the CSAS feedback was particularly helpful with the use of instructional practices” (Poulou et al., 2023, p. 7).

Fabiano et al. (2018) also investigated the CSAS-O and teacher forms. The results of the study concluded that those who received the intervention of the CSAS all saw differences in students' behavior as the outcome and the observation forms between teacher and coach were more similar in that area. It was also found that instructional practices could have been enhanced when comparing the teacher and coach observer forms. Notably, this type of formative

assessment proved valid and effective in classrooms with students exhibiting behavioral challenges, providing timely insights into classroom dynamics and ensuring direct support and instruction (Fabiano et al., 2018, pp. 299-302).

Throughout the research on models and approaches of instructional coaching, there appear to be some things that could be improved. It seems challenging to effectively measure formative assessment and all the tools utilized in coaching. When considering the summative assessment aspect, challenges also arise in accurately measuring coaching outcomes. From there, the issue of whether instructional coaching impacts instructional practices and students' behavior in the classroom becomes a concern. Therefore, behavior should be considered as a distinct element, separate from instructional coaching models.

Dufrene et al.'s (2014) study cites the need for direct behavioral coaching and interventions in the classroom due to the changing needs of students that educators are facing. Because of these challenges and challenging behaviors, Dufrene et al. (2014) conducted a study on praise. Specifically, they looked at the need for educators to have behavior coaching related to praise and more intentionally on behavior-specific praise. When teachers praise students known to have challenging behaviors, their behavior improves. However, when teachers decreased or eliminated behavior-specific praise, it was found that students' negative behaviors increased (Dufrene et al., 2014, p. 576). Direct behavior praise and feedback to the teachers, of course, could be helpful when coaching.

Similarly, Reinke et al. (2014) conducted a study involving coaching on behavior supports in a classroom setting and implementing positive behavior support (PBS) in a classroom setting. The practice of behavior support and planning for behaviors in a classroom directly relates to classroom management. However, her study addresses the need for targeted

intervention for teachers regarding behavior management as it relates to classroom management. Again, her study cites the need for additional instructional practices and evidence-based practices for teachers in the classroom setting as they are encountering more challenging behaviors, specifically students with emotional disturbances or other behavior disorders. The teachers need to look at how classroom structure and effective classroom management are utilized to provide the necessary training and support for students who are termed at risk. Her study concluded that negative interactions and consequences with at-risk students decreased when using action planning and feedback on behavior plans (Reinke et al., 2014, pp. 74-82).

When addressing students with challenging behaviors, it is essential to consider special education within coaching models. Gunn et al.'s (2017) study explored the use of a behavior training program for teachers implemented through a coaching approach. Although external factors were at play, the study indicated that a specific coaching model incorporating behavior skills training, as outlined by previous authors, was noteworthy (p. 275). This research specifically focused on supporting a college student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The study highlights the importance of special education in addressing the needs of students with ASD, particularly in managing behavioral difficulties, emotional dysregulation, and executive functioning challenges.

Table 1

Coaching Models, Focus, Strengths and Challenges Chart

Model	Focus	Strengths	Challenges
Student-Centered Coaching (Sweeney, 2010)	Focuses on student outcomes; goal-driven approach using formative assessments.	Collaboration between coaches and teachers; data-driven decision-making.	Requires clear goals and substantial data collection; upfront work with stakeholders.

Partnership Philosophy (Knight, 2007)	Builds partnerships between teachers and coaches to improve instructional practices.	Promotes autonomy for teachers; focuses on 'Big Four' (behavior, content, direct instruction, assessment).	Time-intensive; may require cultural shifts in schools to embrace partnership models.
Transformational Coaching (Aguilar, 2024)	Holistic approach focusing on emotional resilience, equity, and well-being.	Addresses systemic challenges and personal growth; comprehensive 'Three Bs' model.	Balances instructional focus with personal/emotional development; complex to implement.
Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) (Reddy et al., 2017)	Integrates formative assessments with instructional and behavioral strategies.	Evidence-based approach with observable improvements in strategies.	Lengthy observation processes; requires training on specific tools like CSAS.
Visible Learning Framework (Hattie, as cited by Knight, 2019)	Evidence-based strategies for measurable student outcomes.	Grounded in robust research; supports goal alignment and feedback.	Complex implementation; context-dependent effectiveness.
Technical, Problem-Solving, Reflective, Team-Building, and Reform Coaching (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009)	Categorizes coaching into varied applications based on technical and collaborative needs.	Flexible and adaptable across contexts; encourages varied coaching techniques.	Requires formal training to ensure consistency and effectiveness.
Literacy Coaching (Gallucci et al., 2010)	Specialized focus on literacy skill development and coaching.	Enhances language and literacy instruction; provides specialized support.	Limited in scope to literacy coaching; may not address broader educational needs.
Yope Coaching Toolbox	Tailored model for special education integrating communication, documentation, and challenging conversations.	Designed for special education; addresses unique challenges and professional growth.	Specific to special education; needs further validation for broader application.

The Role of Feedback in Coaching

Creating a feedback-rich environment involves integrating specific, actionable, and constructive input into conversations to foster growth and development. By fostering a culture where feedback is exchanged openly and receptively, a continuous cycle of constructive

feedback is promoted. This loop enables participants to offer insights to each other, promoting reciprocal learning and collective improvement. Such an environment enhances individual growth and cultivates a collaborative atmosphere focused on achieving shared goals through continuous feedback and improvement, making educators feel part of a supportive team.

When discussing feedback, it is essential to create feedback loops to facilitate regular check-ins with individuals undergoing coaching and to evaluate the environments they foster. A more detailed examination of the components and approaches to feedback is necessary. Hattie and Timperley's (2007) research paper "The Power of Feedback" reviews evidence and instructional practices regarding giving feedback. Furthermore, they propose a model for providing feedback and ascertain that feedback should be given and utilized to ensure there are no fragments in communication. They also lay out factors that can influence or impede feedback, such as the timing of the feedback, the perception of the person receiving it, and whether the feedback will be positive or negative. When looking at all of these, when someone gives feedback, it is essential to understand that it must be clear, concise, and conceptualized (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, pp. 81-112). Feedback in this regard is also generated from some assessment that has occurred to give an individual the facts needed to conceptualize the situation and provide feedback to the instructor.

Knight's (2015) book, *Better Conversations*, integrates models from Brené Brown and an understanding that conversation starts with empathy. Conversations also begin with listening. He examines the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and the art of meaningful conversation, stressing the significance of fostering reciprocal communication to enhance transparency. Interestingly, while this book does not specifically address the topic of feedback, its entire focus is on how to engage in meaningful conversations, which inherently include feedback. In a

broader sense, these conversations can naturally lead to, and sometimes include, the process of giving feedback to others.

Similarly, Heath and Heath's (2017) work examines the profound impact that specific experiences and interactions can have on our lives, emphasizing how certain moments can lead to extraordinary outcomes. Their insights into creating memorable and meaningful experiences align well with Knight's principles in *Better Conversations*, particularly in coaching and interpersonal interactions. In *Better Conversations*, Knight (2015) emphasizes the significance of coaching conversations grounded in credibility, care, and connection. He encourages using targeted communication strategies to build trust, support personal growth, and enhance relationships. Knight's principles align well with those presented by the Heaths in *The Power of Moments*. The intentional moments they discuss can create lasting impressions and facilitate deeper connections between coaches and educators, enriching Knight's principles.

For example, Knight's approach to coaching involves providing specific, actionable feedback that supports professional growth. This aligns with Heath & Heath's (2017) concept of "peak moments," where deliberate actions can significantly influence how individuals perceive and engage with learning and development opportunities (pp. 11-23). Integrating the principles from *The Power of Moments* into Knight's coaching framework could enhance the effectiveness of coaching conversations by making them more impactful, memorable, and transformative.

In Stone and Heen's (2014) book *Thanks for the Feedback*, the authors draw on their expertise in negotiation and communication to inquire into how feedback impacts personal and professional growth. They argue that feedback is essential for learning and improvement but often has challenges due to our emotional responses and interpretations. Stone and Heen (2014) categorize feedback into appreciation, coaching, and evaluation. They emphasize that

understanding the type of feedback received is crucial for managing our reactions and leveraging feedback for growth. The book provides practical strategies and insights on receiving feedback more openly, including techniques for managing emotional reactions, interpreting feedback more accurately, and using feedback constructively. Their approach offers psychological research to encourage a shift towards understanding and viewing feedback as a tool for personal development and learning how to harness its potential effectively.

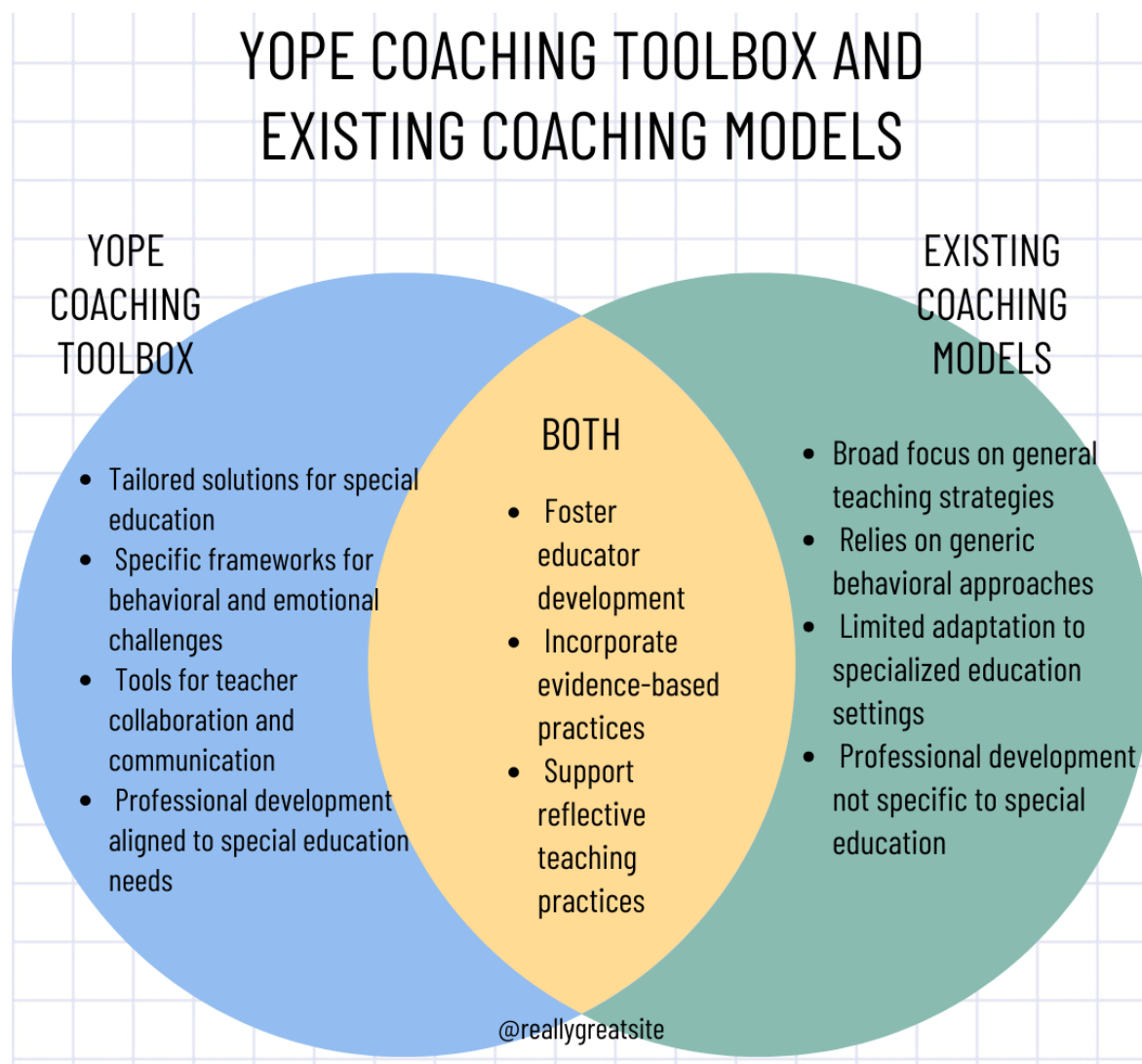
Understanding feedback is multifaceted, and it is crucial to consider how people work best in understanding and receiving feedback. This question is often raised in busy and challenging settings like early intervention and early childhood special education. McLeod et al. (2019) study supports the idea of coaching as a model and examines whether it is helpful to include other practices when coaching. They focused on settings where teachers often struggle to receive feedback. The study examined sharing videos in email to support receiving feedback in early childhood and special education settings. They found that training and video-based e-mail were, in fact, effective at improving instructional practices in these content areas (pp. 199-200).

Fostering a feedback-rich environment is crucial for promoting growth and development in educational settings. Integrating specific, actionable feedback into professional conversations cultivates a culture of openness and continuous improvement among educators. Hattie and Timperley's (2007) research on effective feedback practices, Knight's (2015) emphasis on empathetic coaching conversations, and the transformative potential of intentional moments discussed by Heath and Heath (2017), educators can enhance their ability to receive, interpret, and apply feedback effectively. Moreover, Stone and Heen's (2014) psychological approach in *Thanks for the Feedback* provides valuable strategies for managing feedback reception and leveraging it for personal and professional growth. By integrating coaching into teacher training

and professional development programs, educational institutions can create structured opportunities for educators to receive targeted feedback, refine instructional practices, and foster collaborative learning environments. This holistic approach supports professional growth and enhances student learning outcomes by ensuring instructional practices align with research-based feedback strategies. Figure 1 shows a comparison between the Yope Coaching Toolbox and other coaching models.

Figure 1

Venn Diagram of the Yope Coaching Toolbox and Other Models



Integrating Coaching into Teacher Training and Professional Development in Special Education

This analysis has explored the complexities of instructional coaching. Particularly within special education settings, where students face significant behavioral, emotional, social, and executive functioning challenges, the practice of coaching becomes uniquely demanding. While multiple approaches and assessments are available and widely applied in general education, as evidenced by this literature review, these models often require adjustments to meet the distinct needs of special education environments. The unique nature of special education settings, which serve students with diverse and complex needs, underscores the importance of adapting existing coaching models.

A specific approach to instructional coaching designed explicitly for special education was not identified in the literature. While many general education coaching practices can be applied in special education, they must be adapted to address these additional considerations. Foremost among these is the integration of coaching into the training of teachers and its alignment with professional development strategies. This ensures that coaching not only enhances teaching practices but also directly supports the specialized needs of both educators and students in special education contexts.

When thinking about integrating coaching into training and professional development in a special education setting, it is essential to understand where these teachers are coming from and what happens daily in their setting. In their research on coaching, Gersten et al. (1995) experienced the anxiety teachers had in both general education and special education settings when it came to being observed and receiving feedback. The goal of this study was to address outcomes related to students; however, what they found more that they were dealing with was

the anxiety of the educators throughout this process and the lack of training in current research and methodologies in the classroom (pp. 63-64).

Shernoff et al.'s (2017) study looks to understand and “reduce the gap” from what is found in research in general education and special education and use it to apply it in a classroom setting (p. 459). This qualitative study explored themes related to working with a coach, whether positive or negative, and what made specific coaches or coaching models most effective. The teachers overall found that it was helpful to work with a coach. They also were concerned or listed concerns when engaging in this process. Again, the anxiety from the teachers was noted. Other concerns noted included a coach not understanding what it was like in their specific classroom setting or perhaps not understanding the needs of the students in the classroom (p. 477). This study's findings align with the perspective of many teachers and administrators: implementing a coaching model should be effective for the teacher receiving the coaching.

The multicomponent training model emerged as a promising approach in instructional coaching research (Brown et al., 2014). Brown et al.'s study examined this model's use in a unique education setting. It was evident from the outset that special education teachers need to employ evidence-based practices with their students due to the significant needs of students in their classrooms. The multicomponent training involving didactic training with follow-up training activities proved highly effective. The study's results demonstrated that teachers could effectively instruct students in the special education setting. These strategies could be used to train teachers who might not have the necessary background in special education, instilling a sense of reassurance and confidence. When targeting skills, this type of training could be incorporated into in-service time because it takes a short time to implement (Brown et al., 2014, pp. 347-362).

Brown et al.'s (2014) research brings up an essential point: general education classrooms generally function very differently from special education classrooms. Because of the nature of these classrooms and the chaos that can sometimes ensue, it is essential to consider when feedback is being delivered and if teachers are in a place of hearing it, listening to it, processing it, and then pivoting to change their practice if needed. Rock et al.'s (2009) article explores the use of bug-in-ear technology to support the professional development of teachers. Although not directly focused on a specialized classroom environment, this article presents valuable insights that could be applied effectively within a special education setting. In this situation, the observing person provides feedback in a virtual context through bug-in-ear technology. The study's results implied that the bug-in-ear technology was a “practical and efficient way to provide immediate job-embedded feedback,” resulting in additional positive outcomes (Rock et al., 2009, p. 29).

Coaching for Specific Populations and Contexts

There are many different methodologies and philosophies of coaching. However, when coaching in special education, it is essential to look at the perspective of the staff involved and those who would be part of the coaching model. When coaching with this population, there is a different skill set that is necessary due to significant student behavior disorders, emotional dysregulation, social and emotional difficulties, as well as executive functioning issues, to name a few. It is essential to understand that the staff working with these populations have specialized training to provide students the supports they need to be successful.

In the course of conducting this literature review, it became apparent that a particular coaching model employed in the field of special education warranted greater attention than other traditional instructional coaching models. Instead, the researcher sought literature discussing

coaching around problem behaviors in students with autism, utilizing evidence-based practices with students with autism, and ideas to use when coaching the special education population. Stahmer et al. (2015) discuss the need for teachers in special education settings to have access to evidence-based practices. It has been well documented that the diagnosis of autism and its comorbidities have been significantly on the rise within the past decade. Even with intensive training and coaching, many teachers struggled to implement the interventions with high fidelity, especially the more complex naturalistic strategies like Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) (p. 182). According to the authors, the presence of special education classrooms within general education settings necessitates that schools re-evaluate their current teaching methods and consider implementing coaching models in these environments (Stahmer et al., 2015).

Currier et al. (2012) note that the Maryland State Department of Education attempted to train the Montgomery County public school system staff in responsibility pathways (RAP). This training involves understanding prosocial behavior and addressing difficulties in youth. The training targeted special education teachers working with at-risk students or youth with significant behaviors. Coaching was provided to the staff, and sessions were focused on components of using the RAP system. The authors noted that special education teachers need access to specialized training to work with students with challenging behaviors (Currier et al., 2012, pp. 28–30). Behavior problems are a significant source of research when it comes to the special education setting, as well as research tied to coaching teachers in problem behaviors among students with autism. Pas et al.'s (2016) study involved providing teachers with professional development and coaching in classroom management, as well as guided practice in a mixed-reality simulator (TeachLivE™) (pp. 3641-3642). Observations revealed statistically "...significant improvements in the tallied observations of teachers' use of proactive behavioral

expectations” (p. 3646). This study presents an intriguing integration of coaching within a mixed reality setting; however, it raises important questions about the necessity of this technological approach. Specifically, one might question why coaching cannot be applied to special educators in the same manner as it is within general education settings. The need for technology in coaching special education populations warrants further examination.

It could be argued that traditional instructional coaching models may not be directly effective for special educators, which might explain the exploration of technology-enhanced approaches. Other research has ascertained that coaching has also worked with web-based or mobile apps to coach special education teachers. One such case study by Wilczynski et al. (2017) addresses students with behavior problems and the need for teachers to receive direct instruction through coaching. This study showed effectiveness when web-based training was combined with coaching and feedback. Additionally, coaching feedback was helpful. Currently, teachers need additional background knowledge and specific topics or targeted interventions to utilize with students in the special education populations (pp. 433-443).

Another study by Ruble et al. (2013) evaluated the effectiveness of the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS) intervention in improving educational outcomes in children with autism (pp. 566-567). COMPASS is a manual consultation intervention that targets core deficit areas in autism (social skills, communication, and independence) by developing individualized teaching plans with teachers (p. 566-567). The web-based consultation proves to be effective. The article cites that “...for at least 30 years, research has lagged behind in offering alternative and innovative solutions that impact teacher behavior...” (p. 571). Ruble et al. (2013) also state,

...it is unsurprising that conferences and workshops, with their relative ease of delivery, continue to be a primary mode of training for classroom teachers of students with autism. Without supported models for improving teacher instruction, the gaps in knowledge about autism and limited use of research-supported classroom interventions will continue. (p. 571)

Law et al. (2019) studied technology-enabled training programs like Map4speech. Such programs can potentially serve as an innovative solution to the shortage of ASD professional training. By providing mobile-app-based instruction, practice, and individualized feedback and coaching, this approach can significantly improve intervention fidelity more efficiently and cost-effectively than traditional in-person training methods (pp. 1–10). This promising development offers hope for the future of special education.

As discussed throughout this chapter, there are numerous methodologies and approaches to coaching. However, when coaching in special education, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of both the staff involved and the unique needs of the students. Special education settings, which can include general education classrooms, private licensed schools, approved private schools, partial hospitalization programs, and residential treatment facilities, require coaches to possess specialized skills due to the significant behavior disorders, emotional dysregulation, social-emotional difficulties, and executive functioning issues that these students often present. Despite the various challenges, integrating evidence-based practices and targeted coaching strategies is essential. Studies highlight the need for specialized training and innovative approaches, such as web-based coaching, to enhance coaching effectiveness in special education. However, a distinct, universally accepted coaching model explicitly tailored for special educators

still needs to be discovered. This gap underscores the need for further research and development in this area.

Transitioning to the challenges and successes of implementing coaching, it is crucial to thoroughly examine the practical aspects of how coaching models are applied in diverse educational settings. Understanding these challenges and successes can provide valuable insights into refining coaching strategies to support teachers and improve student outcomes. This comprehensive understanding will equip educators with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate the complexities of coaching in special education. When coaching a teacher, it is important to recognize that successes and challenges are inevitable. In their book, Young et al. (2021) discuss various scenarios that may arise during the coaching process and offer guidance on managing them effectively. They devote an entire chapter to strategies for working with coaches, focusing on optimizing the coaching experience and addressing potential issues as they emerge. Although they do not specifically categorize challenges and successes, their approach emphasizes the importance of navigating difficulties, including interpersonal conflicts, that may occur during the coaching relationship.

Linking Best Practices to the Yope Coaching Toolbox

The review of literature in Chapter 2 highlights several best practices in instructional coaching that serve as the foundation for developing effective coaching strategies in diverse educational settings. Key practices include fostering collaborative relationships between coaches and educators, leveraging formative assessments to guide instructional improvements, and addressing challenges such as teacher burnout and the integration of professional development with day-to-day teaching practices. Models such as Student-Centered Coaching, the Partnership

Philosophy, and the Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) Model emphasize personalized, data-driven approaches to improving teacher practices and student outcomes.

Building on these evidence-based practices, the Yope Coaching Toolbox was designed as a tailored framework to address the unique challenges of instructional coaching within special education. The Yope Coaching Toolbox serves as the independent variable in this study, encompassing five core components that align with best practices identified in the literature: communication strategies, documentation tools, behavioral support frameworks, managing challenging conversations, and professional development integration. Each component addresses specific gaps highlighted in instructional coaching research, such as the need for targeted strategies to manage behavioral and emotional challenges in special education classrooms.

For example, the communication strategies in the Yope Coaching Toolbox are designed to foster open and respectful dialogue, building trust and collaboration between educators and coaches. Similarly, the documentation tools provide a structured approach to tracking progress and aligning coaching activities with measurable goals. The toolbox also includes frameworks for delivering constructive feedback, navigating sensitive discussions, and implementing evidence-based behavioral supports. These components not only reflect the best practices discussed in Chapter 2 but also adapt them to the specific needs of educators working in special education.

The Yope Coaching Toolbox represents an innovative application of these principles, bridging the gap between instructional coaching models and the unique requirements of special education settings. Its implementation within this study provides an opportunity to evaluate how these tailored strategies influence educators' professional growth, instructional practices, and overall effectiveness in addressing student needs.

Figure 2

Steps of the Coaching Process for the Yope Coaching Toolbox



Conclusion

The literature review highlights the effectiveness of various instructional coaching models in enhancing teacher practices and improving student outcomes. Key findings include the positive impact of the Classroom Strategies Assessment System (CSAS) model on instructional

and behavioral management strategies and the importance of adult learning theory in coaching models. Sweeney's Student-Centered Coaching model supports these findings by emphasizing measurable student goals, using formative assessments to tailor instruction, and fostering collaboration between coaches and teachers to address student needs directly. Similarly, Knight's Partnership Philosophy underscores the role of collaborative dialogue and mutual respect in building strong teacher-coach relationships, essential for implementing sustainable instructional changes (Sweeney, 2011; Knight, 2007). Aguilar's Transformational Coaching model further contributes by focusing on emotional resilience and equity, advocating for an approach that considers teachers' well-being and addresses systemic challenges within coaching relationships. Together, these models reinforce the importance of adaptable, evidence-based approaches tailored to the unique demands of each educational context, especially in special education settings where individualized support is critical (Aguilar, 2024).

The findings from this review suggest that developing a comprehensive coaching model requires integrating evidence-based practices like those outlined in the visible learning framework to ground interventions in robust research. Additionally, incorporating formative assessment and real-time feedback mechanisms, as highlighted in the works of Sweeney and Knight, enhances coaching effectiveness by facilitating continuous monitoring and instructional adjustments. Addressing interpersonal skills and communication, evident in Aguilar's work, is also crucial to fostering successful coach-teacher relationships and effective professional development.

Future research should explore the specific coaching components that significantly impact student behaviors and outcomes, particularly in special education contexts. Research could focus on identifying effective strategies for integrating formative assessment and

instructional coaching across educational settings and examining the long-term effects on teacher retention and burnout. Finally, developing digital tools and technologies to support coaching practices offers promising solutions to address time constraints and expand accessibility to coaching interventions. Informed by these insights, the next section of this dissertation will detail the research design, data collection, and analytical methods for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional coaching models in education. This methodology will provide a robust foundation to assess coaching's practical applications and its impact on teacher practices and student success across diverse educational contexts. Having explored the theoretical underpinnings and best practices in instructional coaching, Chapter III outlines the methodology used in this study. This next chapter will detail the research design, data collection, and specific steps taken to implement the coaching toolbox at the school.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Action Plan: Intervention

This chapter outlines the methodology used to address the central research question: What are the effects of implementing instructional coaching within a unique education setting? To explore this, the study also examines two sub-questions: What instructional coaching model can be implemented to train coaches effectively in this setting? and How does the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox influence educators' professional growth and instructional practices? These questions guide the mixed-methods approach utilized in this study, combining quantitative data collection, such as pre- and post-intervention surveys and feedback surveys, with qualitative methods, including classroom observations and notes during coaching sessions.

The research design employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of instructional coaching. Quantitative data from surveys measured changes in educators' professional growth and instructional practices, while qualitative data from observations and coaching sessions will capture nuanced insights into the coaching process. The unique education setting, which serves students with diverse needs, provided the context for evaluating the effects of instructional coaching and the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox. Participants included supervisors, instructional coaches, and behavior specialists who were integral to the intervention's design and outcomes.

The Yope Coaching Toolbox served as the central instrument for this study, providing tools for communication, documentation, feedback, and addressing challenging conversations. This toolbox is tailored to meet the specific needs of special education settings, incorporating

strategies that align with professional development goals. To address the first sub-question, the study evaluated how the instructional coaching model integrates with training programs to equip coaches effectively. To address the second sub-question, the intervention examined how the toolbox impacts educators' practices, focusing on strategies to enhance their ability to meet behavioral, emotional, and instructional challenges.

The action plan began with identifying coaching needs through surveys and classroom observations, followed by collaboratively defining measurable goals with educators. The Yope Coaching Toolbox was then implemented, and progress was monitored through formative assessments. Strategies were continuously refined based on data-driven insights to ensure alignment with the needs of educators and students. Data collection included pre- and post-intervention surveys, feedback surveys, observational protocols, and coaching session notes to provide a holistic understanding of the coaching process and its outcomes.

Finally, data analysis integrated statistical methods to assess quantitative findings and thematic coding to analyze qualitative data. This combination allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's effects on educators' professional growth and instructional practices. Limitations of the study, such as the unique context of the setting and potential biases in self-reported data, are acknowledged. This chapter provides a detailed framework for addressing the research questions and evaluating the implementation of instructional coaching within a unique education setting.

The doctoral dissertation investigated the efficacy of implementing a coaching toolbox model, herein called the Yope Coaching Toolbox, in enhancing professional development and instructional practices among educators within special education settings at a specialized educational organization in western Pennsylvania. This school serves children and young adults

with a range of complex needs, including autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, neurological impairments, and other developmental disabilities. Its mission is to provide high-quality, individualized programs that empower students to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally through a comprehensive support system tailored to each child's unique needs (The Watson Institute, n.d.).

This school was an ideal setting for this research, with programs such as autism-specific education, therapeutic day schools, and vocational training. Integrating academic instruction with services like occupational therapy, speech therapy, and behavioral support provides a holistic approach to student development. This multidisciplinary environment ensures that students receive the support they need to make meaningful progress in academic and social-emotional domains.

The school's commitment to individualized instruction aligns with the goals of this study, making it an appropriate setting to evaluate the effectiveness of the Yope Coaching Toolbox. Educators and staff at the school are highly trained to work with children with special needs, which allowed the Yope Coaching Toolbox to be implemented in a way that directly addresses the challenges these educators face. This structured, specialized setting offers a unique opportunity to assess how tailored coaching tools can support professional growth and improve teaching practices in special education.

Furthermore, the school is part of the broader special education community, focusing on implementing innovative strategies that can be shared and replicated in similar educational settings. This research can significantly impact not only the school but also special education practices in a wider context, helping educators meet the diverse needs of students with learning and behavioral challenges (The Watson Institute, n.d.). Additionally, the school includes several

programs. For the purposes of this study, participants from two programs were utilized. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to gather comprehensive insights into the impact of personalized coaching interventions facilitated by the Yope Coaching Toolbox. Using a mixed-methods approach was ideal for this study because it allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the impact of the Yope Coaching Toolbox, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to assess changes in instructional practices and professional development in special education settings. This approach provided a balanced view of outcomes, offering measurable data to assess the effectiveness of coaching interventions while capturing participants' nuanced experiences and insights.

Quantitatively, pre- and post-intervention surveys and feedback surveys allowed for comparisons, helping to determine shifts in educator confidence, perceived effectiveness, and satisfaction with instructional practices. This aligns with previous research indicating that quantitative metrics are valuable in gauging objective improvements in professional development and instructional outcomes (Reddy et al., 2017). Qualitative data, such as observational notes, provided context and depth, offering insight into educators' experiences with the toolbox and highlighting areas for refinement. Qualitative methods are especially valuable in special education, where unique classroom dynamics and individual teacher-student interactions may impact the coaching toolbox's effectiveness in ways that numbers alone cannot capture (Aguilar, 2024; Knight, 2019). Combining these methods supported a rich understanding of the coaching toolbox's impact, addressing both observable outcomes and personal reflections from participants. This approach aligned well with the study's goals, providing a holistic assessment of the Yope Coaching Toolbox and ensuring the findings are statistically robust and grounded in practical, real-world applications.

The Yope Coaching Toolbox is a structured set of resources to enhance coaching effectiveness, supervision, and professional growth within special education. Each component serves a specific purpose to ensure a comprehensive, practical approach to instructional support. The Coaching Compartment outlines the primary elements of instructional coaching. This section helps coaches understand their role and equips them with strategies to support educators effectively. Following this, the Application component details practical methods for implementing these coaching techniques in real-world educational settings, emphasizing that the coaching strategies are theoretical, actionable, and impactful.

Tying the Applications Together integrates various coaching practices to form a consistent and aligned approach. This section underscores the importance of continuity and coherence in coaching efforts, ensuring educators experience a well-coordinated support model. Expanding on this, Applications and The Coach's Role explores the coach's responsibilities in applying these strategies effectively, including guidance on adapting the approach to fit the unique needs of each educator. To align coaching efforts with specific objectives, The Toolbox and Coaching Goals map out how each component contributes to professional growth and instructional improvement. Diving into Communication follows, emphasizing the importance of effective communication in coaching. This section provides tools and techniques to facilitate open, constructive conversations, helping coaches build a foundation of trust and clarity with educators.

Navigating the Advice Trap addresses a common pitfall in coaching: the tendency to offer direct advice rather than guiding educators through reflective questioning. This component encourages coaches to empower educators to find solutions, supporting a growth-oriented, autonomous approach. Prioritizing Skills offers guidance on identifying and focusing on

essential skills that significantly impact professional development, allowing coaching sessions to be targeted and effective. Active Coaching promotes hands-on, interactive methods, such as observation, feedback, and collaborative planning, to foster real-time growth and immediate application of strategies. Recognizing that not all educators may be receptive initially, Resistance to Coaching provides strategies for managing reluctance and fostering openness, encouraging a more positive coaching experience.

Relationships and Dignity highlight the significance of building respectful relationships that honor the dignity of each educator. This section sets a foundation of trust, ensuring that coaching interactions are supportive and collaborative. For situations involving group coaching, Multiple Members offers strategies for managing the dynamics of team settings, focusing on balancing attention and support when working with multiple educators or staff. To help coaches address the root of instructional challenges, Getting to the Actual Problem encourages identifying underlying issues rather than merely addressing surface-level symptoms. This component is designed to promote meaningful, lasting change in instructional practices. Finally, Not Just Telling but Following Up emphasizes the importance of follow-through in coaching. This section ensures that suggestions are implemented effectively and educators receive ongoing support to maintain progress. Overall, the Yope Coaching Toolbox equips coaches with a comprehensive, practical set of tools to facilitate professional growth and enhance instructional practices in special education. This approach ensures that coaching is not only actionable and goal-oriented but also respectful of individual relationships and responsive to educators' unique challenges.

Building on this structure, each component of the Yope Coaching Toolbox was developed into professional development sessions that addressed specific coaching skills and strategies.

These sessions guided participants through each toolbox aspect, offering theoretical knowledge and practical applications to enhance their instructional practices. Below is a detailed outline of each component, providing a clear framework for the professional development content to be delivered through online platforms like Microsoft Teams or in-person training. The professional development sessions were structured to systematically introduce each component of the Yope Coaching Toolbox, ensuring that participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the model and its application in their roles. The series began with a session on Relationships and Dignity, establishing the importance of building trust and respect in coaching relationships. This foundational session emphasized how dignified, respectful interactions set the stage for effective coaching by creating a supportive environment where educators feel valued and motivated. Following this, participants were introduced to The Toolbox Image and The Coaching Compartment, which provide an overview of the coaching framework and the primary elements of instructional coaching. These sessions helped participants understand the structure of the toolbox and its application in special education. Next, sessions on Application and Tying the Applications Together focused on the practical implementation of coaching techniques. Participants learned how to apply coaching methods directly within their educational settings and how to integrate these applications to form a cohesive and aligned approach to instructional support. The session on Applications and The Coach's Role guided participants in adapting these strategies to meet the unique needs of each educator, enabling them to customize their coaching approach.

The professional development series also included specific sessions on essential coaching skills. Diving into Communication taught participants effective communication techniques to foster open, constructive conversations with educators. Navigating the Advice Trap addressed

the tendency to give direct advice, encouraging coaches to use reflective questioning to empower educators to find their solutions. Subsequent sessions covered Prioritizing Skills and Active Coaching, equipping participants with the ability to identify key skills that will significantly impact educator growth. The Active Coaching session focused on engaging in real-time, hands-on coaching practices, including observation and feedback, to support immediate learning application. Resistance to Coaching was addressed in a dedicated session, where participants explored strategies for overcoming resistance and building rapport with educators who may be initially hesitant.

For participants working in team settings, the Multiple Members session guided managing group dynamics and balancing support across multiple educators. To strengthen problem-solving skills, a session on Getting to the Actual Problem focused on identifying educators' underlying challenges, helping coaches address root issues instead of merely treating surface symptoms. The series concluded with Not Just Telling but Following Up, emphasizing the importance of follow-through in coaching. This final session underscored the value of ongoing support and accountability, enabling coaches to ensure that strategies and commitments are implemented effectively over time.

Each session incorporated presentations, interactive discussions, role-playing exercises, and follow-up tasks to reinforce learning. This structure ensured that participants gained a theoretical understanding of each component and practical experience, with opportunities to apply these skills within a supportive learning environment, either online via Microsoft Teams or in person, depending on the training format.

The research was conducted in phases over 12 months. The study began with a thorough literature review of existing coaching models and tools applicable to educational settings. This

phase, spanning the first three months, informed the development of a coaching toolbox tailored to address specific professional development needs and instructional challenges identified in the literature.

Following the Yope Coaching Toolbox development, the study proceeded to a pilot implementation phase over nine months. During this phase, a small group of educators from diverse programs within the school participated in professional development using the newly developed Yope Coaching Toolbox. Qualitative data were gathered through observational data from coaching sessions to assess the initial impact and refine the toolbox based on participant feedback. Quantitative data collection included pre-and post-intervention assessments, coaching feedback, and continued qualitative data collection through observations and coaching sessions.

Data analysis, slated for months nine to 12, encompassed analyses of quantitative data and thematic analysis of qualitative data to identify recurring themes and insights. The final phase involved synthesizing findings into a doctoral dissertation and disseminating research outcomes through presentations and publications. Overall, this methodology examined how the Yope Coaching Toolbox influenced educators' professional growth and instructional practices in the specialized context of special education at the school, contributing valuable insights to theory and practice in educational coaching.

The participants in this study consisted of supervisors, behavior specialists, and instructional coaches who work within special education settings. To ensure that the Yope Coaching Toolbox is both relevant and impactful, participants needed to meet certain qualifications. Specifically, individuals should have at least one year of experience working directly with students in special education. This experience criterion was designed to ensure that participants possessed foundational knowledge and familiarity with the unique challenges and

needs of special education. Additionally, eligible participants were those currently holding positions that involve instructional practices or professional development, such as supervisors, teachers, behavior specialists, and instructional coaches. An essential requirement for participation was a genuine interest in coaching and a willingness to incorporate new strategies into their professional practices. These criteria aimed to select participants who could fully engage with the coaching toolbox and apply its strategies in their work.

The recruitment process involved contacting a special education program in western Pennsylvania. To initiate contact, an invitation to participate in the study (Appendix A) was distributed. Direct outreach was also made to administrators and the program directors (Appendix B), who helped identify potential candidates based on the criteria provided. Each invitation briefly outlined the study's purpose, highlighting the professional development opportunities and potential benefits for participants. Those who expressed interest received further details, emphasizing the study's goals and the anticipated outcomes of participating in coaching sessions.

Upon expressing interest, participants received an informed consent form (Appendix C) outlining all necessary details about the study. This form will explain the purpose of the study, including the research objectives and the potential contributions to instructional practices in special education. The document described the activities involved, such as attending professional development sessions, engaging in follow-up coaching, and participating in data collection through feedback sessions. Participants were also informed of the expected time commitment, with a clear breakdown of the duration of each session and any follow-up components. To ensure confidentiality, the consent form specified that all data collected will be used solely for research purposes, and all identifying information would be anonymized in reports and publications.

Additionally, participants were reminded that their involvement is entirely voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Potential participants had the opportunity to review the informed consent form thoroughly and be encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of the study. Consent was documented through signed forms, either on paper or electronically, depending on the participant's preference. For those opting for electronic consent, a secure online platform collected signatures safely and confidentially. Throughout the study, participants were reminded of their rights, including their right to withdraw. Follow-up communications provided updates on the study's progress, reiterating the confidentiality measures in place to ensure participants feel informed, supported, and respected throughout their involvement. This approach to participant selection, recruitment, and informed consent prioritizes ethical considerations and respects the autonomy of all individuals involved. By carefully outlining participant qualifications and clearly communicating the study's structure, the research team ensured that participants were well-suited for the study and fully aware of their role within it. This respectful and transparent process aimed to create a positive research environment where participants felt valued and empowered to contribute to the study's objectives.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study encompassed a variety of sources to fully understand the impact of the Yope Coaching Toolbox on educators in a special education setting at the school. Quantitative data were primarily gathered through surveys administered, pre- and post-intervention (Appendices D and E) and feedback surveys (Appendix F), measuring participant satisfaction, perceived impact of the Yope Coaching Toolbox, and changes in mindset regarding

professional growth and instructional practices. These questions explored participants' experiences, perceptions of the coaching process, and changes in instructional practices.

This study began with a pre-intervention survey. This survey was administered to participants before implementing the Yope Coaching Toolbox, either online or in person. The survey targeted special educators at the school who serve in instructional leadership roles and who participated in the study. The primary purpose of this pre-intervention survey was to gather baseline data on participant satisfaction, their perceived professional growth, and their current instructional practices. This baseline information was crucial for comparing changes after the coaching intervention.

During the implementation of the coaching toolbox, observational data were collected. To gather accurate and meaningful observational data, a structured observation form (Appendix G) was developed to guide observers in documenting the impact of the Yope Coaching Toolbox on instructional practices and professional development. The observation form focused on specific, measurable areas that align with the objectives of the coaching toolbox, ensuring that the data collected reflects the targeted outcomes. Key areas of observation included implementing coaching techniques, communication and engagement with students, adaptability in responding to diverse student needs, behavior management, and reflective practices. These areas were selected to provide a comprehensive view of how educators apply the strategies introduced in the coaching toolbox. Qualitative data were additionally gathered by the use of a feedback survey after each coaching session as well as notes taken during coaching sessions.

The observations were conducted by trained observers with a background in special education and instructional coaching. Observers received thorough training on using the observation form, emphasizing understanding each criterion and the types of behaviors or actions

that should be documented. This training included techniques for minimizing observer bias, such as focusing on objective, observable actions rather than subjective judgments and maintaining neutrality in descriptions. By following standardized guidelines, observers will be able to collect data consistently, contributing to the reliability of the findings.

A post-intervention survey was conducted after the full implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox. This survey was administered to the same group of special education educators who participated in the pre-intervention survey. While both surveys measured similar domains—satisfaction, mindset, and instructional practices—the questions and format were not identical. The post-intervention survey was specifically designed to assess perceived changes resulting from the coaching intervention and to evaluate the overall impact of the Yope Coaching Toolbox on educators’ professional development and instructional effectiveness. Although the surveys were not the same, comparing pre- and post-intervention responses offered meaningful insights into the outcomes of the coaching implementation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study involved a structured approach to make sense of the diverse data sources collected. Quantitative data, including pre- and post-intervention surveys and feedback surveys measuring participant satisfaction and perceived impact, underwent statistical analysis. Qualitative observational data were analyzed using thematic analysis with assistance of generative AI tool ChatGPT. The researcher entered qualitative notes on the structured observation forms, the initial and final classroom observations, and the open-ended coaching feedback survey responses into ChatGPT, prompting the AI to identify recurring codes. The researcher then conducted a detailed review of the codes identified by ChatGPT to ensure accuracy and consistency with what was observed, and then the researcher grouped common

codes into themes. Using AI streamlined the process, and the entire approach helped to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' experiences with the Yope Coaching Toolbox, offering profound insights into the qualitative impacts of the intervention on instructional practices and professional development. By integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses, this methodology aimed to comprehensively understand how the Yope Coaching Toolbox influences educators' practices and growth within the specialized context of special education at the school.

Site Permission

Site permission was granted by the Watson Institute (Appendix H). The school does not have its own Institutional Review Board (IRB); however, the study has been aligned with the ethical guidelines and standards of Slippery Rock University's IRB, where necessary approvals for human subjects' research have been obtained (Appendix I). To initiate access to stakeholders, participants, and data sources at the school, formal requests were submitted detailing the study's objectives, methodologies, and anticipated impacts. This approval ensures that the research is conducted ethically and follows the policies and protocols of Slippery Rock University and the school.

Presentation of Results

The results of this study were disseminated through multiple channels to ensure broad impact and accessibility. First, the findings were presented during the dissertation defense and submitted to the university's digital repository, making them accessible to other researchers and practitioners. Key findings may also be published in peer-reviewed academic journals to contribute to the broader research on instructional coaching and special education. Additionally, the results will be shared at educational conferences, allowing for dissemination among educators, researchers, and policymakers. Insights from the study will be integrated into

professional development workshops and training sessions at the school and other educational institutions, focusing on applying the successful elements of the Yope Coaching Toolbox to improve teaching practices and student outcomes. Participants in the study will receive a summary report, providing feedback on the impact of the coaching toolbox and offering recommendations for further application. The findings may also be shared through webinars and online platforms, making them accessible to a wider audience and facilitating broader discussions. Collaboration with the school was essential for using the results to inform future coaching initiatives and instructional strategies within the institution.

Limitations

The study has limitations that should be noted. For instance, the sample used in the study comes exclusively from the school, which may limit how applicable the findings are to other educational settings. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data from surveys, which may introduce response bias. This means participants may provide socially desirable answers rather than accurate reflections of their experiences. Time constraints within the academic calendar also impacted the depth and duration of coaching sessions and data collection efforts, potentially influencing the comprehensiveness of the study's results. Furthermore, variations in participants' prior experience, motivation levels, and engagement with the Yope Coaching Toolbox could introduce additional variability into the outcomes measured. Lastly, external factors such as changes in educational policies or unforeseen events within the school could affect the study's implementation and interpretation of results. Recognizing these limitations is essential for accurately interpreting and applying the study's findings effectively within special education coaching practices.

Conclusion

The action plan for this intervention provided a structured and thorough approach to evaluating the efficacy of the Yope Coaching Toolbox within a specialized educational setting. By focusing on a well-defined participant group, implementing a comprehensive training series, and utilizing a mixed-methods approach for data collection, this study aimed to gather valuable insights into the impact of targeted coaching interventions on professional development and instructional practices. The diverse and rigorous data collection methods, including pre- and post-intervention surveys, observational data, and ongoing follow-up sessions, offered a nuanced view of the toolbox's effectiveness in real-world educational environments. Additionally, careful attention to minimizing bias, ensuring validity and reliability, and maintaining ethical standards throughout the study process reinforces the credibility of the findings.

This research has the potential to not only enhance the practices of educators within the study site but also to contribute valuable knowledge to the broader field of special education coaching. By sharing the results through various academic and professional platforms, this study aimed to inform future coaching initiatives and instructional strategies, promoting evidence-based practices that address the complex needs of educators and students in specialized settings. As we transition to the next chapter, the focus shifts to presenting and analyzing the findings, which will offer insights into the actual impact of the Yope Coaching Toolbox on enhancing instructional efficacy and fostering professional growth among participants. With the methodology defined, including participant selection and intervention details, we move on to the study's findings. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected, offering insights into the coaching toolbox's impact on professional growth and instructional practices.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Restatement of Research Questions

This research study aimed to explore the impact of implementing a coaching toolbox explicitly designed for staff working in special education settings. While instructional coaching has been widely used across educational contexts, there is a clear gap in models that address the unique needs of special education classrooms, particularly around communication, documentation, and navigating challenging conversations. This study examines how the Yope Coaching Toolbox, a model created to meet these needs, supports professional growth and improves instructional practices. The following research questions were proposed:

1. What are the effects of implementing instructional coaching within a unique education setting?
 - 1.1 What instructional coaching model can be implemented to train coaches effectively in this setting?
 - 1.2 How does the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox influence educators' professional growth and instructional practices?

This research used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the measurable outcomes and lived experiences of special educators participating in the coaching process. The ultimate goal was to develop a comprehensive, practical, and sustainable coaching framework that enhances educator effectiveness and improves outcomes for students with complex needs.

Results were collected and analyzed in a mixed-methods format. The flow of the coaching toolbox began and ended with an observation, and then six weeks of alternating a training session and an in-person training session on the topic of coaching. Staff completed a pre-

and post-intervention survey as well as Coaching Feedback forms that included open-ended and Likert scale questions. The questions in the form asked the participants to rate their level of confidence and communication as well as problem-solving abilities. Other open-ended questions asked about professional goals. The Coaching Feedback form assesses the observer/trainer in this study regarding the implementation of materials and checks for knowledge on information covered in the training during active coaching sessions. Observations were also completed by the trainer/observer at the beginning and end of the study.

Participants

The participants in this study included five professionals employed in a special education setting: one behavior specialist, three supervisors, and one instructional coach. During the study, these participants all used the Yope Coaching Toolbox to work with teachers in a coaching capacity. All participants were Caucasian females between the ages of 30 and 45, each with at least one year of experience working at a specialized school in western Pennsylvania. An initial information session was held to outline the study timeline and expectations, during which the consent form was reviewed and clarifications were provided as needed. One potential participant withdrew following this session, temporarily reducing the number of participants. However, within a short period, additional confirmations increased the total number of participants to five. These fluctuations reflected the dynamic nature of the school year, particularly during March, which appeared to be a notably stressful period for staff due to increased demands and responsibilities.

Qualitative Data Findings

Observation Summary

Qualitative data were coded using the generative AI tool ChatGPT and analyzed for the initial observations. These observations were conducted prior to the full implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox to establish a baseline understanding of current practices. Coordinating schedules proved challenging due to participants' workload and the time constraints of the academic calendar. Observational data collected early in the study indicated that while participants were present in classrooms, they were not consistently engaging in active coaching practices. This observation prompted reflection on the degree to which instructional coaching was being implemented with fidelity. Notably, of the behavior specialists invited to participate, only one actually participated; others cited heavy caseloads and additional responsibilities that prevented them from allocating time for participation in the research. These contextual factors contributed essential insights into the practical realities of implementing a coaching model within a specialized educational environment.

Three rounds of coaching sessions were conducted to understand how participants supported instruction, interacted with students and staff, and began utilizing components of the Yope Coaching Toolbox. While each classroom setting was unique regarding age range and student needs, several themes emerged across observations that speak to the strengths present and the areas where coaching practices are still developing. These observations revealed a commitment among study participants and the teachers they were coaching to enhance teaching strategies, reflecting a willingness to embrace new methodologies. The varying age ranges also necessitated differentiated approaches tailored to diverse learning styles. As participants engaged in collaborative discussions, they were able to share best practices and resources, leading to a

more cohesive understanding of practical coaching techniques. This ongoing professional development indicates a promising trajectory for future classroom instructional improvements.

Initial Classroom Observation

The following section extends the abovementioned findings and focuses more specifically on what was observed during the initial classroom walkthroughs. These observations, conducted before the coaching intervention, revealed limited evidence of structured coaching behaviors. While staff were engaged in classroom responsibilities, direct instructional coaching strategies—such as modeling, goal setting, or feedback—were infrequently observed. The lack of visible coaching interactions underscored the need for a more formalized and intentional coaching framework. These baseline findings helped shape the direction and emphasis of the Yope Coaching Toolbox as the intervention progressed.

Classroom management across observations was generally consistent and supported by routines, posted expectations, and visual systems. Teams used a variety of strategies to maintain structure, including job boards, visuals, schedules, timers, and countdowns. In several rooms, staff demonstrated calm and proactive responses to student behaviors. Students appeared familiar with the flow of the day and knew what was expected of them. Even in classrooms where significant behaviors were observed, staff responded with consistency and regulation strategies, which helped maintain safety and predictability.

Instructional delivery varied depending on the time of day and classroom activity. Several observations occurred during lunch or transition times, which limited opportunities to observe formal instruction but offered insight into how staff communicated with and supported students. Many classrooms demonstrated differentiated instruction through communication systems, including LAMP, Proloquo2Go, visual boards, iPads, and verbal prompting. While visuals were

present in most settings, some—such as coaching cues, data tracking charts, or procedural reminders—were designed primarily for adult reference, while others, like visual schedules, behavior prompts, or task strips, were intended for direct student use. Instructions were typically provided clearly, and staff adjusted expectations based on students' individual needs.

Student engagement during the initial classroom observations—conducted across five instructional settings prior to the coaching intervention—was mixed. These baseline observations were intended to document the presence or absence of coaching practices and gather contextual information related to student engagement, staff interaction, and instructional routines. In some classrooms, engagement was high, with students participating in structured activities, centers, or hands-on tasks. In other settings, particularly during less structured times such as lunch or passive video watching, participation dropped noticeably. Staff presence and prompting often played a key role in maintaining student involvement. Peer-to-peer engagement was limited, and most student interactions occurred with staff members rather than classmates. This may reflect both the developmental needs of the students and the nature of the observed classroom activities. These early observations were necessary to establish a baseline of existing practices before implementing the Yope Coaching Toolbox.

Regarding coaching toolbox utilization, most participants were not yet observed actively engaging in coaching behaviors with other staff. Participants sometimes covered a classroom or worked directly with students during the observation, limiting their ability to demonstrate coaching. One participant was observed providing encouragement and feedback to a team member, which aligns with the early use of the toolbox. However, in general, participants were still in the beginning stages of implementation. The coach's role was not always clearly defined

in the moment, and there was minimal evidence of modeling, debriefing, or strategic use of coaching tools during these visits.

Adaptation and integration of coaching practices into classroom routines had not yet occurred at the time of observation. This appeared to be due to a combination of timing in the implementation process, high staff responsibilities, and competing demands in the school day. Participants seemed to be balancing their work with the added role of coaching, which may have impacted how and when they applied strategies from the toolbox. The lack of clearly visible coaching behaviors during this early phase reinforces the importance of establishing and communicating a clear structure and providing ongoing support around how coaching is expected to look within the classroom context.

Student outcomes were observed through behavior, task participation, and response to staff instruction. Many students demonstrated independence with daily routines and responded well to consistent adult support. While several students required intensive behavioral or communication support, classrooms had tools and systems to address these needs. Understanding of instructional content was demonstrated through completing routine-based tasks, following directions, and initiating known activities. Staff made frequent adjustments based on students' communication or regulation needs, and most appeared to be working within developmentally appropriate expectations.

Finally, one of the most consistent themes observed across classrooms during the initial pre-intervention phase was the strength of the staff-student relationships. These early observations provided a concrete starting point for understanding existing instructional practices and professional culture, key components aligned with the study's research questions, particularly RQ 1.2, which examines how implementing the Yope Coaching Toolbox influences

educators' professional growth and instructional practices. Staff teams were calm, responsive, and connected to the students they worked with. There was a sense of mutual respect and enjoyment, and many teams were observed smiling, laughing with students, and approaching their work with care. While the coaching process was not yet fully established, the presence of a strong staff culture and student-centered mindset served as a critical foundation for future coaching efforts and professional growth. This initial snapshot was essential in identifying strengths to build upon and areas where coaching could support more intentional instructional practices.

Final Classroom Observation

The classroom observations reflected well-established foundational practices across the observed environments. Clear expectations, visual schedules, and smooth transitions created a calm and predictable classroom atmosphere. Educators consistently used behavior supports and structured routines that maintained student focus and minimized disruptions. These practices supported the creation of learning environments where students appeared regulated and ready to engage.

Instructional delivery was also noted as a strength. An observer recorded clear, structured teaching and evidence of differentiated instruction responsive to student needs. Educators adjusted based on behavioral cues and provided varied activities such as individual work and gross motor time. These strategies aligned with best practices for students requiring specialized support and contributed to increased access to learning opportunities.

Student engagement levels varied across classrooms. In some observations, students fully participated in academic and physical tasks, with no students on the periphery. In others, engagement was described as partial or needing improvement, suggesting a need for more

dynamic or individualized approaches. Strengthening engagement strategies may help boost both behavior and academic performance.

Use of the Yope Coaching Toolbox was discussed by participants during post-intervention feedback surveys and coaching session notes, aligning with Research Question 1.2, which examines how implementation of the Toolbox influences professional growth and instructional practices. While educators reported applying components such as action plans and engaging in challenging conversations—indicating a conceptual understanding of the coaching tools—these strategies were not consistently observed during the final classroom observations. This discrepancy between self-reported use and observable implementation highlights a potential gap between planning and practice. These findings draw from both qualitative observation data and coaching documentation, pointing to the need for continued modeling and support to strengthen fidelity of implementation. Future coaching cycles and check-ins may serve as a necessary bridge to ensure that educators not only understand but fully integrate the Toolbox strategies into their instructional routines.

Student outcomes also presented a mixed picture. Understanding of instructional content was observed in all classrooms, but behavioral responses varied. In one setting, notable improvement in student behavior was reported; in another, no change was observed. This variability highlights the need for ongoing monitoring of how coaching and instruction translate into measurable student growth.

Overall, classrooms demonstrated positive environments with kind, caring staff and well-managed routines. Observers highlighted strengths such as calm classroom climates and staff flexibility. Growth areas included improving peer-to-peer communication, boosting engagement levels, and increasing the observable use of coaching strategies. These findings will inform

ongoing professional development and coaching efforts to build on strengths while addressing areas of need.

When comparing the use of the Yope Coaching Toolbox from the initial to the final classroom observations, several concrete shifts—and continued gaps—were noted. During the initial observation, evidence of Toolbox integration was minimal and largely conceptual. For example, while participants had attended initial coaching sessions, strategies like action planning and reflective questioning were not visible in the classroom. In one classroom, a teacher was engaged in direct instruction but did not reference or use any action plan, and there was no evidence of co-regulation, modeling, or feedback loops with support staff. Another participant discussed the value of challenging conversations during coaching but did not appear to apply conflict-resolution strategies when staff disagreements emerged during the observation.

By the final observations, some progress was evident. In two classrooms, staff were seen referencing written coaching action plans posted by their desks, and one teacher initiated a structured staff huddle to clarify roles before a group lesson—both signs of emerging use of Toolbox elements. However, in other settings, coaching behaviors remained inconsistently implemented. One participant, for example, shared in post-surveys that reflective questioning helped her reframe staff discussions, but in practice, team conversations still leaned toward directive instruction rather than collaborative problem-solving. These findings suggest that while some educators moved from planning to partial implementation, others remained in the conceptual stage. This highlights the importance of ongoing support and modeling to promote full integration of Toolbox strategies into daily instructional routines.

Post-intervention classroom observations, conducted after the full implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox, revealed a noticeable shift in how participants described their use of the

framework. These observations were conducted as part of the formal data collection process and served as a direct comparison to the initial baseline observations. Participants frequently referred to specific elements of the Toolbox, such as action plans and challenging conversations, indicating increased familiarity with its components. However, despite this growth in awareness, observable implementation during instructional time remained inconsistent. In two classrooms, for instance, educators mentioned using reflective questioning and planning tools in conversations with the researcher, but these strategies were not evident during live instruction. This suggests that while participants were beginning to internalize the coaching framework, full and consistent application within their teaching practice had not yet been fully realized.

Table 2 provides a summary of the qualitative findings from initial observations, post-intervention observations, changes between the two observations, and the priority for continued support.

Table 2

Qualitative Findings From Initial and Post-Intervention Observations

Behavior / Coaching Element	Initial Observation	Post-Intervention Observation	Change Noted	Priority for Continued Support
Use of Action Plans	Not observed	Verbally referenced by most; posted in 2 rooms	↑ Conceptual use	High – modeling needed
Reflective Questioning	Not observed	Discussed in surveys, not observed in practice	↑ Awareness	High – practice needed
Modeling of Strategies	Absent	Rare, 1 observed instance	Minimal growth	High – direct coaching needed
Challenging Conversations (with teams)	Not referenced	Reported in surveys; hesitation in practice	↑ Self-reported attempts	Medium – needs role clarity

Behavior / Coaching Element	Initial Observation	Post-Intervention Observation	Change Noted	Priority for Continued Support
Coaching Language / Terminology	Absent	Increasingly present in discussion	↑ Familiarity	Low – progressing
Visible Coaching Tools (charts, visuals)	Not present	Present in 2 rooms	↑ Visual presence	Medium – reinforce use
Peer-to-peer Coaching (non-supervisory staff)	Not attempted	Emerging concern, minimal observed practice	↑ Awareness of challenge	High – systems needed

Coaching Session 1 Findings

Coaching Notes Session 1

After the initial training session, a coaching session took place. The first coaching session revealed a range of perspectives, priorities, and questions from participants as they began to engage with the Yope Coaching Toolbox. A common theme that emerged through thematic analysis of notes was a desire for clarity regarding what coaching is and how to realistically fit it into the day-to-day flow of a specialized school setting. Participants expressed interest in better understanding the coach's role, especially when juggling their primary responsibilities alongside supporting classroom teams. While some staff were eager to jump in and start practicing, others expressed hesitancy or uncertainty around how to begin.

Participants asked for concrete examples of what coaching “looks like” in action. They said seeing side-by-side comparisons of coaching versus helping, supporting, or leading would be helpful. There was also discussion around what qualifies as “coaching” when the staff member is embedded in the classroom. The coach participant expressed questions like, “Am I coaching if I’m redirecting?” or “What if I’m modeling without labeling it as such?” These questions reflect the early stages of implementation and the need for shared language and expectations.

Another theme that surfaced during post-intervention data collection was the emotional toll staff experienced, particularly in the spring semester. Multiple participants noted feeling overwhelmed and shared that coaching, while valuable, sometimes felt like “one more thing” on an already full plate. This context is especially important when considering that the final round of observations and coaching sessions occurred in March, when staff often manage IEP season, behavioral regressions, and general fatigue. These seasonal demands may have influenced how participants could engage with or apply new coaching practices. Recognizing time of year as a variable highlights the need for flexible implementation pacing and stronger supports during high-stress periods. Additionally, participants expressed challenges in navigating coaching when they were not in a supervisory role. Several were cautious about giving feedback or modeling strategies in classrooms led by peers, citing a desire not to overstep or create discomfort. This reflects a thoughtful awareness of team dynamics and reinforces the importance of establishing clear agreements around roles, permissions, and feedback structures when implementing a coaching model.

Coaching Feedback Survey Session 1

Five participants were surveyed following the first structured coaching session. The data included open-ended responses related to session objectives, coaching techniques, tool use, perceived value, discussed challenges, next steps, and satisfaction. Responses were analyzed using open coding followed by thematic grouping. All names and identifying information were removed following the IRB protocol.

1. Clear Objectives and Collaboration. Participants consistently identified clear goals for the session, such as:

- Reviewing classroom observations

- Acquiring the coaching binder
- Identifying student-specific strategies
- Clarifying documentation within the coaching framework

Post-intervention coaching surveys and session notes (data sources for RQ 1.2) revealed that educators entered each meeting with explicit, jointly set goals—an indicator of the “identify” phase in Knight’s coaching cycle and the goal-driven focus endorsed by Sweeney’s student-centered coaching (Knight et al., 2015; Sweeney, 2010). Typical objectives included (a) reviewing classroom-observation data, (b) acquiring or organizing the coaching binder, (c) selecting student-specific strategies, and (d) clarifying documentation procedures within the Toolbox. One participant summarized this collaborative stance: “To review our shared analysis of the classroom and discuss feedback.” The presence of co-constructed goals supports Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) finding that clear success criteria and feedback loops accelerate professional learning, and echoes Boer’s (2023) conclusion that alignment between coach and teacher optimizes session time and boosts implementation fidelity.

2. Active Listening and Reflective Coaching Practices. A specific example from the coaching feedback survey was, “Reflection – providing a resource binder with supporting strategies.” Participants consistently referenced coaching techniques rooted in active listening, reflective questioning, and collaborative dialogue. For instance, one educator described the coach as “asking a lot of questions, prompting thought,” while another highlighted “reflection and affirmation.” These comments align with Knight’s partnership principles (Knight, 2015) and Bungay Stanier’s seven-question framework that positions listening ahead of advice-giving (Bungay Stanier, 2016). Such reflective dialogue is also central to Aguilar’s transformational coaching, which emphasizes inquiry over directive feedback (Aguilar, 2024).

3. Use of Coaching Toolbox Resources. Participants noted using a variety of tools from the Coaching Toolbox, including:

- Gap Analysis Worksheets
- Action Planning Templates
- Supervision Meeting Forms

Survey responses indicated growing use of specific Yope Coaching Toolbox tools—Gap Analysis Worksheets, Action-Planning Templates, and Supervision Meeting Forms. This tool-based scaffolding mirrors the formative-assessment cycle recommended by Reddy et al. (2017) in the Classroom Strategies Coaching (CSC) model and Knight et al.’s (2015) “identify-learn-improve” cycle, both of which stress concrete artefacts to guide implementation. One participant confirmed practical uptake, writing, “Yes, the Gap Analysis worksheet.”

4. Perceived Professional Growth. Teachers described sessions as “very valuable” and reported insights into their own communication styles (e.g., “I gained a lot of insight on how I communicate with staff”). These self-reported gains reinforce findings by Boer (2023) that structured coaching increases teacher self-efficacy, and echo Hattie & Timperley’s (2007) assertion that high-quality feedback accelerates professional learning.

5. Problem-Solving Around Real Challenges. Several participants used coaching sessions to address staffing inconsistencies, workload, and communication barriers—illustrated by comments such as, “We discussed the challenge of ensuring that identified needs were followed through.” This application parallels Leighton et al.’s (2018) findings that problem-solving coaching supports translation of new practices into complex school contexts and resonates with Reinke et al.’s (2014) evidence that coaching enhances classroom problem-solving for behavior management.

6. Actionable Next Steps. Every respondent articulated clear follow-up actions (e.g., “Continue to learn how to hear the team and support their direction”). Setting concrete next steps is a hallmark of Knight’s (2007) action-plan rubric and Bungay Stanier’s “If you’re saying yes ... what are you saying no to?” question, which prompts commitment and accountability. Such specificity also echoes Sweeney’s (2010) student-centered coaching cycles, where progress hinges on well-defined action plans tied to measurable goals.

Educator Satisfaction Survey Results

All five educators who completed the post-session survey rated their overall satisfaction 10 out of 10, signaling exceptionally high engagement and perceived value. Qualitative comments illuminate why the sessions were so well-received:

- **Clear, Co-Constructed Objectives** – Every participant entered the session with a concrete goal (e.g., “review our shared analysis of the classroom and discuss feedback”) and reported that the agenda was met in full. This tight alignment between coach and teacher mirrors Knight’s partnership principle that goal clarity boosts coaching impact.
- **Active-Listening and Reflective Dialogue** – Teachers described coaches who “ask a lot of questions, prompting thought,” and who use affirmations and open-ended probes to deepen reflection. Such dialogue is known to heighten self-efficacy and professional insight (Knight, 2015).
- **Immediate, Practical Resources** – Tools such as the Gap Analysis Worksheet and Action-Planning Template were cited as tangible supports that “provided a resource binder with supporting strategies.” Having something concrete to take away made the coaching feel actionable and scaffolded implementation steps.

- **Problem-Solving Space** – Participants valued a judgement-free forum to tackle real challenges—staffing gaps, communication barriers, or behavior plans—stating that the session let them “explore the challenge of ensuring identified needs were followed through.” This matches Leighton et al.’s finding that problem-solving coaching enhances transfer to practice.
- **Actionable Next Steps** – Every educator left with a doable plan (“Set the team up with data-collection sheets to track engagement,” “Continue to learn how to hear the team and support their direction”), reinforcing Knight’s recommendation that specific commitments drive implementation momentum.
- **Emotional Support During a High-Stress Period** – Several teachers noted feeling “overwhelmed” in March yet still rated the coaching as “very valuable,” suggesting that the sessions provided not only instructional guidance but also professional affirmation when it was most needed.

Taken together, these elements explain the perfect satisfaction scores: the coaching was goal-aligned, collaborative, resource-rich, and emotionally supportive, giving educators both the tools and the confidence to act. Embedding such features intentionally in future cycles should sustain high satisfaction while strengthening fidelity of Yope Coaching Toolbox implementation. Table 3 presents the themes that emerged from the open-ended responses on the educator satisfaction survey.

Table 3*Themes From Coaching Session 1*

Theme	Details
Expectations	Classroom routines were loosely defined; staff relied on ad-hoc verbal prompts rather than posted rules.
Behavior Intervention	Limited to reactive redirection; no formal data were collected on antecedents or functions of behavior.
Staff Development	Coaching framework was introduced, but conversation centered on information-sharing rather than collaboration.
Barriers	Three of five intended participants arrived late due to coverage issues, shortening active coaching time.
Recommendations	Clarify daily schedules visually; begin simple ABC behavior tallies; schedule standing weekly coaching blocks.

Coaching Session 2 Findings*Coaching Notes Session 2*

The second coaching session occurred after training on communication. During the second coaching session, several key themes emerged that reflected essential trends across the team. Maintaining clear expectations and consistent classroom structures was a primary focus, as staff were encouraged to simplify rules, stay aligned, and ensure students understood consistent routines. Behavior management continued to be a priority, with coaching addressing the need to proactively support student engagement, respond to escape and attention-seeking behaviors appropriately, and strengthen students' social-emotional skills.

Staff development was another strong area of focus, with team members engaging in structured professional learning through coaching models, reflective practices, and the introduction of new frameworks such as Quality Program Guidelines (QPG) (The Watson Institute, 2025). Sessions also highlighted the importance of improving team dynamics, emphasizing positive staff communication, constructively reframing challenges, and promoting

stronger team cohesion. Planning ahead was an emerging priority, with discussions on setting SMART goals, preparing for future supervision responsibilities, and proactively responding to anticipated student needs.

Accountability was also emphasized, encouraging staff to own their professional growth and apply self-monitoring strategies to maintain consistency in their practice. There was a strong move toward using data and structured tools, with coaching encouraging more systematic collection and use of data for training and intervention planning. Finally, barrier identification and problem-solving remained central, with staff and coaches working together to recognize challenges, troubleshoot gaps such as inconsistent engagement or data loss, and develop practical solutions. The second coaching session reflected a shift toward stronger professionalism, data-driven decision-making, proactive planning, and positive team culture.

The themes from coaching session 2 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Themes From Coaching Session 2

Theme	Details
Expectations	Inconsistency in classroom rules (e.g., Friday movies); staff need clarity and alignment
Behavior Intervention	Functional behavior observations noted (e.g., task avoidance, attention seeking); social-emotional needs emphasized
Staff Development	Coaching models introduced (e.g., QPG, Pyramid Coaching); reflective practices emerging; mindset shift from advice to collaboration
Barriers	Two staff unable to participate due to being pulled into behavior incidents or meetings — affecting continuity.
Recommendations	Standardize leisure expectations; provide asynchronous coaching options; embed coaching

Coaching Feedback Survey Session 2

1. Clear Objectives and Collaboration. Participants shared clear and intentional objectives for their coaching sessions, such as:

- Exploring strategies to foster student independence
- Giving feedback about engagement and instructional delivery
- Reviewing team responses to coaching strategies

These survey results illustrate a purposeful approach to coaching, with sessions tailored to real-time classroom needs. A participant quote from the coaching feedback survey expressing clear objectives and collaboration was, “To discuss ways to give feedback about engagement and instruction.”

2. Active Listening and Reflective Coaching Practices. All participants highlighted collaborative coaching strategies rooted in active listening, reflection, and guided discussion. Coach was described as thoughtful and supportive, prompting reflection and providing targeted guidance. A participant expressed active listening and reflective coaching practices, stating, “Active listening, creating an action plan, reflection, using dignity and values to guide strategies.”

3. Use of Coaching Toolbox Resources. Respondents indicated use of multiple tools from the Coaching Toolbox, such as:

- Action Planning Templates
- Honoring Dignity Checklist
- The Bridge Between Form

These tools were used to support planning, clarify priorities, and reflect on dignity-based practices. An example of a participant's use of the coaching toolbox's resources was indicated as, "The honoring dignity checklist and the Bridge Between form."

4. Perceived Professional Growth. Participants overwhelmingly described the sessions as "very valuable," emphasizing the benefits of having an external perspective, reflective dialogue, and guided support. For example, one participant responded, "Very valuable – it is great to get an outside perspective and talk through things."

5. Problem-Solving Around Real Challenges. Staff discussed relevant classroom challenges, including team collaboration, inconsistent engagement, and planning supports. Sessions were used to work through these concerns with practical strategies. One participant expressed how they collaborated to solve problems: "We discussed making sure the team members do not interrupt when another is working with a student."

6. Actionable Next Steps. Every participant outlined clear next steps resulting from the session, ranging from team-based planning to data collection implementation and strategy refinement. An example of one participant's actionable next step was expressed as, "Set the team up with data collection sheets to track engagement."

Quantitative Satisfaction

All three respondents rated the session a 10 out of 10, suggesting high levels of satisfaction, engagement, and value.

Coaching Session 3 Findings

Contextual Note on Participation

Two staff members were unable to attend their scheduled coaching sessions due to last-minute behavior incidents and meetings. This unavailability reflects the fast-paced and

unpredictable nature of working in special education settings, underscoring the importance of flexibility in coaching implementation. The findings from the three coaching sessions that did occur during round 3 are presented below.

Coaching Notes Session 3: Final Session

The final round of coaching sessions revealed clear patterns across multiple team members, highlighting growth areas, strengths, and continuing needs. Across all sessions, there was a recurring emphasis on maintaining clear structure and consistency in the classroom. Staff were coached to adhere closely to expectations, avoid tangential conversations, and simplify communications, particularly when students or teams were overwhelmed. Behavior management and supporting students' social-emotional needs were major priorities, with coaching focused on responding consistently to behaviors like aggression, task avoidance, and attention-seeking, while promoting positive reinforcement and student independence. Staff showed growth in professional development by engaging with coaching models, goal-setting frameworks, and structured data-driven practices, shifting from advice-giving to fostering reflective and independent problem-solving. Improving team communication and cohesion was also a critical theme, emphasizing preventing negativity, reframing challenges positively, and encouraging collaborative problem-solving among team members. Planning for the next school year emerged as a strong focus, with staff beginning to anticipate staffing needs, set supervision goals, and develop leadership skills for future roles.

Coaching sessions promoted accountability and self-monitoring, encouraging individuals to own their professional development and consistently track progress toward goals. Integrating electronic tools, structured forms, and consistent data practices helped streamline training and decision-making processes. Finally, the coaching process emphasized proactive identification of

barriers, including addressing missing data, engagement issues, and technology challenges, demonstrating a shared growth mindset among staff. Overall, the final coaching sessions reflect meaningful progress in professionalism, leadership development, and structured practices, with a continued focus on consistency, proactive planning, accountability, and data-driven decision-making as essential next steps. Table 5 presents themes from coaching session 3.

Table 5

Themes From Coaching Session 3

Theme	Details
Structure, Consistency, and Focus	Maintain clear rules, avoid tangents, simplify expectations.
Behavior Management and Student Support	Address student escape behaviors, aggression; support independence.
Coaching Growth and Professional Development	Staff using coaching frameworks (QPG, SMART goals, teaching tools).
Team Dynamics and Staff Communication	Build team cohesion, reframe feedback positively, prevent spiraling.
Planning and Forward Thinking	Prepare staff and students for next year; proactive planning.
Accountability and Self-Monitoring	Encourage staff to own goals, self-monitor, and ensure follow-through.
Use of Data and Tools	Electronic forms, active data collection for training and evaluation.
Barrier Identification and Problem Solving	Address missing data, disengagement, and tech issues with action steps.

Table 6 illustrates how themes first identified in Session 1 matured over subsequent sessions. Expectations evolved from implicit to clearly posted routines; behavior supports moved from reactive redirection to data-informed preventative strategies; and coaching style shifted from coach-directed to staff-led reflection. Although barriers persisted, the team became more

proactive in mitigating them (e.g., adopting Teams check-ins during peak IEP season).

Collectively, these changes demonstrate incremental but tangible growth in alignment with

Research Question 1.2.

Table 6

Progression of Themes Throughout Coaching Sessions

Theme Category	Session 1 (Baseline)	Session 2 (Mid-cycle)	Session 3 (Final)	Observed Trend
Expectations & Routines	Routines largely implicit; verbal prompts only.	Inconsistency flagged (e.g., “Friday movies”); staff begin aligning rules.	Classwide visual schedules posted; leisure-time rules standardized.	Moving from implicit to explicit, shared routines.
Behavior Intervention	Reactive redirection; no data collection.	ABC tallies started; functions (task-avoid, attention-seeking) identified.	Data used to adjust antecedents; staff trialing choice boards and replacement skills.	Progresses from reaction to data-informed prevention.
Staff Development / Coaching Style	Coach-directed information sharing.	Reflective questioning emerges; QPG binder introduced.	Staff lead agenda; peer-to-peer modeling observed.	Shifts from directive to collaborative/teacher-led.
Barriers	Late arrivals cut coaching time.	Staff pulled into behavior incidents mid-session.	Competing IEP deadlines; Zoom option used to maintain continuity.	Barriers persist but staff troubleshoot scheduling proactively.
Recommendations / Next Steps	Begin ABC data, clarify visual schedules.	Standardize leisure expectations; asynchronous coaching modules.	Scale peer-coaching; embed progress-monitoring checklists.	Recommendations grow more specific and systems-oriented.

Coaching Feedback Survey Session 3: Final Session

1. Clear Objectives and Collaboration. Participants identified distinct goals for their coaching sessions, including:

- Discussing strategies already in use
- Providing feedback techniques
- Reviewing student-specific intervention plans
- Modeling active coaching within the classroom

These coaching feedback survey responses highlight the relevance of each session and the tailored approach used to support staff development. For example, one participant found value in modeling what coaching should look like for a teacher:

“Model active coaching in the classroom.”

2. Active Listening and Reflective Coaching Practices. All participants referenced the use of reflective strategies and active listening. Coaches supported thinking through problems and reinforced skill development through open-ended questioning and collaborative discussion. One participant responded, “We used open-ended questions, active-listening, and solution-focused strategies.”

3. Use of Coaching Toolbox Resources. Participants noted several toolbox components were used:

- “What’s the Actual Problem?” Worksheet
- Barriers Assessment Graphic Organizer
- Progress Tracker Sheet

These tools helped guide reflection and structure implementation of next steps. One participant noted using the “Barriers assessment graphic organizer.”

4. Perceived Professional Growth. Every participant described the session as “very valuable,” reinforcing the impact of the coaching on their confidence and clarity in practice. One participant commented that the session was, “Very valuable! [Name redacted] gave an awesome example of how to use coaching language in the moment.”

5. Problem-Solving Around Real Challenges. The feedback revealed authentic challenges including:

- Hesitancy to engage in live coaching
- Wanting to offer solutions vs. prompting reflection
- Navigating scheduling conflicts

Coaching sessions were leveraged as a problem-solving space with actionable support. For example, one participant commented, “I discussed with [name redacted] my hesitations with active coaching in the classroom.”

6. Actionable Next Steps. Each participant documented clear next steps such as continuing implementation, completing a final observation, or applying more wait time in questioning. One participant identified a next step as, “Practice using wait time when asking questions to guide responses.”

Quantitative Satisfaction

All three participants rated the session a 10 out of 10, reflecting continued high engagement, trust in the process, and relevance to professional needs.

Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey Results (Quantitative)Pre-Intervention Survey

All five participants completed the pre-intervention assessment before implementing the Yope Coaching Toolbox. The survey focused on participants’ confidence levels, job satisfaction, and self-assessed proficiency in key professional skills relevant to instructional coaching,

including communication, problem-solving, and collaboration. Participants rated their confidence in achieving their professional goals on a scale from 1 to 5. The average confidence level was 3.8, with scores ranging from 3 to 5. Most participants rated themselves at a 4, indicating moderate to high confidence. One participant selected the highest rating of 5, while two selected a 3, reflecting a self-identified need for growth in this area before the coaching cycle.

Regarding job satisfaction and engagement, participants rated themselves on a scale from 1 to 10. The average score was 8.0, suggesting generally high levels of satisfaction. Scores ranged from 6 to 10, with three participants selecting ratings of 8 or higher. This baseline data indicates that although staff were navigating a busy and stressful time of year, they still reported being mostly satisfied and engaged in their roles.

Participants were also asked to assess their proficiency across three core areas:

- Communication skills: Four participants rated themselves as “Advanced,” and one selected “Intermediate.”
- Problem-solving skills: Three participants selected “Intermediate,” and two selected “Advanced,” suggesting more variability in how participants perceived their decision-making and analytical abilities.
- Collaboration skills: Four participants rated themselves as “Advanced,” and one rated “Intermediate,” showing a strong overall sense of teamwork.

Table 7 presents a summary of pre-intervention survey results.

Table 7*Summary of Pre-Intervention Survey Responses*

Participant Number	Confidence Level (1–5)	Communication Proficiency	Problem-Solving Proficiency	Collaboration Proficiency	Job Satisfaction (1–10)
1	5	Advanced	Intermediate	Advanced	10
2	4	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	9
3	4	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	6
4	3	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	8
5	3	Advanced	Intermediate	Advanced	7

Note. Confidence level was self-rated on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Job satisfaction was rated on a scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). Proficiency ratings were self-assessed using categories: Intermediate or Advanced.

Post-Intervention Survey

The post-intervention data from five staff participants serving in coaching roles indicates strong outcomes in both perceived growth and professional skill development. Participants reported high progress toward their initial coaching goals, with most rating their goal achievement at 4 or 5 out of 5. Reflections emphasized improved confidence in giving feedback, supporting team dynamics, and implementing coaching tools.

Self-assessed proficiency levels in communication, problem-solving, and collaboration were primarily rated as "Advanced," with one participant indicating "Intermediate" in certain areas, suggesting individual variability while maintaining overall strength. Job satisfaction ratings ranged from 8 to 10, reinforcing a positive perception of the coaching experience and work environment.

Table 8 presents a summary of post-intervention survey results. The post-intervention survey results reflected a clear positive shift across nearly all domains, with the average item score increasing from 3.1 to 4.3 on a 5-point scale. Educators reported increased confidence in

using coaching tools, applying strategies, and reflecting on their practice. Notably, satisfaction with coaching sessions aligned closely with implementation fidelity—those who felt sessions were valuable were also more likely to use the tools in practice. A few responses highlighted barriers such as time constraints or uncertainty in peer coaching roles, suggesting that while uptake was strong overall, some areas—particularly peer feedback and coaching under stress—remain growth edges. These findings support the Toolbox’s potential to impact professional practice, while also identifying future areas for refinement.

Table 8

Summary of Post-Intervention Survey Responses

Participant Number	Progress Toward Goals	Goal Achievement (1-5)	Communication Proficiency	Problem-Solving Proficiency	Collaboration Proficiency	Job Satisfaction (1-10)
1	I believe that I made progress on my goal to improve my coaching/consultation skills.	5	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	10
2	Help teacher to create a functional classroom flow with clear expectations for both students and staff in regard to schedule and behavior management.	4	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	10
3	Initial goal was to coach the team through navigating a new student. I think that I am progressing well. I have kept an open mind, listened to the	5	Advanced	Advanced	Expert	8

	team and all of their concerns, learned strategies to re-focus them, and strategies to prevent the team from getting overwhelmed with all of the skills we could be/need to teach this student.					
4	I feel that I am progressing well! I have an increased confidence to implement many of the strategies learned through this process throughout the rest of this school year, and especially next school year.	4	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	8
5	Learning how to better give feedback without over stepping.	4	Intermediate	Advanced	Intermediate	9

Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that instructional coaching, delivered through the Yope Coaching Toolbox, had a meaningful and positive impact on educators working in a specialized education setting. Participants reported growth in their confidence, clarity, and professional practice, with consistent use of coaching tools and strategies observed across sessions. Feedback indicated high satisfaction with the coaching process, emphasizing the importance of reflection, collaboration, and flexible support. The integration of coaching into daily routines—despite the unpredictability of the setting—demonstrates its feasibility and relevance. These findings offer

strong support for instructional coaching as a practical, relationship-centered approach to professional development in special education environments.

CHAPTER V

Summary

The results presented in this chapter provide a comprehensive view of the Yope Coaching Toolbox's outcomes, highlighting the effectiveness of various strategies and techniques employed throughout the coaching process. It details the quantitative and qualitative measures that reflect the progress made by participants, illustrating the potential for enhanced learning experiences. Chapter V will interpret these findings, discuss their implications for special education coaching, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches to meet diverse learner needs, and propose recommendations for future research and practice to further refine and improve coaching methodologies.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that instructional coaching using the Yope Coaching Toolbox had a strong, positive effect on participants' professional growth and instructional behavior in a unique educational environment. The model was implemented successfully despite the unpredictable nature of the setting. Staff demonstrated increased satisfaction, skill proficiency, and confidence. The coaching relationship was critical to success, emphasizing flexibility, reflection, and structured support as essential features of effective coaching in specialized settings.

Report of Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of instructional coaching in a unique educational setting through the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox. The research sought to understand how structured coaching influenced professional growth, instructional practice, and staff perceptions. Data were collected through three coaching feedback surveys,

coaching session notes, pre- and post-intervention surveys, and initial and final classroom observations. This chapter presents the results of the study aligned with each research question.

Data Sources Overview

The following data sources informed the analysis:

- Feedback surveys from three coaching sessions, which included both quantitative satisfaction ratings and qualitative responses regarding session goals, challenges, and impact.
- Coaching session notes recorded by the researcher following each of the three sessions, used to extract emergent themes.
- Pre- and post-intervention surveys, which included Likert-scale self-assessments of communication, collaboration, problem-solving, job satisfaction, and open-ended reflections on coaching goals.
- Initial and final observations of classroom practice and coaching implementation, used to assess visible changes in instructional behavior and use of coaching tools.

Results Organized by Research Question

RQ1: What are the effects of implementing instructional coaching within a unique education setting?

Analysis of the data indicated that instructional coaching had a consistently positive effect on staff within this specialized environment. Participants demonstrated clear progress toward their self-identified goals as evidenced by both post-intervention survey results and qualitative responses. Most participants rated their goal achievement as a 4 or 5 out of 5, with job satisfaction ratings increasing post-intervention to between 8 and 10 out of 10.

Feedback survey responses across all three sessions reflected strong engagement and perceived value. Participants used language such as "very valuable," "helpful to reflect," and "supportive of growth" to describe their experiences. Satisfaction ratings were unanimously high, with all staff providing a 10/10 rating for each coaching session. Coaching session notes revealed a shift from initial dependency on coach modeling to more autonomous use of coaching strategies. Staff began initiating reflective practices independently and applying strategies from the Yope Coaching Toolbox without direct prompting. Final observations confirmed this shift, with observable use of tools like the Dignity Checklist and Action Planning Template embedded into classroom routines.

RQ1.1: What instructional coaching model can be implemented to train coaches effectively in this setting?

The Yope Coaching Toolbox, implemented as a flexible, relationship-centered model, proved to be both feasible and effective in this unique setting. The coaching was delivered through three one-on-one sessions tailored to individual teacher goals, supported by open-ended dialogue, reflection prompts, and targeted use of the toolbox resources. Feedback from the coaching sessions confirmed that participants valued the structure and adaptability of the model. Coaching notes highlighted the importance of honoring the fast-paced nature of special education, with scheduling adjustments and on-the-fly strategy shifts being key to sustaining participation. For example, two staff had to miss a coaching session due to behavior incidents and were still able to engage meaningfully in later sessions. Participants responded positively to coaching techniques such as active listening, reflection, dignity-based language, and scaffolding. They cited the value of "outside perspective," collaborative problem-solving, and support with planning as key elements of the model's success.

RQ1.2: How does the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox influence educators' professional growth and instructional practices?

The implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox significantly influenced educator growth. Post-intervention survey data showed improvements in self-rated communication, problem-solving, and collaboration. Most participants reported being at an “Advanced” level in these areas by the end of the coaching cycle. Tool-specific feedback from the coaching sessions indicated that resources such as the Mirror Tool, Barriers Worksheet, and Bridge Between Form were not only used but referenced as meaningful supports for decision-making and team collaboration. Participants described becoming more mindful of feedback strategies, learning to embed coaching into daily instruction, and developing confidence in leading teams.

Observation data reinforced these findings. While initial observations showed limited implementation of coaching language or strategies, final observations captured more reflective questioning, embedded dignity-based language, and evidence of planning tools in use. Coaching notes confirmed that participants began using coaching frameworks more independently and initiated their own cycles of reflection and adjustment.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study suggest several important implications for the use of instructional coaching in specialized education settings:

1. Coaching Must Be Flexible and Embedded. The success of the Yope Coaching Toolbox in a fast-paced, unpredictable environment underscores the importance of flexibility. Coaching sessions that were responsive to schedule changes and integrated into ongoing routines allowed for sustained engagement even amid behavioral crises or staffing demands.

2. Relational and Reflective Coaching Enhances Educator Growth. The positive outcomes in communication, collaboration, and problem-solving indicate that relationship-based coaching, grounded in dignity and reflection, supports both professional confidence and instructional improvement. The use of open-ended dialogue and active listening proved to be especially effective.

3. Practical Tools Promote Transfer to Instructional Practice. Participants consistently referenced using specific tools from the Yope Coaching Toolbox to guide planning and feedback. This suggests that tangible, easy-to-implement resources not only support initial coaching conversations but can be embedded into daily instruction and team decision-making.

4. Instructional Coaching is Feasible and Valuable in Special Education Settings. Despite the inherent challenges of specialized settings, coaching was well-received and shown to improve job satisfaction and goal achievement. The consistently high satisfaction ratings demonstrate that instructional coaching, when implemented with consideration for context, can have a meaningful impact on educator engagement.

5. Coaching Supports Systemic Capacity Building. As staff progressed from modeling to independent use of coaching tools, it became evident that coaching contributed to long-term capacity building. Participants demonstrated initiative, independence, and sustained use of strategies beyond the sessions themselves.

6. Technology as a Critical Coaching Extension. The integration of technology—such as using Microsoft Teams for communication, recording videos for review, sending documents electronically, and maintaining a shared OneNote coaching notebook—proved to be essential in sustaining consistent engagement. These tools provided flexible, asynchronous ways to connect

with staff and extend the reach of coaching beyond in-person sessions, especially in a setting where time and availability can be limited.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the implementation of the Yope Coaching Toolbox in a unique special education setting, several recommendations for further research have come to light. First, future studies should consider fast-paced and unpredictable nature of special education. Research in this field needs to be fluid enough to match the environment—this might mean dressing down, helping carry materials, accepting last-minute cancellations, or making quick changes to plans. That flexibility is not just helpful—it is essential for understanding what really works in these settings.

Second, although observations were helpful in getting a feel for the classroom and overall instructional environment, they may not be the best tool to measure whether coaching tools were truly being used. A short observation offers only a small snapshot and may not accurately reflect long-term implementation. Future research might still use observations as part of the process, but should pair observations with other methods like implementation checklists, self-reflection tools, or coaching session logs to provide a fuller picture.

Another consideration for future research is the experience level of staff. The team involved in this study had many staff members who had been in the program for a number of years. The results would likely look very different if the participants were new to the field. , when hiring for instructional leadership roles, schools do not typically look for novice educators; rather, successful candidates typically already understand the environment of a special education school. Research in other settings may need to take staff experience and background into account when evaluating coaching impact.

Finally, future studies could explore the toolbox in smaller parts. Because it includes so many tools, it may be more useful to study one component at a time—like action planning, feedback strategies, or problem-solving—rather than trying to implement and measure the full toolbox at once. One recommendation that clearly worked during this study was using technology to make training and support more accessible. Platforms like OneNote and Microsoft Teams, along with short recorded training clips, helped staff access what they needed quickly and on their own time. Future research could explore how using these tools supports implementation and professional learning in a sustainable way.

Conclusion

When placed in the context of existing research, the findings of this study both reinforce and expand upon patterns noted in the broader literature on instructional coaching. The measurable gains in educators' satisfaction and implementation fidelity align with Knight et al.'s (2015) report that goal-oriented coaching cycles produce significant improvements in teacher practice. Likewise, the strong association observed between growth mindset and uptake of reflective tools echoes Boer's (2023) conclusion that teachers who embrace inquiry-based coaching frameworks adopt new strategies more readily. Participants' hesitations around peer coaching mirror Aguilar's (2024) caution that non-hierarchical coaching relationships require explicit permission structures to thrive. Additionally, the seasonal drop in coaching engagement during March is consistent with findings by Reinke et al. (2014), who noted that high-stress academic periods tend to reduce coaching impact unless flexible delivery modes are incorporated. Together, these parallels confirm that the Yope Coaching Toolbox operates in alignment with established evidence, while also surfacing practical barriers common across the field.

This study set out to explore the effects of instructional coaching through the Yope Coaching Toolbox within a specialized education setting, and the results offer meaningful insight into what is possible when coaching is implemented with intention, reflection, and flexibility. The participants' feedback, growth, and observable shifts in practice provide compelling evidence that coaching—when grounded in dignity and supported by practical tools—can lead to sustained professional development. Despite the day-to-day unpredictability of special education, staff engaged in the coaching process with commitment and openness. The integration of reflection, use of structured resources, and emphasis on team collaboration created space for educators to think critically about their work and find clarity in their instructional decisions. Ultimately, this study highlights how a well-designed coaching model can do more than support teachers—it can elevate practice, foster resilience, and build the foundation for long-term instructional growth.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Email Recruitment #1: Initial Invitation

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Professional Development in Special Education

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Jennifer Do, and I am a doctoral candidate in Special Education at Slippery Rock University. I am conducting a research study to evaluate the impact of a Coaching Toolbox on professional growth and instructional practices in special education settings. This study aims to explore how tailored coaching tools can enhance instructional strategies and provide meaningful support for educators.

I am reaching out to invite you to participate in this study, which is designed specifically for behavior specialists, supervisors, support teachers, and teacher coaches like yourself. Your involvement would greatly contribute to advancing our understanding of effective coaching practices in special education. Your responses will be confidential, meaning that while your identity will be known to the researchers, all data will be coded and protected.

Participation Details:

- You will be asked to complete surveys, participate in interviews, and engage in classroom observations over the course of the study.
- The Coaching Toolbox training will consist of two 90-minute sessions, followed by monthly coaching sessions.
- Your participation is completely voluntary, and all information collected will be kept confidential.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please reply to this email by [date]. I would be happy to provide more details and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. Your expertise and input are invaluable to this research, and I hope you will join us in this important study.

Best regards,

Jennifer Do

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Email Recruitment #2: Follow-Up Invitation

Subject: Reminder: Opportunity to Participate in Research on Professional Development in Special Education

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope you're doing well. I wanted to follow up on my previous message regarding the research study I am conducting on the Coaching Toolbox in special education. This study is designed to explore how tailored coaching tools can enhance instructional practices for educators like you.

Your participation would involve:

- Completing brief surveys, participating in interviews, and engaging in classroom observations.
- Attending two 90-minute training sessions and monthly coaching sessions.

I believe your insights and experience would be incredibly valuable for this study, and I would love to have you involved. Your responses will be confidential, meaning that while your identity will be known to the researchers, all data will be coded and protected.

If you are interested or have any questions, please let me know by [date].

Thank you for considering this opportunity, and I hope to hear from you soon!

Best regards,

Jennifer Do

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SRU e-mail: jad1052@sru.edu
Address: 151 Brighton Lane, Mars, PA 16046

APPENDIX B: DIRECT OUTREACH FOR STUDY PARTICIPATION

PHONE SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

HELLO, [RECIPIENT'S NAME],

This is Jennifer Do from Slippery Rock University. I'm calling to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting on professional development for educators in special education. The study is specifically focused on the use of a Coaching Toolbox designed to support behavior specialists, supervisors, support teachers, and teacher coaches like yourself.

Participating in the study would involve completing a few surveys, participating in interviews, and attending two 90-minute training sessions followed by monthly coaching sessions. Your responses will be confidential, meaning that while your identity will be known to the researchers, all data will be coded and protected.

I believe your experience would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Coaching Toolbox.

I'd love to provide you with more information. Do you have a few minutes to discuss the details?

IF YES:

Thank you! The study involves a few phases—starting with a baseline survey and interview, followed by the training sessions and ongoing coaching support. All information will remain confidential, and your participation is completely voluntary. Does this sound like something you'd be interested in?

IF NO:

I completely understand. Thank you for your time, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you change your mind or have any questions in the future.

IF THEY WANT MORE INFORMATION:

I'd be happy to send you an email with all the details, including the informed consent form and a description of the study procedures. When would be a good time to follow up with you?

Thank you for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon!

Principal Investigator:
Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey
Doctorate Program Coordinator
Special Education
Phone: 724-738-2460
SRU e-mail: a-rineer.hershey@sruc.edu
Dept. Address: 114 McKay Education Building

Co-Investigator:
Jennifer Do
Doctorate Special Education Program Student
Phone: 724-504-7415
SRU e-mail: jad1052@sruc.edu
Address: 151 Brighton Lane, Mars, PA 16046

IN-PERSON SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

HELLO [RECIPIENT'S NAME],

I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself. I'm Jennifer Do, a doctoral candidate at Slippery Rock University, and I'm currently conducting a study on the impact of a Coaching Toolbox on professional development in special education. Given your role as a [behavior specialist/supervisor/support teacher/teacher coach], I believe your experience would be incredibly valuable to this research.

The study involves some baseline data collection—such as a survey and an interview—along with two training sessions and monthly coaching sessions to implement the Coaching Toolbox. Your responses will be confidential, meaning that while your identity will be known to the researchers, all data will be coded and protected.

Your participation would help improve instructional coaching models in special education.

Would you be interested in learning more about the study? I can provide more detailed information or answer any questions you might have.

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey

Doctorate Program Coordinator

Special Education

Phone: 724-738-2460

SRU e-mail: a-rineer.hershey@sru.edu

Dept. Address: 114 McKay Education Building

Co-Investigator:

Jennifer Do

Doctorate Special Education Program Student

Phone: 724-504-7415

SRU e-mail: jad1052@sru.edu

Address: 151 Brighton Lane, Mars, PA 16046

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Assessing the Impact of a Coaching Toolbox on Professional Growth and Instructional Practices in Special Education

Principal Investigator:

Jennifer Do

Doctoral Candidate, Department of Special Education

Slippery Rock University

Contact Information: [Email: jad1052@sru.edu] | [Phone: 724-504-7415]

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jennifer Do, a doctoral student at Slippery Rock University. The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the Coaching Toolbox on the professional growth and instructional practices of educators in special education settings. Before agreeing to participate, it is important that you read this consent form to understand your role in the study, the potential risks, and benefits, and your rights as a participant.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The goal of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of a Coaching Toolbox designed to support behavior specialists, supervisors, support teachers, and teacher coaches in their professional development. This study seeks to measure changes in instructional practices and gather feedback on participants' experiences using the Coaching Toolbox.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you choose to participate, you will be involved in the study for approximately 9 months. The study involves the following steps:

1. **PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE:**
 - You will be asked to complete a survey (approx. 30 minutes)
 - A researcher may observe your classroom (approx. 60 minutes) before implementing the Coaching Toolbox.
2. **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE:**
 - You will receive training on the Coaching Toolbox through three sessions (each lasting up to 60 minutes).
 - You will participate in three coaching sessions (each lasting up to 60 minutes each).
3. **POST-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE:**
 - You will complete a follow-up survey (30 minutes)
 - Classroom observations (60 minutes) will be conducted post-implementation.
 - Risks and Discomforts

Participation in this study presents minimal risks. However, you may experience:

- **Time Commitment:** The study requires several hours for surveys, interviews, and observations over the study period.
- **Psychological Stress:** You may feel discomfort discussing your professional practices, but no questions will be evaluative of job performance. You may withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Additionally, participants will have access to debriefing sessions to discuss any concerns and will be provided with contact information for support services at the Watson Institute if further assistance is needed.

BENEFITS

While there may be no direct benefits to you as a participant, you may experience:

- **Professional Growth:** The Coaching Toolbox may enhance your instructional practices.
- **Contribution to Research:** Your participation will help improve coaching models for educators, benefiting the wider field of special education.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will be protected by assigning a unique code to all your data. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications. Only authorized research personnel will have access to the data. Your responses will be confidential, meaning that while your identity will be known to the researchers, all data will be coded and protected.

Data will be securely stored in encrypted digital files and/or locked filing cabinets. Your consent forms and identifiable data will be stored separately from your responses to ensure anonymity. After the study is completed, data will be kept for three years and securely destroyed thereafter.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw after completing surveys or training sessions, all associated data will be removed from the study and securely destroyed unless you explicitly allow it to be retained.

COMPENSATION

There is no monetary compensation for participating in this study.

QUESTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact:

JENNIFER DO

Doctoral Candidate, Slippery Rock University

Email: jad1052@sru.edu | Phone: 724-504-7415

If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Slippery Rock University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 724-738-4846 or irb@sru.edu.

CONSENT

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this form, and you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

PARTICIPANT'S NAME (PRINTED): _____

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

RESEARCHER'S NAME (PRINTED): _____

RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX D: PRE-INTERVENTION ASSESSMENT

Docusign Envelope ID: 2E6BA809-111F-4320-97C9-6DB51978190F

Pre-Intervention Assessment

* Required

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

1. Full Name

2. What are your professional goals?

3. What is your confidence level in achieving these goals? (5 being the highest)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

4. Rate your perceived proficiency in communication skills, considering both verbal and written communication.

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

5. Assess your proficiency in problem-solving, including your ability to analyze situations, identify solutions, and make effective decisions.

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

6. Evaluate your proficiency in collaborating with team members, including your ability to contribute to group discussions, share ideas, and work towards common goals.

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

7. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, please rate your current level of job satisfaction and engagement. *



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APPENDIX E: POST-INTERVENTION ASSESSMENT

Docusign Envelope ID: 2E6BA809-111F-4320-97C9-6DB51978190F

Post-Intervention Assessment

* Required

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

1. Full Name

2. Revisit your initial goals- how are you progressing?

3. Rate your level in achieving these goals. (5 being the highest)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

4. Rate your perceived proficiency in communication skills, considering both verbal and written communication.

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

5. Assess your proficiency in problem-solving, including your ability to analyze situations, identify solutions, and make effective decisions.

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

6. Evaluate your proficiency in collaborating with team members, including your ability to contribute to group discussions, share ideas, and work towards common goals.

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

7. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, please rate your current level of job satisfaction and engagement. *



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APPENDIX F: COACHING FEEDBACK SURVEY

Docusign Envelope ID: 2E6BA809-111F-4320-97C9-6DB51978190F

Data Collection Sheet: Coaching Session Feedback

Participant's Name: _____

Coach's Name: _____

Date of Session: _____

Session Duration: _____

Section 1: Coaching Session Structure

1. Session Objective:

- What was the objective of the coaching session?

Notes: _____

2. Coaching Techniques Used:

- What coaching techniques (e.g., active listening, reflection) were used by the coach?

Notes: _____

3. Tools and Resources:

- Were any tools from the Coaching Toolbox used during the session? If so, which ones?

Notes: _____

Section 2: Participant's Reflection

1. Perceived Value:

- How valuable did the participant find the session in terms of their professional development?

Notes: _____

2. Challenges Discussed:

- What challenges were discussed during the session, and how were they addressed?

Notes: _____

3. Next Steps:

- What are the next steps for the participant based on this coaching session?

Notes: _____

Section 3: Overall Feedback

1. Satisfaction with Coaching Session:

- On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied was the participant with the session?

Score: _____

APPENDIX G: STRUCTURED OBSERVATION FORM

Docusign Envelope ID: 2E6BA809-111F-4320-97C9-6DB51978190F

Classroom Observation Form

Observer's Name: _____
Participant's Name: _____
Date: _____
Time: _____
Classroom Setting: _____
Grade Level: _____

Section 1: General Classroom Practices

1. **Classroom Management:**
 - How is classroom management being handled (e.g., clear expectations, reinforcement of rules)?
Observations: _____
 2. **Instructional Delivery:**
 - Are clear, structured instructions provided?
 - Is there evidence of differentiated instruction based on student needs?
Observations: _____
 3. **Engagement Strategies:**
 - Are students actively engaged with the lesson?
 - How are students participating in activities (e.g., group work, individual tasks)?
Observations: _____
-

Section 2: Coaching Toolbox Utilization

1. **Coaching Tools in Practice:**
 - Is the participant using any of the tools from the Coaching Toolbox during the observed lesson?
 - If yes, which tools are being used and how?
Observations: _____
 2. **Adaptation and Integration:**
 - How effectively is the participant integrating Coaching Toolbox strategies into their existing teaching practices?
Observations: _____
-

Section 3: Student Outcomes

1. **Student Behavior:**

- How are students responding to the instructional practices (e.g., improved behavior, increased focus)?

Observations: _____

2. Student Understanding:

- Are students demonstrating understanding of the lesson content?

Observations: _____

Section 4: Additional Notes

1. Strengths Observed:

2. Areas for Improvement:

Signature of Observer: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX H: SITE PERMISSION LETTER

Docusign Envelope ID: 2E6BA809-111F-4320-97C9-6DB51978190F

Permission to Conduct Research Study

October 19, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter confirms that the Watson Institute grants permission for Jennifer Do, a doctoral candidate at Slippery Rock University, to conduct her research study titled *"Assessing the Impact of a Coaching Toolbox on Professional Growth and Instructional Practices in Special Education"* at the Watson Institute.

Details of the Study:

- **Study Title:** *Assessing the Impact of a Coaching Toolbox on Professional Growth and Instructional Practices in Special Education*
- **Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Do, Doctoral Candidate, Slippery Rock University
- **Study Purpose:** To evaluate the effectiveness of a Coaching Toolbox in enhancing the professional development and instructional practices of educators (behavior specialists, support teachers, supervisors, and teacher coaches) working in special education settings.
- **Study Duration:** Approximately 9 months
- **Study Procedures:** The study will involve participant recruitment, pre- and post-surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and monthly coaching sessions. All data collected will remain confidential, and participation is voluntary.

Agreement:

By signing this letter, the Watson Institute agrees to:

1. Allow the recruitment of eligible staff to participate in the study.
2. Permit data collection through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations within the institution.
3. Ensure the confidentiality of all staff and students is maintained throughout the study.
4. Support Jennifer Do in implementing the Coaching Toolbox with educators and staff involved in the study.
5. Provide access to necessary resources (e.g., meeting space for interviews, access to classrooms for observations) as needed for the research study.

This permission is granted with the understanding that the study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Slippery Rock University, and that all ethical guidelines will be followed to ensure the protection of participants.

Institution/Organization Name:

WATSON INSTITUTE

Site Administrator's Name (Printed):

MARCIA K. LAUS

Site Administrator's Title:

Chief Operating Officer

Site Administrator's Signature:

Marcia K. Laus

Date: 12-5-24

Researcher's Contact Information:

Jennifer Do

Doctoral Candidate, Special Education

Slippery Rock University

Email: jad1052@sru.edu

Phone: 724-504-7415

APPENDIX I: IRB APPROVAL



TO: Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey
Special Education

Yvonne Eaton-Stull

FROM: Yvonne Eaton-Stull, DSW, LCSW, Vice-Chairperson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DATE: February 17, 2025

RE: Protocol Approved

Protocol #: 2025-033-88-B
Protocol Title: Assessing the Impact of a Coaching Toolbox on
Professional Growth and Instructional Practices in Special
Education

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Slippery Rock University has received and reviewed the requested modification(s) to the above-referenced protocol utilizing the expedited review process. The IRB has approved the protocol effective February 17, 2025.

Your approved protocol will expire on February 16, 2026. You will need to submit a Progress/Final Report at least 7 days prior to the expiration date.

Enclosed are copies of approved consent forms to be copied for participants to sign.

If you complete the study within the next year, please notify the IRB with a Final Report. The Final Report form and instructions can be found on the IRB website.

Please contact the IRB Office by phone at (724)738-4846 or via email at irb@sru.edu should your protocol change in any way.