

STARTING WHERE TEACHERS ARE: THE INFLUENCE OF BELIEFS
IN THE LITERACY COACHING RELATIONSHIP

By

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To my Grandma Williamson, whose love of writing was an inspiration.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the last three decades, researchers and teacher educators have called for the investigation of teachers' beliefs (e.g., Ball, 2006; Fenstermacher, 1978; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987), yet the study of such beliefs remains a murky and complicated endeavor due in part to narrow conceptualizations of beliefs. Despite the difficulties associated with the study of teachers' beliefs, it is a valuable pursuit. Theorists (i.e., Green, 1971; Nespor; Pajares, 1992) and researchers alike (i.e., Reutzel & Sabey, 1996; Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997) agree that teachers' classroom practices and behaviors, and ultimately student learning, are influenced by teacher beliefs. Hall (2005) states that "despite the types and amounts of knowledge that teachers may hold, it is their beliefs that are more likely to dictate their actions in the classroom" (p. 405). Beliefs affect teachers' planning, thoughts, decision-making (Fang, 1996a) and perceptions as they serve as lenses that filter and act on new information received from the world around them (Kagan; Pajares).

Just as beliefs may influence teaching decisions and behaviors, they may also play a crucial role in teacher development. Bullough and Baughman (1997) argue that teacher development is an ongoing process of developing teachers' beliefs, not only through changing those beliefs but also by strengthening and refining them. However, this process of change and growth does not come easily—beliefs are resistant to change (Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1972). One of the primary functions of our beliefs is to reduce dissonance and confusion (Eisenhart,

Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988), leading us to maintain our beliefs at all costs, even in light of credible, contradictory evidence (Green, 1971).

For experienced teachers, professional development is often the vehicle used to foster change in beliefs and/or practices. Within the field of literacy, researchers interested in the power of professional development to exact change in teachers' beliefs and practices have found evidence of such change (i.e., Anders & Evans, 1994; Borko, Davinroy, Bliem, & Cumbo, 2000; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). However, the amount and sustainability of change varied greatly. One of the confounding factors in the examination of the impact of professional development on teacher change is the disagreement regarding the impetus for such change. Researchers such as Guskey (1986) argue that changes in teachers' beliefs are a result of changes in their instructional practices. More recently, however, evidence has emerged suggesting that a dynamic relationship exists between teachers' beliefs and practice with each holding the potential for changing the other (i.e., Richardson et al.).

Researchers argue that successful professional development builds on teachers' existing beliefs (Richardson et al., 1991) and provides space for self-examination (O'Brien & Norton, 1991, Sturtevant, 1996). Through such reflection, the hope is that teachers develop an inner awareness (Lortie, 1975; Muchmore, 2001) regarding the relationship between their beliefs and practice and eventually the ability to begin to, as Ball (2006) refers to it, "step out on their own ideologically" (p. 54) as they question their own long-held perspectives leading to new, independent thoughts.

In summary, though dissonance is necessary to foster learning and change (Kagan, 1992), one of the primary jobs of our beliefs is to guard against such conflict (Eisenhart et al., 1988). So while successful professional development provides opportunities to create what Lyons and

Pinnell (2001) refer to as “good dissonance” (p. 140) allowing teachers to modify their beliefs and practices, little is known about how teachers’ beliefs influence this process. Literacy researchers (i.e., Anders & Evans, 1994; Borko et al., 2000; Hart & Lee, 2003; Richardson et al., 1991) have found that professional development can result in changes in teachers’ beliefs by examining those beliefs both before and after participation in a professional development program. However, little attention has been given to the actual characteristics of belief changes throughout the development process or the ultimate durability of newly developed beliefs. There also continues to be a lack of understanding regarding the dynamic relationship between beliefs and practices in the change process. These gaps in our current understandings provide opportunities for new ways to pursue and expand on the construct of belief within the field of literacy.

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, it expanded current theoretical understandings regarding the nature of beliefs by investigating how they were held by teachers (i.e., On what evidence were their beliefs based? How centrally held were their beliefs? How connected were their beliefs to others within their belief system?). Second, it focused on the impact of those beliefs on the teachers’ and a coach’s participation within the professional development context of literacy coaching. In this chapter, I address broad theoretical conceptualizations of belief in order to argue for the need for a multi-dimensional examination of teachers’ beliefs. I also include research addressing the role of teachers’ beliefs in literacy coaching in order to outline the specific professional development context for this study. Next, I provide an overview of theoretical perspectives that contributed to the design of this study. I conclude by identifying the guiding questions for this research and providing an overview of this report.

For the purpose of this study, beliefs were defined as our understandings about the world that we feel are true. Because we believe in the truth of these understandings, beliefs cannot be separated from knowledge. They are dynamic and continually shaped through our interactions with the social world. This definition builds on the work of Rokeach (1972) (as will be described below and in more detail in Chapter II) and Sigel's (1985) defining of belief as knowledge (as discussed in Sigel & Kim, 1996).

Theoretical Conceptualizations of Belief

Many theoretical assumptions regarding beliefs, though untested, are accepted as reasonable in the study of beliefs within the field of education. These widely held assumptions, while examined in greater detail in Chapter II, are crucial in supporting the importance of this study. Beliefs are our personally held truths about the world and all of our beliefs are organized into belief systems (Rokeach, 1972). Within our belief systems, there are subsystems that have the potential to interact, overlap, or never even cross paths (Green, 1971). Rokeach (1972) used the term connectedness to describe the ways these subsystems, including the individually held beliefs within them, are related to one another and communicate within the system. The ways beliefs are organized within systems is unique to each person. We all hold beliefs with varying levels of centrality and intensity, with those beliefs that are most strongly and tightly held being the most difficult to verbalize and change (Rokeach, 1972). Ultimately, our beliefs are our “selves” (Pajares, 1992)—they reflect all of our experiences, our culture, family and religious upbringing (Richardson, 1996), and personal values (Vartuli, 2005).

In the review of conceptual and empirical literature in Chapter II, I argue for the need to broaden current conceptions of teachers' beliefs in order to consider the influence of the

interconnected, multi-dimensional nature of beliefs and belief systems. My visual representation of this broader conceptualization, generated in an earlier work (Hathaway, 2007), is included in Figure 1. As this figure illustrates, teachers' beliefs are situated in the contexts in which they live and work. Within each of these contexts, multiple subsystems of belief are at play, while the individual beliefs within these subsystems are held with varying degrees of centrality and levels of intensity. At times, these subsystems are highly connected and have far-reaching effects across the entire belief system (i.e., the religious beliefs of a practicing spiritual person). Others are more specific to certain contexts and have little overall impact (i.e., the belief that a trip to the movies is not complete without buttery popcorn).

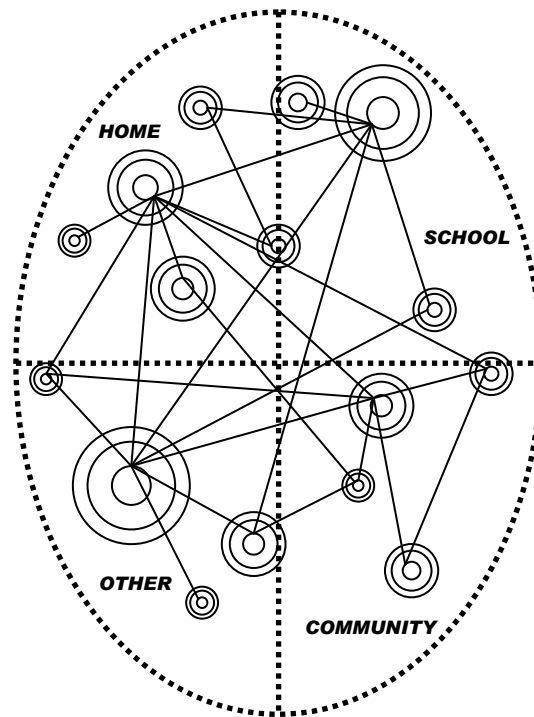


Figure 1. Representation of a teacher's overarching belief system.

Overall, this figure is a representation of Bakhtin's (1981) notion of our ideological self as described later in this chapter. The large oval represents our overarching belief system, or our worldview. Within this large belief system, the concentric circles represent subsystems of beliefs, indicating the centrality of the beliefs within them. These subsystems vary in size due to the different number of individual beliefs grouped within them.

The connectedness of beliefs is shown by the lines between the subsystems. These connections are how the subsystems relate to each other and communicate within the larger system. As can be seen, some subsystems have the potential to interact with many other subsystems, while others may never cross paths. This also helps explain why we can simultaneously hold conflicting beliefs. In order for us to recognize that we hold conflicting beliefs, at some point the beliefs must be examined side by side. However, if they are situated within subsystems that are not connected, that examination may never occur.

All of the subsystems of beliefs are situated in the different contexts of our lives. In this example, these contexts include home, school, community, and others that might be personally relevant. At times, these subsystems may exist in overlapping contexts, while others are more context specific.

Another important consideration for this broader conceptualization of belief is the dynamic nature of belief development. Rather than viewing the figure as a static image, imagine that the subsystems are constantly in motion. They are growing or shrinking, perhaps becoming situated in new contexts, and establishing new links or dissolving old links.

As will be shown in Chapter II, while researchers in the literacy field acknowledge this complex nature of belief, they have failed to honor this complexity in their research (Hathaway, 2007; Pajares, 1992). Instead, they have parsed beliefs into small, discrete units for study,

focusing almost exclusively on teachers' theoretical conceptions of reading (such as whether they hold holistic or skills-based orientations to reading) and their influence on classroom practices. In doing so, they have examined *what* teachers believe (i.e., the content of specific beliefs), while ignoring what Green (1971) argued is the more important issue of *how* teachers believe (i.e., on the basis of what evidence beliefs are held, the centrality with which they are held, or their connections to other beliefs within a belief system). The representation presented above can again help explain the difference between the two approaches to studying teachers' beliefs. Assume that the shaded set of concentric circles in Figure 2 is a teacher's subsystem of literacy beliefs.

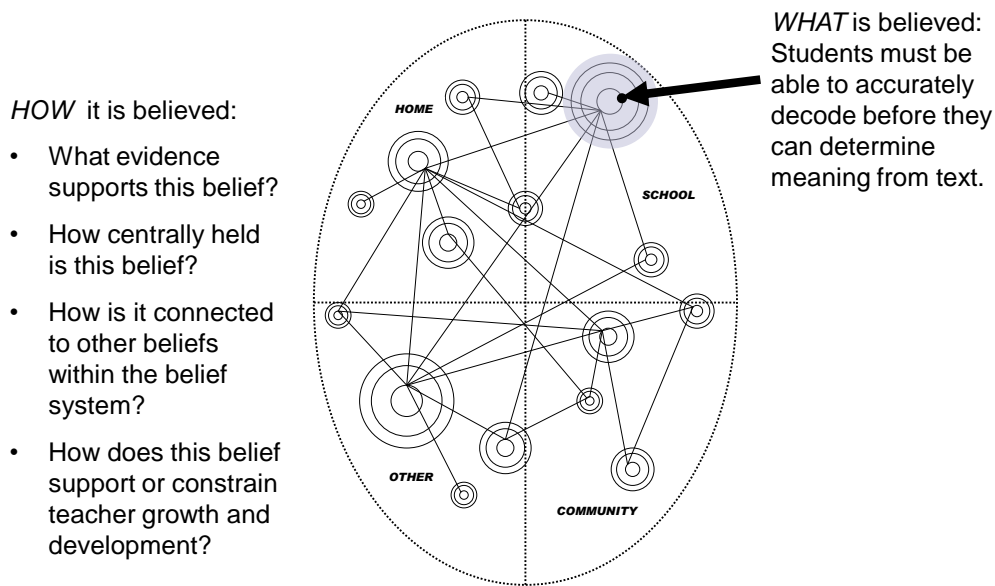


Figure 2. A teacher's subsystem of literacy beliefs. Addressing the *how* versus the *what*.

This subsystem may include this teacher's beliefs regarding instructional materials and methods, theoretical orientations to literacy instruction, as well as beliefs about teaching students

with limited English proficiency or students who struggle with reading. Literacy research, to this point, has chosen to pull out isolated beliefs from within this subsystem to study. So, for example, the belief that students must be able to decode accurately before they can determine meaning from text. This is the type of isolated belief that literacy researchers have so often examined while ignoring the infinite other beliefs that are contained within a teachers' overarching belief system. Little consideration has been give to the evidence on which those beliefs are based, the centrality or intensity of those beliefs within the subsystem, or the connections between beliefs in this and other subsystems.

Therefore, to understand *how* this particular belief might be held, first the evidence on which it is based needs to be considered. Perhaps this teacher has personal experiences with text or has worked with students for whom this seemed to be true, leading her to hold this belief. Alternatively, this belief might be the result of reading that she has done or her participation in professional development.

Considering the evidence on which this belief is based allows for a better understanding of its centrality within the teacher's belief system. For example, if this belief is based on the teacher's personal experiences with texts or students, these direct encounters may lead her to hold this belief centrally as a core belief. On the other hand, if this belief is supported by readings or has its origins in a professional development session, it may be a derived belief based on her trust in the authority of others, and as such more open to change than if held as a core belief. Another way to examine the centrality of a belief is to consider how often it is used as a justification for other beliefs within the system. If this is a core belief for this teacher, it may be used as the reasoning behind many other of the teacher's beliefs, such as her belief in the importance of isolated phonics work or drill and practice of sight words.

An additional element that helps identify how beliefs are held is the connectedness of the beliefs. For this teacher, one might consider how this belief in the importance of students decoding bleeds over into what she also believes about instructional materials or methods. Is this belief connected to her beliefs about the type of school in which she teaches, how she judges successful reading, or differential expectations for students who are considered to be at risk?

Finally, the situated, dynamic nature of beliefs must be considered. In this example, is the belief highly situated within the school in which the teacher works? If she found herself in a school where this was not a commonly held belief, how might this belief be impacted? Likewise, if she found herself in a professional development situation in which she was challenged to use more meaning-based instructional approaches, how would they be reconciled with this belief?

This study addressed this broader conceptualization of belief by considering more than just *what* teachers believed about literacy. It began to explore *how* teachers held and used those beliefs and their influence over participation within a professional development setting by examining the sources of evidence on which they were based, their centrality, and their connections to other beliefs. While it was beyond the scope of this study to map the entirety of teachers' belief systems, there was an opportunity to expand on the current representations of belief in literacy research.

Beliefs within the Professional Development Context of Literacy Coaching

In today's high stakes world of education, school districts and administrators are searching for ways to improve student learning and achievement amid calls for reform. Often, they find themselves relying on professional development to exact change (Rodgers & Pinnell, 2002). Guskey (2000) defines professional development as "those processes and activities

designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (p. 16). While professional development is seen as a necessary component in educational improvement, it is far from a quick fix (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Traditional models of professional development including one-size-fits-all presentations to teacher audiences in one-shot workshops with no follow-up support (Robb, 2000) have been shown to be ineffective (Guskey, 2000). Therefore, new models of professional development have emerged to take their place. Within the field of literacy, coaching is one such model believed to be a powerful intervention (International Reading Association [IRA], 2004a). One reason for this potential is its adherence to principles of effective professional development. To bring about change, professional development must be systematic (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007), provide a clear focus on learning and learners (Guskey, 2000), and be ongoing and embedded in the practice of teaching (Guskey 2000; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Effective professional development also needs to provide intensive and extensive support to teachers, to provide space for teacher reflection, purposeful conversations, and collaboration, and should assist teachers in assimilating new information into their pre-existing beliefs (Hughes, Cash, Ahwee, & Klingner, 2002). A final characteristic of effective professional development is that it allows for interactions between teachers and a more experienced other (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Lyons & Pinnell; Rodgers & Rodgers)—in other words, coaching.

More detailed information regarding research addressing the results of literacy-related professional development programs as well as current understandings of the activity of literacy coaching are provided in Chapter II. Here, however, I focus on the connections between literacy

coaching and teachers' beliefs in order to describe its importance as the context in which this study was embedded.

Literacy coaching is based on social constructivist theories of learning that hold that “our past experiences and beliefs influence how we interact with others, learn new ideas, and discard or refine old ones” (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001, p. 4). Thus, one important component of coaching is considering and building upon teachers' perspectives, or beliefs, in order to understand why they do the things they do. Understanding why teachers make certain instructional decisions allows coaches to provide rationales for trying new instructional possibilities, fostering collaboration as they work toward change (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007).

Not only do coaches need to be aware of teachers' beliefs, they also need to be aware of their own so that they can clearly communicate those beliefs. As Katherine Casey (2006), a former literacy coach, describes, “As you coach, your beliefs will be constantly challenged, and in your most frustrating moments...your beliefs about teaching and learning will steady you” (p. 33).

Beliefs can be quite resistant to change which holds implications for the process of professional development. The change process is complicated by the fact that “teachers within a school or district may have very strong (although implicitly held) beliefs about ‘what works’”. New ideas that represent radical change may require deep changes in the [school's] culturally held belief systems” (Pinnell & Rodgers, 2002, p. 174). Because of this, Kise (2006) argues that the key to professional development is helping teachers understand where their beliefs bind them and keep them locked into practices that limit their ability to help students succeed. If coaches fail to address teachers' beliefs and theoretical understandings, they may find that rather than developing understandings of what and how they are teaching, teachers instead develop a

repertoire of practices they uselessly perform in mechanical ways (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007). Because beliefs are such an integral part of the coaching relationship, it is an ideal context for this study.

Theoretical Perspectives

As I argue above, within the field of literacy there is a need for research that considers a broader view of beliefs as a multi-dimensional, interconnected, situated construct. With the recent rise in prominence of literacy coaching as a form of professional development, there is also a need to understand the impact of beliefs within coaching interactions. While this study followed a grounded theory approach allowing new theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the social learning perspective of ideological becoming contributed to my understanding of beliefs and thus, as a lens for my research.

Sociocultural theories highlight the role of social, cultural, and historical factors in the human experience. From a sociocultural stance, learning is viewed as a social process in which people's understandings and practices are shaped by the contexts in which they live and work (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). In this same way, theorists argue that our beliefs develop from our social interactions and experiences with the world around us (i.e., Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

Bakhtin's (1981) work is particularly applicable to the study of beliefs and belief development. His notion of *ideological becoming* can help us understand how teachers' beliefs develop and change over time. Freedman and Ball (2004) note that this process is "how we develop our way of viewing the world, our system of ideas, what Bakhtin calls an ideological self" (p. 5). The authors further argue that ideological becoming deals with the development of

the whole person, not just isolated concepts and ideas. This argument supports the need for broadening the current view of beliefs found in literacy research from isolated subconstructs of belief to a more connected system.

The work of Bakhtin (1981) also provides a framework for understanding the larger connections between discourses and belief. He viewed ideology as a socially determined set of ideas that influence the way members of a social group view the world (Freedman & Ball, 2004). As we participate in various discourses, we appropriate the associated beliefs, speech patterns, and practices. For example, as undergraduates, teachers find themselves immersed in the discourse of the academic community of their chosen university; they develop new beliefs about what teaching means, new vocabulary, and ways of acting that are recognizable within the world of education (Miller Marsh, 2002). This process continues as they enter the workforce. However, long before entering a teacher education program or taking a teaching position, those same teachers were participants in other discourses from which they also acquired beliefs, ways of speaking, and acting. They first participated in the discourses of their families and communities and as they entered school, encountered yet more discourses (Gee, 1996). Some of what they gathered from these discourses was learned; but much was simply acquired through their participation, with those acquisitions lying outside the realm of consciousness (Rogers, Light, & Curtis, 2004). Beyond the discourses of family, community, and school, Miller Marsh asserts that our worldview is also shaped by discourses of race, class, gender, religion, and sexuality.

Bakhtin (1981) categorizes the multitude of discourses in which we participate into two types: authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses. Authoritative discourses reflect the dominant ideologies of the world into which we are born. Their authority predates our existence (because it has been acknowledged in the past) and permits no flexibility. “It is a *prior*

discourse, the word of the fathers. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal” (p. 342). Examples include religious dogma or scientific truths. Internally persuasive discourses, on the other hand, are “what each person thinks for him- or herself, what ultimately is persuasive to the individual” (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 8). They are not supported by any one authority and may not even be acknowledged in society (Bakhtin). Internally persuasive discourses are open to change and interact with our belief systems to mold and shape our beliefs (Freedman & Ball).

Together, these two types of discourses play a critical role in our ideological development (Assaf, 2005). As we participate in the world, they interact to create tensions, forcing us to make sense of our own and others’ ideological beliefs and assumptions (Assaf & Dooley, 2006).

Within a social learning setting such as coaching, teachers’ authoritative and internally persuasive discourses influence their ideological becoming. Freedman and Ball (2004) argue that Bakhtin’s theories provide support for research investigating teachers’ beliefs because “they emphasize the fact that ideology is not a hidden inner process but rather is external, visible, and amenable to empirical research” (p. 29). In fact, Ball (2006) relies on his work in her own research addressing how teachers’ developing perspectives and commitments are revealed in changing patterns of discourse throughout their teacher education coursework. Bakhtin’s theories are also supportive of the study of social processes, such as belief development (Freedman & Ball).

In particular, Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of ideological becoming contributed to the decision to embed the study within the professional development model of literacy coaching. In his work, he refers to the spaces where struggles between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses occur as “contact zones” and notes these tensions contribute to our ideological becoming.

Coaching interactions hold the potential of serving as such zones as teachers have to work to determine which discourses they personally find to be internally persuasive and to identify the authoritative discourses against which they are struggling. As such, the use of Bakhtin's work as an underlying theoretical base for the study was warranted.

Research Questions

I designed this study to expand on literacy researchers' current views of teachers' beliefs for the reasons explained above. Three overarching questions guided this study, along with more specific related questions.

- 1. What beliefs did the reading specialist and teachers hold about literacy instruction and education?** How did those beliefs compare?
- 2. How were those beliefs about literacy instruction and education held?** On what evidence were those beliefs based? How centrally were they held within a system of beliefs? How were those beliefs connected to other beliefs?
- 3. How do those beliefs influence participation in the professional development setting of literacy coaching?** What beliefs did the reading specialist hold about coaching and how did they influence her work as a coach? How did the teachers' beliefs influence their participation in coaching? How were conflicting beliefs that arose within coaching interactions addressed?

These research questions offer valuable contributions to the study of teachers' beliefs. We know beliefs play a role in the coaching relationship because beliefs ultimately influence all of our actions in life. However, it is still unclear how beliefs influence participation in professional development. It is only by uncovering *how* teachers believe that we can begin to improve current models of professional development and teacher change.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter I provided an introduction to this study. In Chapter II, I review the literature in relation to theoretical understandings of beliefs, the study of teachers' beliefs in the field of literacy, and literacy coaching as professional development. I also address methodological limitations of past research and argue for a broader conceptualization of belief that was honored in this study. Chapter III describes the methodology of the study and provides a description of the nature of coaching observed.

The discussion of the data from this study is divided into three chapters. In Chapter IV, I examine *what* the reading specialist and teachers believed about literacy instruction and the larger purposes of schooling and education. I include descriptions of their visions of ideal practice. Chapter V addresses *how* the teachers held onto their literacy-related beliefs including the evidence on which they were built, the centrality of the beliefs in their belief systems, and connections between beliefs. I also consider the influence of the teachers' beliefs on their participation in coaching interactions. In Chapter VI, the reading specialist's beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching are identified along with the impact of these beliefs on her work as a coach. Ways she considered the teachers' beliefs through differentiated coaching and the resolution of conflicting beliefs arising in the coaching interactions are also addressed.

In Chapter VII, I discuss contributions and implications of the findings both for the understanding of beliefs and literacy coaching. I also address limitations of the study and directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this literature review, I examine current understandings of teachers' beliefs and their impact on the field of literacy. I then build upon this knowledge in proposing a broader view of teachers' beliefs that considers the influence of the interconnected, multi-dimensional nature of beliefs and belief systems. As explained in Chapter I, this study addressed this broader conceptualization of belief along with some of the limitations found within this body of research literature. I begin by tracing the progression of thought among theorists and researchers regarding the theoretical nature of belief. This includes a consideration of beliefs as a construct that is both psychologically held and socially constructed and an examination of the relationship between belief and knowledge. The organization of beliefs into belief systems is also investigated, including factors affecting the strength and intensity of beliefs.

Next, I synthesize specific findings related to literacy researchers' conceptualizations of teachers' beliefs. Within the field, researchers tend to focus on the consequences beliefs have on teachers' instructional practices in literacy rather than the nature of those beliefs. Common findings addressing such consequences are included in this section and consideration is given to researchers' attempts to explain teachers' literacy-related beliefs by examining factors influential in belief development and maintenance. Additionally, studies investigating possibilities for change in teachers' literacy-related beliefs are addressed. Within this section, I also summarize current understandings regarding literacy coaching as a form of professional development, as this served as the specific context in which this study was embedded.

Finally, I explore implications for the study of teachers' beliefs in the field of literacy. Methodological issues including the current lack of definitional consensus, a narrowing of the conceptualization of belief, and limited methods used to capture teachers' beliefs are examined. I argue that a broader consideration of belief building on theories regarding the interconnected, multi-dimensional nature of beliefs and belief systems is needed.

In selecting materials to include in this review, I began with current educational research addressing teachers' beliefs across disciplines, which led me to several seminal pieces of writing regarding the nature and structure of beliefs frequently cited in the literature (i.e., Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1972). I noted that Pajares's efforts to refine the construct of teachers' beliefs and synthesize previous theoretical and empirical work in the field became an anchor piece used by researchers investigating the beliefs of teachers, both in general educational research and in the field of literacy. Thus, I decided to focus on research conducted within the field of literacy since this work and identified 46 studies to include in this review. However, at times I returned to older pieces of research relevant to the review allowing me to draw on the historical knowledge of the field while also describing its current state. Because my primary area of interest was in the beliefs of experienced teachers (those out of the induction period), I focused on research addressing this population. However, due to the limited nature of work related to this particular population, I also reviewed relevant pieces addressing preservice and novice teachers.

How Theorists and Researchers Conceptualize Beliefs: A Progression of Thought

Through the years, theorizations regarding the nature of belief have grown increasingly complex. Earlier conceptualizations of belief, while acknowledging a social component to belief

formation, focused more on beliefs as personal, psychological constructs. More recent conceptions expand on the importance of the socially-situated nature of beliefs. This progression of thought is traced in this section through the work of key theorists such as Rokeach (1960, 1972), Green (1971), and Pajares (1992). Rokeach examined general beliefs whereas Green and Pajares explored the connection between beliefs and teaching. This section also considers one of the fundamental issues central to the understanding of teachers' beliefs—the relationship between belief and knowledge. Finally, the psychological and social nature of beliefs are further considered as the organization of beliefs into belief systems is investigated, including factors affecting the strength and intensity of beliefs.

The Personal, Psychological Nature of Belief

Rokeach (1972) argued that beliefs are personalized, psychological constructs based on individuals' judgments and evaluation. Whether or not supported by rigorous proof, beliefs indicate a confidence in the truth or existence of propositions. Beliefs, which may be explicit or implicit, are central to who we are and how we make sense of and interact with the world around us. Many of our most deeply held beliefs about the world are formed early in life and all beliefs ultimately influence the actions that we take. Because beliefs are psychological constructs, they cannot be directly observed. Instead, they must be inferred from what people do and say.

Like Rokeach (1972), Green (1971) also described beliefs as psychological constructs and noted “when a person believes something, he believes it to be true or to be a reasonable approximation to the truth” (p. 43). Another similarity between the two theorists is their interest in understanding *how* personal beliefs are held rather than *what* beliefs are held. Although these interests will be explored more in depth in a later section addressing systems of belief, it is useful

here to note that the distinguishing characteristic between their two theories is Green's focus on the reasonableness of belief and how it impacts the art of teaching. Green argued that a person's reasonableness cannot be assessed by evaluating the reasonableness of his or her beliefs. Instead, it is necessary to consider the evidence, or grounds, on which those beliefs are based. As an example, he noted that early man's belief that the earth was flat was reasonable because it was supported by the evidence available at the time. Green posited that teaching should help develop reasonable people who are able to consider critically what they believe and the evidence on which those beliefs are based. I argue that in order to do this, teachers must also examine the reasonableness of their own beliefs and question why they believe the things they do.

The Social Nature of Belief

In his synthesis of findings about the nature of beliefs in educational research, Pajares (1992) reached across fields and years of research to consolidate common assumptions regarding beliefs and then demonstrated the need for researchers to consider carefully how they define beliefs and the methods used to capture them. In this synthesis, he built on the work of Rokeach (1972) and others (i.e., Lortie, 1975; Munby, 1982; Nespor, 1987) as he advanced the importance of considering not only the psychological nature of beliefs but also the impact of the social world. He argued that our beliefs are constructed through our social interactions with the world around us, with much of our belief development occurring through enculturation. Belief development is influenced by our personal experiences, ethnicity, socioeconomic standing, and religious upbringing along with gender, geographic location, life decisions (Richardson, 1996), and personal values (Vartuli, 2005).

Teachers' educational beliefs include their beliefs about learners and learning, teaching, subject areas, learning to teach, and the self and the teaching role (Calderhead, 1996) and are also believed to be socially constructed (Richardson, 1996). According to Errington (2004), they are centrally held within a teacher's belief system. Like other personally held beliefs that make up our worldview, educational beliefs are also shaped by our personal experiences, specifically our experiences with schooling and instruction (Pajares, 1992). Researchers have begun to investigate the impact of the school context (Grisham, 2000; Sturtevant, 1996; Sturtevant & Linek, 2003) and experiences with formal knowledge (Grisham) on the development of teachers' educational beliefs. These factors and their impact on teachers' literacy-related beliefs are examined more closely later in this chapter.

Pajares (1992) also laid the groundwork for research investigating the connection between identity and belief. He noted that "people grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their 'self', so that individuals come to be identified and understood by the very nature of the beliefs, the habits, they own" (p. 318). In general, beliefs help people to understand themselves and those around them as they attempt to make sense of the world and their place in it, and as such play a central role in building and maintaining notions of identity (Bullough & Baughman, 1997).

Beliefs also play a role in our group identifications. Pajares (1992) noted that beliefs help individuals identify with each other eventually leading to the formation of groups and social networks. Indeed, when searching for group affiliations, people are more likely to identify with and join those sharing similar beliefs (Rokeach, 1972). Within occupations, such as teaching, people also develop theories to explain the events that are important to them. In this way, there are some commonly shared beliefs within the field of teaching (Lortie, 1975). These commonly

shared beliefs and group memberships can be influential in the development of identities. For example, for teachers, membership in school groups that support their particular beliefs aids the development of confident, clearer conceptions of themselves (Pajares).

Pajares's (1992) argument that our beliefs are ultimately our selves holds great importance in the study of teachers' beliefs. When researchers attempt to investigate teachers' beliefs, they in effect are investigating who teachers are. Accurately representing who teachers are and what they believe is an intimidating challenge. The strong connection between beliefs and identities also holds implications for the possibilities of and process of changing teachers' beliefs.

Connections between Knowledge and Belief

One particular challenge that arises in defining the nature of teachers' beliefs results from the debate regarding the relationship between knowledge and belief. Across the literature, there is disagreement about whether the two are distinct constructs or if one is subsumed in the other (Pajares, 1992). Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, and Wray (2001) noted that arguments supporting the distinction between knowledge and beliefs often emerge from researchers with interests in philosophy and epistemology whereas researchers who assume the constructs are synonymous tend to operate from a psychological perspective. Most often, a truth condition is the litmus test for knowledge versus belief—knowledge must be supported by either rigorous proof or consensus within a community whereas beliefs require no agreement regarding their validity or appropriateness (Green, 1971; Kagan, 1992; Pajares; Richardson, 1996).

Returning to the work of the theorists discussed above, we find that though Rokeach (1972) and Green (1971) held similar views of beliefs as primarily psychological constructs, they

were not similarly concerned with the distinction between belief and knowledge. Rokeach (1972) brushed the topic in his argument that beliefs have cognitive components representative of knowledge, but did not address it extensively in his work whereas Green described belief and knowledge as mutually exclusive concepts. Green argued that because of the truth condition of knowledge, knowing is not a psychological phenomenon like believing. Knowledge functions in situations where belief cannot and vice versa. To give a very basic example of this relationship, if you were to see a person approaching that appeared to be your friend, you might say, “I believe that’s my friend Jill.” However, once the person moves close enough to you for you to make a clear identification that it actually is the person you know, you might say, “Now I know that’s my friend Jill.” Green pointed out that such a shift in language is an indication that we treat knowing as something different from believing. However, he also acknowledged that belief and knowledge can easily be mistaken for one another because knowing is a unique type of believing where one believes what is true.

Like Green, Nespor (1987) posited that belief and knowledge are distinct constructs. Drawing on Abelson’s (1979) work with artificial intelligence models, he delved more deeply into differences between knowledge and belief and identified four distinguishing features of beliefs—existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure—that reflect the structure of beliefs as opposed to knowledge. Nespor argued that when attempting to understand the practice of teaching, beliefs are the more appropriate construct to study because of the complex contexts in which teachers work.

In contrast to these arguments for the distinction between belief and knowledge, Kagan (1992) asserted that the constructs are so closely related they are virtually indistinguishable. She argued that because teaching itself has no absolute truths, ultimately all knowledge teachers hold

is subjective, and therefore, a form of belief. Similarly, Pajares (1992), referencing the work of Nespor (1987) and others (i.e., Ernest, 1989; Nisbett & Ross, 1980), acknowledged that though the cognitive processes involved in believing and knowing may differ, ultimately the concepts are so intertwined they cannot be separated.

While distinctions between knowledge and belief are theorized, Richardson (1996) noted that in teaching and teacher education literature, little distinction is made between knowledge and beliefs. Instead, knowledge is most often used as a term for grouping ideas about teaching. In the field of literacy, some researchers do acknowledge that the constructs of belief and knowledge may be distinct; however, they find them to be so closely related they choose to study them in a parallel manner (e.g., Grisham, 2000; Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997). For example, Thomas and Barksdale-Ladd's research addressed how teachers' differing professional knowledge and literacy-learning beliefs affected their instructional practices. Others argue belief and knowledge cannot be separated and therefore choose to collapse the constructs (i.e., DeFord, 1985; Sturtevant, 1996) as is seen in Sturtevant's study in which she assumed teachers' instructional beliefs included their knowledge related to instruction.

Having considered the arguments put forward by the theorists and researchers mentioned above, I personally see knowledge and belief as indivisible constructs within the study of teachers' beliefs. I believe this consolidation of knowledge and belief is necessary in part because of the complex spaces in which teaching and learning occur. In schools and classrooms, there are no absolute truths; therefore, teachers must work to make sense of the situations (Kagan, 1992), or ill-defined problems, that arise in the entangled domains of the classroom. Ill-defined problems require teachers to move beyond a reliance on the information contained in the

problems and instead to rely on their own background knowledge or make guesses and assumptions in order to solve them (Nespor, 1987).

Kagan (1992) referred to these problems and domains as “schizophrenic tasks.” When teachers encounter such tasks, or uncertainties, in the classroom, they realize they cannot solve such problems by a reliance on clear, indisputable guidelines. Standard cognitive processing strategies fail, relevant schemata cannot be accessed, and teachers cannot determine needed information or appropriate behaviors (Pajares, 1992); therefore, in order to choose between equally valid alternatives, they create their own guidelines for action based on their underlying beliefs and experiences (Kagan). Thus, teachers’ beliefs and knowledge act together, informing teaching practices. Separating the two constructs leads to a less complete picture of the activity of teaching. Because of this, I chose to collapse the constructs of knowledge and belief in this study, recognizing that they both served as mediating tools in the coaching relationship.

Systems of Beliefs

Within the research literature, there is an underlying assumption that beliefs are somehow organized in meaningful ways rather than just being isolated thoughts (i.e., Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1998; Poulson et al., 2001). According to Rokeach (1972), adults possess from tens to hundreds of thousands of individual beliefs that are organized (though not always logically) into a belief system. He defined a belief system as “an organization of beliefs varying in depth, formed as a result of living in nature and in society, designed to help a person maintain, insofar as possible, a sense of ego and group identity, stable and continuous over time” (pp. 11-12).

How Beliefs are Held within Systems

A common hypothesis is that beliefs clustered together into belief systems are even more strongly held than individual beliefs (Abelson, 1979; Pajares, 1992) and that all beliefs develop and change as part of a larger system (Green, 1971). Within these systems, individual beliefs vary in power and intensity with more centrally held beliefs being more resistant to change (Rokeach, 1972). It is even possible to hold conflicting beliefs within the same system (Green). Rokeach's (1972) and Green's emphasis on beliefs as psychological constructs naturally led them to consider how individuals organize these beliefs in order to make sense of them. The following section looks at this organization of beliefs into systems, including a variety of types of beliefs.

Types of beliefs. Systems of belief contain many different types of belief that vary from person to person. The importance of these beliefs is not so much in *what* is believed, but *how* it is believed (Green, 1971). Some beliefs come into existence because various types of evidence or reason in a person's life support them. Others are held regardless of whether they are supported by reason and at times are even held despite contradictory evidence (Green; Rokeach, 1972).

Rokeach (1972) provided greater distinction among the types of belief, breaking them into five different classes that he arranged along a central-peripheral continuum. The location of beliefs within a system along this continuum gives an indication of the centrality of the individual beliefs. The first two classes of belief, described as primitive beliefs, are distinguished by their associated degree of social consensus. These beliefs regarding physical and social reality, as well as the nature of the self are learned through direct encounters with objects of belief and are located in the innermost core of the belief system. Both types of primitive beliefs are virtually incontrovertible; they are rarely challenged, and even when they are, they are so

tightly held that little can be done to change them. Green (1971) described these types of beliefs as core beliefs and asserted they are what make up our basic personalities, and as such are not easily changed because they are so important and are held with such psychological strength. These core beliefs seem self-evident. Pajares (1992) even noted “people believe them because, like Mount Everest, they are there” (p. 309).

As children, all of our beliefs begin as primitive beliefs as the adults around us, particularly parents, serve as authorities that reinforce and validate these beliefs. However, as we mature, we begin to recognize that not everyone is an authority on every topic. This leads us to Rokeach’s (1972) third class of beliefs, authority beliefs. The most important beliefs we hold within this class are those concerning the positive and negative authorities we can identify within our reference groups as we come to see who can and would know and therefore should be trusted (though these authorities vary from person to person). Beliefs within this class can be disputed because we come to understand there are others who do not share our beliefs. But, that does not necessarily mean those other beliefs are not valid; we come to expect differences of opinion. Even though authority beliefs are still centrally held and therefore resistant to change, they are more easily changed than primitive beliefs.

These authority beliefs become quite important when considering Rokeach’s (1972) fourth class of beliefs, derived beliefs. This classification includes beliefs held solely because they come from an authoritative source we find to be credible. Unlike primitive and authority beliefs that are learned through direct experiences with the object of belief, derived beliefs are learned from others. Examples include religious and political ideological beliefs as well as information we believe because we learned it from a trusted source such as an encyclopedia or newspaper. Because these beliefs are based on particular authorities, knowing a person’s

authority source can help identify other beliefs likely held based on this association alone.

Derived beliefs are controvertible—we are aware there are others who both agree and disagree with such beliefs. Often, changes in derived beliefs emanate from changes in authority beliefs as we align ourselves with new authorities, or from changes in the beliefs that our current authorities communicate to us.

The final class of beliefs Rokeach (1972) identified is inconsequential beliefs. These refer to our personal tastes, such as the best flavor of ice cream, and are the most peripherally held of all our beliefs. They are learned through direct experiences with objects of belief and are held regardless of others' agreement with them. They may be intensely held and can be difficult to change.

Connectedness of beliefs. Rokeach's (1972) conceptualization of belief systems is based on three underlying assumptions. First, all beliefs are not equally important to individuals; they vary in intensity and power. Second, the more central a belief, the more resistant it is to change. Third, when beliefs are changed, the effect on the entire belief system is a function of the centrality of the belief. He compared a belief system to an atom with its stabilizing nucleus surrounded by less stable components and hypothesized that beliefs are intuitively organized in a particular order along his proposed central-peripheral continuum. He also theorized there is one superordinate belief system containing all of a person's beliefs that can then be divided into smaller subsystems of belief.

Similarly, Green (1971) proposed that beliefs differ in intensity and power from person to person. He visualized a belief system as a set of concentric circles, with the most strongly held beliefs at the center moving outward to less strongly held beliefs. In studying the intensity of beliefs, it is important to note that although there may be some connection between centrality and

intensity, this certainly is not always the case. Inconsequential beliefs are the most peripheral, yet can be held with great intensity.

From Rokeach's (1972) and Green's (1971) description of belief systems, we can see that the beliefs within them are interconnected. As such, the impact of change in beliefs is a function of the centrality of beliefs within a system. Changes in core beliefs, though very difficult to bring about, have far-reaching consequences on the overall belief system. Rokeach (1972) argued that such change leads us

to question the validity of many other beliefs within one's belief system; it would produce a great deal of inconsistency within the belief system, that, to eliminate, would require major cognitive reorganization in the content and in the structural relations among many other beliefs within the system. (pp. 7-8)

On the other hand, changes in inconsequential beliefs, which are the most peripherally held and have few connections with other beliefs within a system, have little effect on our overall belief system.

A final consideration regarding the connectedness of beliefs within a system is how a person can simultaneously hold what appear to be conflicting beliefs. This possibility exists in part because of the smaller subsystems within the larger belief system. Conflicting beliefs can reside within separate subsystems, and as long as these beliefs are never closely examined side-by-side, the conflict can remain (Green, 1971). At times, we may not even be consciously aware of these contradictory beliefs. However, even when we are, we are able to justify the contradiction through a "this belief has nothing to do with that belief" argument.

Belief systems are beneficial in understanding *how* people believe *what* they believe. Unfortunately, in studying teachers' beliefs determining how beliefs are held may be more difficult than actually determining which beliefs exist. However, it is imperative that researchers begin to move away from dissecting the study of beliefs into pieces and parts in which the focus

is on what is believed. As is seen through an understanding of belief systems, beliefs are interconnected and as such, it is vital that these connections be brought to the surface in the study of teachers' beliefs as this work did. This next section examines the impact of the connected nature of belief systems on the change process.

Implications of Belief Systems for Teacher Change

Theorists agree that belief systems are more stable and resistant to change than the individual beliefs held within them (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1972). The earlier in life beliefs are formed and the more centrally they are held within a system, the more resistant they are to change (Green, 1971; Rokeach, 1972). Nespor, among others (Kagan, 1992; Pajares), argued beliefs are very resistant to change stating, "when beliefs change, it is more likely to be a matter of a conversion or gestalt shift than the result of argumentation or a marshalling of evidence" (p. 321). Even in light of credible, contradictory evidence, beliefs often are maintained at all costs (Green; Munby, 1982). There are many factors contributing to the stability of beliefs including their location within belief systems, the connection they have to personal identity, and the difficult nature of the change process. Despite the difficulty, however, researchers have found there are possibilities for bringing about changes in belief (i.e., Richardson, 1996; Sturtevant, 1996; Vartuli, 2005).

Resistance to change. When considering the likelihood of change in beliefs, one important factor is the location of those beliefs within one's personal belief system, and therefore the strength with which they are held. Beliefs are deeply personal constructs (Pajares, 1992) and as noted above, some beliefs are more centrally located, and thus, less open to change. Our core beliefs are used to validate the other beliefs within our belief system (Green, 1971). Therefore, changes in these beliefs have far-reaching effects on the entirety of the belief system (Rokeach,

1972), and can even damage or destroy it (Rokeach, 1960, 1972). One function of belief systems is to reduce confusion and maintain stability; in order to fulfill this basic service they *must* resist change (Eisenhart et al., 1988).

A second reason for the difficulty in changing beliefs is their connection to our personal identity and sense of self. As previously noted, our beliefs help determine our personalities and who we are as people (Green, 1971; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1972). Thus, all humans work to maintain their beliefs, often at all costs, in order to maintain a sense of self. When our beliefs are challenged, it leads to a disturbing crisis of belief (Green; Goodenough, 1963) which can bring about an identity crisis as we begin to question all that we thought we believed (Rokeach, 1972). Bullough and Baughman (1997) noted the emotional and intellectual investment we make in our beliefs and their organization lends power to those very same beliefs. They also argued that challenges to our core beliefs are seen as personal attacks and that the most common reaction to such attacks is to “shore up the system, even at the cost of engaging in a counterfactual defense, and in self-deception” (p. 73).

Finally, humans have good reason for wanting to believe their beliefs are true; change is hard and can even be painful. Once confronted with evidence contrary to our beliefs, a state of disequilibrium arises forcing us to find some way to resolve it (Goodenough, 1963). The most common outcome of this dissonance is that we work to maintain our current beliefs. One reason this happens is that our beliefs become self-validating as they lead us to see what we expect to see that reinforces our current beliefs (Goodenough; Pajares, 1992). Beliefs are so powerful they can easily outweigh even clear and convincing contradictory evidence and may continue to exist even when they are no longer accurate representations of reality (Pajares). Changing beliefs can also be difficult because at times it may require that we change our personal relationships

(Bullough & Baughman, 1997). Because many of our beliefs are based on the ideas given to us by authorities we trust, when confronted with conflicting information, it may require us to abandon our current sources of authority (Rokeach, 1972). Again, it becomes easier to ignore the contradictions.

Possibilities for change. Although changes in beliefs can be hard to realize, at the same time, they are inevitable. Our beliefs shape the way we interpret the world; because the world is an ever-changing entity, our beliefs will change along with it (Green, 1971). Though the processes through which beliefs are changed are examined later in this paper, it is important to note the role belief systems play in bringing about such change. Green, Goodenough (1963), and Rokeach (1960) all referred to the open or closed nature of belief systems to describe the likelihood and ease of change and growth in people's beliefs. People with more open belief systems are inclined to weigh new evidence against their current beliefs and are open to integrating these new ideas into their existing system of beliefs or when necessary, refining their own beliefs.

People with closed belief systems, though they may be confronted with new contradictory evidence, reject it out right because it does not align with their currently held beliefs (Rokeach, 1960). Again, beliefs become self-fulfilling (Pajares, 1992) and therefore can lead to an even more closed system (Goodenough, 1963). Belief systems may also become more closed in times of challenge in order to ward off threats and anxiety (Rokeach, 1960).

Summary

In this first section, I have examined the prevailing theories and assumptions regarding the nature of belief and belief systems. Beliefs are conceptualized as personal, psychological

constructs that are formed through and influenced by our interactions in the world in which we live (Pajares, 1992). When considering the impact of these assumptions on the study of teachers' beliefs, we must keep in mind that because beliefs are personal constructs, what is believed and how it is believed will vary from teacher to teacher. To understand teachers' beliefs, we must also consider the social contexts in which teachers live and work. Researchers have begun to examine these assumptions, but they remain largely untested. Additionally, consideration of the ways in which our beliefs are inextricably connected to what we know (Alexander, Schallert, & Hare, 1991; Kagan, 1992; Pajares) serves to highlight the complexity of the study of beliefs and provides some explanation for the lack of a cohesive research base investigating these arguments.

Like the hypotheses addressing the nature of beliefs, ideas about how beliefs are organized into larger systems have not been thoroughly tested. Rokeach (1972) and Green (1971) argued that individually, beliefs are more vulnerable to change than when considered as part of a belief system. These theorists also postulated that the centrality of beliefs within a system ultimately affects their durability. The assumption that the grouping of beliefs into systems leads to more tightly held beliefs has implications for research on teachers' beliefs. Attempts to change teachers' beliefs must address their belief systems, and not just their individually held beliefs. Changing beliefs can be a difficult task, but all beliefs are ultimately open to change (though change is much more probable with some types of beliefs than others) (Green; Rokeach, 1972).

So far, current understandings about beliefs and belief systems raise more questions than they answer. With a better grasp of the theories associated with beliefs, we now consider how literacy researchers conceptualize beliefs and examine their efforts to test these common assumptions.

How Literacy Researchers Conceptualize Beliefs

In exploring the current understandings of teachers' beliefs regarding literacy learning and instruction relevant to this study, I found that literacy researchers took a very different approach than the theorists discussed above. Within this smaller body of literature there were strands examining (a) teachers' theoretical orientations towards literacy and literacy instruction, (b) the congruency between teachers' literacy-related beliefs and their instructional practices, (c) the influence these beliefs have on classroom practices and student learning, and (d) the impact of interventions designed to change teachers' beliefs. Also emerging from these investigations were findings addressing factors that influence the development of teachers' literacy beliefs as well as suggestions for supporting the change of these beliefs. This section synthesizes studies from the past 15 years of literacy research, considers the ways in which they contribute to the greater understanding of beliefs, and raises issues for future research.

Conceptualizations vs. Consequences

Although the broad theorizations of beliefs and belief systems discussed in the first section of this chapter are alluded to within the theoretical frameworks of literacy research investigating teachers' beliefs, overall, researchers do not address the actual conceptualization of beliefs. They note their agreement with the views put forth by theorists such as Rokeach (1972) and Green (1971) and rely on the synthesis of research addressing teachers' beliefs given by Pajares (1992), but there are few attempts to test these theoretical assumptions. Rather than investigating *how* teachers' beliefs are organized and held, most literacy researchers have investigated *what* teachers believe about literacy and the *consequences* of these beliefs on instructional practices. They have concluded that teachers do have theoretical beliefs about

literacy and that these beliefs have an impact on instructional practices and ultimately student learning. Studies focused on the consequences of teachers' literacy-related beliefs are considered first. Later, research investigating the effectiveness of professional development for bringing about change in teachers' beliefs concerning literacy is also considered along with current understandings of the professional development approach of literacy coaching which served as the setting for this study.

Teachers' Theoretical Beliefs about Literacy

Research focusing on teachers' theoretical beliefs about literacy typically has one of two aims. Researchers either attempt to identify what specific beliefs teachers hold regarding literacy and literacy instruction (such as theoretical orientations), or having identified these beliefs, they investigate whether teachers' instructional practices are congruent with them. Findings indicate that teachers do hold theoretical beliefs about literacy—I look first at these studies. Then, I consider research addressing the connection between these beliefs and teachers' instructional practices.

At times, researchers have been interested in simply identifying teachers' beliefs surrounding literacy and literacy practices as is seen in the work of Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester (1998), Irwin-DeVitis (1996), Mallette, Henk, Waggoner, and DeLaney (2005), McLachlan, Carvalho, de Lautour, and Kumar (2006), O'Brien and Norton (1991), and Sturtevant and Linek (2003). This most often is accomplished through surveying. For example, Mallette et al. surveyed 90 middle school teachers and found that the majority considered literacy instruction to be an important part of their teaching responsibilities regardless of the subject they taught. Specifically, the teachers valued basic literacies (including topics such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, word identification, and fluency) more highly than new

literacies such as media, the Internet, visual, and critical literacy practices. Only 50% of the teachers surveyed believed these personal, out-of-school literacies should be included within the school context.

Efforts have also been made within this strand of research to identify teachers' beliefs related to very specific literacy topics. Johnston (2001) conducted a study of 42 teachers' self-reported instructional practices in spelling as well as their beliefs about how adequately spelling is addressed within the curriculum. Overall, 73% of the teachers believed that spelling is not addressed well within the elementary curriculum. Researchers have also worked to identify teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction for students with limited English proficiency (Rueda & Garcia, 1996) or students struggling with literacy (Abernathy, 2002; Nierstheimer, Hopkins, Dillon, & Schmitt, 2000; Nierstheimer, Hopkins, & Schmitt, 1996).

A final common interest among researchers describing *what* teachers believe is the identification of teachers' theoretical orientations towards literacy. Harste and Burke (1977) defined theoretical orientations as specific knowledge and belief systems teachers hold about reading that serve to guide their decision making. They found that teachers are theoretical in their instructional approaches to reading. In the past 15 years, literacy researchers have moved away from proving that teachers have theoretical orientations and have begun to investigate their significance. To assist in the identification of these orientations, DeFord (1985) constructed the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP), which continues to be used extensively in research regarding teachers' literacy beliefs (i.e., Ketner, Smith, & Parnell, 1997; Morrison, Wilcox, Madrigal, & McEwan, 1997; Olson & Singer, 1994; Poulson et al., 2001; Qian & Tao, 2006; Reutzel & Sabey, 1996; Sacks & Mergendoller, 1997). The TORP identifies three possible orientations to reading: phonics, skills, and whole language. A second measure used is Lenski et

al.'s (1998) Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) (see, for example, Powers, Zippay, & Butler, 2006), which assesses teachers' beliefs about literacy learning and identifies teachers as holding traditional, eclectic, or constructivist orientations.

As an example of research addressing teachers' theoretical orientations, Poulson et al. (2001) conducted a study in England using a modified version of the TORP (DeFord, 1985) to compare the theoretical orientations of 225 effective teachers of literacy (as nominated by supervisors and confirmed with school and teacher data such as national curriculum assessment results) with a comparison group of 150 teachers exhibiting a full range of effectiveness. Overall, they found the effective teachers were inclined towards a whole language, constructivist orientation to reading instruction indicating they emphasized reading as meaning making and valued the use of authentic texts. In contrast, the comparison group demonstrated more of a phonics and skills orientation to reading instruction.

Other research has shown a trend toward teachers holding more eclectic views of the reading process rather than a strict adherence to any one theoretical model. Baumann et al. (1998) surveyed 1,207 teachers of Pre-K to fifth grade in the United States and found that teachers typically favored a balanced approach to reading instruction that combined both phonics and holistic principles and practices. Mesmer (2006) and Rueda and Garcia (1996) also confirmed this trend.

Another way researchers attempt to understand the significance of teachers' theoretical beliefs is by examining the congruence between teachers' stated literacy-related beliefs and their actual, observed classroom practices. Studies over the past 15 years support that there is usually some degree of congruence between teachers' literacy-related beliefs and their classroom practices. Reed (2003), Rueda and Garcia (1996), Squires and Bliss (2004), and Sturtevant

(1996) all used interview techniques and observation of classroom instruction to identify strong matches between teachers' stated beliefs and their practice. Even researchers such as Davis, Konopak, and Readence (1993), Grisham (2000), Olson and Singer (1994), Powers et al. (2006), and Richardson et al. (1991) who each found cases of congruence and incongruence in their work still argued that teachers' literacy beliefs and instructional practices are generally consistent.

An early example of this type of research is Richardson et al.'s (1991) work with 39 intermediate teachers. Using interview data, the researchers first determined the teachers' theoretical orientations to reading comprehension (rated on a scale ranging from a word/skills approach to a literature approach) and then made predictions of instructional practices they anticipated observing in these teachers' classrooms. After observations were completed, Richardson et al. found they were quite successful in predicting teachers' instructional practices leading them to conclude there was congruence between beliefs and practice.

An extension of this research can be found in studies conducted by Barksdale-Ladd and King (2000), Hedrick, Harmon, and Linerode (2004), and Qian and Tao (2006). Having found inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices, these researchers were interested in identifying factors contributing to the disparities. In an investigation of 4 teachers' beliefs and practices both within a university practicum and in their own classrooms, Qian and Tao found that rather than the teachers' instructional practices aligning tightly with their beliefs, they instead were specific to the teaching context and socially situated. For example, one teacher, Allison, believed in a whole language approach to reading instruction. However, during several lessons, she focused on phonics-based instruction as she had her student read words from flash cards and work on blending sounds. Allison explained that though she generally favored more

holistic approaches to reading, she felt there needed to be a balance between learning phonics skills and meaningful reading opportunities. Additionally, Allison attributed inconsistencies in her beliefs and practice to factors such as time constraints and administrative expectations that she provide certain types of instructional activities. Other participants identified factors associated with the current political climate such as pressures associated with standardized testing.

Davis et al. (1993) found similar constraints, whereas Hedrick et al. (2004) identified contributing factors within the teaching context (such as teachers' manuals) in their study of teachers' self-reported beliefs and practices addressing vocabulary instruction. Barksdale-Ladd and King (2000) found discrepancies to be related to the struggles teachers face as they work to change their beliefs and practices. Richardson et al. (1991) also hypothesized that mismatches they found between beliefs and practice were a result of ongoing changes in the teachers' beliefs and/or practices, specifically that there were changes in beliefs that had not yet been carried through in practice.

From the studies reviewed above, it seems that teachers do have literacy-related beliefs, though at times they may not necessarily be able to verbalize them. Much of what teachers "know" (or, I argue, believe) is tacit and not necessarily available for recall (Bullough & Baughman, 1997). O'Brien and Norton (1991) found this to be true in their study of factors influencing teachers' decision-making in reading instruction. The teachers in their study often discussed beliefs as "'intuition' or 'common sense' and they were unable to account for where or how they acquired these beliefs" (p. 34). Having a better sense of *what* teachers believe about literacy provides a starting point for work attempting to build on teachers' currently held beliefs.

This body of literature also indicates that researchers generally agree there is congruence between teachers' beliefs and practices. However, the question of whether or not such congruence is desirable lingers within the field. Earlier research argued that congruency was a requirement for effective teaching (Dobson & Dobson, 1983). More recent research does not automatically assume that mismatches between beliefs and practice are signs of trouble, as findings have emerged indicating that mismatches may actually serve as indicators of teacher change. There is agreement that whenever teachers begin to make major changes in either their belief systems or their instructional practices there is naturally a time where the two are inconsistent (Barksdale-Ladd & King, 2000; Lenski et al., 1998; Richardson et al., 1991). This finding informs future research into bringing about change in teachers' beliefs by providing new ways of thinking about the change process.

The Influence of Teachers' Literacy-Related Beliefs on Instructional Practices

Beyond research investigating merely what teachers believe about literacy or the congruency between teachers' literacy-related beliefs and their instructional practices, efforts have been made to study the impact of these beliefs. Ketner et al. (1997), Mesmer (2006), Morrison et al. (1997), Muchmore (2001), and Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, and Hampston (1998) investigated the influence of teachers' beliefs on their instructional practices.

Muchmore (2001) relied on a life history methodology. He determined that one high school English teacher's beliefs about literacy—that students need freedom to generate their own ideas and evaluate their own work because literacy is an important vehicle for self-discovery—led her to encourage her students to read about, write about, and discuss topics relevant to their lives in order to help them better know themselves.

Researchers also used surveys to help capture the influence of teachers' beliefs on their instructional practices. Morrison et al. (1997) examined the connections between theoretical orientations to literacy and teachers' attitudes about student control whereas Ketner et al. (1997) were interested in the link between theoretical orientations and developmentally appropriate practices. Mesmer (2006) also surveyed teachers to determine the types of reading materials they used and valued in their classrooms.

Other studies concluded that teachers' beliefs about literacy were not the only ones that influenced their instructional practices. Both Moje (1996) and Pajares and Graham (1998) found that teachers' beliefs regarding the importance of nurturing students overrode their instructional beliefs and practices. Specifically, Pajares and Graham asked middle school teachers to respond to a hypothetical teaching situation in which a student asks the teacher to respond to a poem he has written (which clearly is problematic). Through their responses, the teachers indicated a strong belief in the importance of maintaining the student's self-concept by always providing positive feedback regardless of the poem's merits. Consistently, teachers minimized honest criticism and instruction in order to protect the student's feelings.

These findings addressing the impact of teachers' beliefs on their instructional practices also support the theory that there is a link between beliefs and actions. Importantly, however, this line of research also shows that teachers' beliefs about literacy are not always the most influential beliefs when it comes to their instructional practices. We can see from the work of Abernathy (2002), Moje (1996), and Pajares and Graham (1998) that what teachers believe about their students or their own role in the classroom can be just as or even more important than what they believe about literacy. This raises the issue of the impact of other *non-educational* beliefs on teachers' instructional practices. Theoretical conceptualizations of belief systems on which this

research rests posit that beliefs are much more interconnected than is currently acknowledged by researchers. The singular focus on teachers' literacy-related beliefs limits the understandings of how all beliefs held by teachers, and not just those related to education, influence their practices.

The Influence of Teachers' Literacy-Related Beliefs on Student Learning

Building on the assumption that teachers' practices do affect instruction, Fang (1996b), Reutzel and Sabey (1996), Sacks and Mergendoller (1997), and Thomas and Barksdale-Ladd (1997) examined the impact of teachers' beliefs on their students' learning. Specifically, they investigated the influence teachers' theoretical orientations toward literacy instruction have on students' understanding of literacy.

Thomas and Barksdale-Ladd (1997) studied 2 kindergarten teachers, one with a skills-based approach and another with a whole language approach. In each classroom, students' perceptions of reading, writing, and learning reflected their teacher's beliefs and practices. Students in the skills-based classroom came to see reading and writing as a set of skills they needed to master in order to succeed while students in the whole-language oriented class viewed reading and writing as tools for communication and meaning making. Reutzel and Sabey (1996) drew comparable conclusions from their work in first grade classrooms.

Initial findings in this line of literacy research support a correlation between teachers' beliefs and student learning. However, more research is needed to clarify the degree of this impact. In each of the studies reviewed above, overall, all students showed evidence of learning and achievement regardless of the theoretical orientation their teachers held towards reading. What varied was the way in which the students conceptualized reading and writing. Thus, there is not enough data to conclude that one theoretical orientation necessarily promotes better student learning, just that different orientations promote different types of student learning. At

this point, care must be taken to avoid falling into the trap of identifying “ideal” teacher beliefs for promoting student achievement.

Factors Influencing the Development and Maintenance of Literacy-Related Beliefs

In literacy research addressing teachers’ beliefs, the closest most researchers come to conceptualizing beliefs is when they step back and attempt to make sense of their findings. As they explore the importance of the consequences of teachers’ literacy-related beliefs (e.g., why teachers hold certain beliefs, why there is a lack of congruence between beliefs and practice), the factors they identify as influential over the development and maintenance of teachers’ beliefs parallel many of the hypotheses put forward by theorists. However, unlike the broad views of beliefs espoused by Rokeach (1972), Green (1971), and Pajares (1992), conceptualizations within the field of literacy are much more context specific. Literacy researchers are interested in finding out within certain situations what teachers believe and then moving backward into hypothesizing how and why these beliefs exist. This section examines factors influential in the development of teachers’ educational beliefs. These factors include teachers’ experiences with schooling and instruction, the school context, and experiences with formal knowledge.

Personal Educational Experiences

One significant influence on teachers’ educational beliefs is their personal experience with schooling and instruction (Pajares, 1992). Teachers’ beliefs about teaching are formed in part by the thousands of hours spent in contact with teachers during their school career. Lortie (1975) described this type of learning in which students absorb the role of the teacher as apprenticeship-of-observation. However, this type of learning about teaching is not at all like a typical apprenticeship because perspective teachers do not acquire the technical, pedagogical

knowledge of teaching. Instead, perspective teachers see teaching from only one vantage point; their participation is imaginary. As students, they are not privy to teachers' intentions and personal reflections as they set goals, prepare for instruction, or analyze the results of their actions. Rather than examining teaching through a pedagogically-oriented framework, they assess teachers through a personal framework. Lortie notes "what students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles" (p. 62). Through this apprenticeship-of-observation, students develop affective responses to teaching, but see teaching in a simplistic light. Thus, this type of apprenticeship is restricted in its usefulness. Unlike traditional apprenticeships that provide a supported, mediated entry into a field, an apprenticeship-of-observation is more a process of imitation that reinforces traditional teaching.

Murphy, Delli, and Edwards's (2004) study helps confirm Lortie's (1975) assertion that our early experiences with schooling form the basis of our ideas about teaching. The researchers asked second-grade students, preservice teachers, and in-service teachers to draw pictures of good teaching and then describe what was happening in those pictures. Overall, the descriptions were similar across the groups. Good teachers were described as active participants in the activity of teaching who worked to communicate with students, and good teaching included a student-centered approach. These findings led Murphy et al. to conclude that our notions of "good teachers" may begin to develop as early as second grade and tend to remain constant throughout teacher education preparation.

Other researchers interested in teachers' literacy-related beliefs also documented the influence apprenticeship-of-observation can have on belief development. Agee (2006), Muchmore (2001), Sturtevant and Linek (2003), and Thomas and Barksdale-Ladd (1997) all

argued that teachers' personal experiences with schooling provide a strong influence over their literacy beliefs. Agee hypothesized that teachers bring mental images of their imagined roles into their teaching based on their own memories of other classrooms and teachers. For example, one teacher in the study, Chris, expressed resistance to the use of film as text in literature classes, an idea discussed in a master's course she was taking. Chris noted that as an undergraduate she had struggled to pass a cinema course because it was so far removed from the traditional language arts. She also drew on her observations of the use of film in classrooms in which students failed to engage with the films to support her resistance. Together, her own negative experiences as a student and her observations of the unsuccessful use of film in classrooms (or her apprenticeship-of-observation) led her to reject the new ideas put forward in the English course.

Thomas and Barksdale-Ladd (1997) interviewed 2 kindergarten teachers with opposing theoretical views about reading instruction and found that each teacher's own school experiences colored their beliefs. The teacher embracing a whole language approach to literacy had strong negative memories of learning to read and worked to make her classroom the opposite of what she remembered as typical in her own schooling. In this way, she used her past experiences as what Agee (2006) refers to as an "anti-template." It is also possible teachers may attempt to recreate their earlier schooling experiences if they are seen as valuable. In either case, early experiences with school strongly influence the development of teachers' educational beliefs. This may occur, in part, because episodic memories form around critical episodes and images we encounter early in life (Pajares, 1992). These memories are long-lasting and provide the resulting beliefs with power, authority, and legitimacy (Nespor, 1987).

School Context

The school contexts in which teachers work can also be influential in the formation of their literacy-related beliefs. As Lenski et al. (1998) noted the construction of teachers' beliefs and theories "is the natural outcome of transactions among teachers, students, texts, researchers, administrators, parents, and personal experiences" (p. 218). Increasing accountability pressures (Davis et al., 1993; Grisham, 2000; Powers et al., 2006), time constraints (Deal & White, 2005; O'Brien & Norton, 1991; Powers et al.), curricular regulations, and available teaching materials (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; O'Brien & Norton; Powers et al.; Sturtevant, 1996) are all aspects of the teaching context that can affect teachers' beliefs.

At times, the context may be supportive of teachers' beliefs and instructional practices while at others, the context may work as a constraint (Sturtevant & Linek, 2003). When teachers find themselves working within school contexts supportive of their beliefs about literacy, they often are better able to design instruction consistent with those beliefs (Powers et al., 2006) than teachers working in school contexts which are contradictory to their beliefs (Davis et al., 1993). Even in school contexts that run counter to teachers' beliefs, Powers et al. found that teachers who have clearly articulated beliefs about literacy are often able to modify the institutional requirements in ways consistent with their beliefs (e.g., incorporating a school-wide Accelerated Reader program into the classroom while limiting the significance and role it plays).

Within the school context, students can also influence belief development as teachers work to adapt their own practice to meet students' needs (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Deal & White, 2005; Sturtevant, 1996; Sturtevant & Linek, 2003). However, Davis and Wilson (1999) also found that for 1 Title I teacher working with seventh-grade students, the students' negative self-perceptions and fixed notions of what reading was and was not actually served as constraints

on the teacher's instructional practices. Although the teacher believed in a holistic approach to reading, the students viewed reading as a skills-orientated process, which at times caused them to disengage.

The findings within the field of literacy echo those in the wider body of educational literature regarding the influence the school context holds over teachers' beliefs. Errington (2004) wrote of overarching belief climates or collective belief systems found within organizations and institutions. In larger organizations, in particular, the collective belief systems can exert great influence over personal belief systems. Ernest (1989) argued that schools are powerful social contexts containing the expectations of administrators and other teachers along with material constraints associated with a specific curriculum and assessment plan. These elements have a socialization effect as they lead teachers to internalize a set of constraints that influence how the teachers enact models of teaching and learning.

Formal Knowledge

Within the field of literacy, researchers have found inconsistent results regarding the lasting influence of teachers' experiences with formal knowledge (i.e., Grisham, 2000; Nierstheimer et al., 2000; Poulson et al., 2001). Grisham, in her study of belief development in preservice and novice teachers found that their teacher preparation program positively influenced their beliefs and practice during the beginning of their teaching career. However, beyond the first 2 years of teaching, their development as literacy teachers became more highly influenced by the teaching contexts in which they worked. For example, 1 teacher, Cerise, moved to an alternative school serving students with emotional or behavioral problems after her first year of teaching. In this new school, she moved away from the constructivist teaching practices espoused by her teacher preparation program and adapted more traditional, skills-based instructional practices.

Likewise, a study of preservice teachers' beliefs about struggling literacy learners by Nierstheimer et al. (2000) indicated that the reading methods course in which the teacher candidates participated helped bring about a shift in their beliefs. At the beginning of the course, the teacher candidates indicated they believed that some children have difficulty learning to read because of factors outside of the school (such as a child's home) and also that it was not their responsibility as classroom teachers to help these children. Instead, the responsibility belonged to special programs, reading specialists, or parents. By the end of the course, these same teacher candidates became more willing to assume responsibility for students' reading difficulties. The teacher candidates were also more likely to identify the source of the children's difficulties as the instruction they received or a lack of effective reading strategies. What is unclear from this study is whether these shifts would be sustained outside of the context of this course.

These findings support Richardson's (1996) argument that teachers' experiences with formal knowledge within content areas and pedagogical knowledge addressed in preservice teacher education programs do influence the development of their educational beliefs, though to a much lesser degree than personal experiences. The episodic nature of belief may help explain the difference in strength of influence; episodic memories are long lasting and result in powerfully held beliefs (Nespor, 1987). These memories serve as visions guiding the re-creation of valued classroom contexts (Agee, 2006). Beliefs are also very personalized constructs (Pajares, 1992); therefore, the impact of teacher education programs may vary from teacher to teacher. The value placed on formal knowledge may also depend on the extent to which such knowledge is validated in the classroom. For example, O'Brien and Norton (1991) found that when practicing teachers (enrolled within a graduate program) applied theories and strategies

they learned within their coursework in their own classrooms and found them to be successful, the teachers were more likely to incorporate them into their teaching repertoires.

Based on the studies reviewed above, we see that teachers' beliefs are influenced by a variety of factors including teachers' personal experiences, the school settings in which they teach, and the teacher education programs in which they participate. These echo the theoretical conceptualizations that beliefs begin to develop early in life (Rokeach, 1972), are connected to and change along with our experiences in the world around us (Green, 1971), and are socially constructed (Pajares, 1992). What is rarely seen is an attempt to account for the interaction of multiple factors at one time. Additionally, many teachers identify outside factors over which they have no control as constraints within their teaching (O'Brien & Norton, 1991). Finally, this set of literature demonstrates the need for this study to broaden the view of teachers' beliefs within literacy by exploring the connected nature of belief.

Potential for Change in Teachers' Beliefs about Literacy

Within the literacy research reviewed in this chapter, two types of studies are present. First, there are studies such as those above that examine teachers' beliefs about literacy and literacy instruction, the congruence between these beliefs and instructional practices, and their impact on teaching and learning. Second, there is research investigating the power of professional development, school reform programs, or other interventions to exact change in teachers' beliefs. In this second group, teacher change (in either beliefs, practices, or both) is a desirable goal. Although the vast majority of these studies indicate there is some change in teachers' beliefs and/or instructional practices, the degree and sustainability of change remains variable. Keeping the theories regarding belief change presented earlier in this chapter in mind,

this section reviews research investigating changes in experienced teachers' literacy beliefs and considers both supports and constraints to the change process.

Studies of Change in Teachers' Literacy-Related Beliefs and Practices

Many of the studies of changes in beliefs address the ability of university coursework to influence the beliefs of preservice teachers. Although preservice teachers were not the focus of my work, it is interesting to note that most of these studies find indicators of change (i.e., Agee, 2006; Nierstheimer et al., 2000) in beliefs across the duration of the course, but fail to address the long-term nature of these changes. A much more prevalent line of study regarding changes in teachers' beliefs examines the impact of professional development programs on teachers' beliefs regarding instruction and student learning (i.e., Anders & Evans, 1994; Richardson et al., 1991), assessment (i.e., Borko et al., 2000; Borko, Davinroy, Flory, & Hiebert, 1994; Roe & Vukelich, 1997), and English language learners (i.e., Hart & Lee, 2003). Typically, researchers report changes in teachers' beliefs and practices, though the amount of change is often variable.

One exception is Borko et al.'s (1994) work regarding changes in teachers' beliefs about the use of summary as part of a reading program. This study was embedded within a larger staff development project designed to help teachers develop performance assessments supportive of their instructional goals in both math and literacy. This initial study investigated the impact of the first semester of implementation and found very little change in the beliefs or practices of the 5 third-grade teacher participants. However, the staff development project continued over the course of 2 years, and in a follow-up case study of 2 of the teachers conducted during the third year out from implementation, Borko et al. (2000) did find changes in the teachers' beliefs and practices, though again, the beliefs varied in strength from teacher to teacher. Overall, the teachers moved away from skills-based approaches to math and literacy to approaches fostering

students' conceptual understandings. Their beliefs about their role in the classroom shifted as they became more facilitative than transmissive in their approach to teaching.

Similarly, Anders and Evans (1994) conducted a follow-up study to Richardson and Anders's (1990) Reading Instruction Study (RIS) investigating teachers' beliefs and practices about reading comprehension instruction. Of the original 39 teachers included in the study, Anders and Evans were able to interview 10 teachers 4 years after the RIS was completed. This original study contained a year-long professional development component in which teachers met monthly with university facilitators to talk about and reflect upon teaching practices used during reading comprehension instruction. Teachers also participated in individual development sessions at the beginning and end of the year in which they watched videotapes of their own instruction and reflected upon their practice. Four years after teachers completed the RIS, Anders and Evans found changes in teachers' beliefs about comprehension as well as changes in their instructional practices. The teachers were much less reliant on basals for instruction and had moved from a skills view of reading to acknowledging the importance of text in the reading process. They focused on more affective dimensions of the reading process and used literature across the content. Additionally, the teachers moved from a transmission view of instruction to one in which they helped students construct their own knowledge.

Finally, researchers are interested in the influence other change agents such as district-mandated changes (i.e., Peck, 2002), school-wide reform initiatives (i.e., Datnow & Castellano, 2000), or textbooks (i.e., Altieri, 1998) have on teachers' beliefs. Datnow and Castellano examined the impact of teachers' beliefs on one school's implementation of the Success for All (SFA) reform model which requires a 90-minute daily reading period and provides preplanned lessons that teachers are expected to closely follow. Findings indicated that teachers most

supportive of the reform were those whose beliefs were most closely aligned with the reform before the intervention began. Teachers whose beliefs were drastically different from those embedded within the SFA model were most resistant to change.

From this body of literature examining the influence of change agents such as university coursework, staff development programs, and instructional models and materials on practicing teachers' literacy-related beliefs and practices, we see that it is possible to support teachers in the change process. However, the change process is very personal and therefore varies from person to person. This body of research also shows the need for continued efforts to conduct longitudinal studies examining the change process over time. As noted in Borko et al.'s (1994) work, studies of short-term interventions may not provide evidence of change even though change does appear to occur further along in the intervention process (Borko et al., 2000). Finally, many of the studies conducted within this strand focus on very small samples in order to be able to delve deeply into the change process. Because of this, care needs to be taken before generalizing these findings.

Constraints on Teacher Change

Although beliefs are resistant to change, Richardson (1996) and others (Sturtevant, 1996; Vartuli, 2005; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) argue that beliefs do change with effort. If beliefs *can* be changed, the question becomes how to do so. Interventions of some type are most often researched as change agents. For in-service teachers, professional development is believed to be one key for the modification of beliefs. Sturtevant and Linek (2003), Anders and Evans (1994), Borko et al. (2000), Hart and Lee (2003), and Roe and Vukelich (1997) all found professional development programs to be supportive in changing teachers' literacy-related beliefs and practices.

However, there is a debate among researchers regarding which comes first, changes in beliefs or changes in instructional practices. Guskey (1986) argued that before teachers' beliefs can be changed teachers must first change their practices in the classroom. He believed that once teachers were able to see positive results of these changes in their students' learning, appropriate changes in their beliefs would follow. However, others have found the opposite to be true. For example, Richardson et al. (1991) in their study of teachers' beliefs regarding reading comprehension found that in the case of one teacher, Sarah, changes in her beliefs actually preceded changes in her practice. Richardson (1996) maintains there is no one definitive model for teacher change through professional development; belief modification can be initiated either by a change in beliefs *or* practice. Likewise, Bullough and Baughman (1997) argue that a dynamic relationship exists between teachers' beliefs and practice; each holds potential for changing the other.

Within Richardson et al.'s (1991) study, there were also instances where teachers attempted to make changes in either their practices or beliefs but were unsuccessful in maintaining such changes. Attempts to change practice were thwarted by teachers' lack of understanding of the underlying theories of the new practices they tried to implement. Likewise, other teachers found themselves thinking in new ways about teaching reading but were unable to act on those changes in beliefs due to a lack of knowledge about appropriate instructional strategies. Thus, Richardson et al. conclude genuine changes result "when teachers think differently about what is going on in their classrooms, and are provided with the practices to match the different ways of thinking" (p. 579).

Teachers are not as resistant to change as is commonly assumed (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Peck, 2002; Wideen et al., 1998). However, at times there is resistance. One reason for this

resistance may be the tendency of professional development providers to try to “fix” teachers. Wideen et al. noted in their review of research on learning to teach that teacher educators often view preservice teachers’ preexisting beliefs as problematic, and thus, work to change them. However, the preservice teachers themselves do not share in this change effort because they are not given opportunities to closely examine and problematize their own beliefs. I propose the same holds true for experienced teachers.

Bullough and Baughman (1997) argue that teacher development efforts aimed at fixing teachers are not valuable or even wise. Instead, teacher development needs to be about developing beliefs, not only through changing teachers’ beliefs but also by strengthening and refining them. Ultimately, we need to find productive ways of fostering changes in teachers’ beliefs that honor what teachers bring to the table. “The challenge for teachers—and for those who work with them—is to progressively overcome the blindness of belief, to confront the ways in which interpretations grounded in belief mask the educational possibilities residing in teaching situations” (p. 69).

Supporting Teacher Change

Several researchers have been interested in finding ways to support teachers in their belief development. However, if changes in teachers’ beliefs are not necessarily a logical outcome of professional development programs, what must be included to make these efforts successful in changing teachers’ beliefs? First, there must be a compelling reason for change in order to bring about modifications in beliefs (Agee, 2006) meaning teachers themselves must see a need for change. Muchmore’s (2001) work led him to argue that authentic change happens when beliefs are challenged and found to be lacking.

Olson and Singer (1994) hypothesized that one such way to challenge teachers' beliefs is to present them with data that may either validate or refute their beliefs. As a first step in testing this hypothesis, the researchers worked with teachers to create individual profiles (containing quantitative results from teaching inventories such as the TORP (DeFord, 1985) along with qualitative data collected during classroom observations and from personal histories) supportive of self-reflection. Olson and Singer argued that these profiles may help refute teachers' beliefs, resulting in disequilibrium, which Kagan (1992) argued is necessary for belief modification. As teachers work to resolve this dissonance, new beliefs can grow and replace those that are in conflict (Olson & Singer). Although dissonance is crucial in the change process, it is also important to remember that one role of belief systems is to reduce dissonance and the resulting confusion (Eisenhart et al., 1988). Our initial instinct is to maintain our current beliefs at all costs (Green, 1971). We often turn contradictory evidence into support for our existing beliefs and avoid any genuine dissonance (Pajares, 1992). Thus, the change process is a gradual and difficult process for teachers (Guskey, 1986) which can result in frustration and anxiety (Borko et al., 2000).

A second way to help teachers see the necessity for change is to bring them into the change process as integral members rather than arbitrarily imposing mandated change. Datnow and Castellano (2000) note that "imposed change often creates a mismatch between teachers' personal aims and purposes and the aims and purposes prevalent in a school" (pp. 777-778). Rather than believing in the changes being imposed, teachers may find themselves questioning the motives or feasibility of reform programs developed by outsiders. Peck (2002) conducted a study of teachers' reactions to a district-mandated change in reading instruction. She found that teachers felt threatened by imposed changes because they seemed to contradict all the teachers

understood about reading instruction. Their prior knowledge and beliefs were not valued and teachers began to doubt themselves as their notions of good teaching were challenged. Although the teachers eventually came to find connections between their old practices and those being imposed, their change process initially was marked by stress and discomfort. Also, within this particular district there was a strong assumption that teachers would be resistant to change; therefore, a great deal of pressure was applied to the teachers to conform. This pressure to conform made it difficult for many of the teachers to understand the philosophies behind the mandated changes. In the end, the teachers were supportive of the change, but felt that the way the change was imposed made what was already a difficult situation much worse.

Beyond helping teachers to become integral players in the change process, a starting point for change is to help teachers uncover, define, explore, and reflect on their own belief systems (Calderhead, 1996; Kagan, 1992; O'Brien & Norton, 1991; Sturtevant, 1996; Vartuli, 2005). Olson and Singer (1994) note this is important because “many teachers appear willing and eager to improve their pedagogical skills, but they are often unaware of how their beliefs about teaching specific subjects, or about teaching in general, affect the kinds of changes they might make” (p. 97). Teachers need to develop an inner awareness of how life experiences affect their beliefs and contribute to the underlying assumptions that guide their practice (Lortie, 1975; Muchmore, 2001). As teachers attempt to clarify their beliefs, they begin to reexamine their own actions and the reasoning driving such actions (Olson & Singer). Finally, it is important to address both teachers’ beliefs and practices – focusing only on one or the other may not lead to authentic change and instead may frustrate teachers (Richardson et al., 1991).

It is also helpful for teachers to take a closer look at the school context in which they teach and to identify the constraints and opportunities present within it (Davis & Wilson, 1999;

Sturtevant, 1996). Poulson and Avramidis (2003) found that effective teacher development and learning includes longer-term opportunities for collaboration, teacher autonomy, and reflection. The authors encourage the development of collaborative organizational cultures within schools to support this type of growth and development. Borko et al. (2000) found working with a team of teachers helped support the change process. Because of the collaborative nature of the teachers' interactions, they were able to encourage one another to take risks in their instruction. There was also positive pressure created by the group to be accountable for continuing to work for change. It is important to note, however, that teams of teachers working together can also serve as constraints on teachers' beliefs and practices if the teams are not focused on working toward a common goal of change (Deal & White, 2005).

Poulson and Avramidis (2003) also remind us that professional learning and development is a long-term, non-linear process. It is vital that teachers be given adequate time to examine and change their beliefs. When professional development programs do not provide enough long-term support, teachers may end the experiences aware of the limits of their understandings, yet feeling unequipped to make the necessary changes in their beliefs and practices (Hart & Lee, 2003).

Richardson et al. (1991) argue effective professional development will concurrently address three components: teachers' underlying beliefs and understandings of teaching, theoretical frameworks for instructional practice drawn from current research, and teaching practices that support both teachers' beliefs and research knowledge. Teachers' preexisting beliefs are important to the success of professional development and reform initiatives. The more closely aligned those beliefs are to the practices being put forth by such programs, the more successful teachers will be in implementing new approaches. Therefore, it is important for those working for teacher change to consider and build on teachers' existing beliefs.

For changes in teachers' beliefs to be successful, we know teachers need to be invited into the change process (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). Only once becoming invested in uncovering their own beliefs and seeing meaningful connections to what is occurring in their classrooms can we hope teachers will be more willing to put in the hard work involved in changing beliefs (Borko et al., 1994). We also need more research that explores teachers' voices throughout this change process as much of the research reviewed here is written from the perspective of teacher educators and professional development leaders.

We see through the studies of change agents such as professional development programs and school reforms reviewed within this section that though changes in teachers' beliefs and practices are sometimes difficult to achieve, they are possible. This study dealt with the importance of beliefs within professional development. However, unlike the studies reviewed above, it did not focus on specific outcomes of professional development in the form of changes in teachers' beliefs or practices. Instead, it focused on identifying how beliefs contributed to or constrained the change process without passing judgment on the desirability of such change. In order to accomplish this, it was useful to consider the role of beliefs within one particular professional development context. Therefore, the following section provides an overview of the literature surrounding literacy coaching, the chosen setting for this study.

Literacy Coaching as Professional Development

Coaching has become a vehicle for improving organizational performance and supporting personal growth and development across many fields of practice. Corporations hire coaches to help their executives reach their fullest potential, while individuals seek out life coaches to support their personal development (Valerio & Lee, 2005). Coaching is found within the world

of education as well, especially in the field of literacy. This section offers an overview of literacy coaching including its historical and theoretical roots, the roles and activities of coaching, its impact on teachers, and challenges to its future. This work builds on the information presented in Chapter I regarding the appropriateness of coaching as the setting for this study. While this section is not an exhaustive review of the literature because the context of literacy coaching plays a secondary role to the understanding of beliefs in this study, it does provide a summary of the current understandings of literacy coaching as a form of professional development.

Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Literacy Coaching

The roots of literacy coaching can be traced to the 1930's (Bean, 1981). Additional growth in the practice came in the 1980's as a result of Joyce and Showers's (2002) endorsement of coaching as a promising means to improve student achievement along with research findings questioning the effectiveness of traditional one-shot, "sit-and-get" workshops (Hughes et al., 2002; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007). However, in recent years, there has been a sharp rise in the popularity of literacy coaching, due in part to increased demands for reading achievement (IRA, 2004a) as demonstrated, for example, in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Reading First initiative emerging from this legislation mandates that schools receiving federal funds to improve their reading programs adopt literacy coaching as a form of professional development (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007). Along with these accountability pressures and availability of federal money to fund literacy coaches, the rise in prominence of literacy coaching can also be attributed to an increase in publications discussing coaching and the support of professional organizations (Rodgers & Rodgers).

Coaching as a form of professional development is built on social constructivist theories of learning (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007). Based on the work of the

Russian scholar Vygotsky, one of the key components of social constructivism is the idea of scaffolding (having a more able peer provide assistance during learning episodes in order to advance learning) (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Within coaching, the need for scaffolding is paramount. Indeed, the coaching activity can be thought of as an instantiation of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development as teachers interact with coaches to build independence with new teaching practices and ideas. While coaches often do play the role of the more knowledgeable other, it is crucial that they not position themselves as experts within the coaching relationship. Instead, coaches should work to establish a co-learner role with teachers. This also allows coaches to be seen as peers and helps them move away from the more threatening role of an evaluator (Rodgers & Rodgers).

Another component of social constructivism, the importance of language as a mediating tool for learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2006), is particularly relevant to literacy coaching. Much of the coaching relationship is built on what Rodgers and Rodgers (2007) refer to as coaching conversations. Often these conversations focus on teacher reflection, helping teachers to become more flexible in their instruction and better able to adapt their teaching to meet students' learning needs (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). I turn now to a discussion of the particular roles and activities of coaching.

The Roles and Activities of Literacy Coaching

There are a variety of understandings regarding coaching (IRA, 2004a; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007), as it is a situated, complex activity. Even within school districts, the role of coach may be actualized very differently from school to school (Hathaway & Risko, 2007). In their *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2004b), the International Reading Association defines a literacy coach as a reading specialist who provides professional development for

teachers by supplying the additional support needed to implement a variety of instructional practices and programs. This notion of the provision of support for teachers, often leading to increased student learning, is a common theme across definitions of coaching. Toll (2005), for example, defines a literacy coach as “one who helps teachers recognize what they know and can do, assists teachers as they strengthen their ability to make more effective use of what they know and do, and supports teachers as they learn more and do more” (p. 4). Similarly, Rodgers and Rodgers argue a literacy coach’s primary role is “working with teachers to construct complex understandings of teaching with the goal of enhancing student learning” (p. xix).

The actual work of coaching is quite varied. Researchers have found that coaches often find themselves engaged in non-instructional duties such as clerical, administrative, or district-related work (i.e., Bean & Zigmond, 2007; Deussen et al., 2007; Smith, 2007). However, the focus of this section is on coaches’ instructional activities with teachers as these served as the setting for this study. Bean (2004) (as cited in IRA, 2004a) describes three levels of intensity in coaching activity. Level 1 includes informal activities that serve to build relationships between coaches and teachers. These may include providing resources and materials, participating in curriculum development, helping with student assessment, and teaching students. Level 2 activities allow coaches to begin to identify areas of need on which to base future coaching interactions. These activities may include co-planning lessons, analyzing student work, interpreting assessment data, or providing formal professional development presentations. The third and final level of activity is characterized by formal, intense interactions. Included within this level are common in-class supports, which may include modeling new techniques, teaching side-by-side in teachers’ classrooms, and observations of teachers’ instruction followed by feedback sessions. These forms of in-class support are the distinguishing feature of literacy

coaching (IRA, 2004a) and are the types of interactions focused on in this study. Regardless of the specific activities in which coaches engage, Lyons and Pinnell (2001) argue that the purpose of coaching sessions is to provide teachers with needed feedback in order to allow them to refine their instructional practices. These sessions also provide a time and space to “expand teachers’ conceptual knowledge in a way that helps them learn from their own teaching over time” (p. 139).

Impact of Coaching on Teachers

While specific research findings addressing the impact of coaching on teaching and student learning are lacking (Bean et al., 2008; IRA, 2004a), initial evidence does indicate that literacy coaching holds great promise as an intervention (IRA, 2004a). Hughes et al. (2002) argue that any form of professional development that provides intensive support and many opportunities for reflection (both of which are components of literacy coaching) is more likely to have positive effects.

Joyce and Showers (2002) were early proponents of coaching as an effective form of professional development. Their model of coaching is peer coaching—teachers alternate between being coached and serving as a coach. While this differs from the typical roles found in literacy coaching as described above, they argued that coaching between what they refer to as an expert trainer and a teacher is just as effective. Based on their research, Joyce and Showers estimated that coaching led 95% of participants to transfer components and outcomes of the professional development into their own practice as opposed to traditional professional development models involving only study of theories, demonstrations, or isolated practice. The coaching appeared to support this transfer in a variety of ways. It prompted teachers to practice and use new strategies

more frequently and helped teachers develop deeper understandings regarding the purposes and use of new models of teaching.

Lyons and Pinnell (2001) also advance several advantages to coaching in the classroom. First, coaches provide another viewpoint in the classroom from which to assess and consider student learning. Next, the specific demonstrations, feedback, and assistance provided by coaches can increase teachers' confidence with trying new approaches and considering new ideas. Finally, teachers are able to move beyond superficial implementation of new instructional practices and ideas. Lyons (2002) summarized by noting "our research has shown that the greatest shifts in understanding and practice occur when the teacher is engaged in the reflective process with a more knowledgeable and experienced coach" (p. 93).

Challenges Facing Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching offers promises for teacher growth and development; but it also faces several challenges to its future. Though literacy coaching is a widespread phenomenon, there is a lack of a significant research base to support it. As Rodgers and Rodgers (2007) note, coaching "is an example of an idea that seems to hold so much promise that it has gotten ahead of the very necessary research that needs to be done to help answer a number of questions" (p. xviii). Much of the research that does exist is descriptive in nature and fails to address the effectiveness of coaching (IRA, 2004a). In their review of literature from 1992 to 2007 addressing literacy coaching, Bean et al. (2008) found only 28 articles meeting standards of high-quality research, highlighting the need for additional study. This lack of a strong research base is particularly challenging because without documentation of the impact of coaching on student learning, it faces the risk of being discarded as just the latest fad in education (Rodgers & Rodgers).

A second challenge to the future of literacy coaching is the need for highly qualified teachers to fill coaching positions. The International Reading Association (IRA) outlined five requirements for coaches in their 2004 position statement, *The Role and Qualifications of the Reading Coach in the United States*. First, coaches must be outstanding classroom teachers with a variety of teaching experiences. Second, coaches should have a deep understanding of reading processes, literacy development, assessment, and instruction developed through educational experiences beyond undergraduate work. IRA's third requirement is that coaches have experiences working together with teachers to bring about improved classroom practices and instruction. Fourth, coaches should understand adult learners and have experience presenting to teacher audiences. The final requirement for highly-qualified coaches is that they have sufficient experience to help them develop the skills necessary for observing other teachers' practice and providing feedback while developing strong collegial relationships. The IRA urges school districts and administrators to hire only highly-qualified teachers to serve as coaches and even to delay implementation of coaching until there are adequately prepared coaches. However, in their study of the qualifications of Reading First coaches in five western states, Deussen et al. (2007) found that while the majority of the 190 coaches they surveyed were experienced teachers, many of them had no previous experience with coaching and a quarter of them had no specific education beyond their bachelor's degrees.

Final challenges that I propose exist for literacy coaching deal with the relationship between coaches and teachers. First, I argue that coaches' and teachers' prior beliefs will have an impact on the coaching activity. While no studies were located that specifically examined this challenge, several authors (as noted in Chapter I) emphasize the importance of considering these beliefs in order to build successful coaching relationships. Failure to honor teachers' pre-existing

beliefs and understandings may lead to difficulties in the coaching relationship. Finally, time may be a threat to literacy coaching. Coaching is not an easy or quick path to teacher change (Gibson, 2006). The coaching relationship is founded on trust (IRA, 2004a; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001) which takes time to build. Unfortunately, with the current push for measurable results from coaching, time may not be a luxury that coaches and teachers have.

From this body of literature, we see that the role of coaching is highly variable. However, it holds great potential for supporting teacher and student learning. In order to strengthen current understandings of coaching and to ensure its survival for the future, more high-quality research is needed (Bean et al., 2008; Gibson, 2006). There is a need to continue building understandings about the inner workings of the activities of coaching, including the ways beliefs influence participation within coaching relationship interactions. While beyond the scope of this study, efforts should also be made to examine the impact of literacy coaching on teacher and student learning.

Summary

In looking at the theory building regarding beliefs from the first section of this chapter and the findings in the literacy research on teachers' beliefs, an imbalance between theory and research becomes clear. The theory addresses broad ideas of beliefs as multi-dimensional, connected, dynamic entities while the research explores very isolated, narrow facets of beliefs. Without a cohesive set of theory testing, it is difficult to advance our understandings of beliefs. However, though the stated aims of the literacy research reviewed above did not include testing conceptual theorizations regarding beliefs, the findings, nonetheless, do lend support to a few of these assumptions. The findings affirming congruence between teachers' beliefs and

instructional practices help confirm the theorized link between beliefs and actions. Rokeach (1972), Green (1971), Nespor (1987), and Pajares (1992) all argued that beliefs influence actions and findings indicating congruence support this assumption. Additionally, literacy researchers' identification of factors, such as aspects of the school context, as influential to the development and maintenance of teachers' beliefs supports Pajares's argument that beliefs are socially constructed and influenced by the world around us.

Although researchers have identified starting points for the study of teachers' literacy-related beliefs by identifying *what* teachers believe and connecting these beliefs to instructional practices, they have failed to address what Green (1971) argued is the more important part of understanding beliefs, *how* teachers hold these beliefs. Also, as researchers have begun to examine processes supportive of teacher change, they have indicated that beliefs can be changed. Still, there is a lack of understanding regarding which beliefs can change and how this change takes place.

Other concerns are brought to light by the limited findings within this body of research. Theoretically, beliefs are believed to be durable, yet changeable (Green, 1971; Rokeach, 1972), but these two characteristics are underrepresented in the literature. First, the durability of beliefs leads to the need for greater understanding regarding teachers' personal histories and the impact of these unique histories on belief development. Not only should teachers' experiences with schooling and formal education be considered, but also their life experiences contributing to their non-educational beliefs. Next, because beliefs are highly resistant to change, it is also important that future research investigate the openness of teachers to change. How does their willing participation in the change process work to overcome the durability of their beliefs? Which

beliefs are more susceptible to change? How does teachers' self-awareness support or constrain their belief development?

Finally, beliefs are changeable; therefore, researchers need to continue to uncover characteristics of professional development that support belief modification. This is especially useful within the personalized professional development setting of coaching where opportunities abound for building on teachers' current beliefs. Other questions that remain for future research include: (a) How does the length and intensity of a professional development program influence the strength with which teachers embrace new beliefs and practices?, and (b) How can changes in teachers' beliefs be sustained over time? These issues inform future research and lead us to a discussion of the larger implications for the study of teachers' beliefs in literacy.

Implications for the Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Literacy

As has been shown above, studying teachers' beliefs is a complex task. Over the past 15 years, researchers in the field of literacy have worked to uncover teachers' beliefs regarding literacy instruction, adding to current understandings. At the same time, however, limitations remain within this body of research. In these final sections of this chapter, I examine methodological issues pertinent to future research as well as argue for the need for literacy researchers to embrace a broader view of belief.

Methodological Issues

Among the methodological concerns discussed here are the lack of agreement regarding the definition of belief, the narrow ways in which belief is conceptualized, and problematic methodological tools used to capture teachers' beliefs. Pajares identified these concerns as

existing within the larger educational literature in 1992. Though more than 15 years have passed since this observation was made, these limitations persist, especially within the field of literacy.

Lack of Definitional Consensus

One element missing from the study of teachers' beliefs in educational research, including literacy research, is the clear delineation of the term beliefs. Too often, it is left undefined in research, leaving readers to bring their own personal interpretations of the construct to the work. Or, at best, beliefs is defined circularly, using phrases such as "beliefs about." Perhaps researchers take for granted that the term belief holds a universal meaning and needs no further explanation. However, as Pajares (1992) pointed out, the construct of teacher beliefs is quite complex and muddled.

Even before Pajares' work, Eisenhart et al. (1988) found in their review of research from the 1960's to the 1980's examining teachers' beliefs that researchers rarely defined belief or were explicit in its use as a conceptual tool in their work. They argue this lack of definitional congruence limits the cumulative development of the concept of belief. Pajares (1992) found a similar situation in his review of research investigating beliefs 4 years later. He referred to beliefs as a "messy construct" and argued for the need for a stronger consensus on the definition of beliefs to be used across disciplinary fields. Pajares also advocated for researchers to operationalize the term more clearly in order to allow better comparisons to be drawn across studies. Despite his call, there still seems to be no definitional consensus within the educational research community. This is even more pronounced within the field of literacy. Of the 46 studies of teachers' beliefs in literacy reviewed for this chapter, only 5 included explicit statements defining beliefs.

Efforts to establish a consistent working definition of beliefs are further confused by the multiple terms used synonymously for beliefs within research including attitudes, values, judgments, opinions, perceptions, theories, dispositions, conceptions, perspectives, and understandings (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Writings in which the term beliefs is defined tend to be theoretical in nature (i.e., Kagan, 1992; Rokeach, 1972) and definitions are rarely operationalized.

A final definitional problem lies in the reliance on general assumptions about the nature of belief. Some researchers do take the time to include a cursory review of the widely held theoretical assumptions regarding teachers' belief, yet do not then specify how they operationalize the construct within their own work. Additionally, while these theoretical assumptions are widely held, little research has been conducted testing their validity. Although Rokeach (1972) tested his assertions about the nature of belief with quantitative studies, his work was the exception rather than the rule. Within the literacy field, no specific attempts to test theoretical assumptions regarding belief were located during the last 15 years. Until agreement can be reached regarding how to define beliefs, the body of knowledge addressing beliefs will continued to be disjointed.

Narrow Conceptualizations of Belief

Though the study of teachers' beliefs has become more prevalent within literacy research, the way in which beliefs is conceptualized is still very limited. Within the field, the most common aspects of beliefs researched include teachers' theoretical orientations towards literacy and literacy instruction as well as the impact of these orientations on instructional practices, the influence beliefs have on classroom practices and student learning, and the malleability of such beliefs. Pajares (1992) refers to these isolated beliefs as beliefs subconstructs and argues they

provide only a limited understanding into the broader systems of beliefs. He notes that researchers' use of the term "teachers' beliefs" most often refers to teachers' educational beliefs that are but a part of their larger, general belief system.

Study of beliefs subconstructs leads to the fragmentation and isolation of beliefs about teaching (Eisenhart et al., 1988) and fails to honor the more connected nature of beliefs and belief systems. As Nespor (1987) noted, teaching is an entangled domain; multiple beliefs are simultaneously, and at times even incongruously, held within teachers' belief systems and influence their actions in the classroom. However, Eisenhart et al. noted that within research, teachers' dilemmas tend to be portrayed as discrete problems influenced by singular beliefs.

Similarly, Muchmore (2001) argues that current conceptualizations that portray beliefs as uni-dimensional and interchangeable are insufficient. Instead, he proposes that beliefs exist on different levels varying in their degree of usefulness and longevity. This echoes the theoretical ideas regarding belief put forward by Rokeach (1972) and Green (1971). However, while many researchers describe these broader theorizations as foundational in their work, they have not been thoroughly tested (Eisenhart et al., 1998).

Ultimately, what is needed is for literacy researchers to broaden their conceptualization of beliefs. Teachers' educational beliefs, which have so often been studied, need to be examined as they are situated within larger belief structures rather than in isolation. Attempts to focus on narrow, individual beliefs cannot provide a genuine understanding of a construct that is so complexly intertwined. Not only do researchers need to broaden their conceptions of belief, they also need to address systematically the issues identified in earlier sections of this chapter. Future work should build upon current findings and advance the field's understanding of how the durability of beliefs impacts teachers' actions and possibilities for belief change, how to foster

teachers' openness to change, and to support teachers both in the modification of their beliefs and the sustaining of these changes.

Problematic Methods

Across content areas, there are common methodologies that have been used to research teachers' cognitive processes and therefore their thoughts, beliefs, judgments, and decisions including simulations, commentaries, concept mapping and repertory grid techniques, ethnography and case studies, and narratives (Calderhead, 1996). Surveys and other pencil and paper measures are additionally used to elicit teachers' beliefs (Fang, 1996a). This section offers a brief description of each the commonly used methods (surveying, interviewing, and observation) found in the study of teachers' literacy-related beliefs and discusses the benefits and limitations of each. Additionally, less common methods used to investigate teachers' literacy-related beliefs such as simulations, teacher storylines, and visioning are examined.

Within the study of teachers' beliefs in the field of literacy, qualitative methods including interviews and classroom observations are most prevalent. Indeed, of the 46 studies examined for this paper, 34 relied on qualitative designs. Six additional studies utilized a mixed methods approach, often relying on both survey data and interview and/or observation data. Finally, 6 studies demonstrated quantitative designs with all but 1 of these relying solely on survey data.

Surveys. In this review, surveys refer to pencil and paper measures that attempt to elicit teachers' beliefs directly. The most common format is to have teachers rank their agreement with statements that are typical of different theoretical orientations towards literacy. Of the 46 studies reviewed from the past 15 years, 19 included some survey data. Of those, 12 used surveys as the only tool for identifying teachers' beliefs. Most often, researchers created questionnaires specific to their research questions though DeFord's TORP (1985) was also frequently used, along with

other pre-existing measures such as the Literacy Orientation Survey (Lenski et al., 1998). At times, survey data were used to screen participants as researchers attempted to identify teachers supportive of particular theoretical orientations. In other studies, survey data were used to triangulate data collected during interviews and classroom observations in order to help determine congruence between teachers' stated beliefs and their beliefs in practice. Finally, researchers also analyzed survey data to reveal correlations between factors such as teachers' theoretical orientation and years of experience, beliefs about current instructional practices, or student achievement.

One advantage surveying holds is that pencil and paper measures can be used to help researchers identify teachers' implicitly held beliefs. Often, these beliefs are difficult for teachers to access on their own, as they struggle with verbalizing their own beliefs (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Kagan, 1992). Questionnaires or inventories may prompt teachers to begin to reexamine their own beliefs and actions and to clarify their beliefs for themselves. Olson and Singer (1994) noted some of the teachers in their study indicated completing beliefs inventories helped them to state and better understand their beliefs. In this way, use of surveys may help teachers develop a greater awareness of their beliefs, which can be an important first step in teacher development (Muchmore, 2001). Surveying also allows researchers to include larger numbers of participants, allows for timely analysis of data, and when combined with other forms of data can help identify inconsistencies in teachers' beliefs, shining light on areas that need attention (Pajares, 1992).

Along with these benefits, surveying also has drawbacks. One limitation of survey data is that it is self-reported by teachers, and when used alone provides only one way to evaluate teachers' beliefs and instructional practices (Baumann et al., 1998). Because the data are self-

reported, the risk of response biases is inherent in survey research. One such bias is that teachers may respond to inventories in ways they think effective teachers *should*, even though such responses may not be accurate reflections of their true beliefs (Olson & Singer, 1994). Baumann et al. refer to this type of bias as social desirability along with identifying courtesy, ingratiation, and deception as other forms of response biases.

A second limitation of survey-type instruments is that they provide teachers with limited responses and force them to choose between them. Often, these responses may not be the most accurate descriptions of teachers' beliefs, but teachers feel compelled to respond. Olson and Singer (1994) found in their surveying of teachers that many qualified their responses to closed-ended questions—what Pajares (1992) termed “it depends” thinking. Muchmore (2001) also takes exception to the way survey measures can silence teachers. He notes, “Beliefs do not exist in a vacuum. They are formulated and are held by particular people in particular contexts....yet survey instruments...regularly filter out this rich and important context, leaving only the disembodied responses to a series of propositional statements” (p. 90).

Although surveying can be a useful tool, the use of pencil and paper measures alone should be avoided. The tendency of survey data to lead to understandings of central tendencies while losing the subtleties of the diversity within the findings (Baumann et al., 1998) simply does not provide the richness of data needed to capture the complexity of the construct of beliefs.

Interviews. Interviewing is by far the most commonly used method within the field of literacy to investigate teachers' beliefs, though it is rarely used alone. Of the 46 studies reviewed for this work, 34 used some type of interview technique, with all but 5 of these using interviewing along with an additional form of data collection. Interviews allow researchers to gather insider information and are especially useful in describing how and why changes occur

(Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interviews are also advantageous in situations where direct observation is not possible (Creswell, 2003), such as is the case in the study of teachers' beliefs.

In the body of literature reviewed here, the majority of the interviews conducted were semi-structured in nature, often including open-ended questions in order to provide some structure to the interviews, but at the same allowing room to pursue information arising during the interviews. The number of interviews conducted in the studies was rather evenly divided between either one or two interviews or 3 or more interviews. Most of the time only teacher participants were interviewed, though there were studies in which students, supervisors, or administrators also participated in interviews.

Beyond semi-structured interviews, there were other examples of more specific interviewing techniques. Anders and Evans (1994), O'Brien and Norton (1991), and Reed (2003) engaged teachers in stimulated recall interviews. This technique involves having teachers view video of their own teaching as they verbalize their personal thought processes at the time of the instruction they are viewing (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996a). Similar methods that attempt to elicit teachers' thought processes using verbal reports include think-alouds in which teachers verbalize their thoughts as they are engaged in teaching tasks such as planning for instruction, and retrospective interviews in which teachers examine their thinking after completing instructional tasks (Fang, 1996a). Although Calderhead identified these as common methods for studying teachers' beliefs, they are not represented within the body of literacy research reviewed here.

Similar to one of the limitations of survey data, data gathered from interview techniques are also self-reported and therefore are open to response biases (Creswell, 2003; Olson & Singer, 1994) such as courtesy, ingratiation, deception, or social desirability (Baumann et al., 1998).

Teachers may inadvertently provide answers that are more accurate reflections of the currently acceptable educational theories than their own personal beliefs. Indeed, questions have been raised about the ability of teachers to represent accurately their thoughts and beliefs, which are often implicitly held complex structures, in a verbal report. Calderhead (1996) notes that because teachers may not always be able to access their own thinking, the information they provide during interviews may be incomplete. Another concern is that the interview context may lead teachers to rationalize their own behavior after the fact rather than clearly identifying their thoughts and beliefs. Participants vary in articulateness and perceptiveness, which can also limit the data provided through interviewing (Creswell). Finally, Kagan (1992) reminds us that at times teachers may be able to verbalize their beliefs, yet be reluctant to express them publicly.

An additional limitation of data collected through interviewing results when the assumption is made that researchers and teachers share the same perceptions and thus hold identical understandings and meanings of things such as language cues. Munby (1982) argues that many times researchers and teachers hold very different views of what is important and respond to cues in different ways. Thus, if this assumption of shared perceptions is ignored, the interpretations researchers make based on teachers' statements may be biased. Indeed, Moje (1996) asserts that inconsistencies identified in teachers' beliefs and practices may actually be a result of inconsistencies instead in the beliefs of the researchers and practices of the teachers. This limitation highlights the importance of researchers making their own assumptions known and considering how such assumptions may influence their research. Unfortunately, this type of transparency is rarely found in the studies included in this review.

Observations. Observations, particularly in combination with other methodological tools are important in the study of teachers' beliefs because it can be very difficult to examine beliefs

directly. Rokeach (1972) argued that beliefs cannot be determined from either statements or actions alone. Instead, it is necessary to study teachers' statements, their intentions, *and* their behaviors in order to make inferences about their beliefs. Thus, it is not surprising that in the study of teachers' literacy-related beliefs, observations and interviews go hand in hand. All but 2 of the 25 studies using observation as a tool also included interviewing as part of the research design. Most of these studies included more than 3 classroom observations of varying lengths and relied on field notes as a source of data.

Observations can be particularly useful because they allow researchers to gather firsthand experience with the participants (Creswell, 2003). However, while they allow for deeper understandings of specific teachers' beliefs, they do not allow wide generalizations to be made (Calderhead, 1996). Also, the danger of the assumption of shared perspectives (Munby, 1982) exists in the use of observational data. Finally, participants may perceive observations as obtrusive (Creswell), and the presence of researchers can actually change the context they are attempting to observe if care is not taken to establish prolonged engagement.

Simulations. Simulations typically involve a fictitious problem or context used to bring forth teachers' thinking about practical teaching situations (Calderhead, 1996). Policy capturing is one such method in which teachers are introduced to simulated teaching cases or student vignettes, curricular materials, or teaching episodes and their reactions and judgments are then recorded (Fang, 1996a). Pajares and Graham (1998) utilized such an approach when they asked middle school teachers to respond to a hypothetical teaching situation in which a student presents a piece of poetry and asks the teacher if the poem is good. Davis et al. (1993) and Davis and Wilson (1999), following Kinzer and Carrick's (1986) protocol, had teachers examine lesson plans representative of different theoretical orientations to reading and choose the plan they

deemed to be the best. Their responses were compared to their personal theoretical orientations in order to determine, in part, the congruence between their stated beliefs and instructional practices. Other variations of simulation methods were found in Abernathy's (2002) work with her use of a storybook prompt as well as in Barksdale-Ladd and King's (2000) use of a written discussion prompt.

Although simulations can be useful in the study of teachers' beliefs in that they allow researchers to manipulate situations and contexts (Calderhead, 1996), Fang (1996a) raises concern over the reliability of such methods. He argues data collected from these procedures reflect a portrayal of teachers' judgments rather than a true representation of their actual thought processes. In addition, because the simulations are not able to replicate the complicated dynamic of the classroom, the decisions made by teachers may not truly represent decisions that would be made within the actual context of a classroom. Finally, there is the concern that teachers may vary in their response to the same stimulus on different occasions, thus making it hard to establish reliability with simulation methods.

Teacher storylines. Teacher storylines (Beijaard, van Driel, & Verloop, 1999) is a less commonly used method in which teachers' beliefs regarding a particular facet of education are traced over time using a graphic representation. Grisham (2000) utilized this method as part of her study of the impact of undergraduate constructivist literacy coursework on teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. She had participants construct storylines regarding the idea of constructivist teaching beginning with their present experiences in their second year of teaching and moving backward to before entering their undergraduate program. Through these storylines, participants plotted how congruent they believed their practices to be with constructivist theory noting changes over time and providing explanations for their ratings. Grisham then constructed

her own storyline for each teacher based on her personal observations of their teaching and compared the two sets of storylines.

In Grisham's (2000) study, the storylines allowed participants to reflect on the differences in their own beliefs and practices and to examine factors influencing those discrepancies. Along with this advantage, Beijaard et al. (1999) argue that the storyline method allows participants' experiences and events to be quantified and compared. Storylines are also relatively quick and simple to construct and are non-threatening for participants. However, this method can lead to information that is too general and lacking in important detail. Additionally, in order for this method to be most effective, it is vital that a relationship be established with participants before storylines are constructed.

Visioning. Another relatively new method used to examine teachers' beliefs is visioning. This interview protocol (see Hammerness, 2001, 2003, 2006) helps uncover teachers' unconsciously held beliefs about schooling and provides a framework for evaluating the degree of closeness or distance between teachers' ideal beliefs about the optimum teaching/learning environment and their current reality (Squires & Bliss, 2004). With this method, teachers create a written response to a prompt describing an ideal day in their classroom.

Squires and Bliss (2004) modified the visioning technique by using it as an analytical tool to help understand the connections they found between two teachers' stated beliefs and instructional practices. They categorized the teachers' responses in previously conducted interviews using the five elements of a visioning statement. These newly created visioning statements allowed the researchers to understand the teachers' reasoning behind their choices, ultimately helping them recognize that what originally seemed to be contradictory beliefs and practices were actually quite well aligned.

Squires and Bliss's (2004) use of the visioning technique was unconventional; nevertheless, they believe this process holds great potential for examining beliefs. It is especially useful in helping teachers develop a greater awareness of their own beliefs, and in turn provides opportunities for challenging those beliefs (Hammerness, 2001). As for limitations, Hammerness (2006) notes that teachers' visions are private and not readily visible to the public, thus it can be challenging to capture such thoughts. Finally, visioning is a new method not commonly in use and may have additional limitations that have yet to be uncovered.

A variety of methods has been used in literacy research to investigate teachers' beliefs, but many others remain untested and unused. Therefore, one of the methodological implications emerging from the review of this body of literature is that researchers must continue to search for combinations of methods as well as novel approaches for examining teachers' beliefs in order to capture the multiple facets of what and how teachers believe what they do about literacy. The implicit nature of beliefs can make them hard to verbalize (Munby, 1982), thus researchers also need to search out newer methods, such as visioning, which can help unearth teachers' unconscious beliefs about literacy.

Many of the concerns raised in this section were addressed by this study. In Chapter I, I outlined how beliefs were defined in this study. This defining honors a more comprehensive view of beliefs as interconnected and dynamic constructs. In Chapter III, I explain how beliefs were operationalized within this study. The next chapter also provides an overview of the data collection techniques used to avoid the fragmentation and isolation of beliefs that is so prevalent in literacy research. These techniques are designed to help teachers access both their explicit and implicit beliefs and allow for a better consideration of the connections between teachers' varied beliefs.

The Need for a Broader Conceptualization

Although strides have been made in the understandings we have about teachers' literacy-related beliefs, after reviewing the literature from the past 15 years, part of the picture still seems to be missing. Beliefs are an essential element of who we are, and as such, attempts to parse them into small, discrete units for study fail to honor their complexity. In this final section, I argue for a new vision of belief that builds on broader theorizations of the construct.

In Chapter I, I argued that beliefs are our understandings about the world that we feel are true. Beliefs and knowledge are inseparable because we can believe in the truth of our understandings whether or not they are based on evidence. Beliefs are not static—instead, they are in a constant state of flux as they are continually being shaped through our interactions with the social world. This definition reflects my conceptualization of beliefs and is far more inclusive than the majority of belief constructs found in literacy research. While I introduced my visual representation of this broader vision of belief in Chapter I (see Figure 1), I expand on it in this section as I more specifically examine the interconnected, multi-dimensional nature of beliefs and belief systems. I also use Bakhtin's (1981) notion of ideological becoming to explain the need for situating teachers' systems of belief within the multiple discourses in which they work and live. Finally, I explain the importance of treating belief systems as dynamic systems.

Consideration of the Interconnected, Multi-Dimensional Nature of Belief

Because of the interconnected nature of our beliefs, at any one time there is the potential for any or all of our beliefs to influence the way we see the world as they filter our interactions with the world around us (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Our worldview can be defined as “a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of

our world” (Sire, 1997, p. 16). A consideration of the greater worldview of teachers has been missing to this point in the literature. Yet, Kalekin-Fishman (1999) argues that the worldview of a teacher is one of the most important aspects of instruction in the classroom and is “crucial for an understanding of how [teachers] know, believe, and opine” (p. 108). We know beliefs influence teachers’ actions in the classroom (Pajares). Thus, we must conclude that greater awareness of teachers’ views of the world will add to our understanding of their beliefs and their ultimate impact on actions.

Beliefs exist across multiple dimensions that have consistently been overlooked in the literature. These dimensions address *how* beliefs are held—which Green (1971) argues is crucial in understanding beliefs—rather than *what* exactly is believed. One dimension to consider is centrality of a belief within a belief system. The more centrally beliefs are held the more resistant they are to change, and any changes that do occur create a ripple effect of change across the entire belief system (Rokeach, 1972). These most centrally located beliefs result from our direct interactions with objects of belief and are implicitly held and taken for granted. Other beliefs are more peripherally held, addressing personal tastes and preferences. Beliefs that fall in the middle are a result of our trust in authority sources rather than our direct experiences with objects of belief (Rokeach, 1972).

We should also consider the intensity with which beliefs are held. Although centrally held beliefs are generally more strongly held, intensity can vary independently of centrality. For example, Rokeach (1972) noted that our personal tastes are peripheral and that change to these types of beliefs has little impact on our overall belief system. However, these beliefs can be very resistant to change. It is important for researchers to recognize both the centrality and intensity of teachers’ beliefs, especially if efforts are to be made to change teachers’ beliefs. Centrally held

beliefs tend to be incontrovertible because, as noted earlier, one of the main functions of our belief system is to reduce dissonance and maintain stability, often leading us to ignore contradictory evidence.

The openness of teachers' belief systems may hold great importance for researchers working to design interventions for teacher change. When confronted with new ideas and beliefs, people with more open belief systems will weigh the new evidence against their current beliefs and consider either assimilating them into their existing beliefs or refining their current beliefs. People with more closed systems do not want to reconcile new beliefs with their old. If they do accept new beliefs, they prefer those beliefs be handed to them on a silver-platter so that no dissonance is created and the new beliefs do not have to be reconciled with old beliefs (Rokeach, 1960). Green (1971) refers to this type of belief development as indoctrination because there is a greater concern for what is believed than for how (or on the basis of what evidence) it is believed. Both Green and Duffy (2002) argue this should not be the goal of teacher development. Instead, we want to help teachers to become more open to change and active participants in the change process—to be independent thinkers (Duffy).

Consideration of the Situatedness of Beliefs

Poulson et al. (2001) argue beliefs are shaped by context and circumstance. Thus, it is necessary to consider the situatedness of beliefs along with their interconnectedness and multi-dimensionality. Teachers' beliefs and belief systems develop within social contexts (Fang, 1996a) including, but not limited to, the classroom. Although the context of the classroom has begun to be considered by researchers (i.e., Davis et al., 1993; Deal & White, 2005; Grisham, 2000; O'Brien & Norton, 1991), I argue it is also important to examine not only the contexts in which teachers work but also those in which they live. One way to accomplish this is through the

consideration of the discourses in which teachers participate. Discourses can be defined as “systems of beliefs, attitudes, and values that exist within particular social and cultural practices” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 11) and therefore, are inherently ideological.

The work of Bakhtin (1981), as described in Chapter I, provides a framework for understanding these connections between discourses and belief. Bakhtin viewed discourses as “specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values” (p. 292). Our participation in the social world leads to tensions between our authoritative and internally-persuasive discourses. Ultimately, these tensions fuel our ideological becoming.

No place is this more true than in the professional development setting of coaching. In fact, Greenleaf and Katz (2004) argue that “teachers’ shifts in thinking, doing, and interacting in the professional development context - their ‘ideological becoming’ - seem reflective of the struggles between multiple internally persuasive discourses...and the discourses they encounter in the company of colleagues in this context” (p. 178). Bakhtin (1981) refers to the spaces where these struggles occur as “contact zones” (p. 345). By seeking to identify how beliefs are addressed within coaching interactions, this study adds to our understanding of this complex process of teachers’ ideological becoming.

Not only do our belief systems develop through these tension-filled dialogues, but also our identities (Danielewicz, 2001; Miller Marsh, 2002). Through our ideological becoming, we “author” ourselves (Greenleaf & Katz, 2004) again and again as we negotiate our way through the world and the discourses in which we participate. To tell the whole story of teachers’ beliefs, we must know more about the discourses (beyond those of the classroom) in which teachers participate. We need to understand their *history of participation*—the beliefs and practices they bring with them from their experiences across a range of contexts (Rogers, 2003).

Consideration of the Dynamic Nature of Beliefs

As we live and cross through a multitude of contexts, ideological becoming is a never-ending process (Morson, 2004). We are constantly confronted with multiple perspectives that either allow us to reaffirm our currently held beliefs or force us to make adaptations in those beliefs (Rokeach, 1960). Our belief systems are dynamic (Green, 1971); they are always in a state of flux and growth (Freedman & Ball, 2004)

Just as our belief systems are constantly changing, the same is true for our identities. We have multiple identities that shift from context to context (Danielewicz, 2001). Miller Marsh (2002) explored how the identities of a first-year kindergarten teacher, Ms. Nicholi, were shaped as she moved through the multiple contexts of her life. Miller Marsh found that Ms. Nicholi's identities were "positioned and repositioned as they were situated within the different discourses that swirled around her" (p. 335) in her teacher education program, the school where she worked, and the personal aspects of her life. Unlike current research, which attempts to capture beliefs in an isolated, discrete way, we must begin to investigate beliefs as part of constantly changing systems. As Freedman and Ball (2004) argue, what Bakhtin teaches us is that

we in education have to be clear about who we are and what we think, about not just what a single individual thinks but about systems of thought and how they interact together. We have to recognize that our thought systems are always in a state of flux and growth (p. 30).

Conclusion

My purpose in reviewing the body of literacy research addressing teachers' beliefs has been twofold. First, I examined recent empirical studies along with older theoretical pieces on which they rely in order to understand current considerations of beliefs and the lenses researchers use to study them. Second, I stepped back from this body of research in order to bring an

analytical lens to the work. Through this analysis, I identified what we can learn from the current literature and use to advance future work in the field.

This chapter also demonstrates the need for this study considering the complex construct of beliefs within teachers' professional development. Freedman and Ball (2004) note that "ideology is part of a social process, and can only be understood by analyzing its social and interactive essence" (p. 29). This entails much more than simply identifying *what* teachers believe about literacy—instead, it requires examining *how* teachers believe what they do and the way those beliefs impact their participation in coaching. While it was beyond the scope of this study to fully map teachers' overarching belief systems across all of the contexts and discourses in which they are embedded, this study took a broader view of beliefs as it identified multiple beliefs teachers held and used in the professional development setting of literacy coaching. Having built a case for the importance of this study, I turn now to a description of the research methodology in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this study were to identify the beliefs held by a reading specialist and teachers about literacy instruction and education, to move beyond this simple identification of *what* they believed through a consideration of *how* those beliefs were held, and to investigate the influence those beliefs had on participation in the professional development setting of literacy coaching. This study used a qualitative case study approach to examine both teachers' stated beliefs and their beliefs in action in order to draw conclusions about the influence of those beliefs on the activity of coaching. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What beliefs did the reading specialist and teachers hold about literacy instruction and education?
2. How were those beliefs held?
3. How did those beliefs influence participation in the professional development setting of literacy coaching?

In this chapter, I first describe the design of the study. I then discuss the research site and participants followed by a description of the types of coaching activities in which the participants engaged. Next, I explore the methods used for data collection and data analysis. Finally, I address issues of trustworthiness related to the study.

Design of the Study

The study of teachers' beliefs is a complex undertaking as is demonstrated by the wide range of studies reviewed in the previous chapter. Therefore, this study situated the examination of teachers' beliefs within the professional development activities associated with literacy coaching. By narrowing the focus of the study to the influence of beliefs within a single context, this study allowed for a detailed description of the beliefs present within the coaching relationship along with an explanation of how those beliefs were held and ultimately influenced participation in coaching. Throughout this chapter, "teachers' beliefs" refers to the beliefs of the reading specialist and classroom teachers, though the main emphasis of this study was on the beliefs of the classroom teachers.

Because the context was so important to this study, naturalistic inquiry was the most appropriate research paradigm. Naturalist inquiry provides for an emergent design, allowing the researcher to respond to emerging multiple realities. Also, the recognition of multiple realities inherent in this paradigm made it appropriate for this study as it attempted to determine how teachers constructed their own realities that then influenced their personal professional development.

This study also used an explanatory case study design to help better understand the complex belief systems and how they were appropriated within a coaching relationship. Yin (2003) argues that case studies hold distinct advantages when "a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 9), which was certainly the case in this study. The contextual conditions were crucial when investigating the way teachers' beliefs are represented in professional development settings such as coaching. This study developed multiple cases, focusing on the teachers' beliefs as

enacted within coaching interactions. I focused on specific periods of time set aside for planned interactions between the reading specialist (one title used for literacy coaches in the research site) and classroom teachers. I also considered interactions between the reading specialist and classroom teachers that took place in small groups settings (such as grade level meetings) and large group settings (such as presentations to the school faculty). A description of the nature of these interactions is provided later in this chapter.

One purpose of the study was to test and expand current theories regarding the influence of beliefs in teachers' professional development. Because of this, I chose to follow a more specific case study design described by Stake (2005) as an extended instrumental case study, or a collective case study. This type of case study is used when "a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (p. 445).

Three cases were chosen to support the understanding of beliefs in action within professional development settings. The reporting of these cases does not include the traditional narrative often associated with case study design. Instead, I synthesize understandings based on the cross-case analysis. This reporting is appropriate for this study because as noted above, the cases themselves are of secondary interest. Instead, they serve as sources of evidence for synthesizing new understandings (Yin, 2003).

Site and Participant Selection

Site Selection and Description

The research setting for this study was located within a metropolitan district in the Southern United States. With a total enrollment of more than 75,000 students, the district served a 66.7% minority population in 137 schools. Approximately 72.8% of students in the district were considered to be economically disadvantaged while 9.2% were classified as English Language Learners (ELL).

The district's literacy framework supported a balanced language arts program composed of the integrated study of reading, language mechanics, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and spelling. Within the elementary schools, this framework was described as a balanced literacy approach and included a 2 to 3 hour instructional block consisting of elements such as guided reading groups, shared reading opportunities, vocabulary and word study, and writer's workshop.

Additionally, each elementary school in the district was provided a full-time reading specialist whose responsibilities, as identified by the district, included serving as a reading instructional coach to all classroom teachers and providing reading instruction to at-risk students. The reading specialist also provided on-going, job-embedded professional development and coordinated the balanced literacy program within the school.

As a whole, the district was chosen as a research site because of its use of reading specialists as a support for teacher development. In order to examine how reading specialists' and classroom teachers' beliefs influence the coaching relationship, it was necessary to be located within a site where the model of reading specialists as professional development providers was well established.

The particular school within the district that served as the research site was Blue Mountain Elementary. (Pseudonyms were assigned to identify the school and all participants.) The selection of this school was contingent on the selection of the participants as described below. Blue Mountain was a K-4, Title I school that served approximately 500 students. There were 27 classrooms and 1 reading specialist. The ethnicity demographics for the school included: 38.2% of students were Black, 29.7% Hispanic or Latino, 24% White, and 7.1% Asian. 68.8 % of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch while 21.8% were identified as ELL. The school had a history of meeting the federal benchmarks for adequate yearly progress as required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. During the 2007-2008 school year, the students' performance on state mandated testing indicated 87.8% scored at a proficient or an advanced level in reading/language while 82.7% scored similarly in math.

Participant Selection and Description

Reading specialist. Participant selection began with the reading specialist near the end of the 2007-2008 school year. I looked to find a reading specialist who had served in that position for at least 3 years and had systematic in-class contact with multiple classroom teachers. In a first round of recruitment, 5 reading specialists known to university faculty were contacted by email regarding their interest in participating in the study. Three indicated initial interest, but after phone conversations with 2 of the potential participants, they were removed from consideration. One did not work in the district selected as a research site while the second did not have established in-class support routines. The third reading specialist coached at a middle school. I met with this potential participant to discuss the research and her participation. While she was interested in participating, she was ultimately eliminated from the pool because she coached at

the middle school level rather than the elementary level, which was the proposed setting for the study.

Beyond the contacts resulting from prior relationships with university faculty, I also asked a district administrator to nominate reading specialists known to be routinely engaged in classroom coaching activities and was provided 11 names. I contacted these 11 reading specialists by email and received indications of initial interest from 3. I followed up with each potential participant through additional email messages as well as phone calls or personal visits (based on their preference). Of these 3, 1 spent more time in classrooms working with teachers and had established protocols for routine contact with teachers. Therefore, Sarah was selected to participate. Sarah and I met in July and she was consented for the study. The study was originally scheduled to end in December. However, due to the idiosyncratic nature of school schedules, additional time was needed to complete the final two interviews. Sarah consented in December to continue her participation through January 2009. Over the course of the study, Sarah received a monetary stipend of \$650 for her participation.

Sarah was in her eighth year as an educator. For her first 3 and a half years she taught first grade at a private school before leaving the classroom to pursue her master's degree in reading education. Upon completion of her degree, she took a job at Blue Mountain and spent 2 years at the school as a first grade teacher. When the reading specialist position became available at the school, she was hired for the position and was in her third year as a reading specialist at the time of the study. While Sarah enjoyed her job as a reading specialist, she was open to returning to the classroom. She also had long term goals of pursuing further graduate studies.

While Sarah engaged in coaching activities as part of her job as a reading specialist, she had no specific preparation for coaching, though she felt that her master's degree had prepared

her well for the interventionist responsibilities associated with her job. She also felt well versed in the district's balanced literacy framework and had attended multiple workshops on topics such as guided reading, literature circles, and literacy centers offered by the district in order to learn as much as she could about the types of instruction the district expected teachers to provide. Upon assuming the position of reading specialist, she received 2 days of training involving an introduction to the responsibilities and procedures associated with the position, but no specific preparation for coaching. There was no formal coaching program or model being implemented in the district, therefore Sarah was free to determine her own style as a coach. Much of what she knew about coaching was self-taught. She sought out professional readings and attended conference sessions focusing on coaching when feasible.

Classroom teachers. Having consented Sarah to participate in the study, I moved on to recruit 3 teacher participants. The teachers' portion of the study was divided into two phases. During phase 1, teachers agreed to complete two survey measures, provide a written vision statement, and participate in three interviews. Teachers received a \$100 stipend for their participation in the first phase of the study. The second phase of the study required a second round of consenting. In this round, teachers agreed to allow me to observe in their classrooms, to observe their interactions with the reading specialist, and to complete four interviews. Teachers received a \$400 stipend at the completion of the second phase of the study. The consent process was originally divided into two parts to allow for more purposive sampling for the second phase of the study. I hoped to identify teachers with both similar and differing orientations towards literacy and literacy instruction than Sarah. However, because the pool of potential teacher participants was much more limited than I had anticipated, teachers were actually consented for both phases of the study at the same time. Thus, the sample became a convenience sample.

Teacher recruitment began in July. I asked Sarah to generate a list of teachers she anticipated having routine in-class contact with during the coming school year. It is important to note that at Blue Mountain teachers were not forced to receive support from the reading specialist. Thus, the teachers approached for this study were willing participants in coaching activities. Before the end of the school year, Sarah had made initial contact with 6 of her teachers who indicated some willingness to participate. Sarah suggested I contact 3 of these teachers first, and then depending on their interest the other 3. I contacted all 3 by email and as they continued to be interested, met with them to discuss the project and their participation. Two of these three teachers (Kathryn and Jessica) were ultimately consented for participation before school began in August. The third withdrew her name from consideration after a family emergency arose. At this point, Sarah offered an additional name for consideration, a teacher who was new to the school. I contacted Lauren in August and met with her. She agreed to participate and was consented for the study.

In September, Jessica's teaching assignment was changed and she was no longer teaching language arts. Therefore, after completing the first phase of the study, she withdrew. Because she did not complete both phases of the study, her data were not analyzed for this report. At this point, I returned to the original list of names that Sarah had provided months before. Rachel was contacted and ultimately consented for the study. Like Sarah, in December all of the teachers consented to continue their participation through January 2009

Kathryn was in her seventh year of teaching, all of which had been completed at Blue Mountain. Her first 4 years were spent as a second grade teacher before moving to her current assignment in third grade. During her fourth year of teaching, she began on online degree program, ultimately earning her master's degree in reading instruction. She had plans to move

out of state at the end of the school year and while she was interested in staying involved in education, she was not sure she would seek another classroom position.

Like Kathryn, all of Rachel's teaching experience had been at Blue Mountain. She was in her fifth year of teaching and had moved to a third grade classroom after teaching fourth grade for 4 years. During her time in the study, Kathryn completed the requirements for an online degree program and received her master's degree in curriculum and design. Her plans for the future were to remain a classroom teacher.

Lauren was a new teacher at Blue Mountain in her third year of teaching. Her undergraduate student teaching experiences were a bit unique in that she completed her teaching abroad in Australia. At the completion of her student teaching experience, she took an interim teaching position at the school that lasted the rest of the term. After returning to the United States, her first 2 years were completed in two different schools in a different state. She taught in a kindergarten classroom in her first year followed by a first grade position. At Blue Mountain, she remained in a first grade classroom. During the final month of the study, Lauren began a master's program at a local university, though she had not decided on a focus for her degree at the time the study ended. While she enjoyed first grade, she felt she might like to try teaching in the intermediate grades at some point in her career. She also was interested in transitioning into a leadership position in the future.

Throughout this report, I refer to the participants in a variety of ways. At times, I identify them as a group using the term participants. I also refer to them as the reading specialist and teachers. Finally, there are instances where I identify them by name.

Others within the school context. Because this study was situated within a school context, other people were peripherally involved. For example, teachers other than those consented for

the study were present for the group coaching activities I observed. Similarly, the students within each teacher's classroom were present during classroom observations. However, because the study focused on the interactions of the reading specialist and classroom teachers, they were the only participants consented for the study. At the request of the school's principal, letters were sent to parents of students in each consented teacher's classroom informing them of the study.

Description of the Research Context

Having provided a bit of information about each of the participants, I now offer a description of the types of coaching interactions I observed over the course of the study in order to provide the reader a way to ground the examples used to highlight the findings in the coming chapters. As described in Chapter II, literacy coaches engage in a variety of activities as they support the work of teachers. These may range from informal activities such as talking with teachers or providing materials for their classrooms to formal activities involving in-class support such as modeling, co-teaching, or observing teachers' instruction for the purpose of providing feedback (IRA, 2004a). Here I describe the types of coaching activities Sarah engaged in with the teachers at Blue Mountain Elementary. Two main types of interactions were observed: group coaching sessions and individual coaching sessions.

Group Coaching

The group coaching sessions that Sarah conducted were used to address the school district's new assessment program, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS, Good & Kaminski, 2002). Sarah began the training associated with this new assessment during a faculty meeting in August as she provided a 45 minute overview of the

assessment and the associated changes made by the district. She then met with each grade level three times in September and once in October and November. These meetings lasted approximately an hour and were held during each grade level's planning time. At the end of these meetings, Sarah asked the teachers to complete a short writing prompt addressing any concerns that had been raised by the sessions (e.g., When I think about my DIBELS data, my concern is...). Sarah had led grade level meetings in years past to provide professional development, however never with the regularity or frequency of the meetings she conducted around DIBELS.

In September, October, and November I observed sessions Sarah conducted with the first and third grade teams as the teachers in the study were present for those meetings as well. Sarah provided an agenda for each meeting and the information she presented varied little across grade levels. The first meeting in September provided teachers with an overview of the DIBELS measures specific to their grade levels. The teachers also received their students' scores from the first round of benchmark testing conducted by an assessment team at the school. In two additional meetings in September (for which I was not present, though I saw Sarah conduct similar meetings earlier in the year with the assessment team) the teachers learned how to administer the DIBELS measures so they could begin to conduct biweekly progress monitoring with their students. Both of these meetings were transmissive in nature, though Sarah did open spaces for teachers to share their ideas and concerns.

The teams met again in October to consider how their students' scores might influence classroom instruction. The purpose of this meeting was to help the teachers identify instructional strategies that could be used to provide the "something different" needed by students who had been identified as at-risk of not meeting their assessment goals. During the first half of the

meeting, Sarah provided each teacher with a packet of instructional strategies, explaining how to implement each of them and the different literacy skills they reinforced. For the last half of the meeting, she asked the teachers to share strategies they were currently using in their classrooms.

In October, the grade level teams met to consider the progress monitoring data they had been collecting for their students. Sarah moderated the meeting, but it was driven by the teachers' conversations and concerns. The purpose of this meeting was to identify specific students that were not progressing with the "something different" already being provided by the teachers and to share ideas and brainstorm new instructional approaches that might be effective for helping those students meet their benchmark assessment goals.

Individual Coaching

Sarah engaged in a variety of coaching activities with individual teachers over the course of the study including: answering teachers' questions, providing instructional materials, modeling instruction with their students, modeling instruction in one-on-one meetings without students present, observing instruction and providing feedback, and helping teachers interpret their assessment data. She also described coaching interactions from the previous year in which she led small group instruction in teachers' classrooms and worked with new teachers to show them how to conduct running records. Sarah preferred working in classrooms and because of this was quick to offer to demonstrate in teachers' classrooms. She also liked to leave teachers with something in writing—a plan for what to do next—at the end of each coaching session. Below I provide a general overview of the nature of the coaching interactions between Sarah and the teachers in the study.

Coaching interactions with Kathryn. I observed Kathryn and Sarah's interactions twice during the course of the study. While they had other conversations on the fly in the hallway, for example, or during car duty in the afternoon, these were their only two scheduled contacts. They first met on September 11 during Kathryn's planning period to discuss plans for support over the coming weeks. The meeting lasted approximately an hour. Kathryn was interested in receiving help setting up writer's workshop in her classroom and had questions about how to connect it to word study. She was also concerned about her daily schedule. While the district mandated a 90 minute uninterrupted block of instructional time for language arts, Kathryn currently had only 120 minutes for both language arts and math instruction in her schedule. As a result, the literacy block was often cut short. Sarah offered to work on adjusting the schedule after the meeting ended so they could use their time to discuss Kathryn's other concerns.

During this meeting, Sarah and Kathryn discussed how to group Kathryn's students for word study based on their scores on the district's spelling assessment. For the past few years, Kathryn had worked exclusively with the lowest readers in third grade as the students had been grouped across the grade level for reading instruction. This year the students were not being grouped this way, so she was faced with students who were more advanced and demonstrated a wider range of spelling development than those she had taught in the past. Sarah and Kathryn also talked about ways to build on Kathryn's current writing instruction and implement a workshop approach in the classroom. Throughout the conversation, Sarah used open-ended questions to gather information from Kathryn regarding her concerns and frequently restated Kathryn's responses as a way to clarify her points. Sarah provided specific examples of ways that Kathryn could integrate grammar instruction into a writer's workshop format. They also discussed materials the students might need (i.e., notebooks) and teacher resource materials that

were available in the school. As the meeting ended, Sarah restated their plan for future contact: “I’m gonna’ look at the scheduling....You [Kathryn] think about what exactly you want this to look like in your room...then we’ll touch base again about what do you need me to do to help you get it started” (Planning Meeting, September 11, 2008).

Sarah and Kathryn’s next scheduled contact was on October 24 when Sarah joined Kathryn in her classroom for approximately an hour during the language arts block. At this point in the school year, Kathryn had started word study in her classroom, but had not yet attempted to organize a time for writer’s workshop. When I asked Kathryn later to describe her goals for this time together, she explained that she was feeling frustrated with her teaching and wanted additional support from Sarah because she was concerned about meeting the needs of her students who were reading at or above grade level.

Sarah and Kathryn sat side by side at a table in the back of the room where Kathryn met with her small reading groups. They both later referred to this as side-by-side coaching. The visit began with a conversation about word study. Kathryn explained that she had debated returning to a more traditional approach to spelling but was eventually able to convince herself to stay with word study. However, she had received complaints from parents and wanted to establish a spelling test as part of word study in response. Sarah voiced her concerns with Kathryn’s plan and helped establish other alternatives that would help simultaneously address Kathryn’s needs, the district mandate, and the parents’ concerns.

The next issue Kathryn raised was her concern that she was not meeting regularly enough with some of her guided reading groups. Sarah suggested that she conduct her guided reading lessons while she observed. Then they could talk about Kathryn’s instruction. Kathryn worked with two different guided reading groups. In between each group, she and Sarah talked about

ways to use her instructional time more efficiently (e.g., having students read independently at their seats before coming to guided reading rather than using guided reading time to read aloud) and also ways to keep the rest of the class on task as Kathryn worked with small groups. They spent the last few minutes of their time together discussing writing instruction. While no specific mention was made of a writer's workshop format, Sarah did offer suggestions for building on the instruction Kathryn had already been providing and including writing activities as one component of the independent work students completed during guided reading time. Sarah's support consisted of reassuring and building Kathryn's confidence with her instruction.

Coaching interactions with Rachel. Rachel and Sarah had six planned contacts that I observed. They first met on September 22 during Rachel's planning time to discuss plans for support. Having moved down to third grade from fourth, Rachel had questions about how to meet the needs of her students during guided reading. While teaching in fourth grade, her students had been grouped by ability across the grade level and Rachel had always taught students who were close to grade level in their reading abilities. In third grade, she found her students had a wide range of reading abilities and was particularly concerned with how to meet the needs of her students that were reading below grade level and had difficulties with decoding. Rachel began the meeting by asking Sarah to help her finalize her student assignments for guided reading groups. During this exchange, Sarah encouraged Rachel to reflect on the students' assessment data and to consider the level of text that would be appropriate for the newly formed groups. Rachel decided that she would start literature circles with her students who were reading at or above grade level as this was a format she was familiar with from fourth grade that would work well with her current students. Sarah offered to share a set of materials used to teach

specific reading strategies and to model a lesson using these materials with the lowest reading group. Rachel accepted her offer. The meeting ended as they set a time for the model lesson.

Sarah and Rachel's next planned coaching interaction took place on October 1 when Sarah modeled a guided reading lesson in Rachel's classroom. Sarah modeled how to use the instructional materials to introduce students to the strategy of looking at pictures to help figure out an unknown word while reading. The lesson lasted approximately 20 minutes. Throughout the demonstration, Rachel's attention was repeatedly drawn away from the lesson by visitors to the classroom as well as the other students working on independent activities. Sarah and Rachel met at the end of the school day to discuss the lesson. The conversation addressed keeping a tight focus for the instruction during a guided reading lesson by addressing only one teaching point. Sarah shared her written plan for the lesson and Rachel asked questions regarding the strategy materials and how to best use them in her instruction. The meeting ended as they decided that Sarah would come and observe Rachel the next day as she led a guided reading lesson with her lowest group.

Due to scheduling conflicts, Sarah did not observe Rachel's guided reading instruction until October 21. During the lesson, which lasted approximately 20 minutes, Rachel's teaching points included the difference between retelling and summarizing, using context clues to solve unknown words, and sequencing. Sarah and Rachel spoke briefly following the lesson and Rachel identified that she had a hard time sticking to one strategy in the lesson. She was also struggling with whether to focus on decoding skills or comprehension with this group as both seemed to be important. They scheduled a time to meet and debrief on October 24 during Rachel's planning time.

When Rachel and Sarah met to discuss the observed lesson, Sarah provided Rachel with a word processed copy of her notes from the observation. These notes included a script of what the students were doing during the lesson as well as the teacher. Sarah started the conversation by returning to the concern Rachel identified earlier of not being able to stick to one teaching point. Sarah prompted Rachel to think about the strategies she had seen her students spontaneously using in order to determine which strategies she still needed to reinforce or teach. They also discussed ways for Rachel to document her teaching in guided reading as well as her observations of students' reading behaviors. Rachel was still struggling with using the strategy materials that Sarah had provided so Sarah walked her through the next lesson in the series, showing her how to use the teacher's guide and posters. Sarah reassured Rachel by saying,

You're doing what you're supposed to do. And it's hard because you're dealing with a new grade level. You're dealing with kids that have very different needs than your kids did last year and trying to pick out, "Okay, what's important now? What's my focus now?" And not disregarding what you see they need, but just kinda' tabling it. That's why I said have somewhere you can write it down. That way you don't have to worry and fret about it. You know, "I'll write that down and that's something I need to get to once I finish what I've started here." (Guided Reading Debriefing Meeting, October 24, 2008)

The meeting ended as they talked about other events happening at Rachel's grade level.

The final scheduled interaction that I observed between Sarah and Rachel occurred on December 11 during Rachel's planning time and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Rachel initiated the meeting because she had questions about how to score some of her students' running records. She was unsure whether or not the students' answers to the comprehension questions were adequate. As she shared the students' work with Sarah, Sarah either agreed or disagreed with Rachel's scoring, each time offering explanations for her response.

Coaching interactions with Lauren. Lauren and Sarah's seven planned coaching interactions took place over the course of 3 weeks. Lauren approached Sarah to learn more about the balanced literacy component of word study and how to implement it in her classroom. The

planning meeting took place on October 20 during Lauren's planning time and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Lauren shared with Sarah the types of word study activities she had tried so far in her classroom. Sarah then explained the assessment piece associated with word study and how it would help Lauren identify the developmental spelling levels of her students (though it was not required for first grade). Lauren did not feel ready to try conducting word study with groups of students on different levels and therefore chose not to do the spelling assessment. Sarah agreed that she could continue using the word study activities with all of the students in her class and offered to model a typical 5 day word study routine. They scheduled times for the following weeks for Sarah to demonstrate.

The next five interactions between Sarah and Lauren took place in Lauren's classroom on 5 different days over 2 weeks as Sarah modeled five different word study activities (e.g., word hunt). Each of these demonstration lessons lasted approximately 25 to 30 minutes and I was present for all but the first of these. While in the classroom, Sarah took the lead with the teaching. Lauren occasionally sat at her desk or a table in the back of the classroom and completed clerical work. However, she also kept written notes of what Sarah was doing with each activity. Towards the end of each lesson, Lauren often circulated around the room checking on students' progress and providing individual assistance as needed. Occasionally as the students worked Sarah would speak to Lauren privately and explain the decisions she made for the lesson (i.e., how many words to have the students work with), why she chose certain instructional approaches, how she modified the materials (i.e., replacing a few of the picture cards with new pictures in order to form an assessment tool), or suggestions for how she might organize the word study time in her classroom.

On the final day of modeling, Sarah met with Lauren during her planning time to talk about Lauren's impressions and concerns regarding word study. This meeting lasted approximately 15 minutes. Lauren liked the idea of word study the way that Sarah had modeled it and planned to incorporate it into her daily schedule. Lauren asked how word study would support her students' spelling and Sarah explained that focusing on the patterns of the words would reinforce their spelling development. Lauren liked the way the activities reinforced what her students were learning with phonics as well. Sarah encouraged Lauren not to forget that the activities needed to be accompanied by instruction and not just assigned as individual activities, for example, in literacy centers. She also encouraged Lauren to continue to address the district's phonics standards in her teaching because following the progression of word study would not necessarily provide students with all of the phonics knowledge they needed. As the conversation ended, Sarah agreed to follow up with Lauren after she had a chance to try the activities to see if she had additional questions or would like to learn other activities for her students to complete.

Summary. As can be seen, though the focus of the coaching interactions varied from teacher to teacher, the nature of support resembled patterns of support Bean (2004) refers to as a coaching cycle. Sarah began with a conversation to address teachers' concerns and plan more targeted support for a future time. Then Sarah spent time supporting teachers in their classrooms, in these instances in three different ways. Finally, except with Kathryn, she followed up with a conversation she referred to as debriefing in order to determine teachers' reaction to her support and questions they might still have.

Data Collection

Because this study sought to examine the complex construct of teachers’ beliefs as situated within the professional development setting of the coaching relationship, it was necessary to rely on the variety of data sources described in this section. Data collection occurred over a 7 month period with the primary methods for collecting data being interviewing, observation, and surveying with artifacts used to supplement these sources. Figure 3 illustrates the sources of data used to address each of my research questions. Throughout the study, my role was one of an observer participant. I did not intervene in the regular classroom activities and had only limited contact with the students.

Research Question	Primary Sources of Data
1. What beliefs do the reading specialist and teacher hold about literacy instruction and education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – survey data – visioning statement – interviews – initial, survey, vision, #1 – observations – artifacts
2. How are the reading specialist and teachers’ beliefs about literacy instruction and education held?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interviews - all – observations – artifacts
3. How do these beliefs influence participation in the professional development setting of literacy coaching?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interviews – final 4 – observations – artifacts

Figure 3. Research questions and sources of data.

Overview of Data Collection

As noted above, this study was originally designed to be completed in two tightly defined phases. However, as research began these phases became blurred as participants moved through research activities at different rates and as one participant withdrew from the study and was replaced. Participants moved through the research activities in the same progression, though as can be seen in Figure 4, there was some variability as to when these activities occurred.

The majority of the research activities took place during the fall of 2008. The set of research activities described as phase 1 activities above served to help me build rapport with the participants, which because of the personal nature of beliefs was crucial for my understanding of how each participant's beliefs influenced her participation in coaching. The data collected during this first phase provided initial understandings regarding the content of teachers' beliefs that were built upon in the second part of the study. In order to be able to recognize the ways that the participants' beliefs were represented in and influenced the coaching relationship, it was imperative that I have a strong understanding of each individual participant's beliefs. The interviews during phase 1 provided time and space to gather information regarding specific literacy-related beliefs as well as more general beliefs that influenced participants' practices.

The activities of this first phase began during the consent meeting I had with each participant. I gave them copies of the survey measures and the option of completing the measures as I waited or returning them to me in our next scheduled meeting. Only Sarah chose to complete them immediately. The participants also received copies of the vision statement writing prompt at this time. There were no deadlines set as to when the writing needed to be completed. As it neared time for us to talk about their visions, I offered reminders and collected the finished products during a visit to the school before their vision interview. Each participant completed

Date	Data Collection Event
May 2008	– recruitment of reading specialist
July 2008	– recruitment of teachers – surveys (Sarah) – interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ initial (Sarah)
August 2008	– recruitment of teachers – surveys (Kathryn, Lauren) – vision statements (Sarah, Lauren) – interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ initial (Kathryn, Lauren) ○ survey (Sarah) – observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ professional development sessions led by Sarah (all)
September 2008	– surveys (Rachel) – interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ initial (Rachel) ○ survey (Kathryn, Lauren) ○ visioning (Lauren) – observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ full day in teacher’s classroom (Kathryn, Lauren) ○ 2 grade level meetings led by Sarah (all) ○ individual coaching interactions (Sarah/Kathryn; Sarah/Rachel)
October 2008	– vision statement (Kathryn) – interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ survey (Rachel) ○ visioning (Sarah, Kathryn) – observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ full day in teacher’s classroom (Rachel) ○ 2 grade level meetings led by Sarah (all) ○ individual coaching interactions (all)
November 2008	– vision statement (Rachel) – interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ visioning (Rachel) ○ interview 1 (Sarah, Lauren) ○ interview 2 (Sarah, Lauren) – observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ observations during language arts block (Kathryn (3), Rachel (3), Lauren (4)) ○ 2 grade level meetings led by Sarah (all) ○ small group instruction (Sarah) ○ individual coaching interactions (Sarah/Lauren)
December 2008	– interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ interview 1 (Kathryn, Rachel) ○ interview 2 (Kathryn, Rachel) – observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ observations during language arts block (Kathryn (4), Rachel (4), Lauren (2)) ○ individual coaching interactions (Sarah/Rachel)
January 2009	– interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ interview 3 (all) ○ interview 4 (all)

Figure 4. Overview of data collection.

interviews providing background information about themselves as teachers, their thoughts about the survey measures, and their vision statements.

Research activities referred to as phase 2 activities above were similar to those completed in the first part of the study. Again, these “phases” were not bounded by actual dates and times, but rather were determined by the types of research activities completed by the participants. Having identified an initial set of beliefs held by the participants in the first part of the study, the research activities in the second half of the study allowed me to delve more specifically into the evidence on which teachers’ beliefs were based and the ways those beliefs impacted their participation in coaching as I followed up on themes that emerged from data collected during phase 1.

Initially I conducted a full day observation in each teacher’s classroom. This allowed me to develop a strong sense of the typical daily routines of the classroom. Beginning in November, I conducted approximately one or two observations a week in each classroom during the literacy block. I also observed interactions between Sarah and the teachers both in grade level and individual meetings (as described above). These observations were conducted during this part of the study in the hopes of capturing instances of the teachers’ beliefs in action. During interviews, participants’ attention was drawn to their own beliefs in action as they were asked to reflect on their beliefs and instructional practices. Having explained the differing purposes for the phases of data collection, I next describe the methods used across the study.

Methods

In the following section, I describe the methods used for data collection and the specific purposes for their inclusion in the research design. These methods included surveying, teacher visioning, interviewing, observing, and artifact collection.

Surveys. In order to uncover preexisting orientations to teaching and literacy instruction two survey instruments were administered at the beginning of the study. The first instrument was the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) (Lenski et al., 1998; see Appendix A). This survey is designed to examine the consistency of teachers' beliefs and practices with constructivist theory. The LOS was particularly appropriate for this study because the literacy framework of the district was consistent with the ten principles of literacy instruction in constructivist classrooms on which the survey is based. These include: a view of literacy as a meaning-making process, support for facilitated, child-centered instruction, the importance of a literate environment and instruction aimed at strategic reading, the need for flexible grouping and meaningful assessment, an integrated approach to instruction, the encouragement of student writing as well as parent participation, and the need for the teacher to be a reflective practitioner.

The LOS contains 30 items—15 statements of beliefs and 15 statements of practice. Teachers indicated their agreement with the belief statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing). Similarly, a scale of 1 to 5 (from never to always) was used to indicate frequency of use for the practice statements. The sum of the ratings for the belief items served as the beliefs scores while the sum of the practice items was the practice score. By combining these two sums, a total score was determined. Based on the survey results, one of three orientations to literacy learning and instruction was determined for the beliefs score, practice score, and overall score using the range of scores provided by the authors. These

orientations included traditional teachers, constructivist teachers, and eclectic teachers. To explain these orientations, I provide a description of the types of associated instructional practices as well as examples of both a belief statement and practice statement from the measure that are illustrative of these orientations.

Traditional teachers are described as those who believe in a transmissive approach to learning and rely on traditional reading methods and direct instruction. A traditional teacher would be expected to agree, for example, with the belief statement, “The purpose of reading instruction is to teach children to recognize words and to pronounce them,” as well as the practice statement noting, “I assess my students’ reading progress primarily by teacher-made and/or book tests.”

Constructivist teachers use an inquiry approach to teaching, rely on whole texts for instruction, and view students as meaning-makers. A teacher identified as holding this orientation might agree with a belief statement such as, “The purpose of reading is to understand print,” or a practice statement such as, “I encourage my students to monitor their comprehension as they read.”

Finally, teachers falling within the eclectic orientation would demonstrate a combination of traditional and constructivist approaches and views on student learning. Thus, they might agree with belief or practice statements aligned with either the traditional or constructivist orientations.

Because the LOS provides for separate categorization of teachers’ beliefs and practices using these orientations, it allows a closer examination of the alignment between teachers’ beliefs and practices. The authors described the process used to validate the LOS and report

internal validity and reliability (with a test-retest reliability coefficient of .927) as well as external validity.

The Educational Beliefs Questionnaire (EBQ) (Silvernail, 1992b; see Appendix B) was the second survey administered to all participants at the beginning of the study. This questionnaire is designed to assess teachers' educational philosophical orientations by examining their beliefs regarding five different concepts including the role of schools in society, the curriculum content, instructional methods, and the roles of the teacher and student. The EBQ contains 21 belief statements to which teachers indicated their level of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These items were organized into three subscales that measured the broad educational philosophical orientations of traditionalism, progressivism, and romanticism. Composite scores for each subscale were calculated by averaging the item responses within the subscale, with the subscale with the highest average indicating the identified orientation.

The traditionalism orientation views schools as a vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage, values drill and practice in learning, supports strong authority roles for teachers, and views students as passive receivers of knowledge. Within this orientation, learning is focused around a set of predetermined facts and skills and effectiveness is measured through students' academic achievement. A survey item illustrating this traditional orientation states, "The student should be a receiver of knowledge."

The progressivism orientation recognizes schools as places for inquiry and building socially conscious adults, values a facilitative role for teachers, and views students as active participants in their own learning. While students are encouraged to discover "facts" through "logical" inquiry, teachers guide students to certain facts and skills that are contained within a

predetermined framework. Within this orientation, effectiveness of education is measured by success in producing productive citizens. A survey item illustrating this progressive orientation states, “Schools exist to foster the intellectual process.”

Finally, the romanticism orientation addresses the roles of schools as child-centered organizations charged with building new social ideas and individual awareness, in which teachers guide students in their natural development. Within this orientation, students are fully involved in directing the path of their own learning—there are no predetermined facts or skills that must be mastered—and because of this, effectiveness in education cannot necessarily be measured. A survey item illustrating this romantic orientation states, “No subject is more important than the personalities of the students.”

Silvernail (1992a) conducted a factor analysis of the EBQ and found the three subscales to have a total scale internal consistency coefficient of .73 (with alpha coefficients of .71 for the traditionalism orientation, .64 for the progressivism orientation, and .72 for the romanticism orientation). This measure was selected because of the broader information it provided about teachers’ educational philosophies.

Teacher visioning. The teacher visioning format provides a framework for evaluating the degree of closeness or distance between teachers’ ideal beliefs about the optimum teaching/learning environment and their current reality (see Hammerness, 2006). A vision statement includes a description of a teacher’s explanation of five elements of his/her ideal classroom including

the sights and sounds of the classroom, the role of the teacher, the role of the students, the curriculum and how it relates to student learning, and the relationship between the classroom and the kind of society the teacher would like to see in the 21st century. (Squires & Bliss, 2004, p. 758)

It is important here to distinguish between teachers' personal visions and larger, institutional visions. Hammerness (2006) argues that teachers' visions are more than just a teaching philosophy. Instead, they are "a set of vivid and concrete images of practice" that "embody teachers' hopes for the future and play a significant role in their lives and work" (p. 1). Rather than being strictly future-oriented like organizational visions tend to be, teachers' visions provide teachers with a way to understand their past and present while simultaneously creating images of possibility for the future.

Each participant was provided with a written and electronic copy of the visioning prompt (based on Hammerness's protocol, 2006; see Appendix C) and was asked to complete a written response. Each of the five questions was placed on a separate sheet of paper. Participants were encouraged to respond with connected text or bulleted lists, whichever was most accessible for them. A follow-up semi-structured interview was conducted using a modified version of Hammerness's (1999) protocol in order to investigate themes that emerged from the writing (see Appendix D for guiding interview questions). The interview also included probes to determine how closely the teachers' visions matched their actual experience. The visioning statement was created in the first part of the study. However, as the study drew to a close, participants were asked to revisit their statements in the final interviews and note any changes in their visions or the degree to which it matched their current practice.

This measure was included in the study because of the potential it held to help teachers develop a greater awareness of their own beliefs, and in turn provide opportunities for challenging those beliefs (Hammerness, 2001, 2003). It also helped reveal teachers' unconsciously held beliefs (Squires & Bliss) and allowed for a comparison between the visions of the reading specialist and teacher participants.

Interviews. A variety of interview techniques were used to stimulate discussion with participants in order to reveal their underlying belief systems and the impact they had on the coaching relationship. Seven semi-structured interviews (including one visioning interview as described above) were conducted with each individual participant using qualitative interviewing techniques advanced by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Locations and times for the interviews were determined by the participants and each interview lasted approximately an hour. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Field notes were also recorded and used to create methodological and theoretical notes following each interview. I turn now to a more detailed description of specific interview techniques that were used during the study. It is important to note that this is a general description of the interview process followed with all participants. However, at times topics introduced in one interview were returned to in later conversations due to time constraints or a renewed interest in the ideas presented by the participants. For example, I originally intended to have teachers reflect on their responses to both the LOS and EBQ in the survey interview. However, for most participants, the topic was too time intensive to complete in one interview. Therefore, the discussion of their responses was often spread across several interviews.

Initial interviews were held shortly after participants were identified for the study. The purpose of these interviews was to learn more about participants' teaching backgrounds and their perceptions of reading instruction. Guiding questions for these interviews were adapted from Richardson et al.'s (1991) Teacher Belief Interview and are included in Appendix E. This interview protocol was well suited for this study because it was designed to elicit both teachers' public, stated beliefs about reading instruction and literacy development along with their more private beliefs (or beliefs in action) by focusing on specific students. However, most participants

were not able to address all of the ideas included in the interview protocol in the time allotted. Therefore, these questions were carried over into their next interview.

The next interview conducted was the survey interview. In these interviews, I asked participants to reflect on their responses on the LOS and EBQ. Because the LOS was designed as a tool for self-reflection, it specifically allowed the teachers to examine the alignment between their beliefs and practices. Both survey measures provided openings to ask teachers to identify sources of evidence on which their beliefs were based. In addition, I looked for questions in which the participants' responses varied from what might have been expected based on their identified orientation in order to probe these areas of inconsistency in their beliefs. Finally, participants were asked to discuss how well they felt the orientation identified by their scores matched their perception of their beliefs. To assist them with this, I gave them short summaries of the orientations identified by the measures (see Appendix F), though I chose to remove the labels placed on these by the survey authors so they would not sway participants' responses. Again, participants' reflections regarding the EBQ were addressed across different interview sessions for each participant due to the time constraints noted above.

The next interviews each participant completed were the visioning interview (described earlier in this section) and a series of semi-structured interviews. The nature of conversation varied across participants as we discussed their perceptions of their own teaching and their interactions with Sarah. Prior to each of these interviews, I revisited past conversations with each participant and reviewed the theoretical notes included in my field notes to determine directions to pursue. I prepared a set of possible interview questions used to start our conversations and then used follow-up questions and probes (see Rubin & Rubin, 2005) to clarify confusions, prompt for elaboration of ideas, and deepen my understanding of the participants' responses.

A final interview technique that was included in the study was a stimulated recall procedure. This technique was included as part of the final one or two semi-structured interviews. Participants viewed short video segments (typically lasting 5 to 10 minutes) of their own classroom practice recorded during regularly scheduled classroom observations or during their coaching interactions with Sarah. I provided them with either a copy of a transcript of the events they viewed or an expanded version of my field notes in order to support their understanding of what they were watching, as the audio on the videos was sometimes poor. After viewing the short video, they were asked to reflect on their personal thought processes at the time of the interaction they viewed (Calderhead, 1996) and to consider how they saw their beliefs being represented. The stimulated recall interviews provided opportunities for the teachers to compare their own actions to their conscious beliefs about teaching and reading instruction and provided openings for conversations regarding their unconscious beliefs. Sarah participated in the most stimulated recall events—four—as she responded to interactions she had with each of the three teachers and the faculty as a whole. Kathryn and Rachel each considered two different video clips, while Lauren responded to one longer clip of her instruction.

Observations. Throughout the study, a variety of observations were conducted in order to examine the participants' beliefs in action. In September and October, I conducted one full day observation in each teacher's classroom in order to develop a sense of the routines and structures present in the classrooms. In November and December, I observed in each teacher's classroom approximately once or twice a week during their language arts block. A total of seven observations were conducted in Kathryn's and Rachel's classroom, each lasting approximately 45 to 90 minutes. Six different observations were conducted in Lauren's classroom, with each

observation lasting 1 to 2 hours. I also observed Sarah's instruction with two different small groups of students with whom she worked. The purpose of the classroom observations was to examine participants' beliefs in action as evidenced in their classroom practices, including, but not limited to, literacy instruction, classroom routines, procedures, and management, and teacher/reading specialist and teacher/student interactions.

Overall, the usefulness of the data collected during classroom observations for addressing the research questions was limited by both the timing within the school year in which the observations took place and the lack of variety of classroom activities that were captured. The observations took place over a 6 week period in November and December, 1 week of which students were out of school for fall break. During this time, students were engaged in several holiday themed activities. The grading period also came to a close, and teachers were required to complete district assessments (e.g., running records) for each student in their class. As a result, classroom schedules and routines were often disrupted. The most frequently captured classroom activities were guided reading instruction and sessions in which teachers collected running record data. Therefore, rather than serving as primary sources of data, the classroom observations were used to triangulate the findings regarding beliefs identified through survey and interview data. The classroom observations also served as sources of information used to prompt teachers' responses during interviews.

With the exception of the first full day observation in each teacher's classroom, all observations were either video recorded or audio recorded. Due to scheduling conflicts, I was not always able to be present in the classroom for a personal observation. Because I observed only during the teachers' language arts block, all of which were conducted at the same time of the day, I often needed to conduct two observations at the same time. In order to facilitate this, I set

up video equipment in both teachers' classrooms and record the classroom activity. Though I moved back and forth from room to room checking on the status of the video equipment, I spent the majority of each observation period in one classroom observing in real time. Afterwards, I watched the video recorded observation from the other classroom. Across the two months of observations, I made sure to rotate my schedule to allow a similar number of personal versus recorded observations in each classroom.

When present in the classroom for an observation, I created written field notes as I recorded both my actual observations and my personal reactions to what was happening in classrooms in two separate columns. These field notes were also used to create methodological and theoretical notes following each observation. I would later expand my notes as I created word processed field notes while watching the recorded observations. For observations that I was not able to participate in personally, I watched the video and created word processed field notes, including methodological and theoretical memos as needed. At times, I also included brief transcriptions of portions of the video, especially those used in the stimulated recall interviews.

In addition to observing classroom activity, I observed all planned coaching interactions (as described above) that took place between Sarah and the teachers. The only exceptions were one modeled lesson that I did not see in Lauren's classroom and the one planning interaction I only saw on video between Sarah and Lauren. Because of the nature of coaching, there were on the fly interactions for which I was not present. I also observed many of Sarah's group coaching sessions, especially those in which the teachers also participated. Finally, I observed a presentation Sarah made at a faculty meeting at the beginning of the school year to introduce the teachers to the district's new reading assessment along with two training sessions she conducted for the school's assessment team as they learned how to administer the new test. All of the

coaching interactions I observed were either videotaped or audio recorded. I completed written field notes in the same manner as described above.

Artifacts. Finally, many artifacts that were used or produced during observations were collected. For example, I collected the meeting agendas and handouts Sarah provided during the faculty meeting and grade level meetings. I collected copies of the teachers' lesson plans for some of my observations as well as their documentation of their practice (such as notes they created during guided reading lessons). At times, there were extra copies available for me to keep. When this was not practical, I used a digital camera to capture images of the artifacts. None of these artifacts were directly analyzed, though they were used at times to triangulate the findings reported in the chapters to come.

Data Analysis

In this section, I describe the process that guided the analysis of data for this study, namely a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method involves reading and rereading sources of data for the purpose of identifying emerging patterns and categories of beliefs, actions, and interactions. Open coding is used to identify concepts emerging from data while axial coding provides a way to organize and synthesize those emergent categories. Strauss and Corbin explain that the analytical processes of open and axial coding are not necessarily sequential, linear steps, which was certainly true for this study

Throughout the study, I worked to operationalize the construct of belief clearly. During conversations with teachers, I listened for linguistic markers—phrases such as *I believe*, *I think*, *I know*, or *I feel*. I also prompted teachers to explain the evidence upon which their beliefs were built as Green (1971) argued this was one way to begin to identify the centrality of a belief. At

times, teachers offered these sources of evidence spontaneously, often within stretches of conversation in which they were evaluating or explaining their practice.

Quantitative data analysis was used peripherally to analyze the participants' responses to the LOS, the EBQ, and the conformity scale. The authors' scoring procedures (as described in the previous section) were used to determine participants' orientations to teaching and literacy. No further quantitative analysis was completed for this data, though the data were analyzed qualitatively as I looked for patterns of response across the survey measures. For example, I examined the data to identify survey items on which there was congruence across the participants' responses (i.e., high agreement or disagreement with an item) as well as items on which there was a wide range of responses. At times, the survey data provided a triangulation of the data as I compared interview responses to responses participants provided on the surveys.

Qualitative data analysis was ongoing throughout the study using a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Throughout the data collection period, I read and reread my field notes from classroom and coaching interaction observations, read transcripts of and listened to audio recordings of interviews, and reviewed the video recordings of the interactions between the reading specialist and teachers noting possible patterns of action and themes within and across each case. I recorded these initial wonderings as theoretical notes embedded within the field notes. I then used these emerging patterns to help shape the direction of future data collection, such as the selection of specific questions to be asked during subsequent interviews. For example, I noticed that Sarah often used the phrase "meeting teachers where they are" when describing her ideas about coaching. After recognizing the recurring theme and noticing through my observations of her coaching interactions that she provided different kinds of support for different teachers, I chose to pursue this idea directly during her interviews. This process

continued throughout the data collection in order to affirm, broaden, or nullify assumptions about the participants' beliefs and their influence on their participation in coaching.

As data collection concluded, I entered all of the interview transcripts and field notes, survey responses, and relevant artifacts (such as teachers' written vision statements) into NVivo 8, a qualitative data analysis software program. I assigned descriptive category labels to data units of varying size. The data units most often consisted of questions and their answer, though at times smaller units such as sentences or phrases were identified. Field notes from observations within teachers' classrooms and coaching interactions were coded by hand following similar procedures. Within the data collected during coaching interactions, data units tended to consist of several exchanges of action or conversation that comprised critical incidents.

Following this initial open coding, I began to look for connections between the categories. As I did this, I was able to eliminate some of the categories as irrelevant to the strand of analysis addressing the identified research questions. For example, patterns concerning teachers' beliefs regarding parental influence on students' academic performance, while perhaps interesting for future analysis, did not advance the purpose of this study uncovering the influence of their beliefs in the specific context of literacy coaching.

During axial coding, I recoded the data into five larger categories (parent nodes): content of beliefs, basis for beliefs, thinking and talking about personal practice, teachers' interactions with coaching, and role as specialist (see Appendix G). These categories, which contained a number of codes (child nodes) within them, were developed both from a priori hypotheses and also patterns emerging in the data. For example, because of the research questions guiding this study, I knew I would need to identify specific beliefs that teachers held, or *what* they believed. Thus, the notion of coding for the literal content of their beliefs was a priori. So too were some

of the child nodes within that category such as the role of students and the role of teachers as both of these were specific questions teachers' addressed in their vision statements and survey responses. However, other child nodes, such as shoulds and should nots, arose from patterns in the data. As I pored through the data, I realized that many of the participants seemed to hold ideas about what was or was not acceptable practice. For example, Kathryn said, "Teachers in that building are just not doing what they're supposed to be doing and I don't want to be one of those. I'm not, I don't, I'm not one to be that kind of person" (Interviews 1 & 2, December 12, 2008).

Because many data segments were representative of more than one category, I used multiple codes for those responses. For example, in this data unit, Lauren described why she asked students questions encouraging personal connections during her guided reading instruction. She said

I know that I pay more attention when someone's interested in me and I know they pay more attention, interest, they have more interest in what's going on when I'm interested in them. So I try to ask 'em their opinions on things. (Interview 4, January 22, 2009)

This data unit was coded first as a belief based on her experiences as a learner because she identified a practice that was successful for her own learning. It was also coded as a belief based on her experience with teaching as she indicated she had tried this practice with students and knew that it was effective. Finally, it was coded as an instance in which Lauren was justifying her practice because she was explaining her reasoning for this particular instructional approach.

Throughout the data analysis, I returned to observational data and artifacts to ensure a triangulation of the data. As a final step of analysis, I looked across the cases to identify commonalities as well as what was unique to each.

During the later stages of data analysis, there were instances where data displays became useful tools for deepening my understanding of the participants' beliefs and the influence they

had on their participation in coaching. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue conceptually clustered matrices are helpful for organizing data in such a way to allow for an examination of overarching themes. For example, in Chapter V, I share a matrix that I used to assist in the classification of the teachers' beliefs about the topic of focus for their coaching interactions with Sarah. However, before I was able to construct that matrix, I created an additional set of matrices to support my understanding of the beliefs behind teachers' justifications and evaluations of their own practice. An example of an entry from the matrix used to analyze teachers' justifications is shown in Figure 5. I used the matrix to organize data into the type of practice, rationale for justification, and outcome categories. I then was able to step back and reflect on the identified groups of beliefs that were associated with a particular justification. These initial analyses regarding connections between beliefs were invaluable when attempting to classify beliefs by type.

Source	Type of Practice	Rationale for Justification	Outcome	Associated Beliefs
Rachel Interview 3 (January 15, 2009)	guided reading	if all you do is teach on students' level, they're not going to be exposed to or work towards something else; she's had groups that were able to read text much higher than their level with her help; she sets high expectations	Rachel chooses to use books above students' reading level in guided reading at times	meeting students' needs, grouping, guided reading, struggling readers

Figure 5. An example of an entry in the justifying practice matrix.

Trustworthiness

Erlanson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) define trustworthiness as a combination of qualities through which a study “must demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the

neutrality of its findings or decisions” (p. 29). These qualities include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

In naturalistic inquiry, it is crucial that the realities constructed by researchers resonate with the individuals providing data for the study. In order to address the credibility of this study, one strategy I employed was the use of prolonged engagement. As the original research schedule was shifted, there was much less time for observation in teachers’ classroom. Therefore, while I was engaged in the research site for approximately 6 months, I was only present in teachers’ classrooms during 2 of those months. However, I do believe this was enough time to overcome the effect my presence might have on the context I was studying, especially when it came to interactions between Sarah and the teachers, and to allow me to distinguish between typical and atypical events occurring in the context (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Credibility was also strengthened through the triangulation of methods of data collection through a combination of observation and interview techniques. This effort to look across both teacher actions and statements was crucial for addressing credibility within the study of teachers’ beliefs. As Pajares (1992) noted, beliefs are difficult to examine directly. In order to make inferences about teachers’ beliefs, it is necessary to study teachers’ statements, their intentions, *and* their behaviors (Rokeach, 1972). The triangulation of methods within this study allowed for these types of inferences. I also worked to strengthen the credibility of the study through peer debriefing. Data and analyses were shared with members of the dissertation committee and other colleagues in order to seek out alternative interpretations.

Transferability, which examines the extent to which findings from naturalistic inquiry can be applied in other contexts or with other participants, is also crucial to the trustworthiness of inquiry (Erlandson et al., 1993). My prolonged engagement in the research site allowed me to

provide thick descriptions of the participants and their beliefs; however, the relatively small amount of time the participants engaged in coaching activities limited my ability to draw strong conclusions regarding the typicality of the interactions. Another weakness in the transferability of this study was the limited nature of the purposive sampling that occurred. As noted above, because of the number of teachers in the initial pool of potential participants the sample became one of convenience.

Dependability, a third criteria of trustworthiness, results from researchers' efforts to provide evidence which would allow the findings of the inquiry to be replicated if the study were repeated using the same (or similar) participants and contexts (Erlandson et al., 1993). Triangulation of methods once again strengthened the dependability of this study along with the multiple-case design. Yin (2003) argues that a multiple-case design can strengthen the dependability of research as it can allow researchers to draw common conclusions across multiple cases. A final way I preserved the dependability of the study was by keeping a detailed accounting of the history of the research methodology.

A final characteristic of trustworthiness is confirmability. This criterion provides readers with confidence that the findings of an inquiry are "the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34). Within this study, the triangulation of methods of data collection and data sources along with peer debriefing strengthened its confirmability. Overall, the methods described in this chapter contributed to a trustworthy research design.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify teachers' specific beliefs regarding literacy instruction and how they were held, and then building on those understandings to determine their influence on participation in coaching. The study followed a multiple case study design involving 1 reading specialist and 3 teachers with whom she worked. Data were collected through interviews, observations, written vision statements, surveys, and collected artifacts. The data were analyzed following a constant comparative approach with multiple matrices supporting the final stages of analysis. The discussion of the data from this study is divided into the next three chapters. In Chapter IV, I examine *what* the participants believed about literacy instruction and the larger purposes of schooling and education. Chapter V addresses *how* the teachers' beliefs were held including the evidence on which they were built, the centrality of the beliefs in their belief systems, connections between beliefs, and the impact of these beliefs on the teachers' participation in coaching. Chapter VI examines Sarah's specific beliefs about coaching and the impact these had on her work as a coach.

CHAPTER IV

IDENTIFYING BELIEFS ABOUT LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND EDUCATION

In this chapter, I address the first research question as I examine *what* the reading specialist and teachers believed—both their specific beliefs about literacy instruction as well as their more general beliefs about education and schooling. First, I share the findings from the two survey measures. Then, I examine participants' visions of ideal practice including some of their beliefs about literacy instruction that are influential in the coaching interactions to be discussed in Chapter V. I conclude with a discussion of factors contributing to the sufficiency of the survey measures to identify the participants' beliefs. The data presented in this chapter are drawn mainly from the reading specialist and teachers' survey responses, their written vision statements, and the first four interviews they completed. However, at times they did return to ideas expressed in these measures in later interviews, so when appropriate, I draw on these data sources as well.

Survey Results

The reading specialist and teachers completed the Educational Beliefs Questionnaire (EBQ) (Silvernail, 1992b) and the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) (Lenski et al., 1998). These were then scored following the authors' scoring procedures described in Chapter III. These results as well as the survey questions themselves served as starting points for conversations with the participants. First, I asked them to reflect on their identified orientations by either selecting the orientation they felt most closely described themselves before learning of their identified orientation (see Appendix F for orientation descriptions shared with participants)

or after learning of their personal orientation, discussing how well they felt it matched their beliefs.

I chose to have the participants complete the survey measures to provide a starting point for understanding their specific beliefs about literacy instruction and education in general. However, unlike much of the past research into teachers' beliefs, I did not rely on these as the only sources of data for understanding what the reading specialist and teachers believed. As we talked about their survey responses, I learned that they often interpreted and responded to survey items quite differently. These differences would have been impossible to know from their written responses alone. In this section, I present the results from each of the survey measures and participants' discussions of their identified orientations. I also discuss patterns of response across survey items.

Educational Beliefs Questionnaire

As discussed in Chapter III, the EBQ examines teachers' beliefs about the role of schools in society, the curriculum content, instructional methods, and the roles of the teacher and students. The survey is arranged into three subscales that align with the orientations of traditionalism, progressivism, and romanticism. The traditionalism orientation views schools as a vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage, values strong authority roles for teachers, and sees students as passive receivers of knowledge. The progressivism orientation recognizes schools as a place for inquiry and building socially conscious adults, values a facilitative role for teachers, and views students as active participants in their own learning. Finally, the romanticism orientation addresses the role of schools as child-centered organizations charged with building

new social ideas and individual self-awareness, in which teachers guide students in their natural development.

In Table 1, I present participants’ scores for each subscale of the EBQ. Each participant’s overall orientation is noted within the highlighted cells (see Appendix H for their responses for each survey question). Sarah’s, Kathryn’s, and Lauren’s scores all fell within the progressivism orientation while Rachel’s was highest in the traditionalism orientation.

Table 1

Educational Beliefs Questionnaire Subscale Scores (mean out of 5)

	traditionalism	progressivism	romanticism
Sarah	3.25	3.5	2.86
Kathryn	3.125	3.5	2.429
Rachel	4.625	4.167	3.429
Lauren	2.75	4.167	3.143

The participants and I discussed their perceptions of their scores on the EBQ. Sarah agreed that progressivism was the best match for her. She felt that the traditionalism orientation was “scary” and said, “I like that I fell into [progressivism] because that, I mean that does fit a lot of what I say I believe” (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008). She also felt that her teaching when she was in a regular classroom setting would have been well-aligned with the progressivism orientation. Sarah offered examples from her own teaching, both in literacy and other content areas, to support her agreement with this orientation. For example, she explained

we did a lot of partners, small group. And not just with me, but I mean we did book discussions in first grade in small groups. I would let them go talk about books. We did science the same way and our science curriculum is designed to be hands-on and ask questions and those kinds of things.... you would’ve definitely see [*sic*] evidence of [the

facts and skills and things] when we did, you know, phonics lessons or math. But we really tried to get at the whys behind a lot of that. It wasn't just one plus one equals two, it was, "Well, why does that? Well, let's get out our manipulatives and figure it." You know, it wasn't just a drill kind of thing. And, so yeah, I think you would've seen [the progressivism orientation] much, much more than the [traditionalism orientation]. (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008)

Kathryn, Lauren, and Rachel were all asked to choose the orientation they felt best described them before being told the results from the survey. Kathryn struggled to select only one orientation, but when told her results she agreed that the progressivism orientation was the best match for her.

Lauren selected the progressivism orientation, matching her survey results. She was quick to dismiss the traditionalism orientation as she selected the progressivism orientation. She provided examples from her own teaching that matched the points made in the orientation description. For example, in response to the description that students should participate in logical inquiry, Lauren explained that she tried not to give students direct answers to their questions. Instead, she encouraged them to think things through before coming to her for assistance. When considering the idea that schools play a central role in fostering the intellectual process Lauren also said,

I like this part where it says the schools foster the intellectual process because it's more of a process. It is that process of learning to think things through versus this is the right answer, this is wrong answer. Not every answer's gonna' be right or wrong. There's some, there's so much gray area in life. You know, they have to learn, including just simple things like behaving, there's gray area. (Interview 1, November 7, 2008)

Rachel also correctly self-identified her orientation as traditionalism. However, she noted that in the past she would have agreed more strongly with the progressivism orientation. Having moved to third grade from fourth grade, she felt she needed to be more directive in her teaching. While Rachel's score was highest for the traditionalism orientation, it is interesting to note that her agreement with the progressivism orientation was just as high as or higher than the other

participants' agreement. Rachel's scores across all three subscales tended to be higher than the other participants. In examining her responses, she indicated agreement, mostly selecting 4's and 5's, with the majority of the items on the survey, which may have contributed to her higher scores than her peers for each subscale.

Literacy Orientation Survey

The Literacy Orientation Survey is designed to help teachers assess their beliefs about literacy learning and to examine how these beliefs relate to their classroom practices. Three scores are calculated on the survey: a beliefs score, a practice score, and an overall score. Each of these scores is associated with either a traditional orientation, an eclectic orientation, or a constructivist orientation to literacy learning and instruction. These orientations are located along a continuum from traditional to constructivist and help provide a picture of the degree of consistency of a teacher's beliefs with constructivist philosophy.

As described in Chapter III, teachers identified as traditional teachers on the LOS tend to use traditional reading methods such as basal reading instruction, rely on direct instruction, and take a transmissive approach to learning. Constructivist teachers are more likely to use whole texts and integrated instruction, rely on an inquiry approach, and view students as active meaning-makers rather than vessels to be filled. Finally, eclectic teachers represent a blend of both traditional and constructivist beliefs and practices.

In Table 2, I present the identified orientations for Sarah's, Kathryn's, Rachel's, and Lauren's beliefs, practice, and overall scores on the LOS (see Appendix I for participants' responses for each survey question) while Figures 6, 7, and 8 show their locations along the orientation continuum for these three scores. Overall, their results on the LOS fell either in the

eclectic or constructivist orientations. Sarah, Kathryn, and Lauren all agreed that the orientations indicated by their survey results were accurate descriptions of their teaching styles, while Rachel accurately identified the constructivist orientation as most descriptive of her teaching before being given her results on the survey.

Table 2

Literacy Orientation Survey Scores

	BELIEFS closest to 51=traditional closest to 61=eclectic closest to 69=constructivist	PRACTICE closest to 51=traditional closest to 56=eclectic closest to 63=constructivist	OVERALL 90 to 110 = traditional 111 to 125 = eclectic 126 to 145 = constructivist
Sarah	constructivist (69)	eclectic (57)	constructivist (126)
Kathryn	constructivist (66)	eclectic (59)	eclectic (125)
Rachel	constructivist/eclectic (65)	constructivist (69)	constructivist (134)
Lauren	eclectic (63)	constructivist (60)	eclectic (123)

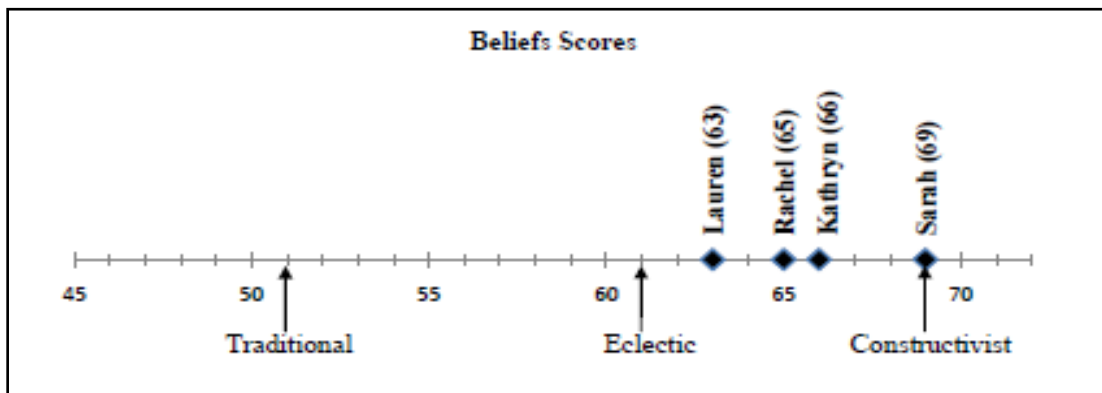


Figure 6. Location of participants' LOS beliefs scores along the continuum.

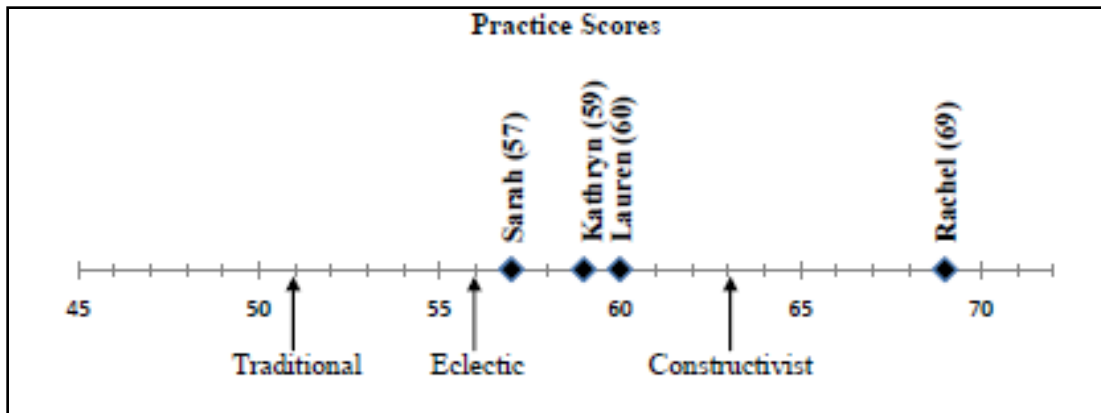


Figure 7. Location of participants' LOS practice scores along the continuum.

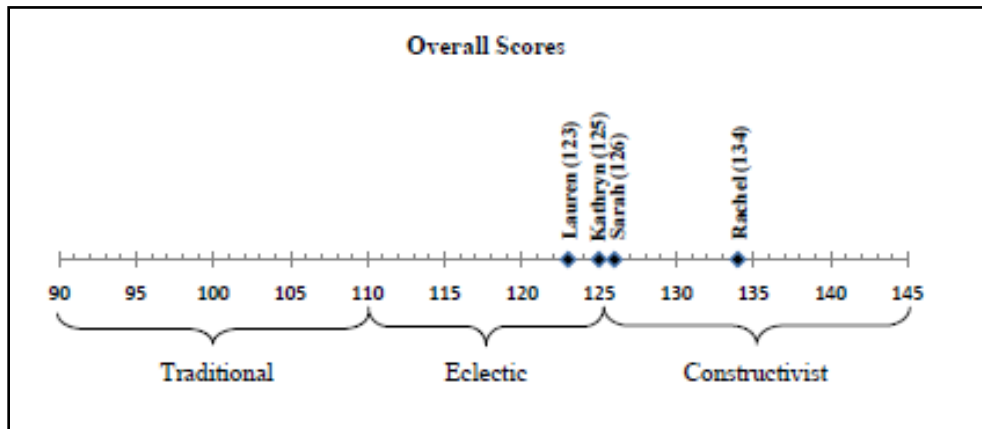


Figure 8. Location of participants' LOS overall scores along the continuum.

When examining the overall scores, Sarah's, Kathryn's, and Lauren's scores were clustered around the dividing point between the eclectic and constructivist orientations. With three or fewer points separating them, both Lauren and Kathryn fell into the eclectic category while Sarah was identified as having a constructivist orientation. Rachel's scores are of particular interest because as can be seen in Figures 7 and 8, her practice score and overall score were more strongly aligned with constructivism than the other participants. However, her beliefs score (see Figure 6) was a bit more equivocal as it placed her directly between the eclectic and

constructivist orientations. One possible explanation for this gap between her beliefs and practice may be explained by the district's balanced literacy framework, which is aligned with constructivist practices. Even though, as noted in the previous section, Rachel's score on the EBQ suggests she has tendencies towards a more traditional orientation to teaching, she does follow the district's literacy framework. Therefore, her score may be mediated by these more constructivist instructional practices, especially as related to literacy instruction.

Figures 6 and 7 also show that Sarah's beliefs score was more strongly aligned with constructivism than the other participants, yet her practice score was the most eclectic. The discrepancy between those two scores led to her overall score being on the edge between an eclectic orientation and a constructivist orientation. When asked to reflect on that difference, she was not surprised to see the lack of alignment. She said

I've always felt like you can't say anything is a completely wrong way to instruct children. Because as soon as you start doing that, that child'll walk through your door that needs to be taught that way. They need it spelled out for them, they need their hand held, they need it, you know, they may need phonics, just explicit, systematic phonics instruction in order to learn to read. And so you can't base all of your instruction on, we're just gonna' get into stories and you'll start recognizing words. 'Cause it's not going to work for that kid. And I guess being an interventionist, that's something you have to be open to. (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008)

In Sarah's case, the interventionist role that she carries out as a reading specialist seems to influence her practices just as strongly as her beliefs. Though her beliefs are more supportive of a constructivist approach to literacy instruction, she often provides direct instruction of prescribed skills to address gaps in students' understanding.

Patterns of Response

During our interviews, rather than asking participants to review their answers for each survey item, I instead looked for patterns of response and chose to focus on items in which their

responses were at odds with their identified orientations. The purpose was to tap into these areas of personal disagreement in order to understand the nuances of their identified beliefs. In this section, I look first at evidence of participants' agreement or disagreement with their identified orientations. Then, I discuss patterns of response across the survey items in which the participants as a group either demonstrated areas of agreement with one another or disagreement.

Responses to competing orientations. Overall, as the reading specialist and teachers reflected on the findings from the EBQ and LOS, they agreed with their results and felt the identified orientations fit them fairly well (as noted in the previous sections). However, there were several occasions where participants identified pieces in competing orientations with which they also agreed, or individual elements of their identified orientations with which they disagreed. This was especially true for the EBQ, which had more detailed orientation descriptions than the LOS. Sarah tended to have very strong opinions regarding the orientations for each survey—as evidenced by her description of the traditionalism orientation on the EBQ as “scary” and the traditional orientation on the LOS as “extreme.” Her strict adherence to any one orientation was tempered by her tendency to avoiding being “pinned down” or “boxed in.” In describing herself and her philosophies regarding reading instruction, she said she had “never felt like an extreme” (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008). Even though Sarah felt that overall she was a progressive, constructivist teacher, she still said there were times when direct instruction focused on essential skills was necessary and often provided this type of instruction in her intervention groups.

Similarly, Rachel selected the traditionalism orientation of the EBQ as most descriptive of her beliefs. One of the characteristics of this orientation is the reliance on drill and practice, which was a technique she felt was important for her students at the moment. However, she also

agreed it was important at times to help her students discover facts through logical inquiry. She provided an example of this in describing her math instruction. She noted,

like with their math facts like they learned in first grade 3 minus 1 equals 2 or 1 plus 5 equals 6. They don't know their basic math facts. So right now I feel like drill and practice is like the most of importance....but then down here when it says that they discover facts through [logical inquiry], I always give 'em like, with multiplication, you know, you start 'em out and you let them see the process and why it's 2 times 3. (Interview 1, December 11, 2008)

Lauren also found points of agreement in orientations other than her identified orientation on the EBQ. Though she self-identified with the progressivism orientation, she also believed that she was a strong authority figure in her classroom, which was one of the elements of the traditional orientation. She equated a strong authority role with classroom management rather than an instructional approach. She explained, "I think dictating the schedule is that major authority role—it's this is what we're gonna' do when..... I think that's that authority role that teachers have" (Interview 1, November 7, 2008).

Finally, Kathryn seemed to have conflicting feelings about the orientations, especially those associated with the EBQ. When I first asked her to read through the traditionalism, progressivism, and romanticism orientations during her vision interview (October 6, 2008), she found points of agreement within each one. For example, though her identified orientation was progressivism, Kathryn agreed with the element of romanticism that schools should be places where children are free to express themselves and be involved in choosing the direction of their learning. She explained that she thought there should be some limitation on the directions in which a child could go, but that "if you give a child a choice on what they want to do, then they're gonna' be more apt to do something." At first, Kathryn would not identify one specific orientation with which she agreed. But, when she learned that her survey results fell within the progressivism orientation, she said, "Yeah, I can see where I would go under all those," and read

back through each of the elements of the orientation, providing supporting statements for each. However, when she came to the last element that noted that effectiveness in education is measured by success in producing productive citizens, she paused and then disagreed. She argued, “I think, if [students] don’t want to be productive, they’re not gonna’ be productive.... You need to have productive citizens, but it all goes back to a child’s, what they want to do.” For her, producing productive citizens would not be a measure of the effectiveness of education because ultimately she believed it would be up to each student to decide whether he or she would take what had been learned in school and use it to be a productive citizen.

Patterns of response across survey items. There were 21 items on the EBQ, with varying numbers of items for each of the three identified subscales. There were eight items in the traditionalism subscale, six in the progressivism subscale, and seven in the romanticism subscale. Of the 21 items, there were 4 statements (19.0%) on which there was strong agreement between the participants’ responses (meaning they all provided similar responses of 4 and/or 5). Two of these items were part of the progressivism scale and addressed the importance of students learning from each other as well as the role of the teacher as a facilitator. The remaining two items on which there was strong agreement among the participants were part of the traditionalism subscale of the EBQ. The participants all agreed (response of 4) or strongly agreed (response of 5) with statements that there are essential skills and pieces of knowledge that all students need to learn. Since Rachel’s overall orientation was identified as traditionalism, one might expect her agreement to be higher on these statements. However, the remaining participants were identified as holding a progressive orientation. Therefore, their agreement with these statements was contradictory to their identified orientation. Participants’ explanations for

this contradiction are discussed later in relation to the sufficiency of the survey measures to identify their beliefs.

In looking across the three subscales, Sarah and the teachers responded more similarly to items on the traditionalism and progressivism subscales than those on the romanticism subscale. However, responses to the survey overall were quite mixed. There were very few items on the EBQ that seemed to evoke strong feelings of agreement or disagreement among participants. There were only two items (2.4%) that received a response of 1 for strong disagreement (both of which were provided by Kathryn). There were nine items (42.9%) on which at least one participant responded with strong agreement (response of 5); however, only three of those items received more than one response of strong agreement. One reason there were few definitive patterns of agreement or disagreement on the EBQ was because there were so many neutral responses of 3 given by participants. 33.3% of all responses on the survey were neutral responses. Of all of Sarah's responses, 57.1% were 3's, while 28.6% of Kathryn's responses, 14.3% of Rachel's responses, and 33.3% of Lauren's responses were 3's.

In examining patterns of response on the LOS, I compared participants' beliefs scores with their practice scores as these two directly contributed to their overall scores. The survey measure contained 15 beliefs statements and 15 practice statements to which participants rated their agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Overall, there was greater consistency on the LOS between the reading specialist and teachers' beliefs scores than among their practice scores. The participants' responses were closely aligned with each other and with constructivist principles on 73.3% of the beliefs statements as opposed to 40% of the practice statements. Across the two sets of statements, the participants responded more variably to items addressing both their beliefs and practices in regards to student grouping.

Specifically, of the 15 beliefs statements there were 11 statements (73.3%) on which there was strong agreement between the participants' responses (meaning they all provided similar responses of either agreement (responses of 4 and/or 5) or disagreement (responses of 1 and/or 2). The responses to these 11 statements also indicated high agreement with constructivist principles. For example, all participants rated their agreement with the statement, "Students need to write for a variety of purposes," as a 5 (strongly agree). Strong agreement with this statement is consistent with constructivist principles.

Of the remaining four beliefs statements on the LOS, there was a mix of responses. These items addressed instructional strategies, grouping of students, and the purpose of reading. Of particular interest were the responses to the statement, "The purpose of reading is to understand print," as they were not supportive of constructivist principles. Sarah and Kathryn disagreed (response of 2) with it while Rachel and Lauren responded with a 3. Reasons for this variability in response will be discussed later in this chapter.

Overall, the degree of agreement among participants was lower across the 15 practice statements on the LOS. Of the 15 statements, there were only 6 statements (40.0%) on which there was strong agreement between the participants' responses, which also indicated strong agreement with constructivist principles. For example, all of the participants rated their agreement with the statement, "I encourage my students to monitor their comprehension as they read," as a 5 (strongly agree). Strong agreement with this instructional practice is consistent with constructivist principles.

Participants mostly agreed (majority of responses of 4 and/or 5 along with one neutral rating of 3) on 4 of the 15 practice statements (26.7%) on the LOS. These statements addressed instructional strategies and curriculum integration. On the five remaining practice statements,

participants' responses were variable (33.3%). These items addressed interactions with parents, student grouping patterns, and writing instruction.

In looking across the patterns of response for the EBQ and the LOS, there was a greater percentage of questions on the LOS (17 out of 30, 56.7%) on which there was strong agreement between participants' responses than was found on the EBQ (4 out of 21 questions, 19.0%). There were also fewer neutral responses provided by participants on the LOS. Overall, 33.3% of responses on the EBQ were neutral responses of 3 compared to only 12.5% of responses on the LOS. These differences in patterns of response may hold implications for the sufficiency of these survey measures to capture teachers' beliefs, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Visions of Ideal Practice

As noted in chapter III, the reading specialist and teachers created written vision statements that provided a description of their explanation of five elements of their ideal classrooms. These elements included

the sights and sounds of the classroom, the role of the teacher, the role of the students, the curriculum and how it relates to student learning, and the relationship between the classroom and the kind of society the teacher would like to see

in the future (Squires & Bliss, 2004, p. 758). These visions are quite personal and represent the mental images teachers hold about ideal practice. This visioning protocol (Hammerness, 1999, 2006) holds potential for helping teachers tap into their more implicit beliefs about teaching. Hammerness (2006) argues "vision brings together teachers' passions—their hopes, cares, and dreams—with their understandings—their knowledge about how and what children should be learning" (p. 5).

In this section, I report on the reading specialist's and teachers' visions of ideal instruction as well as their perceptions of ideal practice at Blue Mountain Elementary, drawing

primarily on their written descriptions of ideal practice and the conversations we had around these vision statements. In these conversations, the participants and I talked about their beliefs regarding a variety of topics including assessment, classroom community, grouping of students, the purpose of reading, struggling readers, and the influence of the home and parents. However, I am choosing to include the five main elements of their actual vision statements. First, I provide a general description of the sights and sounds Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren identified in their ideal classrooms in order to help paint a picture of these classrooms through their eyes. These general descriptions often overlap with their more specific beliefs about the role of the teacher, the role of the students, ideas regarding curriculum and instruction, and the purpose of schools, which are the main focus of this section. These visions of ideal instruction lay the groundwork for the next chapter in which I examine *how* the teachers held onto these beliefs and how they influenced their participation in the activity of coaching. At times, participants' survey responses are used to support or add to these findings as in general, their visions were aligned with their survey results. Throughout this section, I have often included Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren's voices so that their visions can be seen in their own words.

Sarah's Vision of Ideal Practice

As a reading specialist, Sarah continued to see students on a daily basis, but in a pull-out setting. So, she completed her vision statement thinking about what she would want her classroom to be if she were to leave her current position and return to a regular classroom setting.

The sights and sounds of Sarah's ideal classroom captured learning in action. Students were working together and there was a hum in the classroom as they talked about the books they were reading. There was a sense of community and confidence in the classroom—her students

were readers! Looking around the room, there was evidence of literacy learning including materials for writer’s workshop, an ample classroom library, an actively used word wall, and charts generated by both the students and teacher. Sarah’s description was quite detailed and heavily focused on literacy. (See Figure 9 for an overview of the remainder of Sarah’s vision.)

	Sarah
role of the teacher	facilitator; guide; observer; assessor; not a hand holder
role of the students	engaged, active participants; learning from each other; members of a community; responsible for their own learning
curriculum	hands-on; integrated; literacy should be a strand that runs throughout the day
purpose of schools	not just for academics: build responsibility; help students become productive members of society; learn to make informed choices; teach students how to be respectful and work together to solve problems

Figure 9. Sarah’s vision of ideal practice.

Sarah then moved on to describe what she would be doing in her ideal classroom. She specifically identified the roles of facilitator, guide, observer, and assessor noting during our conversation that as a reading specialist she spent much more of her time in the role of assessor. She also mentioned that she was not a hand holder, despite the fact that her regular classroom experience was in first grade. As a first grade teacher, she believed that she needed to help her students develop independence as they learned how to do things for themselves. She argued that taking on the roles of facilitator and guide helped build that independence in students and encouraged them to take ownership over their own learning. She explained,

You can’t just hand it to them. They’ve got to take some responsibility. They’ve got to own it. So there are, you know, obviously times to do direct instruction but then they’ve got to have opportunities. And so by guiding them or you know, being a facilitator, those kinds of things, then you’re, I mean you’re almost forcing them to take on those roles and

trying to see what they do. And you can go back and forth if you see these children need a little more guidance. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

As she noted, while she believed teachers should foster independence in their students, she also thought teachers needed to step in and scaffold students' understanding as necessary in order to ensure their learning.

Sarah's explanation above regarding her role in the classroom also illustrates the importance she placed on students taking an active role in their own learning. She believed it was imperative that students develop ownership and responsibility over what they were learning. She also believed students can and should learn from each other and noted that students can teach each other things in ways that teachers do not always think about, which can help build a sense of community in the classroom as well.

When asked about the focus on literacy that she identified in her vision, Sarah was aware that her current position influenced her vision of ideal practice. However, she also said that literacy would permeate the day in her ideal classroom as students were engaged in hands-on, integrated learning. She noted that in her classroom

that would be the kinds of things that were going on no matter what the subject. I mean, [students] would be rereading. They would be writing you know in all kinds of ways. They would be talking about strategies and stuff no matter what we're doing. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

Finally, Sarah wrote and talked about the larger purpose of schools in society. She believed that while academics are important, developing students' academic knowledge is not the only purpose of schools. Sarah thought that schools should also help students learn to be good members of society by teaching them how to learn to make choices and work together. She said,

Academics are very important because [students have] got to be able to think for themselves. They've got to be able to reason and problem solve and that's in academic areas and not....They've got to make decisions and they need all the tools...so they've

got to have good character too. But they've also got to have the skills to do them, make those decisions. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

Sarah was aware that her vision of ideal practice had changed over the course of her teaching career. As a new teacher, she was dependent on her teachers' manuals and was thankful to have them to show her what to teach. In later years, she moved away from such a direct role in the classroom and favored a more facilitative teaching style. Sarah saw no impediments to making her vision a reality and was confident that if she were to return to the classroom she would be able to bring it to life.

Kathryn's Vision of Ideal Practice

Kathryn's description of the sights and sounds of her ideal classroom focused on the physical environment of her classroom. She saw clearly defined and organized learning spaces and storage spaces in the classroom. She also saw her students being able to carry out established routines in the classroom. Another part of Kathryn's vision was the assistance of a second adult in the classroom, thus allowing her to focus more on instructional concerns rather than clerical issues. (See Figure 10 for an overview of the remainder of Kathryn's vision.)

	Kathryn
role of the teacher	“teacher” rather than a paper pusher; facilitator; helper rather than a strong authority figure
role of the students	active participants; learning from each other; members of a community; take ownership
curriculum	hands-on; integrated; all subjects are equally important, but reading, writing, and math are foundations
purpose of schools	to prepare students for the real world; to provide essential skills and knowledge; socialization

Figure 10. Kathryn's vision of ideal practice.

When asked to identify her own role in the classroom, Kathryn noted she would be the “teacher.” She explained this meant that she wanted to be in charge of the teaching in the classroom without having to be concerned with all of the paperwork. She wanted more opportunities to work with students in small groups or one-on-one settings. Kathryn also believed it was important to be a facilitator of her students’ learning, but shied away from being a dictator in the classroom. She was opposed to the “my way or the highway” type of management which she saw as synonymous with being a strong authority figure.

In her ideal classroom, Kathryn wanted her students to be active and involved in class discussions and to feel like they were part of a community. She also wanted them to take ownership over their learning and tried to foster this by providing choice for them in the classroom. However, Kathryn knew that in order to do this, she must be willing to relinquish some of the control in the classroom and she struggled with this. So, she provided choice—but it was often in the form of offering students the freedom to choose between two activities she offered rather than offering more authentic, free choice. In this way, Kathryn vacillated between wanting to keep the power in the learning relationship by serving as the sole source of knowledge in the classroom and yet wanting her students to take the knowledge she gave them and try to make it their own. She noted

Well [students] can have their own thoughts and they can be able to feel free to interject things when it’s appropriate....I’ve had many times where I’m teaching something and some that will say, “Well, it’s like this.” And I’m like, “Yeah! That’s a pretty good way to put it.” (Vision Interview, October 6, 2008)

So, for Kathryn, students’ active involvement must fit into what she saw as “appropriate” participation. Students had some freedom, but they were not free.

Kathryn was very much interested in integrated instruction in her classroom because she thought it would save time, but she struggled with knowing how to make it a reality. Her grade

level team decided to use science and social studies as time for whole group reading instruction, but Kathryn was not sure what to do to make integration a reality in her classroom beyond this. In addressing the importance of different content areas, Kathryn argued that students should learn reading, writing, language, math, science, and social studies because they are important. However, she also believed that reading, writing, and math are the basic foundations of the others.

Finally, Kathryn thought that schools should prepare students for the real world and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. She said, "...if you work hard and do your best then you take that knowledge that you have and use it to your benefit" (Vision Interview, October 6, 2008). This is very much a variation of the traditional American work ethic, in which knowledge is power and one can pull oneself up by the bootstraps. Kathryn also thought socialization was an important goal, as students need to learn how to interact in order to prepare them to participate in the real world.

When first asked about the match between her current classroom and her vision of her ideal classroom, Kathryn felt there was a 50% match. There were still many routines and procedures that she was working to help her students master, so she anticipated that degree of match would increase over the course of the year. However, she knew there was no hope for a complete match, since part of her ideal vision was having a second adult to assist in the classroom—currently an impossibility in the district.

Rachel's Vision of Ideal Practice

The sights and sounds of Rachel's ideal classroom focused on student activity. Her students would be working independently on grade level and "would always have something to

be working on and would be able to know how to do the activities on their own” (Vision Statement, November 16, 2008) while she was working with small groups. Her description also addressed the climate of the classroom—it would be a warm, safe place filled with laughter and friendship where students worked together collaboratively. (See Figure 11 for an overview of the remainder of Rachel’s vision.)

	Rachel
role of the teacher	facilitator (if students can handle it); challenge students; “teaching”
role of the students	active participants; learning from each other; members of a community; busy; take ownership; “learning”
curriculum	hands-on; integrated
purpose of schools	to help students develop independence and problem-solving; responsibility; socialization

Figure 11. Rachel’s vision of ideal practice.

For Rachel, her role as the teacher was very much intertwined with the role she would like for her students to take on in her ideal classroom. She would like to be a facilitator in her classroom but was finding it difficult to accomplish this during her first year in third grade. For her, taking on the role of facilitator necessitated students being more independent and responsible for their own learning. She was having trouble supporting her third graders in this. She also tended to define the role of facilitator more by what her students did than what she did. For example, she explained that facilitation meant that students learned on their own and inquired of each other rather than always having to be prompted. They also worked together to challenge each other and to think outside of the box.

Rachel was very much aware of the difficulty she was facing in making this part of her vision a reality in her classroom. When Rachel selected the orientation from the EBQ that she felt was the best match for her as a teacher, she selected the traditionalism orientation, which supports a strong authority role for the teacher and a more passive role for students in the classroom. Rachel acknowledged that in the past she would have identified herself as a more progressive teacher. However, in moving from fourth grade to third, she found that she needed to take on a more directive teaching role.

Beyond being a facilitator in the classroom, Rachel also believed that it was her job to challenge her students and not make things too easy for them. She found this role to be important because she believed the students would never take responsibility over their learning if they were constantly given the answers. When asked who was responsible for her students' learning, Rachel said she was responsible for teaching and her students were responsible for learning. To do this, they needed to stay busy in the classroom.

When it came to her ideas about curriculum in her ideal classroom, Rachel acknowledged that she was passionate about social studies and was very interested in integrating social studies and science topics with reading and writing skills. Rachel attempted to include integrated instruction in her daily teaching, though the degree of integration varied. Examples of integrated instruction in her classroom ranged from having students read the nonfiction classroom magazine *Scholastic News* during guided reading, to including stories from the basal reader during social studies instruction, to larger projects such as a week-long integrated unit on elections or a multi-week project combining the study of inventions in science, timelines in social studies, and biographies in language arts.

Finally, Rachel believed that the purpose of schools is to help students learn to think on their own and develop the independence and confidence they will need to do whatever it is they choose in the future. In her vision statement, she wrote

I think that if students are able to learn and think on their own, then they will be able to solve problems on their own. They will also gain an independence that will allow them the confidence to do what ever [sic] they want to do in the future. The society is changing so fast and students need to learn responsibility. I think there are a lot of adults out in the real world that did not learn responsibility on their own. This is a hinder [sic] to them now because they are not able to hold a job or take care of their own children. Students need to learn that they are responsible for their jobs and families. (Rachel, Vision Statement, November 11, 2008)

Rachel did not feel she was having much success making her vision a reality, due in large part to the personalities of the students in her classroom. Rather than working collaboratively, her students tended to argue with one another. She also was struggling with the facilitative role as a teacher and again, attributed this difficulty to the students' ability to work together. She had tried to foster group work in the classroom, but had not been successful. Though she had been more successful in the past with making her vision a reality, her beliefs about the students in her classroom stood in the way of a successful enactment of her vision.

Lauren's Vision of Ideal Practice

The sights and sounds in Lauren's ideal classroom were warm and fuzzy—her students were excited and smiling and she felt calm and accomplished. Her room would run “like a machine with clear expectations and guidelines” (Vision Statement, August 28, 2008) and Lauren would be able to see the progression in her students' understanding and skills. She also saw and heard her students working together. (See Figure 12 for an overview of the remainder of Lauren's vision.)

	Lauren
role of the teacher	facilitator, encourager, positive role model
role of the students	engaged in developmentally appropriate activities; learning from each other
curriculum	hands-on; social skills are important too
purpose of schools	build independence; help students become productive members of society; help students learn to work together; develop fundamental skills

Figure 12. Lauren’s vision of ideal practice.

In describing her role in her ideal classroom, Lauren saw herself as a facilitator of learning. While she understood there may be times that direct instruction is needed, she thought it should be balanced with facilitation. Lauren said that in her ideal classroom she would guide more than directly instruct. She also believed that it was important that she serve as a positive role model for her students and encourage their effort. She hoped this encouragement would help her students develop a love of learning.

Lauren wanted her students to have the opportunity to participate in developmentally appropriate activities. She said, “Kids need to be kids and develop accordingly” (Vision Statement, August 28, 2008). In a later interview, Lauren expanded on this by noting, “I really do believe that there is a strong natural development of a child and developmentally some kids just aren’t there yet with certain behaviors and understanding” (Interview 1, November 7, 2008). She also believed that most of the time students learn more from doing things together than they do from her, so it would be important that they have opportunities to work together.

Throughout her vision statement and our conversations, Lauren had very little to say about the role of the curriculum in her ideal classroom, though she often complained of the lack of depth in the first grade curriculum. Having come from schools in which she taught using

Reading Mastery (Englemann & Bruner, 1995), a scripted reading program, she was still basking in the freedom she felt in having more control over her instruction in her classroom. However, when it came to instruction, she did think it was important that her students try to figure things out for themselves, so she did not give them the answers. Instead, she prompted them to think it through. She did not want students to come to rely on her for their answers and to see her as all knowing.

Finally, when it came to the purpose of schools, Lauren saw her classroom as representative of society. She wrote

People have to learn to work together as well as become independent. There are a lot of things happening in a classroom, just like a city, and it is important to keep a balance in a classroom as well as society so people stay sane and productive. Classrooms flourish under the right circumstances and society would too. (Vision Statement, August 28, 2008)

Lauren also wanted her students to develop the fundamental skills they would need to succeed.

When Lauren and I talked about her vision at the beginning of September, she felt there was a fairly strong match between her vision and the reality of her classroom and was hopeful that the match would continue to strengthen. Because of the type of teaching assignments she had found herself in during the past years, this was the first year that she was feeling the freedom to make her classroom her own. However, when we revisited her vision in November, Lauren felt that there was actually less of a match between her vision and reality than there had been at the beginning of the year. She was struggling with maintaining the community piece of her vision as she worked to address challenging behaviors presented by a few of the students in the class. The sense of calm that she felt in the classroom at the beginning of the year had been replaced by “little wars” (Interview 1, November 7, 2008) that she felt were taking over the classroom. Despite the difficulties she was facing however, Lauren was still optimistic that she would be able to come close to making her vision a reality by the end of the school year.

Perceptions of Ideal Practice at Blue Mountain Elementary

Having looked at each participant's personal vision of the ideal classroom, I wondered if these personal visions were reflective of a larger vision of ideal instruction that was shared by the faculty at Blue Mountain Elementary. I asked Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren if there was a characteristic way of teaching reading at the school and how their instructional practices compared with other teachers at the school. Through an analysis of their responses, I found there was no perception of a cohesive vision of literacy instruction at the school.

The teachers were all aware of the district's balanced literacy framework and that they were expected to incorporate those components into their teaching. However, the specific approaches used to do so varied from classroom to classroom. For example, in some classrooms writing was taught through very structured lessons led by the teacher while in others writing instruction was approached using a writer's workshop format. While these are very different approaches to teaching, they both address the balanced literacy component of writing.

The component of balanced literacy that was most often mentioned at the school was guided reading. The teachers all identified it as a required component in their classrooms (and Sarah agreed that it had been the school-wide emphasis in the past few years), but beyond that did not believe that any one way of teaching reading was privileged or encouraged at the school. As Lauren explained, "here, we really get a choice of how we want to go about [teaching reading]...I don't think anything's better or worse, I just think, you know, whatever works best for the person" (Survey Interview, September 4, 2008). A basal reading series was available in the school, but all of the teachers reported there was no expectation or requirement for teachers to use it for instruction (though some did).

The teachers could also each identify other teachers in the school who used very different approaches than their own to teach the components of balanced literacy. While they may or may not have personally agreed with these different approaches, at the same time they were all deemed to be acceptable at the school. For example, while Rachel did not consider herself to be a “basal person”, she felt there were many teachers in the building that relied on the basal reader for their instruction. She said, “That’s their reading lesson. And granted, I don’t say it’s their guided reading lesson, but I feel like that’s their reading lesson” (Survey Interview, October 8, 2008).

While there was no clearly defined way of teaching reading at the school, Kathryn still felt that there were teachers who, when it came to including the elements of balanced literacy in their teaching, just were not doing “what they’re supposed to be doing and I don’t want to be one of those” (Interviews 1 & 2, December 12, 2008). When asked about the consequences of teachers not following the balanced literacy framework, she indicated that there were no consequences because there was no one to hold those teachers accountable. Kathryn felt it should be the principal’s job, not the reading specialist’s, to hold teachers accountable. However, she did not believe that happened at Blue Mountain as the principal was rarely in teachers’ classrooms.

Having examined the teachers’ perceptions of an overarching vision of literacy instruction at Blue Mountain, I was interested in how Sarah’s perceptions might differ as the school’s reading specialist. When we discussed her vision of ideal practice, I specifically asked her if her vision was the *school’s* vision or *her* vision for the school, and she responded

Well, probably I would have to say that it’s more my vision. Not that anyone else would say, “You’re way out of line with that.” Because some of it is based on, you know, what we as teachers in [the district] must do. But yeah, I think for the most part it’s probably mine....but again it’s built, you know, based on what I see with other teachers. So it’s

kind of like, “I’m going to borrow that idea from you ‘cause I thought that was a really good idea.” (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

So, while Sarah had a personal vision of literacy instruction, she did not use her position as a reading specialist to promote it as the school’s vision of literacy instruction. Overall, her responses regarding the characteristics of reading instruction at Blue Mountain were similar to the teachers’. She agreed that there was no one specific way of teaching reading at the school, though teachers were expected to include guided reading, shared reading, read alouds, independent reading, writing, and word study as these were components of the district’s balanced literacy framework. She felt that to varying degrees, the teachers at the school were being successful with these elements in their classroom. When asked about her role in holding teachers accountable for including the components of balanced literacy in their instruction, she was emphatic that as the reading specialist, compliance was not her responsibility—her role was not an administrative position. She agreed that the school’s principal was ultimately responsible for holding teachers accountable for teaching the district’s literacy framework while she was responsible for providing teachers with the tools they needed to successfully carry out balanced literacy instruction.

Comparing Participants’ Visions

Looking across Sarah’s, Kathryn’s, Rachel’s, and Lauren’s visions of ideal classroom practice (see Figure 13 for a summary of all participants’ visions), many similarities are apparent. As I talked with each of the participants about their visions of ideal practice, I was surprised at how cohesive their visions appeared to be, especially considering the lack of privileging of any particular instructional approaches at the school. However, as I began to dig a bit deeper I realized that though the participants were using similar language, their beliefs were

not as tightly aligned as they first appeared. More specifically, I noticed they held competing views of the role of the teacher as a facilitator and curriculum integration as these were ideas they all discussed as part of their survey responses and vision statements.

	Sarah	Kathryn	Rachel	Lauren
role of the teacher	facilitator, guide, observer, assessor	“teacher”, not paper pusher; facilitator; helper	“teaching”; facilitator (if students can handle it); challenge students	facilitator, encourager, positive role model
role of the students	engaged, active; learning from each other; community members; responsible	active; learning from each other; community members; ownership	“learning”; active; learning from each other; community members; busy; ownership	engaged in developmentally appropriate activities; learning from each other
curriculum	hands-on; integrated; full of literacy	hands-on; integrated; reading, writing, and math are foundations	hands-on; integrated	hands-on; social skills
purpose of schools	not just for academics; responsibility; productive citizens; respect; problem-solving	prepare for real world; essential skills and knowledge; socialization	independence; problem-solving; responsibility; socialization	build independence; productive citizens; learn to work together ; fundamental skills

Figure 13. Participants’ visions of ideal practice.

Competing views of facilitation. Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren all identified that teachers should assume a facilitative role in the classroom. In addition, on the EBQ, they all rated their agreement with the statement, “Teachers should be facilitators of learning,” as a 4 or 5. But I came to understand that what they each meant by facilitation varied greatly.

Wittmer and Myrick (1989) argue that facilitative teachers provide learning situations for their students that allow for learning that is personally meaningful, self-initiated, self-evaluated, and supportive of students' affective growth and development. Teachers are no longer simply providers of information. However, this idea, though typical in teacher education, was not the same one put forward by all the participants. For Sarah and Lauren, facilitation was a purposeful approach to teaching. It was about scaffolding students' learning so that they could come to new understandings on their own. For example, Sarah made a distinction between the role of guide and facilitator. She said,

To me a guide has a more direct role 'cause it's more like you're leading students. Facilitator is more you keep it going. You may start it and then, you know, your role kind of lessens a little bit so that you can get the students actively engaged in whatever you're reading or whatever you're doing. So it's not as a direct—to me a guide is more direct. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

Similarly, Lauren described facilitation as “very broad guidance. As time goes on you know, broader and broader. Letting [students] really kind of learn” (Initial Interview, August 28, 2008). In a later interview, she expanded on this idea and said, “I try to build a framework and let [students] fill in all the pieces....I always think of a house. I put up the frame. [The students] build the walls and then we add the details” (Interview 1, November 7, 2008). So, both Sarah and Lauren acknowledged that with facilitation there is a relinquishing of control. However, they retained the awareness that the teacher is still very much involved in setting up learning situations that are supportive for the students.

Rachel's view of facilitation was also reliant on students but in a different way than Sarah's and Lauren's defining. She explained,

I feel like with my fourth graders, again, I felt I could be the facilitator more than the teacher. I feel with this group I need to be more of the teacher than I do the facilitator for at least for right now. Like, I feel like I can be the teacher the first couple of times, and then facilitate. (Vision Interview, November 20, 2008)

In a later conversation, Rachel added that in the past she would “introduce the lesson but [the students] would take ownership of their learning and they would challenge each other,” (Interview 1, December 11, 2008). She further explained that this challenging happened spontaneously on the part of the students rather than through situations she had specifically created to encourage their independence. Because they demonstrated the ability to learn independently, she was then able to act as a facilitator. This may explain Rachel’s difficulties in “facilitating” her students’ learning this year. She found that her students could not independently take ownership over their learning, so she could not facilitate their learning. Because Rachel had only taught in fourth grade prior to this year, she was not sure if this difference in her ability to facilitate was a result of third graders in general needing more direction, or if this was a characteristic of the particular group of students with whom she was working.

Rachel’s belief that her ability to facilitate was dependent on her students’ maturity and ability directly contradicts Sarah and Lauren’s ideas of facilitation. As first grade teachers, they felt they were able to facilitate their students’ learning and did not see the ability to facilitate as being dependent on their students’ independence with learning.

In contrast to these ideas of facilitation as a way of teaching, for Kathryn facilitation was more of a way of making sure students had learned what had been taught. She explained that to her, facilitation meant that

after a concept has been taught to be able to go around and say, “Okay. This is what you’re supposed to be doing and I’m here if you need me. If you don’t then I’ll be working with students that are meeting in small groups,” or something like that. So, in my opinion, the facilitator means that I’m, after I have taught it, I’ve kind of relinquished control of what I’m doing and that way they can be exploring I guess on their own.... the teacher is the facilitator because she is responsible for providing [students] the information and then I let them...go and explore what...[they’ve] been taught. (Vision Interview, October 6, 2008)

Kathryn saw facilitation as following instruction—it was the opportunity students had to practice with new knowledge presented to them by the teacher. While she also believed that taking on the role of a facilitator meant she had to relinquish control, she still remained in charge of the main learning event.

Competing views of integration. Another area where there appeared to be agreement among the visions, at least on the surface level, was around the idea of integrating curriculum. Sarah, Kathryn, and Rachel all specifically mentioned this as something that was important to them in the classroom in their vision statements. While Lauren did not specifically include it in her vision statement, she did agree with statements on the EBQ and LOS related to integration and occasionally mentioned it in our conversations. In addition to their statements regarding integration, one of the questions on the EBQ specifically asked participants to rate their agreement with the statement “Subjects should be integrated across the curriculum.” All agreed strongly with this statement.

Looking across the participants’ statements, Lauren’s thoughts regarding integration were very different from the others. She said, “I love that here we can teach science and social studies. Never could do that before. It had to be integrated somehow. Good luck! You know? I feel like here I actually have time to teach all of my subjects” (Initial Interview, August 28, 2008). This view of integration may be the result of finding herself in a new teaching situation. Again, unlike the other participants who had been working at Blue Mountain Elementary for at least 5 years, Lauren was new to the school and her previous teaching experiences had been in schools that were quite different from Blue Mountain. Whereas integration had been a necessity in the past for her because she was not allowed a specific time in her instructional day to focus on areas other than reading and math, at Blue Mountain Lauren found she had plenty of time to teach

without using integration and was excited to have this more dedicated time for each subject.

During our conversations, the only mention Lauren made of working to integrate her instruction was that she attempted to integrate content from social studies and science into her students' writing or their work in centers. For example, when the class was studying travel in social studies and mapping in science, Lauren included map puzzles in the puzzle center and had students work on mapping activities in the computer center. Students also wrote about a place they would like to visit in the writing center.

Taking a closer look at Sarah's, Kathryn's, and Rachel's ideas about integration, they all were very much aware that time was a factor in integrating instruction. However, the focus of their instruction (or the purpose for integrating) differed for each. Sarah noted,

Integration to me would be when [teachers are] choosing books for guided reading or choosing materials for shared reading or any type of text that they would use in their classroom that they're also considering how they could put their science and social studies content into that arena. So, when they're doing guided reading for example, if they're studying, if their science unit is on rocks, then choosing books upstairs that are at the students' level or near that student's level and teaching them about rocks in guided reading. And teaching them how to do that nonfiction piece and get the content because a big issue is teachers don't have time to teach science and social studies. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

Sarah's defining of integration had much more of an instructional focus. It aligned with the notion of integration as a way "to bring into close relationship the concepts, skills, and values of separately taught subjects to make them mutually reinforcing" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 118).

On the other hand, Rachel's understanding of integration was focused on grading, and being able to accomplish multiple tasks at one time in her classroom. She said,

I feel like [reading] needs to be more integrated into science and social studies. I feel a lot [of teachers] are saying, 'Well I just don't have time. I don't have time to teach science. I don't have time to teach social studies. I don't have time to read the story out of the basal. I don't have time to do guided reading. I don't have time to do writing.' It's called integration. And if you integrate all of that, then you're gonna' have time. You know? I integrate my reading skills into my social studies. I can get two grades out of something. I

can get a social studies grade and a reading grade. You know, they go hand in hand. They can do writing with a reading activity. (Survey Interview, October 8, 2008)

Most often, the grades students earned on integrated assignments would be counted towards multiple subject areas. For example, when students completed questions associated with a science themed article in the nonfiction *Scholastic News* magazine, the grade they earned was recorded as both a reading grade and a science grade. Rachel explained, “I mean if you think about it, like in order to answer those questions [the students] had to read the information. Well, that’s a reading grade. But then also, it’s all science related too” (Interview 3, January 15, 2009).

Finally, Kathryn was never clearly able to articulate what she thought integration was, but she was clear on what it was *not*. In reflecting on the district’s balanced literacy framework she said, “I think balanced literacy was designed for integration because...as you can see it’s hard to be able to do writing, science, social studies...all in a little separate compartment.” (Survey Interview, September 18, 2008). Later, she explained, “...like I was so used to everything being compartmentalized and so I know integration is what’s gonna’ save the time aspect.” (Vision Interview, October 6, 2008). For Kathryn, integration was *not* separating subjects into their own compartments. As mentioned earlier, however, she did not have a strategy for making this vision a reality in her classroom. She saw integration as the key to fitting everything in and this idea was reinforced by her grade level’s efforts to integrate instruction by having students read selections from the basal readers during science and social studies time. This allowed them to fit whole group reading into the daily schedule while also utilizing the grade level basal texts.

Summary of Participants' Beliefs

In this section, I look across the survey data and information gathered from the teachers' visions of ideal practice to summarize their beliefs. Many of the beliefs identified in these snapshots ultimately influenced the teachers' participation in coaching as will be examined in Chapter V.

Overall, Sarah was identified as a progressive, constructivist teacher by her scores on the EBQ and LOS. These two orientations are quite compatible as they both favor an inquiry approach to teaching in which students are actively involved in their own learning. This also matched her beliefs about the role of students as identified in her vision of ideal practice. She thought classrooms should be places where students are engaged in hands-on, integrated instruction as teachers work to facilitate their learning. Finally, she believed the classroom should be a literate environment where students learn from each other as they also learn how to become respectful, responsible, productive members of society. While the influence of Sarah's beliefs about literacy and education on her work as a coach will not be specifically addressed in the coming chapters, her beliefs about coaching and the influence they wielded will. Many of the same beliefs she held about her role as a teacher held true for her role as a coach as well. These similarities will be explored further in Chapter VI.

Kathryn's scores on the surveys identified her as a progressive, eclectic teacher. As an eclectic teacher, she held beliefs that were both constructivist and traditional in nature regarding student learning and reading instructional methods. Thus, while she believed that students should be active participants in their own learning and teachers should act as facilitators of learning, there were also times she identified that she was the provider of information and engaged in more didactic teaching practices. Though she believed in an integrated approach to teaching, she

struggled with making this a reality in her classroom. As a teacher, Kathryn often felt overwhelmed by the many hats she was required to wear and believed that she should be free to focus on teaching rather than the clerical work associated with schooling. Kathryn also held beliefs about the social development of her students. She felt schools should prepare students for the real world, and that establishing productive relationships was part of this, as was the mastery of essential skills and knowledge such as reading and writing. She wanted her students to learn from each other as they participated as members of the classroom community.

Rachel was identified as holding both traditional and constructivist beliefs about teaching on the EBQ and LOS. These orientations are contradictory in their framing of student learning and the role of the teacher, as were several other of Rachel's beliefs as will be discussed in the next chapter. Traditional views of teaching support the passive transmission of skills and knowledge from teacher to student as opposed to constructivist views in which students use their own prior knowledge to build new understandings as teachers facilitate the learning process. In our conversations, Rachel shed light on how she came to such conflicting orientations. Her vision of ideal practice involved working as a facilitator in her classroom as her students actively worked together to build new understandings. In such a setting, students would be responsible for their own learning, active problem-solvers, and would seek out opportunities to learn from each other. However, she found that her students were not independent enough to take ownership over their learning, forcing her to take on a more traditional role in the classroom at times. While she valued a constructivist approach to teaching, she sometimes found the traditional orientation to be necessary. Rachel also believed in the power of a strong classroom community and was working to establish this in her classroom. Finally, she believed in the importance of an

integrated curriculum, though she often used it as a tool for fitting in all of the required standards, rather than a conceptual approach to students' learning.

Like Kathryn, Lauren's scores on the survey measures were most closely aligned with the progressive and eclectic orientations. She too demonstrated a range of ideas about teaching and learning. In her vision statements, she explained that teachers should be facilitators in the classroom as they foster a love of learning in their students. She valued having her students work together as she felt their interactions were supportive of their developing social skills. As a first grade teacher, she was especially attuned to the importance of developmentally appropriate instruction and worked to engage her students in these types of activities in her classroom. She saw a direct connection between her classroom and society at large and felt it was important for her students to become independent and learn to work together with others if they were to become productive citizens.

Factors Impacting Sufficiency of Survey Measures

Having identified some of the participants' beliefs regarding literacy instruction and education, I turn now to a discussion of the role the survey measures played in uncovering those beliefs. As noted in Chapter II, much of the research conducted on teachers' beliefs has relied on survey measures as a way to capture what teachers believe. However, I found that using surveys as the only source of data for understanding what participants believe was insufficient. Interviews with the reading specialist and teachers revealed several factors contributing to this lack of sufficiency including differences in how survey items were interpreted, participants' overall comfort level with the measures, and a variety of strategies used to respond to survey items.

One factor influencing the insufficiency of the survey measures used was differences in interpretation. Often, these differences came to light when participants were asked to talk about responses that were at odds with their identified orientations. For example, one item on the LOS asked the participants to rank their agreement with the statement, “The purpose of reading is to understand print.” According to the scoring guidelines, a higher rating of agreement on this item would be more indicative of a constructivist view of reading in which the reader works to make meaning from text, while a lower rating of agreement would be closely aligned with a traditional view of reading. Despite all participants’ scores on the LOS falling either in the constructivist or eclectic orientations, Sarah and Kathryn rated their agreement at a level 2, while Rachel and Lauren rated their agreement at a level 3. In order to understand this disconnect to their identified orientations, I asked each participant to talk about her response to this question. Sarah and Rachel both explained their lack of agreement was a result of their understanding of the meaning of the item. They both interpreted the phrase “to understand print” as meaning that students would recognize words and be able to read them fluently. They saw this as a separate purpose than making meaning from and comprehending the text. Lauren also took exception with the word print, actually circling it on her survey and writing the question, “What context?” next to it. She explained that she responded as if print was referring to print concepts. When we discussed how she would have responded if she had interpreted the word print as text, she noted she would have rated her agreement as a 4 or 5. Finally, Kathryn’s response of 2 on this item was quite intentional. She interpreted the item as meaning the purpose of reading is for the reader to make meaning and understand text. However, she disagreed with the item because she felt there is more to the purpose of reading, namely enjoyment or purposeful reading. So, the participants had differing ideas about the purpose of reading, yet those subtleties would be lost with only the

number response given on the survey. Our conversations helped tease out their more specific thoughts and add depth to the understanding of their beliefs.

While each participant interpreted the item above in a different way, at times they interpreted items similarly, yet not in the same way as intended by the survey authors. For example, two different items on the traditionalism subscale of the EBQ asked teachers to rate their agreement with the ideas that there are essential skills and knowledge that students must learn in school. Kathryn and Rachel responded with 5's while Sarah and Lauren rated their agreement as 4's. Because this question was contradictory to Kathryn's, Sarah's, and Lauren's identified orientation of progressivism, I asked all of the participants to talk about their responses. As might be expected, Rachel (whose identified orientation was traditionalism) provided examples of isolated bits of knowledge and very specific skills such as knowing how to "chunk words" (Interview 1, December 11, 2008), basic math facts, and facts about the responsibilities of the president. These ideas were congruent with the notion within the traditionalism orientation that there are predetermined facts and skills that students need to learn.

However, Sarah's, Kathryn's, and Lauren's responses demonstrated a different interpretation of the idea of skills and knowledge. Kathryn, for example, named social skills as an important skill all students needed to learn. Lauren explained she thought students needed to learn skills such as "thinking skills—like being able to compare and contrast. Being able to think something through logically, step-by-step. Those are the skills I'm talking about. Not specific like, you need to be able to count to a hundred" (Interview 1, November 7, 2008). Similarly, Sarah described her response to this item by noting she meant

just basic learning to read. Learning to work with numbers. Those kinds of just basics.... Those are just things that kids need to know to be productive members of society. So I guess I saw it as all encompassing that, and not just they need to know how to do compound words, they need to know how to add s's to words. I didn't break it

down that far in terms of skills and I don't know if that's what the question was getting at. That's why [my response] would be a 4 because I do believe there are things students need to learn and not, you know—if [the question] had said isolated it would have been very different. (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008)

Thus, Sarah, Kathryn, and Lauren all interpreted skills and knowledge as larger constructs than the survey author intended within the traditionalism orientation. For them, skills and knowledge were necessary tools for students to be meaning-making, active participants in their own learning. While their written responses on the survey were contradictory to their identified orientation, their explanations of these items were not.

Another problem presented by the survey measures was participants' comfort level with completing them. In general, the LOS tended to be a more accessible measure for the reading specialist and teachers as it was rooted in their everyday literacy practices. The participants had an easier time completing and discussing this measure. Sarah explained the difference between the two measures. She said, "I guess to me [the LOS] was—concrete's not the word—it's more tangible or infused with what I do on a daily basis whereas these questions [on the EBQ] are more the subconscious, hidden things I don't think about" (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008). Participants' comfort level with each survey was also apparent from a review of the patterns of response on each measure. As noted above, participants' responses were more decisive on the LOS, with very few neutral responses of 3. Overall, participants responded with a rating of 3 only 12.5% of the time (15 items out of a total of 120 items for all participants). In contrast, 33.3% of items on the EBQ received a neutral rating of 3 (28 items out of a total of 84 items for all participants). The language used throughout the EBQ may have been more difficult for participants as well as the fact that all of the statements were belief statements, unlike the LOS where half of the items asked about daily instructional practices in the classroom.

Finally, participants used different strategies for responding to survey items, especially those for which they were unsure. For example, Lauren explained that for items that she did not know how to respond to, she marked a 3. However, Sarah used a different strategy. She noted that she often marked 3's, not as an indicator of neutrality, but because she would only agree with half of the statement and was not sure how to represent this in her responses. She said, "there would be a word in the question that would make me think...it's not but maybe half that I would agree with and half I wouldn't" (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008). For example, she rated her agreement with the statement, "Drill and factual knowledge are important components of any learning," from the EBQ as a 3 and explained, "it's the drill that wears me out and why I wouldn't go higher than [a 3]. There are facts that students need to know, but I don't think drilling 'em is the way to go" (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008).

So, overall, the survey measures alone were not a sufficient way to establish a rich understanding of the participants' beliefs regarding literacy instruction or education in general because of the issues raised here of participants' varying interpretation of survey items, comfort levels with the measures, and use of different response strategies for more difficult items. However, the surveys were useful tools for opening conversations with teachers and helping them provide more detail regarding their beliefs. They provided a frame around which our conversations could occur, especially during our early interviews together while we were still working to establish trust. They also encouraged the teachers to verbalize beliefs that otherwise might have remained hidden. Additionally, the survey data were useful as they provided triangulation when compared to teachers' ideas as presented in their visions of ideal instruction.

Conclusion

This analysis of the participants' survey responses, vision statements, and interviews provides a window into their beliefs regarding literacy instruction and education. They felt that their identified orientations on the survey measures were representative of their beliefs, and indeed these orientations were in line with their vision statements and beliefs as identified through our conversations. However, their beliefs were not nearly as clear cut as they might appear to be according to their survey results. While there was much evidence of consistency between the participants' beliefs and their identified orientations, instances of inconsistency were also identified such as when participants agreed with elements of competing orientations or agreed with survey statements that were contrary to their identified orientations. These areas of disagreement opened up conversations that provided a depth of understanding of the participants' beliefs not possible with reliance on survey data alone.

While the insufficiency of reliance on survey data alone is not a new idea, through this analysis I have identified specific areas of weaknesses including varying interpretations of terms within survey items, interpretation of survey items that differ from what the survey author intended, the difficulty of the measures themselves in terms of vocabulary and accessibility for participants, and differing response strategies for difficult items. These insufficiencies reinforce the importance of relying on survey data as tools for triangulation rather than the sole source of data for identifying beliefs. The focus of this chapter has been on identifying *what* Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren believed. Now, having a better sense of the content of their beliefs, I move forward and examine *how* these beliefs were held by the teachers and the influence they exerted over their participation in the activity of coaching in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

UNCOVERING HOW TEACHERS HOLD THEIR BELIEFS AND THE INFLUENCE ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN COACHING

A consideration of *how* teachers hold their beliefs requires moving beyond identifying the literal content of their beliefs and instead calls for a consideration of how they are connected pieces of a larger puzzle. That is my aim in this chapter as I address my second and third research questions and examine *how* the teachers held some of their beliefs about literacy instruction. First, I consider the evidence on which their beliefs were built. Then, I explore the centrality and connectedness of those beliefs within the teachers' systems of belief. I use this information to hypothesize classifications of some of the identified beliefs. Finally, I examine the influence these beliefs had on the teachers' participation in coaching. The findings presented in this chapter build on the summaries of Kathryn's, Rachel's, and Lauren's beliefs presented in Chapter IV and draw on the seven interviews conducted with each participant.

Sources of Evidence for Identified Beliefs

As noted in Chapter II, literacy researchers have considered factors that influence the development and maintenance of teachers' literacy-related beliefs including their personal educational experiences, experiences with formal knowledge, and the school contexts in which they teach. These factors, along with others, were identified by the participants in this study as well. In the first part of this chapter, I examine the sources of evidence that served as foundations for the participants' beliefs. These include their experiences with teaching, their experiences as learners, their interactions with others, their participation with formal knowledge in higher

education, and their efforts to build their professional understanding through professional development. Many times these sources were identified directly by the participants at my request. For example, after explaining their visions of ideal instruction, I asked each participant to explain the basis for those beliefs. Other times these sources were provided without prompting.

The focus of this chapter is on the teachers and their beliefs. However, in this section, I consider the general types of evidence cited as sources of beliefs and include related data from the conversations Sarah and I had. Overall, these conversations were focused more on Sarah's beliefs about coaching (these will be presented in the next chapter) than on her literacy-related beliefs. So at times there is not enough data to provide rich findings regarding the sources of evidence supporting Sarah's beliefs about literacy. Because of this, throughout this section Sarah is specifically mentioned by name and included in the findings that address topics that were included in our conversations. When addressing findings relating only Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren, I refer to them individually by name or collectively as the teachers.

Experiences with Teaching

For the teachers, their participation in teaching was the most frequently mentioned source of evidence for their beliefs. In this section, I describe the teachers' experiences with instruction that supported their beliefs. I also examine the influence of instances when the teachers were able to see instruction "work."

Experiences with instruction. Throughout the study, Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren identified their experiences in the classroom as part of the evidence on which their beliefs were based. There were two main types of teaching experiences to which they referred. First, there

were general attributions linked with the teachers' literal *time* in the classroom. As Rachel explained, "the more years that you're teaching, the more you're going to learn" (Vision Interview, November 20, 2008). Then, there were experiences linked to specific teaching events and outcomes, either led or witnessed by the teachers.

The teachers often named their years of experience in the classroom (both as preservice and in-service teachers) as a source of their beliefs. This type of evidence was often provided when the teachers were asked to explain the basis for their agreement with their identified orientations on the survey measures or the source of their ideas about ideal practice. Kathryn talked about this type of teaching experience as trial and error and noted that much of what she knew about teaching was what she had figured out on her own. Similarly, Rachel very much believed that the more time she spent in the classroom, the more she would improve as a teacher. She felt having survived her first years of teaching she was currently in a place where she could take on new ideas and practices.

Lauren was less likely to cite these general types of teaching experiences as influential, perhaps because she was still in her third year of teaching and thus not necessarily out of the beginning stages of the development of teacher expertise (Berliner, 1994). However, Lauren did attribute the differences between her beliefs score and practice score on the Literacy Orientation Survey (Lenski et al., 1998) to her general experiences as a teacher.

Beyond this general type of experience, Sarah and the teachers also described specific teaching experiences that were connected to beliefs that they held. Sarah mentioned events that supported her ideas regarding the role of textbooks in teaching, the active engagement of students, and the importance of addressing students' unique learning needs. Kathryn cited teaching interactions that supported her ideas regarding integration, students taking on the role of

active meaning-makers while reading, grouping students for instruction, and meeting students' learning needs. Rachel provided examples of teaching experiences that influenced her beliefs regarding her expectations for students, her role as a teacher, the role of her students, parental involvement in the classroom, and also the importance of building classroom community. For example, she explained her desire to build time into the daily schedule for intentional community building as she noted, "I just felt like I wanted the kids to learn more about each other and be more of a community. My kids last year had a really good community attitude.... I had a sense of family with them." While this sense of community had emerged spontaneously in the previous year, she valued its impact in the classroom and wanted to replicate it with her current group of students. Lauren provided many examples from her student teaching experiences in Australia that supported her belief in an active role for students, a facilitative role for teachers, and an inquiry approach to teaching. Her beliefs about fluency instruction and guided reading were also impacted by specific events from her teaching.

For Sarah and Lauren, there were times that the influential experiences they shared were not actually things they themselves carried out in the classroom. Rather, they were examples of instruction they had seen being led by others. Again, Lauren's student teaching experiences were quite influential over her beliefs regarding the role of the teacher and explicit instruction. She explained,

When I taught in Australia, the vice principal taught reading. And she was an explicit teacher. Everything had a reason and a purpose and the kids knew the reason and purpose behind it. And I remember thinking to myself, "I have to adopt that because that's the only way that these kids are moving along the way they are." (Interview 4, January 22, 2009)

Sarah also noted that some of her beliefs were based on what she saw the teachers she worked with doing in their classrooms, even if it was not something she had done herself as a teacher.

What “works.” For Sarah and the teachers, participation in teaching activities in which they saw something “work” was also powerful evidence supportive of their own beliefs, with all of the participants providing multiple examples of these types of events. Kathryn quite clearly stated this connection when she talked about her belief that small group reading instruction best met the needs of her students. She said, “To me, I’ve seen it. I mean, like they say, proof in the pudding? I’ve seen the proof of working with a child in small group reading versus whole group reading” (Interview 4, January 30, 2009).

Rachel’s beliefs were also influenced by success with instruction. As noted above, she was working to build a stronger sense of community in her classroom and found the time she was setting aside each morning for students to greet one another and share about their lives was effective. Though she valued successful teaching experiences, Rachel felt she was willing to take risks and try new things in her classroom in order to find what worked best for her students. She explained, “You don’t know unless you try it. And I’m always gonna’ try. I’m not gonna’ say it’s not gonna’ work if I don’t try it” (Interview 4, January 22, 2009). Rachel thought it was important that teachers remain open to trying new approaches. She saw the teaching world as in flux, with new things constantly coming to the forefront.

Lauren provided a similar rationale for her belief in balanced literacy as an effective teaching framework. She explained that because she was no longer constrained by a scripted reading program, she could see that her current students were further along in their abilities to talk about texts than students in previous years.

Sarah shared that she believed word study was an important component of balanced literacy even though she never had the opportunity to implement it as a classroom teacher.

However, she heard the teachers in her school say that it worked and had seen the assessment results that supported its effectiveness. For her, seeing was believing even without doing.

As a final note, there was also some evidence that participants' ideas about what "works" were flexible. When asked if their visions of ideal instruction would remain constant regardless of the student population with whom they worked, all of the participants felt that the major emphases of their visions (or their beliefs) would not change. However, they were aware that with each new group of students, they may have to adapt their practices or the way they chose to enact their beliefs. Kathryn, for example, explained that there was a different chemistry with each group of students that might influence what would or would not work. Rachel agreed that what had worked in the past, might not work with her current students. Thus, she was open to changing the way she brought her beliefs to life in the classroom.

Experiences as Learners

The teachers' experiences as learners (both in K-12 settings and as adults) were the second most cited type of evidence on which their beliefs were based. Overall, the teachers' experiences as learners seemed to help them identify with their own students. The teachers remembered what it was like for them as learners and empathized with some of the struggles their students faced. Kathryn explained, "I see [the frustration] in [my students'] eyes and I know. I've been there, sat there where they are, know the frustration that's going through their head" (Initial Interview, August 26, 2008). Because of her own difficulties as a reader, Kathryn developed a passion for working with struggling readers. Lauren also indicated that she had struggled with reading as a child. Her struggle and ultimate success was the basis for her belief that struggling readers can become good readers.

It certainly is no surprise that the teachers' own experiences as learners would influence their beliefs. Indeed, as described in Chapter II, Lortie (1975) refers to this type of learning in which students absorb the role of the teacher as apprenticeship-of-observation. However, while much of what Lortie refers to is what teachers specifically learn about teaching through their time spent in classrooms as students, the experiences described by Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren tended to be more personal. They based their beliefs on their understandings of who they were as learners and what they had found was either beneficial or detrimental for their personal success. Typically, these experiences as learners served one of two functions: the teachers either hoped to recreate or avoid these experiences in their own classrooms.

Recreating productive experiences. While recounting their experiences as learners, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren often described experiences they wanted to replicate in their own classrooms because they found these things had worked for them as learners. For example, Kathryn supported her belief that modeling was an important form of instruction by stating, "I think about myself. If I don't see how something's done to begin with, I have a hard time picturing it" (Interview 4, January 30, 2009). Rachel explained her belief in the need for students to make personal connections in order to support their learning in a similar way. She said, "Because I had that connection, I got to see for myself. And I feel like when kids have those connections they learn more because they take ownership of what they're learning" (Interview 4, January 22, 2009). Likewise, Lauren revealed she believed it was important for students to make connections so their engagement would remain high. She noted, "I know that I pay more attention when someone's interested in me and... they have more interest in what's going on when I'm interested in them. So I try to ask them their opinions on things" (Interview 4, January 22, 2009).

Avoiding non-productive experiences. Not all of the experiences the teachers described were ones they wanted to emulate. At times their experiences served as anti-templates. Agee (2006) describes these as instances where teachers “actively seek different models of action often because their prior experiences were painful or non-productive” (p. 198). Within these experiences, the teachers sometimes identified actions of their own teachers that were not useful. For example, Kathryn described how she felt the writing instruction she received as a student was insufficient because in her perception she had never been taught how to write connected text. Instead, her experiences as a student focused on learning grammatical skills, and because of this she felt that teaching writing was a weakness for her. At other times, the teachers identified their own actions as learners as non-productive. For instance, Rachel explained she believed students need to take active roles in their learning and ask questions because as a student she was quiet and rarely asked questions, often leaving her without needed information.

Though these experiences served as anti-templates because they were not productive, some of the experiences the teachers shared as evidence for their beliefs were representative of painful experiences they had as learners. Often these painful experiences influenced the teachers’ beliefs about their students’ affective needs in the classroom. Kathryn’s experiences as a learner supported her belief that teachers should work to address students’ unique learning needs. When asked why she chose to become a teacher Kathryn explained,

as a child when I was growing up, I struggled in school and I had a few rotten teachers along the way. And they were very frustrating to me because they never would give me the time of day. They never found the positive in me....so I had decided a long time ago that I wanted to go and be that—I wanted to be that teacher that I never had. (Initial Interview, August 26, 2008)

Lauren also wanted to support her students’ learning and drew on her own experiences to support her role during guided reading. She said, “I never want to let [the students] hang either. I hated that when I was a kid—not knowing where I was, getting mixed up...and the teacher just

looks at you....I try and prompt them” (Interview 4, January 22, 2009). Finally, Rachel’s belief that students need to be part of a classroom community and feel safe was supported by a story she shared of her own difficulties being bullied as a fourth grade student.

Interactions with Others

Unlike the experiences with teaching and as learners described above, which the teachers directly connected to their beliefs, in this section I discuss their interactions with others as more indirect influences on their beliefs. While the teachers did at times identify their interactions with others as sources of evidence for their beliefs, their discussion of the ways these individuals influenced their beliefs more often addressed changes in their practice or specific ideas they had learned. As I argued earlier in this work, in this study I have chosen not to distinguish between teachers’ beliefs and their knowledge. Thus, changes in their understandings based on their interactions with others can provide insight into their beliefs. In this section, I first address ways the teachers’ co-workers influenced their beliefs. I discuss either conversations or other interpersonal interactions here rather than instances where another teacher’s modeled instruction was influential. Then, I discuss possible voices of authority—either in theory or practice—that may have been influential for the teachers.

Influence of other teachers. Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren all identified other teachers as influential over their beliefs. They particularly found the sharing of ideas to be beneficial, whether with teachers they knew in their school or with those they interacted with in other settings such as workshops. They also described ways their coworkers were able to encourage them during difficult times. Kathryn explained that she figured out how to teach from other teachers at her school noting, “I fell on my face many times, I know I did. But then I had people

there that were here to support me and to encourage me and say, ‘Hey, you know, maybe you can try this’” (Initial Interview, August 26, 2008). Similarly, Lauren contrasted her coworkers at Blue Mountain with those in her last two teaching positions and was thankful to be surrounded by teachers who were able to get along, were trying hard, and “who still have a little idealism left in them.” She continued, “[The teachers at Blue Mountain] get bogged down. They have their days and everybody does. But, they’re still hopeful that what they’re doing is positive. My first year was like going into a prison” (Interview 4, January 22, 2009).

Rachel provided an example of how another teacher could have had a negative impact on her beliefs regarding expectations for students. However, instead of altering her beliefs in a negative way, her interactions with this teacher strengthened them. As a student teacher, one of her mentor teachers was in Rachel’s words “very negative” (Interview 4, January 22, 2009). When she approached him about trying a hands-on math activity, he discouraged her arguing that the students would not be able to handle the activity. Rachel persisted and the students were successful. Though her mentor teacher challenged her beliefs about her expectations for her students, she now uses this experience to support her belief in the importance of teachers being open to trying new things (as described earlier in this chapter).

Finally, as a coach, Sarah was interested in fostering collaborative relationships between her teachers that would allow them to serve as sources of beliefs for each other. She encouraged them to share their instructional practices with one another. For example, during the grade level meetings she facilitated, she built time into the schedule for the teachers to share their concerns about their students who were struggling and to brainstorm together different instructional approaches that may be beneficial. However, she was also aware of the drawbacks of encouraging teachers to examine their own practice in light of their neighbor’s. She explained

Sometimes I feel like [teachers] see what their neighbors are doing and then if they're not doing it they feel like they're doing something wrong. I think they use that as a measure...well they've got it going so well. Which that can be a good thing especially if it's one of your areas that's struggling. You know you can go watch that teacher and do it. But some teachers get stuck in that self-defeating, "My room will never be like hers." (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Voices of authority. I was interested in whether or not there were voices of authority that acted as authoritative discourses for the teachers (Bakhtin, 1981). Authoritative discourses are those that reflect the dominant ideologies of the world and are accepted without question. While there were voices that held the potential to be authoritative for the teachers, none of those voices seemed to live up to their potential. This was seen first in the fact that there were few voices of authority explicitly identified by either the reading specialist or the teachers. Kathryn mentioned authors (identifying only two by name) and professional development leaders (though no one specific was named) while Rachel found Sarah's voice to be an authority on some topics (e.g., writer's workshop for which Sarah served as Rachel's "guide").

Because all of the teachers were supportive of the ideas underpinning the balanced literacy framework implemented by the district, I expected that the district would serve as an authoritative voice for the teachers. This was not what I found though. While the district did exert some influence over teachers' beliefs because it was part of their teaching context (as will be discussed later in this chapter), it did not serve as a source that was accepted without question as a voice of authority.

Kathryn acknowledged that the district's voice held some weight because of what it mandated teachers to do in their classrooms and the resources it provided. However, she also acknowledged that ultimately she did what she wanted to in her classroom and that at Blue Mountain there was no one holding teachers accountable for their implementation of balanced

literacy. When asked about how she might respond to being told exactly how to teach, Kathryn was quite clear that she would not like it. She explained,

For me, I work better when someone says, “Okay, let’s try this and go with it.” I guess it all depends on how you word it with me. I’m the type person where if I don’t like it, then I don’t want to do it. Then I pretty much, I have a hard time making myself do it. (Interview 1 & 2, December 12, 2008)

So Kathryn was open to voices of authority. However, she wanted to be invited into the process rather than being forced.

Rachel seemed to be willing to accept the district as a voice of authority, though most of her references to its authority dealt with what was not being mandated. She was frustrated that the district did not tell teachers how to teach writing or have some type of writing program. Her frustration indicates the possibility that if there had been such a program in place, it could have served as an authoritative voice for her. Similarly, she lamented the lack of guidance she received during her undergraduate studies regarding writing, again an indication that if she had found the information she received in her program useful, she might have viewed it as a voice of authority.

Lauren never identified a single voice of authority that she relied upon for her beliefs. She instead indicated she was open to considering many sources of information. At the same time, her past teaching experiences led me to believe that the instructional programs she followed in her classroom could serve as a voice of authority for her. In her previous teaching position, Lauren’s school implemented a scripted reading program that she was required to follow. In our early conversations, she was relieved she was no longer constrained by the rigidity of the program. However, over the course of the study she often referred back to the program and noted that though she had found it to be boring, repetitive, and regimental she also believed it was effective. Thus, she continued to carry over some of the instructional practices into her

current teaching. The impact of this instructional program on Lauren's beliefs will be considered further as part of the discussion in this chapter regarding the influence of the teaching context.

Finally, while Sarah did not identify any voices that were authoritative for her personally, she was aware that she might serve as a voice of authority for some of the teachers at Blue Mountain. She believed the impact of her words was dependent in part on where the teacher was in her development as a professional. Expanding on this idea, Sarah explained,

It depends on where [the teachers] are. You know, Rachel's been going through her master's program so yes, all of that reading has affected her. Teachers that aren't doing that, then no. What I do, what I say has more weight....So yeah. I know what I say. And so I try to be careful. (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Sarah was not interested in replicating her personal beliefs throughout the school. Instead, she wanted teachers to examine critically ideas presented to them and to work to understand the underlying ideology.

Professional Development Activities

A final source of evidence the teachers identified as influential over their beliefs were ideas they gained from their participation in professional development activities. The two most frequently mentioned activities were workshops and reading professional literature. Most of the teachers' attributions, however, referred to their general participation in these activities rather than identifying specific workshop opportunities or readings that were particularly strong sources of evidence.

Workshops. All of the experiences that Kathryn shared regarding her participation in workshops were focused on the district's balanced literacy framework. These workshops provided much of the foundation for her strong belief in a balanced approach to literacy instruction. She stated, "I've been to so many different workshops and the balanced literacy. And

I believe in it. It's not easy for people to do, but I understand the idea" (Interview 3, January 27, 2009). Indeed, Kathryn's connection to the district's way of doing balanced literacy was evident when I asked her to describe balanced literacy. She immediately reached for the notebook of information she had received during her most recent balanced literacy workshop sponsored by the district. She wanted to make sure she was correctly representing the district's take on the approach.

Of all the teachers, Rachel referred to her experiences in workshops the most. She had participated in many workshops offered through the district and local universities. She specifically mentioned workshops on topics such as guided reading, balanced literacy, writer's workshop, classroom management, and teaching history. In describing the role these workshops played in her belief development, Rachel was able to distinguish between those that were and were not influential. She also identified specific reasons for these differing levels of influence including the amount of information presented, the pacing of the sessions, and the supporting materials that were provided.

Finally, as a new teacher in the district and with fewer years of teaching experience than the other teachers in the study, Lauren had participated in very little professional development in the district. She was still trying to figure out what types of workshops were offered and how to take advantage of those. Throughout the study, the only workshops in which she participated were those held specifically at the school for the faculty of Blue Mountain. She provided only limited information regarding her participation in professional development before being hired in the district. Much of what she described were workshops focused on the implementation of the specialized reading programs being used in the schools where she taught. Overall, Lauren attributed very few of her beliefs to her participation in workshops.

Reading professional literature. In general, professional reading was not a strong source of beliefs for the teachers, perhaps in part because none of them routinely engaged in this form of professional development. While all of the teachers noted that they read journal articles (though no specific journals were referenced) and other materials as part of their postgraduate studies, neither Kathryn nor Rachel had continued the practice after completing their degrees. Lauren began her master's program during the final month of the study and was just beginning to seek out articles. However, this had not been a typical practice for her in the past.

Usually, when the teachers referenced professional reading as a source of evidence for their beliefs, it was only a vague reference. The teachers often explained that based on what they had read or what research said they held a certain belief. For example, Lauren said, "There is a lot of low level thinking in first grade, which is okay from what I've read" (Interview 1, November 7, 2008). Similarly, Kathryn noted that her belief that small group instruction for reading is better than whole group instruction was based on her personal experiences and "of course I know what the research says out there too" (Interview 4, January 30, 2009).

While scholarly journals were rarely mentioned in a specific way, there were individual practice-oriented books that each teacher found to be somewhat influential. Kathryn had a large professional library in her classroom filled with teaching resources. She explained she would refer to these whenever she needed new ideas, though she did not view them as holding all of the answers. She was able to read and evaluate her agreement with individual ideas within the books without discounting the entire source.

In preparation for building a stronger community in her classroom, Rachel had read *The Morning Meeting Book* (Kriete, 2002) and found that it reinforced her beliefs about community building in the classroom. Lauren had a similar experience with *The Essential 55: An Award-*

Winning Educator's Rules for Discovering the Successful Students in Every Child (Clark, 2003)

as she found it influenced her beliefs about developing students' social skills.

Though participation with professional reading was not a particularly strong source of evidence for the teachers' beliefs, it was quite influential for Sarah. She routinely read scholarly journals and other materials and saw it as an important part of her role as a reading specialist.

She explained

I read a lot. I like to stay caught up on what's going on and if I have a question or a teacher asks me a question, a lot of times I'll go read something about it. I mean they ask me all the time, "Well, where do you get those ideas?"... Well I go, I read it. That's one reason I'm a resource is because I have resources. I don't pretend to just know it all. And I know a lot of teachers a lot of times don't have time to go read it on their own. So, I do a lot of that just on my own. (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Not only was Sarah a voracious reader, she also put the ideas she gathered from her reading into action as she modeled her own reading and implementation of research-based practices for her teachers. For example, during the study she read a journal article addressing repeated poetry reading as a strategy for building fluency. She implemented this idea with her intervention groups and also shared it with the teachers during a grade level meeting. Later in the year, Rachel chose to start this practice in her classroom as well after hearing that her own students in Sarah's intervention groups were having success with the approach.

Formal Knowledge Resulting from Higher Education

Richardson (1996) argued that teachers' experiences with formal knowledge addressed in teacher education programs influence their educational beliefs, though to a much lesser degree than their personal experiences. Literacy researchers' inconsistent findings regarding the lasting influence of teachers' experiences with formal knowledge (i.e., Grisham, 2000; Nierstheimer et al., 2000; Poulson et al., 2001) support this argument, as do the findings of this study. While the

reading specialist and teachers did attribute some of their beliefs to their undergraduate and postgraduate programs, this happened with much less frequency than with the sources of belief noted above.

Undergraduate studies. The reading specialist's and teachers' evaluations of their undergraduate studies varied. Both Kathryn and Rachel attributed very few of their current beliefs to their undergraduate experiences. Kathryn felt that she had developed a completely different style as a teacher than what had been presented to her in her licensure program. While she said she "picked up a few things along the way," (Initial Interview, August 26, 2008) she attributed most of her understanding of teaching to her experiences in the classroom.

Rachel had similar feelings about her undergraduate experience. She explained she felt her college courses taught her what teaching was supposed to be like rather than the reality of what it was. As a result, she did not feel prepared for teaching and ultimately felt she learned more from her student teaching experiences than from any of her formal coursework. Kathryn and Rachel only referred to their undergraduate experiences in negative ways when connecting them to their beliefs. Kathryn specifically mentioned how her program had not prepared her for integrating instruction while Rachel mentioned her concerns that her program in no way prepared her for establishing writer's workshop in her classroom. While they each might have been willing to allow their undergraduate studies to serve as evidence for their beliefs, they were not able to find value in those experiences.

Lauren's evaluation of her undergraduate studies was somewhat different. She felt that the focus of her teacher education program was on practice and that it supported her beliefs regarding balanced literacy. As noted in Chapter IV, Lauren also had strong beliefs about the

importance of developmentally appropriate activities for her students. She specifically attributed these beliefs to her undergraduate coursework.

In Sarah's description of her undergraduate program, she noted that while it provided her a "mold" into which most of her students fit, her experiences with students who did not fit that mold ultimately led her to continue with postgraduate studies.

Postgraduate studies. While Sarah's, Kathryn's, Rachel's, and Lauren's undergraduate programs varied in the degree to which they served as evidence for their beliefs, they all cited their postgraduate studies as sources of their beliefs. Kathryn and Rachel provided examples of specific coursework and the way it had influenced their beliefs. For example, Kathryn supported her belief in the importance of students working together in the classroom by saying, "I learned that, and it's very true, like when students are working in cooperative groups and if they really understand something and they actually teach it to another students [*sic*] that it demonstrates true understanding of that concept" (Vision Interview, October 6, 2008). Other beliefs that were supported by her postgraduate studies were beliefs regarding assessment, guided reading, flexible grouping of students, and the primacy of reading.

Similarly, Rachel specifically attributed her belief in the role of the teacher as a facilitator to a course she completed in her master's program in which facilitation was a frequent topic of conversation. Through her participation in that course, she found that the idea of facilitation resonated with her and thus adopted it as part of her beliefs and practice.

Lauren's experiences with postgraduate studies were quite new, as she started coursework in the final month of the study. However, she noted that her experiences in her master's program were prompting her to think about and clarify her beliefs.

Finally, Sarah's experiences in her master's program was the source for her initial belief in a balanced approach to literacy instruction as well as guided reading and assessment-driven instruction. In her program she "got a lot of the balanced literacy, the guided reading. Oh, well it makes sense to teach kids reading at their levels and use running records to figure out what they're doing" (Survey Interview, August 21, 2008).

Influence of the Teaching Context

The social contexts of schools can influence teachers' beliefs and practices as teachers internalize constraints that affect how they enact models of teaching and learning (Ernest, 1989). The transactions between teachers, students, materials, school leaders, parents, and personal experiences within these contexts all contribute to the development and maintenance of teachers' beliefs (Lenski et al., 1998). As described in Chapter II, literacy researchers identified such factors as increasing accountability pressures (e.g., Davis et al., 1993), time constraints (e.g., Deal & White, 2005), the students themselves (e.g., Sturtevant & Linek, 2003), and curricular regulations and available teaching materials (e.g., Datnow & Castellano, 2000).

Many of the sources of evidence identified above by Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren—experiences with instruction, interactions with other teachers, various voices of authority, professional development opportunities—are elements that constitute the micro-level of teaching contexts. In this section, I consider elements within the macro-level of the reading specialist's and teachers' teaching contexts, namely the district's curricular framework and other instructional programs with which the participants were familiar.

Impact of the district's curricular framework. The power of the district itself as a voice of authority for the teachers, as discussed earlier, was fairly weak. However, the district's curricular

framework of balanced literacy impacted the participants' beliefs to varying degrees. Sarah, Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren all agreed with using a balanced literacy framework, though it was particularly meaningful for Sarah and Kathryn. They both had moved beyond a simple agreement with and implementation of the approach to an internalization of the framework as part of their personal beliefs about reading instruction.

Sarah particularly found the district's balanced literacy framework to be supportive of her larger ideas regarding good reading instruction. When asked if balanced reading was the "right" way to teach reading, Sarah explained,

I think [balanced literacy is] one of the better models that we have....I think it's a good framework for addressing all of the things that we need to cover in reading. Everything from yes, the five [National Reading Panel] components that are drilled down our throats but....you've also got a lot of opportunity for choice and motivation and those type of things which also need to be taken into account in any kind of reading program. Kids have to have those pieces. I think within a balanced literacy framework you do have the opportunity to expose them to multiple genres of literature and writing and teach them those skills. I mean there's lots of opportunity for explicit teaching and practice with different levels of scaffolding. But also just the choice, the motivation in there. Choosing what you want to read. Choosing what you want to write. I think that those are huge pieces too. So it's not just the five components. I think there's a lot more to it. But I think it's a pretty good framework for all of those. (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Kathryn had also come to believe in a balanced approach to literacy instruction. The balanced literacy framework was adopted by the district during her first year of teaching. As a new teacher, Kathryn noted it was difficult and frustrating trying to figure out how to implement all of the components of balanced literacy. However, after 7 years of personal experiences with the framework, she had come to value it and felt that it had become a permanent part of her own beliefs about reading instruction. I asked Kathryn if balanced literacy was an instructional framework she would implement in the future even if she were in a different school district and she answered that she would. She explained, "[Balanced literacy is] instilled in my head....and I think it's important. I think the balanced literacy is very important. I don't agree with every little

aspect of it but I think it falls under every category in my opinion” (Survey Interview, September 18, 2008).

Impact of other instructional programs. Lauren was the only teacher in the study that cited other instructional programs she had experience with as influential over her beliefs. This may be because while she had the fewest years of experience among the teachers, she had more experience in different types of school contexts than Kathryn and Rachel whose only teaching experience had been at Blue Mountain. During the study, Lauren was in her third year of teaching. In her first 2 years of teaching, she worked in a different state in two different schools. Each of these schools had quite distinctive instructional programs that were school specific rather than district-wide. In this section, I examine the influence of Lauren’s experiences with these different instructional programs on her beliefs.

Lauren’s first year of teaching was spent in a Reading First school. The schedule was quite regimented in this school and there was an expectation that across a grade level instruction would be the same from classroom to classroom. She described this school as “structured, strict, scary—insanely scary” and added,

I always felt like I was gonna’ get in trouble. The timeframes that we had to do things were so strict that if you were finished a minute early, you know the lesson was over, if the kids weren’t where they were supposed to be—in their center, on the carpet, with you at reading group—and you finished a minute early and someone walked in, you thought you were gonna’ get chewed out. (Initial Interview, August 28, 2008)

Lauren’s teaching experiences in this school were stressful and prompted her to look for a different teaching position.

During Lauren’s second year of teaching she worked in a school implementing a scripted, direct instruction reading program—*Reading Mastery* (Englemann & Bruner, 1995)—which she described as “pretty dummed” (Initial Interview, August 28, 2008). Her understanding of the program was that “You follow the script....You aren’t gonna’ mess it up. The kids are gonna’

learn” (Interview 2, November 14, 2008). Again, all of the teachers on her grade level were expected to provide identical instruction.

Lauren often described her teaching in both of these schools in terms of what she was not “allowed” to do. For example, she explained that she had never been allowed to teach language arts or handwriting and she was not allowed to alter the instructional schedule in her classroom. During our initial conversations at the beginning of the school year, Lauren was basking in the freedom she found she had within her classroom at Blue Mountain. She was allowed to teach language arts however she wanted to, had the freedom to tweak her instructional schedule as much as needed, could choose whether or not to follow the reading textbooks, and for the first time felt she had the opportunity to implement her vision of ideal practice.

As the study progressed, however, Lauren seemed to struggle with balancing the newfound freedom she felt at Blue Mountain with knowing what to do next in her classroom without the strict guidance of an instructional program. More and more she began to return to the ideas about instruction that she had seen work with *Reading Mastery*. This was especially apparent in our final two conversations that took place in January. Over the winter break, she had spent time reflecting on her students’ progress and found that they were further behind in many areas than her students from the previous year. Because of this, she began to question her instructional choices. She explained,

I really have a hard time with guided reading—staying focused....I almost liked the way guided reading went in my *Reading Mastery* program a little bit better because it was so regimental and the kids knew it. I knew it....I think the language in *Reading Mastery* was repetitive and boring....But, the way it built on itself was what worked so well. And the building aspect is where I’m struggling. Like making sure that I’ve developed enough scaffolding for [students] to get the next concept. I guess it’s more of I feel like I’m second-guessing myself now whereas I didn’t before. (Interview 3, January 20, 2009)

While Lauren used a few of the instructional methods she knew from *Reading Mastery* at the beginning of the year, such as having her students answer in unison as they recited sight words,

at the end of the study she was considering incorporating more direct instruction practices into her classroom in an attempt to help accelerate her students' progress.

Lauren's questioning of her own practice and return to the familiar highlights the impact this instructional program exerted over her beliefs. Though she believed that students needed to be active meaning-makers as readers, to learn to think independently, and that the role of the teacher was to facilitate students' learning, she was debating choosing an instructional path that would position her students as passive learners and place her in a transmissive role as a teacher. Her belief that *Reading Mastery* worked for all students was in direct opposition with her beliefs about the role of the student and teacher.

The instructional programs Lauren participated in may also have influenced the way she participated in coaching. This will be examined more at the end of this chapter, but it is pertinent here to mention that in her first 2 years of teaching Lauren had become used to conforming to what she was told to do in her classroom. Though she may not have always agreed with the mandates she was given, she faithfully carried them out. At Blue Mountain, she was happy to have a bit more freedom over her practice, but was grateful for the structure the instructional programs had provided for her in years past. She said,

I think every year so far I've gotten like that much more independence. Which, but again, I think maybe as a young teacher that's been good for me because I've slowly been given independence instead of getting it all at once and being like, "Oh my gosh. What am I going to do with it?" (Vision Interview, September 9, 2008)

At the beginning of the year, Lauren felt ready to handle more freedom, but her self-doubt as she moved into the second half of the year may be an indication that being free was harder than she anticipated.

Summary and Implications

Throughout this section, I have considered the sources of evidence that exerted influence over Sarah's, Kathryn's, Rachel's, and Lauren's beliefs. For all of the participants, their experiences with teaching—both those associated with years of experience and specific teaching events—were quite influential. Successful experiences with instruction were most often mentioned. There were times when teachers referred to less than successful experiences, but they did so while offering evaluations of their practice rather than accounting for their beliefs.

The teachers also offered their experiences as learners as evidence for their beliefs. Productive experiences supported their desires to recreate these experiences for their own students while the teachers worked to avoid subjecting students to the types of negative experiences they faced as learners.

The teachers' interactions with others had an impact on their beliefs as well. While they rarely observed their coworkers' teaching, the conversations they had were influential. Beyond the teachers, there were not many other people identified as providing a voice of authority for the teachers. The few mentioned included authors, professional development leaders, and Sarah in her role as reading specialist. Sarah was aware that her voice held weight with the teachers in the school and worked to downplay her influence. The teachers were all open to having the district serve as a voice of authority. However, they most often were disappointed by the lack of direction it provided.

Different forms of professional learning were influential for the participants, though their impact was variable. Kathryn and Rachel credited their participation in workshops for some of their beliefs while ideas presented in professional literature were more meaningful for Sarah. For

all of the participants, the source of evidence least often cited was formal knowledge resulting from their participation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

Finally, though the teaching context was never explicitly mentioned by the participants as a source of their beliefs, they did at times address elements contained within it. The district's balanced literacy framework was particularly influential for Sarah and Kathryn while Lauren drew more on her experiences with instructional programs she encountered during her teaching in other schools.

Personal experiences both with teaching and as learners were the most frequently cited sources of evidence for the teachers' beliefs. These types of experiences are often the basis for episodic memories that are long lasting (Pajares, 1992). Nespor (1987) argued that these memories provide the resulting beliefs with power, authority, and legitimacy. This seemed to be true for the teachers who often identified specific, direct connections between these types of experiences and their beliefs. The clarity of their attributions may be indicative of the intensity and centrality of those beliefs.

The connections that teachers made between their beliefs and sources of evidence other than their personal experiences were much more general (i.e., I read it somewhere or I learned it in workshops). They also tended to address topics that were unfamiliar to the teachers before entering the teaching profession. For example, Kathryn and Rachel's beliefs about balanced literacy were very much influenced by the district's curricular framework and their participation in district-sponsored professional development. These were relatively new beliefs for the teachers that had developed during their time teaching in the district (7 and 5 years respectively). In contrast, their beliefs about the role of the student were based on many of their experiences as students themselves and as such, had been developing over many more years. The relative

newness of beliefs based on sources other than personal experiences may also explain the more generalized attributions that so many of the teachers made to these sources of evidence.

The findings presented in this chapter addressing the influence of interactions with others and voices of authority raise questions regarding the impact of authoritative versus internally persuasive discourses on teachers' beliefs. This discussion will be continued in Chapter VII.

These findings regarding the sources of evidence on which teachers' beliefs were built became important as I began to consider *how* teachers held their beliefs. Beliefs develop in part out of the experiences that we have and the trust we place in others. The teachers' personal experiences with teaching and as learners seemed to be more influential over their beliefs than other types of evidence they offered. In thinking about teacher change and development, these findings raise questions about the types of experiences that may need to be provided to serve as sources of evidence for new beliefs.

The Relationship between Sources of Evidence, Connectedness, and the Centrality of Beliefs

As argued in earlier chapters, understanding teachers' beliefs involves more than simply identifying *what* they believe. *How* their beliefs are held must also be addressed. This means moving beyond an examination of just the content of their beliefs and considering the types of beliefs that are held (Green, 1971) such as those identified by Rokeach (1972) in Chapter II. In this part of the chapter, I hypothesize how the sources of evidence cited above can help determine the centrality of beliefs held by the teachers. I also consider the connections between these beliefs and others identified in Chapter IV as an additional clue to the type of beliefs that the teachers might hold. During the study, a multitude of beliefs were identified for each teacher. With so many beliefs, it would be impractical to trace the centrality and connectedness of all of

the teachers' beliefs or to attempt to categorize each belief they held. Therefore, in this section I am choosing to examine the teachers' beliefs that were most relevant for their interactions with coaching. Understanding how the teachers held these specific beliefs helps determine the impact they had on the teachers' participation in coaching which is the topic of discussion for the last part of this chapter. I begin with a brief review of the main theoretical arguments about the centrality and connectedness of beliefs first presented in Chapter II.

Theoretical Ideas Regarding the Centrality and Connectedness of Beliefs within Systems

All of the beliefs a person holds develop and change as part of a larger system (Green, 1971). Beliefs clustered together into belief systems are even more strongly held than individual beliefs (Abelson, 1979; Pajares, 1992) and within these systems individual beliefs vary in power and intensity with more centrally held beliefs being more resistant to change (Rokeach, 1972). The centrality of a belief is determined in part by the type of belief it is. There are beliefs that come into existence because various types of evidence or reason in a person's life support them. Others are held regardless of whether they are supported by reason and at times are even held despite contradictory evidence (Green; Rokeach, 1972).

Figure 14, which is a combination of Rokeach's (1972) and Green's (1971) ideas regarding the structure of systems of belief, illustrates the centrality of the differing types of beliefs. By collapsing Rokeach's five categories of belief (as described in Chapter II) into three, I was better able to match the grain of analysis possible from the data collected in this study. I chose to combine the two classes of primitive beliefs and use the term core beliefs to name this combined type of belief. I also chose not to specifically include authority beliefs as a separate

category as Rokeach proposed. Instead, I included it as part of the derived beliefs category as derived beliefs are dependent on authority beliefs according to Rokeach.

Core beliefs are learned through direct encounters with objects of belief and are located in the innermost core of a belief system. These are the beliefs that are believed because they are there. They are taken for granted. For example, beliefs about self-identity (e.g., why we believe we know our name), matters of faith, and ego-related beliefs (e.g., belief in our own intelligence) are often core beliefs (Rokeach, 1972). Core beliefs are rarely challenged, and even when they are, they are so strongly held that little can be done to change them (Rokeach, 1972).

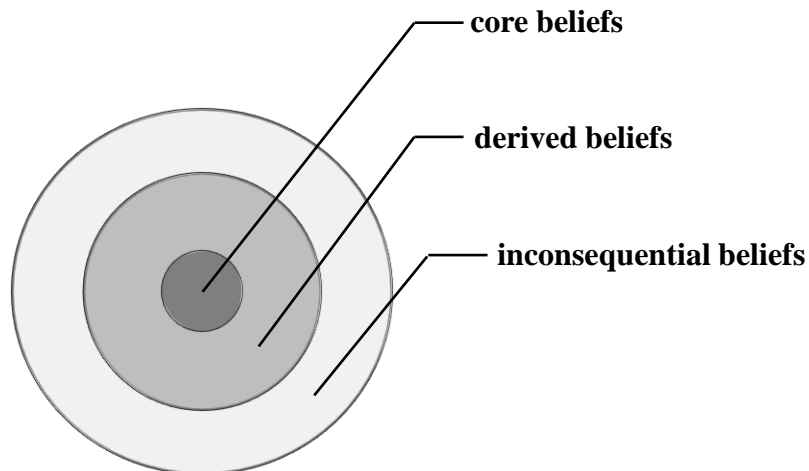


Figure 14. The centrality of types of beliefs within a subsystem of belief.

This description of core beliefs seems to leave little possibility for change. However, Green (1971) hypothesized that a person's most centrally held beliefs could be further divided into evidential and nonevidential beliefs. Beliefs held evidentially are those beliefs a person holds on the basis of reason or evidence. Evidential beliefs are open to change (though change is still quite difficult) and can be modified in light of further evidence or better reasons.

Nonevidential beliefs, on the other hand, are not based on reason or evidence. In fact, they may be held in spite of contradictory evidence. These are the types of beliefs that a person may not be able to explain. Even when presented with other evidence or reason, nonevidential beliefs tend not to be open to change. Thus, when I talk about core beliefs throughout the rest of this work, I refer to evidentially held, centrally located beliefs.

The next type of belief, derived beliefs, are those learned from others that are the result of a person's trust in authorities rather than personal experiences with the actual objects of belief. Examples include religious and political ideological beliefs as well as information believed because it was learned from a trusted source. Beliefs within this class can be disputed because people come to understand there are others who do not share the same beliefs. Even though derived beliefs are still centrally held and therefore resistant to change, they are more easily changed than core beliefs (Rokeach, 1972).

Finally, inconsequential beliefs are those that refer to personal tastes (e.g., favorite ice cream flavors or movies). These beliefs are the most peripherally held of all beliefs. Like core beliefs, they are learned through direct experiences with objects of belief and are held regardless of others' agreement with them. They may be intensely held and can be difficult to change (Rokeach, 1972).

While both core and inconsequential beliefs are based on direct experiences with objects of belief, they are distinguished by the degree to which they are connected to other beliefs within the system. Because of these connections, the impact of change in beliefs is a function of the centrality of beliefs within a system. Changes in core beliefs are very difficult to bring about. Therefore, if and when change occurs it will have far-reaching consequences on the entire system of belief because those beliefs are so highly connected to others within the system.

Changes in core beliefs create a ripple effect of change throughout the belief system. However, changes in inconsequential beliefs have little effect on the overall system of belief because they are the most peripherally held and have fewer connections to other beliefs within the system (Rokeach, 1972).

A confounding factor in the consideration of the centrality of beliefs is the fact that people may hold the same belief in differing ways. Therefore, one person's religious beliefs may be held as core beliefs resulting from their personal experiences with matters of faith, while another person may hold the same beliefs as derived beliefs based solely on their trust in a person of authority. If one were to challenge these same beliefs in these two people, it is more likely that the person holding the beliefs as derived beliefs would be willing to modify them. Thus, in thinking about professional development, efforts to address the same beliefs across a group of teachers may or may not bring about the desired change based on how those beliefs are held by each individual.

Another dimension of belief that is important to consider but yet was beyond the scope of this study is the intensity with which beliefs are held. Though there is a positive relationship between the centrality of a belief and its intensity, it is not a direct relationship. For example, inconsequential beliefs may be very intensely held, yet they are the least central type of belief. By intensity, I refer to the strength and fervor with which a belief is held. This differs from the centrality of a belief that refers to how tightly it is held to the center of a system of belief. Figure 14 above is a representation of centrality, holding the intensity of beliefs constant. Rokeach (1972) argued that ultimately a consideration of intensity is more important when considering beliefs of the same type rather than across types of beliefs. For example, while an inconsequential belief may be more intensely held than a core belief, a change in the core belief

will still have a greater impact on the entire system of belief. However when considering two core beliefs of differing intensities, the belief with the stronger intensity holds the greater potential impact on the system if changed.

Considering how beliefs are held through an examination of their centrality and connectedness may be particularly important for professional development and considerations of teacher change. Green (1971) described centrality as a force in determining the changeability of beliefs as he argued that starting at the center of a system of belief, “as we move from circle to circle toward the perimeter, there will be found beliefs we...are more prepared to examine, discuss, and alter” (p. 46). Thus, when considering beliefs to address in professional development, starting with those teachers are more prepared to address may facilitate the change process. Because of this, I turn now to a discussion of the process I followed to hypothesize the types of beliefs held by the teachers in the study.

Classifying Teachers’ Identified Beliefs

To describe *how* teachers held onto beliefs that were influential in their coaching interactions, I categorized their beliefs as either core, derived, or inconsequential. In this section, I describe my hypotheses regarding the types of beliefs held by the teachers. First, I describe the general process I used to classify their beliefs. Then, I provide a detailed description of my analysis of Lauren’s beliefs about word study. Finally, I address my overall hypotheses regarding the types of beliefs held by Kathryn and Rachel addressing the topics of their coaching interactions.

General procedure for identifying types of belief. To identify the types of beliefs held by the teachers, I began by looking at their talk about their beliefs and practice. Again, for this

analysis I specifically considered the teachers' beliefs and practices related to the focus of their coaching interactions with Sarah as I looked for information that would help me draw conclusions about the types of beliefs they held. In doing this, I relied on Rokeach's (1972) argument that in order to make inferences about a person's beliefs, you must consider their statements, intentions, and behaviors.

I first attempted to identify the teachers' beliefs related to their coaching interactions based on their statements alone. I looked for instances where the teachers specifically named their beliefs (i.e., "I know that word study has been designed to meet individual needs" (Kathryn, Survey Interview, September 18, 2008)). Direct statements of attribution such as this were rare. Therefore, I had to consider clues regarding their intentions and actions found within their talk.

Much of the teachers' talk about their practice included their evaluations of or justifications for their own practice. Throughout our conversations, I probed to learn about the reasoning or evidence on which their beliefs were built and often found that the teachers resorted to using one of their beliefs to support another. Green (1971) argued that this is an indication that a person's core beliefs have been reached. He posited there are two markers that might be used to identify core beliefs. One is that core beliefs may be those provided as reasons or sources of evidence for other beliefs. In other words, if a person cites one belief in order to explain why he/she holds or rejects another belief, that cited belief is likely a core belief. (In terms of Green's description of beliefs as evidential or nonevidential, in this example the cited belief would be a nonevidential belief. However, the original belief being questioned would be held evidentially with the cited belief serving as a source of evidence.) Second, core beliefs may be those held nonevidentially for which a person can offer no additional reason or source of evidence (i.e., a person's reason for believing is "because I do").

Using these markers for identifying core beliefs, I examined teachers' statements regarding their reasoning for practices in their classroom and drew conclusions about their associated individual beliefs. While I did not conclude at this point that these identified beliefs were necessarily core beliefs, this process did help me investigate the teachers' language in a systematic way in order to determine beliefs that were important to them.

After using the teachers' statements regarding their reasoning behind their practice to infer associated specific individual beliefs, I considered the larger subsystems of belief to which those individual beliefs might belong. These subsystems were larger categories of beliefs that were part of my coding system for the study as described in Chapter III.

I then considered the types of evidence the teachers offered in support of the identified beliefs associated with the focus of their coaching interactions. I considered both sources of evidence provided for the individual beliefs and the larger subsystems of belief. These sources were grouped into the categories of evidence described in the first part of this chapter—experiences with teaching, experiences as learners, interactions with others, participation in professional development activities, and formal knowledge resulting from participation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. While the larger teaching context was discussed earlier as a source of evidence, as I noted above much of the impact of the teaching context was accounted for in the other sources of evidence. Therefore, I did not include it as a specific source of evidence for this analysis.

Next, I examined the connections between the teachers' beliefs related to the focus of their coaching and other beliefs that had been identified throughout the study. I looked for areas of overlap in the teachers' talk regarding their beliefs. For example, beliefs about the role of students were often connected to beliefs about the role of the teacher.

Finally, I used all of these clues to hypothesize the type of beliefs held by the teachers. Figure 15 shows the general criteria I relied on for this classification. I first considered the sources of evidence underlying the beliefs in my attempt to classify them into types. Both core beliefs and inconsequential beliefs are those formed through personal experiences with objects of belief. Therefore, beliefs that are supported by teachers’ personal experiences with teaching and as learners are likely either core beliefs or inconsequential beliefs. To distinguish between these two types of beliefs, I relied on the degree of connectedness of the beliefs. Beliefs that were highly connected and supported by experiences with teaching and as learners were identified as possible core beliefs.

Type of Belief	Sources of Evidence	Degree of Connectedness
<p style="text-align: center;">CORE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – learned through direct encounters with objects of belief – changes in these beliefs have far-reaching effects on the system of belief 	<p style="text-align: center;">experiences with teaching experiences as a learner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">high</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DERIVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – learned as a result of our trust in authorities rather than direct encounters with objects of belief 	<p style="text-align: center;">interactions with others professional development formal knowledge</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">INCONSEQUENTIAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – learned through direct encounters with objects of belief – changes in these beliefs have little effect on the system of belief 	<p style="text-align: center;">experiences with teaching experiences as a learner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">low</p>

Figure 15. Criteria for classifying beliefs.

Those beliefs that were supported by personal experiences with teaching and learning but had few connections to other beliefs could be identified as possible inconsequential beliefs.

However, throughout my examination of the teachers' beliefs, no inconsequential beliefs were identified. During our conversations, we focused on the big ideas surrounding the focus of their coaching interactions, and there were not enough data to support the identification of inconsequential beliefs specifically related to these foci. Typically, however, inconsequential beliefs would be matters of personal taste, or teaching style. As such, this type of belief would not usually be the target of change within professional development settings. For example, Kathryn had very strong beliefs about how classroom activities and materials should be organized. As you might remember, part of her vision statement included descriptions of clearly defined and organized spaces for learning and storing materials within her classroom. She described the specific procedures she had her students follow when they were using manipulatives during math in order to minimize the chaos in the classroom. While Kathryn had experiences that led her to believe she needed to structure activities in such a way, this belief was not highly connected to her beliefs about how students learn, the role of students in the classroom, meeting individual needs, etc., therefore a change in this belief would have little impact on her system of educational beliefs.

Beliefs that were supported by sources of evidence including teachers' interactions with others, their professional development activities, and formal knowledge gained through participation in higher education were identified as derived beliefs. Derived beliefs are those that are learned from a trusted source rather than personal experiences with the actual objects of belief. For the teachers, their interactions with others, professional development, and formal knowledge all served as trusted sources. As these beliefs could be identified from their sources of evidence alone, I did not specifically consider how connected these beliefs might be to others within a teacher's system of beliefs. However, based on the theoretical assumptions explored

above, one might expect derived beliefs to have fewer connections than core beliefs, yet more connections than inconsequential beliefs.

Hypotheses regarding Lauren's beliefs about word study. While I followed the process above to identify how all of the teachers held onto beliefs that were related to the focus of their coaching interactions with Sarah, I am choosing to share a detailed example of the process I followed to classify Lauren's beliefs regarding word study. Her beliefs were more clearly stated and directly linked to sources of evidence than Kathryn's or Rachel's beliefs. Additionally, Lauren's coaching interactions with Sarah were singularly focused on word study while the other teachers addressed multiple topics in their coaching interactions.

Within this example, I am not attempting to address every possible belief that might have influenced Lauren's ideas about word study. Instead, I am addressing those most critical to the discussion later in this chapter regarding how Lauren's beliefs influenced her participation in coaching. Figure 16 illustrates the data display matrix (as described in Chapter III) used in the process described above that I followed to categorize her beliefs as core or derived. In this section I will explore one example of a core belief held by Lauren about word study that ultimately influenced her participation in coaching as well as an example of a derived belief.

Word study was one component of the district's balanced literacy framework. Though it was not required for first grade, Lauren was interested in trying it in her classroom after hearing Sarah and her coworkers talk about it. When Lauren talked about word study in January, she explained that it was not a stressful activity for her students. She often scheduled it at the end of the school day because her students enjoyed completing the activities. She also thought the game-like activities prevented her students from becoming bored. Each of these statements connected to her beliefs about the role of students in the classroom. As noted in Chapter IV, data

Instructional Focus of Coaching	Teacher's Reasoning Demonstrated Through Her Talk	Associated Individual Belief(s)	Associated Subsystem of Belief	Underlying Evidence for Beliefs	Connections to Other Subsystems of Belief	Hypothesized Type of Belief
word study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students enjoy word study – word study is not stressful for students – game-like activities keep students from being bored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students need to be actively engaged in their learning – students need to develop a love of learning 	role of students	experiences with teaching; experiences as a learner	role of the teacher; curriculum, purpose of school; guided reading	core
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – word study is designed to build on itself – the patterns presented build on one another – skipping some of the units will undermine the built-in scaffolding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – scaffolded instruction leads to success 	meeting students' needs	experiences with teaching	role of teacher; grouping; developmentally appropriate instruction; curriculum	core
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the district does not allow traditional spelling instruction and while word study is not required in first grade, it is better than nothing – can be hard for students to spell phonetically and the word patterns learned through word study can support this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – balanced literacy; word study can support students' spelling development 	spelling instruction	experiences with others	meeting students' needs; grouping; developmentally appropriate instruction; curriculum	derived
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – her current students do not spell as well as students in previous years when she taught spelling in a traditional way – she misses teaching spelling the way she has in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – traditional spelling instruction is effective 	spelling instruction	experiences with teaching	writing instruction	core

Figure 16. Some of Lauren's beliefs about word study.

from Lauren's interviews as well her survey responses and vision statement indicated that she believed students should be actively engaged in their learning as they completed hands-on activities that were developmentally appropriate. The activities associated with word study matched her descriptions of the types of activities she believed students should be involved with in the classroom. She also believed that students needed to develop a love of learning. Having them engage in activities they found to be enjoyable yet that still helped them learn was a way to foster this love of learning.

Each of these beliefs about students could be connected to Lauren's subsystem of belief dealing with the role of students. When she talked about her beliefs regarding the active engagement of students, she cited her own experiences with teaching and also as a learner as sources of evidence. She explained that as a learner she paid more attention when someone was interested in her. She had also seen this to be true with her students—when she paid more attention to them, they were more interested and engaged with the lesson.

Lauren's beliefs about the role of students were tied to other beliefs she held about the role of the teacher, curriculum, the purpose of schools, and guided reading. For example, to support students' active engagement in the classroom, she believed the teacher should take on the role of a facilitator. She also believed the classroom curriculum should be hands-on and developmentally appropriate. While she believed that one role for students to take on was to become learners, she also thought this was a larger purpose of schooling—to help students develop a desire to learn. Finally, she often used game-like activities in her guided reading groups because she wanted students to enjoy participating in their reading groups and to be excited about reading.

Lauren's beliefs that students should be actively engaged and develop a love for learning were supported by her personal experiences with the objects of belief. They were also highly connected to individual beliefs within other subsystems of belief that she held. Thus, I hypothesize that these beliefs are core beliefs for Lauren. Lauren's beliefs regarding the effectiveness of scaffolded instruction and traditional spelling instruction also appear to be core beliefs.

However, there was one belief that I hypothesize is a derived belief for Lauren, based on her trust in Sarah as an authority knowledgeable about the district's balanced literacy framework and the word study component. This belief is that word study can support students' spelling development. As Lauren explained her reasons for choosing to use word study in her classroom, she noted that word study was preferable to having no way to address spelling. She also felt that it was hard for some of her students to spell phonetically and therefore learning the word patterns through word study would support this type of spelling.

These beliefs were not based on Lauren's own experiences with word study since she had only just begun to implement it in her classroom. Instead, they were based on her interactions with Sarah. At one point, Lauren specifically asked Sarah how word study would help her students learn to spell. Sarah's response was that the focus on the patterns of the words would support their spelling development. Lauren trusted Sarah as a voice of authority in this instance and chose to take up this belief.

This individual belief was mostly likely associated with Lauren's other beliefs about balanced literacy and spelling instruction. There were also connections between this belief and her beliefs about meeting students' needs, student grouping, developmentally appropriate instruction, and curriculum. Because this belief was based on Lauren's trust in Sarah as an

authority rather than her own personal experiences with word study, this most likely is a derived belief.

Hypotheses regarding Kathryn's beliefs about writing instruction. While Lauren's beliefs that influenced her coaching interactions were clearly defined and supported by evidence, Kathryn's beliefs regarding writing instruction were not as obvious. As I will discuss in the final part of this chapter, many of Kathryn's beliefs (and our conversations) were overshadowed by her frustrations with teaching and struggles within her personal life regarding her plans for the future. Therefore, while I was able to identify four beliefs that were influential in her coaching interactions, I was only able to form firm hypotheses about the possible type of belief for one of them.

Figure 17 shows some of Kathryn's beliefs regarding writing instruction. In her coaching interactions, she was interested in implementing a writer's workshop framework in her classroom. In our conversations, Kathryn directly stated that students needed to have a firm grasp of grammatical conventions before being able to write. This direct statement of belief was also supported with descriptions of her own experiences with teaching and as a learner. Additionally, this belief was connected to a variety of other beliefs she held including beliefs about literacy as a meaning making process, balanced literacy, and the role of textbooks. Because of the degree of connectedness along with the direct statement of belief and citing of personal experiences, this belief is likely a core belief Kathryn holds about writing instruction.

Kathryn's beliefs that writing is a necessary skill with a functional purpose and that reading and writing are connected processes were both clearly stated beliefs. However, she did not elaborate on these beliefs and offered no direct sources of evidence for them. I also was not able to find instances where she addressed them in other conversations. Based on Green's (1971)

Instructional Focus of Coaching	Teacher's Reasoning Demonstrated Through Her Talk	Associated Individual Belief(s)	Associated Subsystem of Belief	Underlying Evidence for Beliefs	Connections to Other Subsystems of Belief	Hypothesized Type of Belief
writing instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to be a reader you have to have to be able to write – if you don't know how to read, you can't write – students need to understand connections between reading and writing – strongly agreed with this statement on LOS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reading and writing are connected processes 	literacy as a meaning making process	none clearly provided	essential skills and knowledge; writing practices; role of students; purpose of schools; balanced literacy	unclear (possible core)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students need writing to get around in life – people have to know how to write – not everyone will be a good writer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – writing is a necessary skill with a functional purpose 	literacy as a meaning making process	none clearly provided	essential skills and knowledge; purpose of schools	unclear (possible core)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students must understand grammar in order to write – to write a complete sentence, you need to know the parts of a sentence – to write paragraphs, you need to be able to write sentences – she knows how to teach isolated grammar skills but not how to help her students transfer that to their writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – knowledge of mechanics and conventions are prerequisites for writing 	writing practices	experiences with teaching; experiences as a learner	literacy as a meaning making process; essential skills and knowledge; integration; balanced literacy; meeting students' needs; role of textbooks	core
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – writing is her weakest area as a teacher because she's "horrible" at writing – she doesn't see herself as a writer; she doesn't know how to connect it all together – she was never taught how to write – some teachers have a "gift" or a "knack of putting it together" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – teachers must be good writers to be good teachers of writing 	role of the teacher	experiences with teaching; experiences as a learner	writing practices	unclear (possible core or inconsequential)

Figure 17. Some of Kathryn's beliefs about writing instruction.

argument, the fact that she is able to provide no other sources of evidence may be an indication that they are core beliefs. Nonetheless, based on the limited amount of conversation that we had around the topic of writing, I was not comfortable classifying them as core beliefs without additional data.

The final belief was Kathryn's belief that to be a good teacher of writing, one must be a good writer. She did not identify herself as a writer and felt that writing was her weakest area as a teacher. She offered experiences with teaching and as a learner that supported this belief. However, there did not appear to be many connections to other subsystems of belief. Because this belief was based on personal experiences yet was not highly connected, it might be classified as an inconsequential belief. However, the nature of this belief led me to question this classification. Rokeach (1972) argued that beliefs about self-identity or ego-related beliefs are often core beliefs. This belief could be an example of such a belief. Thus, without the opportunity to explore this belief further with Kathryn, I was unwilling to classify it as either a core or inconsequential belief. I did include it, however, because as will be discussed in the next chapter, this lack of self-efficacy regarding writing instruction influenced her participation in coaching.

Hypotheses regarding Rachel's beliefs about guided reading. Figure 18 identifies three of the beliefs about guided reading that influenced Rachel's coaching interactions. Two of these were identified as core beliefs. Rachel believed that guided reading groups should be formed based on students' reading levels. She directly stated this belief and cited her experiences with teaching, interactions with others, and professional development activities as sources of information. This belief about grouping was also connected to several others, indicating it is likely a core belief. Rachel's belief that students should read grade level texts in their guided

Instructional Focus of Coaching	Teacher's Reasoning Demonstrated Through Her Talk	Associated Individual Belief(s)	Associated Subsystem of Belief	Underlying Evidence for Beliefs	Connections to Other Subsystems of Belief	Hypothesized Type of Belief
guided reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students need to be on their level – Sarah has stressed this idea (as well as the district) – not reading on students' level frustrates them – Sarah may not be approve of her having her lower groups read texts above their level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students should read texts at their instructional levels in guided reading 	guided reading	interactions with others; professional development activities	meeting students' needs; struggling readers; good readers; grouping; role of students; role of teacher; balanced literacy	derived
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – when all groups read the same text, she provides differentiated instruction for each group – if all you do is teach students at their levels, they don't get exposed to higher expectations – providing students texts at grade level gives them something to work towards – her low group has done well with challenging texts – students need to be challenged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – students should read grade level texts in guided reading 	guided reading	experiences with teaching	meeting students' needs; struggling readers; good readers; grouping; role of students; role of teacher; balanced literacy	core
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – created her guided reading groups based on reading level first, then what they struggled with – LOS – strongly agreed that students should be treated as individuals; disagreed that reading instruction should take place in whole group; strongly agreed that grouping for reading instruction should be based on ability – grouping by ability means students will be able to read appropriate texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – guided reading groups should be based on students' reading levels 	grouping	experiences with teaching; interactions with others; professional development activities	meeting students' needs; guided reading; balanced literacy; assessment	core

Figure 18. Some of Rachel's beliefs about guided reading.

reading groups regardless of their reading levels was also identified as a core belief because it was based on her personal experiences with teaching and was highly connected to other subsystems of belief.

Interestingly, Rachel also directly stated the opposite belief that students need to read texts that are at their instructional levels in their guided reading groups. Rachel was aware of the contradiction between the two beliefs though she offered support for each across multiple conversations. Her belief regarding the need for instructional level texts was based on her interactions with Sarah and professional development activities. She knew this was a district expectation and noted that Sarah often reminded teachers of the need to place students in instructional level texts. Because this belief was based on Rachel's trust in authorities rather than her own personal experiences, it is most likely a derived belief.

Summary and Implications

For each of the teachers, I was able to identify specific beliefs that influenced their participation in coaching and to hypothesize the types of beliefs they each held. This process of considering how beliefs are held is certainly not conclusive. However, it does provide a way to begin to think about teachers' talk as a tool for identifying how they hold their beliefs.

Each of the teachers also held beliefs that were in some way counter to the desired outcome of their coaching sessions. Lauren was willing to try word study and hoped that it would support her students' spelling development. However, she held the core belief that a traditional approach to spelling instruction was effective and missed using it in her classroom. Kathryn was interested in trying a writer's workshop approach in her classroom, but many of her ideas regarding writing and writing instruction were not compatible with the theoretical

underpinnings of a writer's workshop framework. Rachel held conflicting beliefs about the types of materials that students should be reading during guided reading instruction. These contradictions of belief will be explored further in the following section when I consider how the teachers' beliefs influenced their participation in coaching

Knowing how beliefs are held has implications for teacher development and professional development. First, having a better sense of *how* beliefs are held allows an understanding of which beliefs might be most open to change. Derived beliefs are less centrally held than core beliefs, and as such are more amenable to change. Thus, these beliefs may provide better starting points for professional development aimed at teacher change. Understanding how beliefs are held also provides a glimpse into the types of evidence that are persuasive for teachers. Knowing that personal experiences with teaching are often strong sources of evidence, this opens the possibility that providing teachers with teaching experiences supportive of new beliefs may facilitate the change process. The same is true for their experiences as learners. Are there experiences teachers could have as learners in professional development that would allow them to see their students in a new light? Also, understanding which sources of evidence are most persuasive for teachers provides insight into the types of discourses that may be internally persuasive for them. Again, this allows for the possibility of creating what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as contact zones in which multiple internally persuasive discourses are forced to interact, leading to teacher growth and development. Finally, the identification of how beliefs are held raises awareness of the connectedness of beliefs and the implications this may have for professional development. Because teachers' beliefs are connected, professional development needs to address new beliefs in ways that allow teachers to maintain those connections between

beliefs and compatibility with other systems of belief. These implications will be discussed further in Chapter VII.

The Influence of Teachers' Beliefs on Their Participation in Coaching

In this final section, I consider ways that the teachers' beliefs (both those identified above and in Chapter IV) influenced their participation in coaching. The conclusions I share here are tentative in nature, due in large part to the limited time the teachers spent engaged in individual coaching activities. As will be addressed in the following chapter, Sarah's time for coaching became quite limited as she assumed additional job responsibilities associated with the district's implementation of DIBELS. During the fall semester, Kathryn and Lauren completed one coaching cycle (i.e., preconference, classroom support, post-conference) with Sarah, though she and Kathryn never had a formal debriefing session following her in-class support. Rachel participated in two cycles of coaching, with each focused on guided reading. Again, the hypotheses I share in this section, while based on the data collected, are just that—hypotheses. Additional coaching interactions would need to be examined in order to confirm these initial findings. Also, as I touch on the impact of coaching on the teachers' practice, the conclusions are based mainly on self-reported data, though they were substantiated by observational data.

Kathryn's Participation in Coaching

Throughout Sarah's coaching interactions with Kathryn (as presented in Chapter III), there were several topics that were addressed including writer's workshop, writing instruction, guided reading instruction, and word study. However, these interactions were not as tightly focused as, for example, Sarah's interactions with Lauren around word study. Sarah and Kathryn

met to discuss ways to establish a writer's workshop format. Sarah then joined Kathryn during her guided reading groups, observing her teaching and reflecting on what she observed.

When asked to describe her goals for the interactions with Sarah, Kathryn explained that she was looking for affirmation and a boost in her confidence and felt she got this from their interactions. She particularly valued Sarah's feedback because she knew Sarah was familiar with her teaching as she had spent much time in Kathryn's classroom in the past few years.

Sarah and Kathryn had a history of successful coaching interactions and had developed a strong personal relationship. Kathryn often mentioned how she was Sarah's guinea pig—a safe place to try out new ideas. While Kathryn respected Sarah and took Sarah's opinions into consideration, she did not feel she was required to adopt the suggestions Sarah provided.

As the study concluded in January, there did not appear to be significant changes in Kathryn's writing practice and a writer's workshop approach had not been established. Kathryn agreed that her writing practice had not yet changed. She explained that it just had not yet become a priority and thus did not receive enough attention. I wondered if this was because it was one of so many topics that covered in Kathryn and Sarah's coaching interactions. While writing had been initially identified as the main topic, many other matters drew attention away from it.

Kathryn was hopeful that her writing instruction might still change. She continued to think about what she could do with her writing instruction, though the ideas she shared with me were not those she and Sarah had developed together. Kathryn's goals had shifted a bit. She stated that she hoped to do

more writing lessons right now. The writer's workshop is—I like the idea, but I don't know how I'm gonna' manage it. I don't know if it's gonna' work for me personally. I like the reader's workshop type thing better, so I thought just maybe if I take it—for me, I have to take things little steps at a time. So that I'm gonna' try this little step and see how

it goes. And if I get, if this gets going good then I'll try the next step. (Interviews 1 & 2, December 12, 2008)

While Kathryn did not take up the ideas presented about writer's workshop in her coaching, there were smaller suggestions that Sarah made that she claimed for her use. For example, Sarah suggested having students read independently before meeting with them in their guided reading groups. Sarah explained this would allow more time for discussion in Kathryn's groups. Kathryn chose to use this approach with all but her lowest reading group.

Because Kathryn chose not to take up writer's workshop as presented in her coaching interactions with Sarah, I examined her beliefs to see how they might have influenced this decision. As described in the previous section, the centrality of Kathryn's beliefs about writing instruction was difficult to categorize. She believed that reading and writing are connected processes and felt that writing was a necessary skill for students to learn. Neither of these beliefs appeared to conflict with the ideas Sarah presented in their coaching interactions. However, Kathryn also held the belief that a person must have a strong grasp of grammatical conventions before becoming a writer as a core belief. This belief alone can help explain her resistance to writer's workshop as it is not consistent with a writer's workshop philosophy where even the youngest of writers with a grasp of very few conventions would be encouraged to convey his/her meaning through writing, or be a writer.

Kathryn also did not see herself as a writer or a good teacher of writing. She argued that teachers who were good at teaching writing had a "gift" or a "knack of putting it together" (Interview 4, January 30, 2009). While she felt confident in her abilities to teach grammar, she was much less sure of herself when it came to the type of instruction inherent within writer's workshop. For example, Kathryn believed that modeling was a crucial part of writing instruction and was certainly part of a writer's workshop format. However, modeling was not something she

was able to do on the spur of the moment. She needed time to plan her modeled writing in advance. As I note below, time was an obstacle for Kathryn, and when combined with her lack of confidence in herself as a writer, may have also impacted her choice not to move forward with writer's workshop.

Beyond her beliefs about writing, I was intrigued by an exchange that took place during Sarah's visit to Kathryn's classroom. Kathryn explained to Sarah that she had considered abandoning word study in her classroom and returning to a traditional spelling format. She described the mental battle that had ensued as she argued both sides of the issue, ultimately choosing to continue the practice. I was shocked to hear her say this because I knew that in multiple conversations Kathryn had explained her beliefs about the importance of word study in detail. While she had not been in favor of the practice when it was first instituted in the district, she had researched it and believed in its developmental underpinnings. She had also used it for many years in her classroom and had seen that it worked for her students. She even attributed her own growth as a speller to her teaching of word study. I hypothesized that her beliefs about word study were core beliefs as they were based on personal experiences and were highly connected to her beliefs about balanced literacy and meeting students' needs.

I wanted to understand how Kathryn had reached the point that she considered abandoning a practice she clearly believed in and valued. Her answer, in one word, was frustration. She explained, "I was frustrated with trying to do everything and couldn't do it. I was frustrated because I felt like I was just failing. I was falling flat on my face and I was being a horrible teacher" (Interview 3, January 27, 2009). I knew that frustration had been an overarching theme of Kathryn's teaching experience throughout the study, but was surprised to learn that it would lead her to consider such a drastic decision.

Frustration was a common theme for Kathryn, and I suspect that her personal beliefs and circumstances in many ways became more influential over her practice and participation than her beliefs about literacy instruction. As an example, I return to her discussion of how frustration led her to consider replacing word study with traditional spelling lists. She explained,

I thought well I'll just, okay, it's better than not having anything at all so I'll just do that 'cause it's easier to do. I was just taking the easy route because I was frustrated and I didn't know what else to do. And I was tired of give and give and give and give. Doing, doing, doing, doing. (Interview 3, January 27, 2009).

Evidence of her personal beliefs and needs overriding her educational beliefs was also provided through an examination of Kathryn's talk about her teaching. Often, her beliefs about time were used to justify her practice, typically in the respect of not having followed through on a practice because she could not find the time. For example, she believed it was important for students to be held accountable for the work they completed during word study. However, she could not find time to review their work and therefore was not able to hold her students as accountable as she had in past years. She also often talked about her teaching, especially in guided reading, in terms of flying by the seat of her pants, as she struggled to find enough time to plan for instruction.

As explained in Chapter III, Kathryn had plans to relocate at the end of the school year and was not sure if she would seek a position as a classroom teacher. Though she was frustrated and at times disillusioned, she was still striving to be a good teacher and wanted to meet the needs of her students. She said, "I want to do the right thing and I'm trying to do the right thing. I may not always succeed, but I try" (Interview 3, January 27, 2009). She just found herself overwhelmed and I would argue unable to take on many new ideas regardless of how well they meshed with her beliefs.

Rachel's Participation in Coaching

Rachel and Sarah spent more time engaged together in coaching activities than any of the other pairs. As described in Chapter III, Rachel approached Sarah for help with guided reading because she was unsure how to support her struggling readers who had difficulties with decoding. In their first cycle of coaching, Sarah provided a modeled guided reading lesson using instructional materials supportive of students' strategic reading. When Sarah and Rachel debriefed following this lesson, Rachel felt she needed additional support. Therefore, Sarah offered a second cycle of coaching and conferring in which she observed Rachel leading a guided reading lesson.

Overall, Rachel's participation in these coaching activities resulted in no significant change in her instructional practices. Though she indicated in our conversations in December that she was trying to sharpen her focus to one teaching point and to identify teaching points more purposefully, in our final interview in January she acknowledged that her guided reading instruction had not really changed. I also saw little evidence of change during my classroom observations.

I was interested in exploring what prevented Rachel from taking up the ideas about guided reading shared during the coaching interactions. I knew that she and Sarah had had successful interactions in years past in which Rachel's practice and thinking shifted dramatically. For example, in the previous school year Sarah worked with Rachel to establish writer's workshop in her classroom, a practice Rachel continued and indicated she had strong feelings about in our interviews. Rachel's lack of uptake during these interactions was also interesting because she self-reported that she had chosen to adopt a different practice that Sarah had suggested in a group coaching session. So, she was willing to take on Sarah's guidance and in

fact often looked to Sarah for direct answers to her questions, but did not act on the ideas shared around guided reading.

I was able to identify factors that may have served as obstacles for Rachel taking ownership over the ideas presented by Sarah during their coaching interactions. The first was the type of support that she received. Rachel very much valued modeling. As a learner, she knew that she needed to watch someone do something before trying it for herself. Therefore, Sarah's offer to model a lesson should have been supportive of Rachel's learning. However, the modeled lesson did not turn out quite as Rachel expected. She explained,

I'm one of those I need to see how it's gonna' work. Like, and I need to see what's going on. And, I think the day that [Sarah] was in here doing the lesson [the principal] came in and I had another teacher come in and I wasn't able to sit down and focus on what she was teaching. Instead I was too busy trying to deal with everybody else. Because they thought, "Oh, well [Sarah's] in here so [Rachel] isn't doing anything now." (Interview 2, December 16, 2008)

Because she was not able to see the instructional practices in use, Rachel indicated she never really understood what Sarah was trying to help her do. Additional modeling may have clarified the purpose of the activity for Rachel.

Difficulties with the instructional materials may also have hindered Rachel's participation. Sarah provided the strategies materials hoping they would be a teacher-friendly resource. However, Rachel found them difficult to navigate and became frustrated with them. She ultimately abandoned the materials and indicated that without further assistance, she would not use them. In addition to her difficulties with the instructional materials Sarah provided, Rachel also indicated that she was unsure how to identify appropriate books that would support her teaching points during guided reading. She thought that all books were supportive of work with comprehension, but was not able to identify books that would work well with other teaching points.

Constraints on Sarah's time and her own were additional roadblocks to Rachel's uptake of new ideas during her coaching interactions. For example, though she knew she would not use the strategies materials without more help from Sarah, she also realized that Sarah's time was at a premium. Because of this, she hesitated to ask for additional help, explaining

I feel really bad to ask her—and I know that's her job and I know it's my job to ask her. But I'm like, "Ooh, I really hate to bother her right now." Because I know she's got all that, I mean, they've got a lot more to do now than what they did last year. (Interview 2, December 16, 2008)

This lack of time was one of the differences Rachel identified between her interactions with Sarah in the past and her experiences with coaching during the study. In the previous year when Sarah had successfully helped her establish writer's workshop, she had the opportunity to be in Rachel's classroom much more frequently. Along with Sarah's lack of time, Rachel also struggled with finding time to plan for guided reading. She found it overwhelming to think about planning a different guided reading lesson for each of her groups every day. Part of what Sarah had modeled was covering words within books to encourage students to look to picture cues to help identify unknown words. While Rachel reacted positively to this idea during the debriefing session that followed the lesson, later she indicated that she did not have time to prepare books ahead of time for each lesson. This seemed like an unattainable goal.

Finally, I hypothesize that Rachel's beliefs may have been a final obstacle to her participation in coaching. Unlike the factors above which Rachel was able to identify herself, she never verbalized that her beliefs might have limited her participation. However, clues she provided through her justifications for her practice indicated they might. The data indicated that Rachel and Sarah held differing beliefs regarding the types of texts students should be engaged in during guided reading as well as the purposes of guided reading instruction.

Rachel and Sarah worked on providing guided reading lessons focused around one

teaching point during their coaching interactions. Rachel struggled with this, and while she identified it as a problem, she also did not seem ready to let go of the practice. She believed that when students, especially those who struggled with reading, raised connections to prior instruction or voluntarily contributed to lessons that their contributions should be honored. Rachel considered these to be teachable moments and was worried that if she changed her pattern of participation with students they would disengage from the lesson. While she realized that acting on these teachable moments often derailed the lesson from its original purpose, she was excited when students made those types of connections. She wanted to pass that excitement on to her students rather than have them feel they were being turned away.

As described in the previous section, Rachel also held conflicting beliefs about the types of texts students should engage with during guided reading and the purposes for their participation. She was very much aware that Sarah believed students should be taught at their instructional levels and often named that as a belief that she held as well. However, during several of our conversations, her justifications for her choices to have students sometimes read texts above their instructional level during guided reading indicated that her belief that students should be reading grade level texts was more centrally held than her belief regarding instructional level texts which appeared to be derived from her trust in Sarah and the school district itself as authorities. In this case, her more centrally held belief appeared to influence her practice more strongly.

A final belief that was classified as a core belief for Rachel was her belief that guided reading groups should be based on students' reading levels. While this belief seems to contradict her belief (and instructional decision) to engage all students in texts of the same level, Rachel's practice allowed her to maintain those beliefs without a conflict. Though she often had all

students engaged in the same text, she described ways that she differentiated the amount of support she provided for each group, thereby still working to meet their individual needs.

Rachel's conflicting beliefs about the importance of planning focused lessons and the types of materials to use in guided reading may have prevented her from fully taking up the ideas Sarah presented. However, I do not believe Rachel was consciously aware that she held beliefs that disagreed with the practices Sarah presented or that these beliefs may have contributed to her failure to take ownership over the ideas presented in coaching. This lack of conscious awareness of beliefs or how they function within coaching is problematic. Rachel knew what Sarah believed about these topics, but it was not apparent that Sarah was aware of Rachel's conflicting beliefs. The lack of awareness of the difference in beliefs may have prevented Sarah from providing the types of rationales and evidences that Rachel would find more convincing. This raises the question of whether more progress could have been made if they both had been aware of the difference and able to confront it directly.

Lauren's Participation in Coaching

Lauren approached Sarah for assistance with word study after reading the materials on her own and realizing she could use some help. Sarah had told her she would help any way she could, so Lauren decided to ask her to show her how to do word study. As noted in Chapter III, they met to discuss the type of support that Lauren needed and decided that Sarah would model a 5 day routine with word study. Following the final day of modeling, Sarah and Lauren met to discuss Lauren's impressions of the instructional practices she had seen modeled and lingering questions she might have.

Lauren found Sarah's in-class support particularly useful. She said it was

great, because the kids have that great model of somebody who really knew what they were doing. I had that great model of somebody who really knew what they were doing. So then I just do it the way she did it. (Interview 2, November 14, 2008).

Lauren was particularly happy that Sarah had not asked her to help in the classroom while she was modeling. She felt that gave her a chance to pay attention and take notes that she had since used to recreate the activities with her students.

In January, Lauren indicated she was still using word study in her classroom and was happy with it. She did not feel she needed any additional support with word study, though she knew that Sarah had offered to share additional activities with her as needed. Unlike past experiences where coaches visited Lauren's classroom to point out what she was doing wrong, Sarah had been invited in and Lauren felt free to either take on the ideas she offered or not.

Lauren was aware that it was a common practice for Sarah to offer teachers choices. She said,

I know I've heard her say to other teachers, "You could try it this way." And I think she spins it the right way where if she, like for instance with word study. I wasn't using word study and she basically said, "You should give it a go. If it doesn't work for you, fine. We'll try something else." (Interview 2 Continued, November 21, 2008)

Because of this positive spin (or as I'll argue in the next chapter, differentiated approach to coaching), Lauren was receptive to Sarah's offer of support and was willing to take up the idea of word study.

Overall, Lauren's uptake of the word study practices Sarah modeled during their coaching interactions appeared to be a success. It was well-aligned with her core beliefs about student engagement and scaffolded instruction. However, during the same interview in January in which she reiterated that word study was continuing to go well in her classroom, she discussed her beliefs regarding her preference for traditional spelling instruction (identified as a core belief earlier in this chapter). So, Lauren had willingly taken up the practices that Sarah offered, but perhaps not the underlying beliefs. She was willing to try word study because as she explained,

“This is gonna’ help, really is, since we don’t do spelling lists. We need to do something” (Interview 2, November 14, 2008). She might also have been willing to take up the practice of word study because she was very much used to conforming to what she was told to do in her classroom. Sarah certainly did not tell Lauren she had to do word study, and Lauren even noted that she knew she was free to use it or not. Still, as she struggled with how to handle the freedom she found within her classroom, the offer of a structured program may have been appealing.

I see a few possible outcomes of this shift in practice occurring before a shift in Lauren’s belief. One is that she would continue to use the practice without incorporating the belief as a core belief, as it is a better alternative than no instruction for her students. However, if ever given the chance to return to a traditional manner of teaching spelling, she would abandon this new practice as well as the derived belief associated with it in favor of her more centrally located belief regarding the effectiveness of traditional spelling instruction.

Another possibility is that with continued use of word study, Lauren would accumulate enough experiences with it as a teacher—perhaps seeing that it works, that it is connected to and reinforces her other beliefs regarding student engagement, etc.—that those experiences might begin to serve as stronger sources of evidence than her trust in Sarah’s word, thus shifting the belief from a derived belief to a more centrally held core belief. Guskey (1986) argued that this is one way changes in teachers’ beliefs are accomplished.

While each of these scenarios is hypothetical, they do point to the importance of considering how teachers hold beliefs. If as the coach Sarah were aware of the positioning of Lauren’s belief around word study as a derived belief, she might be able to encourage Lauren to think about her personal experiences with word study and to reflect on the outcomes she sees for

her students. This pointed reflection might help shift Lauren's thinking and believing about word study and spelling.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a starting point for ways to examine *how* teachers hold their beliefs. First, several sources of evidence influential in the development and maintenance of teachers' beliefs were identified. Teachers' personal experiences with teaching and as learners were the most frequently cited sources of evidence. As these types of experiences are often associated with core beliefs, they might also be the most persuasive for teachers. The other sources of evidence that were cited relied in large part on teachers' willingness to trust in other authorities, whether their coworkers, professional development providers, authors, or college professors. Sources of evidence including their interactions with others, participation in professional development activities, and formal knowledge gained through undergraduate and postgraduate studies varied in the amount of weight they held for teachers. Beliefs resulting from these types of evidence are often derived beliefs. Thus, if teachers' trust in these authority were to change, so too might their beliefs.

The links between teachers' sources of evidence, connections between beliefs, and the centrality of beliefs were then considered. Building on theoretical arguments regarding the structure of systems of belief, a process was described for beginning to consider teachers' statements, intentions, and behaviors in an effort to categorize the types of beliefs they hold. Having a better understanding of the types of beliefs held provides the opportunity to personalize professional development and teacher development.

Finally, attention was paid to ways that differing types of belief impacted the teachers' participation in coaching. Kathryn and Rachel did not take up the ideas Sarah shared with them in their coaching interactions even though they both had done so in the past. At times, their beliefs were inconsistent with the ideas that were presented to them, though neither acknowledged the conflict and Sarah also seemed unaware of it. Other factors that may have influenced their participation in coaching included the nature of the support they received, the materials used for instruction, and time constraints. For Kathryn, her personal feelings of frustration and discontent seemed to exert greater influence on her practice than her educational beliefs. Finally, though Lauren did take up the word study practices Sarah modeled, questions remain about the durability of her associated beliefs. In Chapter VI, I consider the influence of Sarah's beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching on her participation in coaching.

CHAPTER VI

THE INFLUENCE OF SARAH'S BELIEFS ON COACHING

In this chapter, I once again address my third research question concerning the impact of beliefs on participation in coaching. In Chapter V, beliefs that impacted the teachers' responses to coaching were examined. A variety of beliefs were identified, some core beliefs and others derived, that held the potential for influencing the teachers' participation in coaching though often in tacit ways. As their beliefs conflicted with the ideas Sarah presented to them in their coaching interactions, they were not aware of the conflict and did not actively challenge those ideas. Therefore, I was interested in examining what happened when a difference in belief was recognized. Throughout their coaching interactions, I was able to identify a few places where Sarah recognized that her beliefs were bumping against the teachers' and chose to address the competing beliefs.

Ultimately, this study is about coaching as a context for professional development and how teachers' beliefs are involved in their participation. Therefore, I was interested in considering how Sarah approached professional development in her role as a coach and how that approach addressed differences in teachers' beliefs. In an effort to understand the context for understanding teachers' beliefs, I now examine the influence of Sarah's beliefs about coaching. First, I identify Sarah's specific beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching. Next, I consider the impact of those beliefs on her work as a coach. Then I explore her efforts to differentiate her coaching to address teachers' specific needs. Finally, I describe ways in which conflicting beliefs arising between Sarah and the teachers during their coaching interactions were

mediated. The data presented in this chapter are drawn mainly from my interviews with Sarah and my observations of her coaching. At times, I draw on artifacts collected during those coaching activities as well.

The Influence of Sarah's Beliefs on Her Work as a Coach

In Chapter IV, I identified many of the beliefs that Sarah held about literacy instruction and education in general. While these most certainly informed her work as a coach and the content that she provided to teachers during coaching interactions, in this chapter I am choosing to focus on the work of coaching separately from the content of coaching. This consideration of the activity of coaching includes the specific ways that Sarah approached teachers and the types of support that she provided during coaching interactions. I chose to focus on Sarah's beliefs about her work as a coach rather than her beliefs about literacy because as described in Chapter V, I was not able to obtain the same level of understanding regarding her literacy-related beliefs as I did for the teachers because the nature of our conversations was more focused on her work as a coach. Overall, we spent less time talking specifically about the sources of evidence that supported her beliefs and our conversations did not lead to the spontaneous addition of this information as it did with the teachers.

Because I did not capture as much information regarding the sources of evidence on which Sarah's beliefs about coaching were based, I did not attempt to analyze *how* she held these beliefs in the same way that I did with the teachers in Chapter V. I speculate that the beliefs she held about coaching were centrally held. Sarah had no formal preparation for her role as a coach, and as such no specific program or model of coaching serving as a voice of authority. Instead, much of what she had learned about coaching came from her own professional reading and

experiences with teachers in their classrooms. However, the data simply were not sufficient to form hypotheses regarding the types of beliefs (i.e., core, derived, inconsequential) she held about coaching.

In this section, I describe Sarah's beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching. Then I consider how these beliefs influenced her coaching practice.

Sarah's Beliefs about Coaching

Sarah did not believe there was one right way to teach reading. Thus, she was hesitant to require all of her teachers to teach the same way and had no expectation that instruction would be the same across classrooms and/or grade levels. She explained

The framework that [the district has] that teachers are supposed to be doing is very broad and I feel like as long as they've got those pieces that within those pieces there's a lot of room for individuality and letting teachers figure out how it works for them....I try not to box them into doing just what I do because, I mean, there aren't any two classrooms alike. There aren't two teachers alike. So I feel like there's not a right way to do it. (Interview 1, November 11, 2008)

Part of Sarah's hesitation in naming one way of teaching reading was that she believed no one instructional program would be sufficient for teaching all students. Even though she supported a balanced literacy framework, as an interventionist she recognized there were students who needed more focused approaches, such as systematic phonics instruction, for example, to address gaps in their understanding.

As a reading specialist in the district, part of Sarah's job description was to ensure the balanced literacy initiative was implemented within the school. While Sarah believed in allowing teachers flexibility in their classrooms, there were a few instructional practices she felt were non-negotiable for the teachers in her school. First, the teachers should use assessment data to inform their instruction in order to teach students at their instructional level. They should also include

the components of balanced literacy—guided reading, shared reading, read aloud, independent reading, word study, writing—and meet with their lowest students in guided reading every day as often as possible.

Sarah also believed that having a strong relationship with her teachers was a critical element of successful coaching. She counted the relationships she had built working side-by-side with teachers before assuming the role of reading specialist as an asset to her coaching. In describing the type of relationship she hoped to build with teachers she explained, “I want to foster the relationship where they would come to me wanting some ideas or bouncing ideas off of me” (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008). Sarah acknowledged if she were to move to a different school, forming relationships with the teachers would be a challenge yet also the first thing she would work to establish. Relationships were also crucial because Sarah felt they were what allowed her to *know* her teachers. This intimate knowledge of the teachers allowed her to differentiate her coaching to meet their needs, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sarah believed that her role was to act as a guide for teachers and to help them discover what worked for them in their classrooms rather than provide them with all of the answers. To facilitate this, she felt she needed to provide her teachers with choices. She said, “I always give [teachers] choices. I always give ‘em choices.... ‘cause I feel like if I don’t give ‘em choice, then it’s more I’m telling them what to do—which is not my job” (Interview 1, November 11, 2008).

Sarah also felt that providing teachers with choices about the type of support she provided or the topics addressed in coaching fostered greater teacher ownership or “buy in.” She explained,

I think [buy in is] absolutely crucial. Because if it’s something that [teachers] don’t understand or something that they feel like they couldn’t do, or don’t get it, then they’re not gonna’ follow through with it. They’re not gonna’ keep up with it. They’re not gonna’ be comfortable with it. Teaching’s you know, as much as we have all these

mandates, these things we have to do, teaching is a very individual thing. I mean there aren't two teachers that do the same thing and so to tell someone you have to teach this way, I think, kind of defeats the purpose of what you're doing. 'Cause they have to have buy in. Now granted they don't, they may not get it the first time, and if it's something like guided reading for example, we have to do guided reading. You know, there's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. You do it. And you know, there have been teachers that they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I can't fit it in." Obviously they don't understand the purpose of it. They don't understand why it's important. And so even though you go in and show them this is what it is, they still may not understand the purpose behind it. So, you've gotta' get them to understand and see it as being valuable so that they will make it a priority. (Interview 2, November 20, 2008)

In her role as a coach, Sarah did not want to encourage teachers to take on new practices without understanding the importance and reasoning behind them. To support their understanding, she provided rationales for the ideas and practices she offered to teachers. Also, though she focused on her relationships with teachers, she was aware that ultimately, her work was about the students and what was best for them.

Finally, to foster the teacher buy in and deeper understandings of new practices, Sarah believed it was important that she meet her teachers "where they were." She noted

I try to always start with where [teachers] are...I really try to be conscious of telling them how to do anything. 'Cause I do have teacher[s] that come to me and they'll just say, "This just isn't working." And so I try to figure out where they are before I know where they need to go. I don't want to be the person that runs in and puts out the fire because that's not gonna' be sustainable. (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Ways that Sarah worked to meet teachers where they were are discussed later in this chapter.

Interestingly, several of Sarah's beliefs about coaching mirrored her beliefs about the role of teachers and students as described in Chapter IV. For example, she believed students need to be actively engaged and take ownership over their own learning. She felt the same way about her teachers as they participated in coaching. Sarah also believed it was important for students to learn from each other and worked to help the teachers learn from each other as well. For example, during group coaching activities she encouraged the teachers to share their ideas.

Finally, as a coach, she was interested in facilitating her teachers' understanding just as she was interested in facilitating her students' learning.

Sarah's Coaching Beliefs in Action

Each of the beliefs identified above influenced Sarah's work as a coach. They impacted how she presented herself to teachers as well as the types of interactions she pursued with them. In this section, I consider the ways Sarah chose to position herself in her role as a reading specialist based on her beliefs about the purpose of coaching and her role as a coach. I also consider other ways her coaching was shaped by these beliefs.

Sarah's positioning of herself. Sarah's beliefs about her role as a coach influenced the way she chose to position herself at Blue Mountain. Coaches are often cast into the role of expert (Gibson, 2006) and while Sarah acknowledged that some of her teachers saw her this way, she did not want to be perceived that way. As noted above, Sarah wanted to be seen as a guide on teachers' paths of self-discovery.

Along with not positioning herself as an expert, Sarah was also adamant that she not be positioned as an administrator. Unfortunately, the direct line of communication she had to the school's principal and the messages she was often required to pass along to teachers from the district sometimes made it hard for her to avoid the appearance of an administrative role.

However, she was clear that she was not an administrator, she was not an evaluator, and she was not an enforcer. She said,

We've been told in our reading specialists meetings we are not administrators. It is not our job to make teachers do guided reading. It is not our job to make them do read alouds. We can't make them do anything. You know we just give 'em tools. (Initial Interview, July 15, 2008)

Sarah wanted to serve as a resource and support for teachers.

Sarah worked to overcome perceptions of her as an expert and administrator by positioning herself as a co-learner or equal with her teachers. She encouraged her teachers to share ideas with each other and would often refer teachers with questions to other teachers in the building who had experience with a certain practice. For instance, she suggested that Kathryn talk with Rachel about writer's workshop. Sarah and Rachel had worked together in previous years to establish the practice in Rachel's classroom. Sarah explained, "I try to emphasize to [the teachers] you know, I'm learning too. I don't pretend to know everything. So I say I'm a resource, not an expert" (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008).

Another example of Sarah's efforts to position herself as just another one of the teachers occurred during the grade level meetings in November. When the teachers shared their concerns about students that she also taught in her intervention groups, Sarah would ask the other teachers to provide advice to her as well saying, for example, "What can we do more with John?" or "What are some other ideas for [the teacher] and me?" (Grade 1 DIBELS Data Meeting, November 12, 2008).

Finally, at times the principal at Blue Mountain was also mindful of protecting Sarah from the role of an administrator. For example, the principal assigned Sarah to serve as a member of the school's writing team. However, she made it clear that Sarah was just to be a member of the team, not the chairperson. Sarah explained, "I was a member of the committee 'cause [the principal's] very careful about that. You know, she wants me to be a voice on the committee. She does not want me leading them. Which, I'm all for" (Interview 3, January 23, 2009).

Sarah's efforts seemed to work, as the teachers in the study did not perceive her as an administrator. Lauren described her as "another teacher in the school" (Interview 2 Continued,

November 21, 2008) and thought this positioning was an asset. Lauren respected that Sarah still worked with students on a daily basis. She felt that it gave Sarah greater credibility than previous coaches with whom she had worked. Similarly, Kathryn clearly described her understanding of Sarah's role.

The way I understand Sarah's role is that she's not an administrator. And she doesn't have the law to say, "You do this or else." And she doesn't have, it's not her job to go back and tattletale to [the principal] that we're not doing this. Her job is to work with us and help us....She's not gonna' go where she's not welcome. She will do what she's supposed to as far as her job is concerned, but she's not gonna' go make you come to her. (Interview 3, January 27, 2009)

Influences beyond positioning. In addition to the impact of Sarah's beliefs about coaching on her positioning, there were other ways that Sarah's beliefs about coaching affected her work at Blue Mountain. Sarah's belief that there is no one correct way of teaching reading allowed her to remain flexible about the types of practices her teachers worked to adopt. She argued, "This isn't Sarah's reading program. It's not everyone has to do Sarah's model." (Interview 1, November 11, 2008). This flexibility led her to value learning from her teachers as she sought their input and was open to ideas they had to share.

While she did not try to push her own agenda at Blue Mountain, Sarah was aware that her beliefs might be prominent in her coaching. However, she did not intentionally work to promote those beliefs. She explained,

I'm like anybody else. I have my opinions. I feel like I know what you should be doing and you know, or I think I know what you should be doing. But I can't, you know, but that's not how to help somebody else. I don't want copies of me all over the building. That would be really scary! And so I really do try to balance it. You know, give [teachers] enough support where they feel like I am helping them. I'm not just saying, "Well what do you think? What do you think? What do you think?" 'Cause eventually you feel like, "I'm asking you what you think." So I try to balance [giving teachers the direct help they are looking for but asking them to think about it as well]. (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

At the same time, Sarah was aware that teachers in her school had a tendency to focus on whatever instructional practice she highlighted, so she tried to be careful with the influence she had.

Sarah also believed her relationships with teachers were key and as such, their concerns were important to her. Sarah viewed the teachers as fellow professionals rather than technicians she needed to train. This idea was also connected to her beliefs that teachers needed to have choice over activities within the coaching relationship and even choice over whether or not they worked with her. In her position, Sarah did not push her way into classrooms where she was not invited. Her principal did not require that she work with teachers against their will and Sarah noted she would be quite uncomfortable in a job where she was required to do so. Because she respected the teachers' autonomy in their classrooms, she did not want to be perceived as someone who could come in uninvited and disrupt their classrooms.

While Sarah chose not to force her way into classrooms, she also did not ignore teachers who were not eager to work with her. Instead, she established a repertoire of strategies for gaining access to teachers' classrooms in non-threatening ways. These included surveying teachers at the beginning of the school year to learn about their specific needs and concerns, using assessment data to open conversations with teachers, and asking general questions about how things were going in classrooms. I asked Sarah if there were times she offered teachers choices about the types of support she could provide and they chose not to accept her help. She said,

Yeah. And they're like, "No, I got it." And I always follow up with, "Okay but, we'll check in in a week or two and just see how it's going." And I try to be really good about the checking in. "How's it going?" And then if I need to offer the options again. But I don't push myself into classrooms. And, I mean, that's just kind of a personal thing and it's also something that because I don't get a lot of that from [the principal], then I don't feel like I have to do that. Or, I need to do that. And again, it's one reason I do those

surveys is because that's kind of my foot in the door so I don't feel like I'm pushing. Or being too pushy. (Interview 1, November 11, 2008)

All of Sarah's ideas regarding coaching fed into her belief that to be effective in her job she needed to meet teachers where they were. She had specific strategies for determining what teachers were ready for and how to differentiate her coaching support to meet their individual needs. These will be addressed further later in this chapter.

Finally, while Sarah had strong beliefs about literacy and coaching, at times the impact of those beliefs on her work was somewhat moderated by the district and her responsibility to carry its messages. While she supported the district's framework, there were small elements within it with which she did not agree. However, because she served as a representative of the district's views, she did not always feel that she could or should share her personal opinions. For example, Sarah disagreed with the district's decision to abandon its battery of best-practices based assessments in favor of DIBELS (Good & Kaminiski, 2002). However, it was her job to introduce the new assessment to the teachers in her school and she wanted to do this without passing on her biases regarding the assessment. Instead, she wanted teachers to evaluate it for themselves. When I asked her about the way she introduced the faculty to DIBELS in August, she explained that she made a conscious decision to take a neutral stance on the assessment. She maintained this stance in every observed coaching interaction over the course of the study.

The district's expectation that she facilitate teachers' close implementation of the balanced literacy framework also occasionally raised conflicts with her own beliefs about her role as a coach. She described times where she was forced to go to teachers and clearly state the district's requirements. She always followed the reminder with offers of support for the teacher. However, she admitted that if those teachers chose not to take up the district's ideas, she did not believe it was her job to enforce the implementation of the framework. When teachers made such

choices, Sarah was ambivalent about the impact that had on her as a reading specialist. She ultimately believed that teachers needed to take personal responsibility for their choices regarding instruction in their classroom, yet she was aware that when they chose not to work within the district's guidelines that it was in some way a reflection on her as the school's reading specialist. To overcome these feelings, Sarah would remind herself that her job was to support teachers' understanding of the framework and to make sure they had the information they needed to implement it successfully. What teachers chose to do with the information was their responsibility.

Summary

Many of the beliefs Sarah held about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching focused on the affective aspects of coaching. She worked to respect teachers' autonomy and professionalism and to build collegial relationships. She recognized their uniqueness as learners while her willingness to consider many different approaches to literacy instruction allowed her to act as a guide for her teachers as they found the approaches that worked best in their own classrooms. In addition, Sarah's beliefs led her to struggle against attempts to cast her in the role of the expert. She recognized, as Toll (2005) argued, that placing herself in the role of the expert hindered her ability to build trusting relationships with her teachers. Sarah's focus on the affective fostered the establishment of a trusting environment, which has been identified as one key to effective literacy coaching (Lyons, 2002).

Considering Teachers' Beliefs Through Differentiated Coaching

According to Kise (2009), the goal of differentiated coaching is “to identify what information an individual teacher needs during change” (p. 148). While Sarah was not aware of this particular model of coaching, this is very much what she did in her work as a coach. Sarah made the deliberate choice to coach each of her teachers differently, a piece of information she first volunteered to me during her vision interview in October, though I had already seen evidence of this in my observations of her coaching. For Sarah, coaching was about meeting teachers “where they were.” I argue that her efforts to accomplish this involved a consideration of their beliefs about teaching and learning, though she never verbalized that this was her intention. In this section, I explore ways in which Sarah differentiated her coaching, beginning with a brief description of the different approaches she took when coaching Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren. I end by considering tensions associated with meeting teachers' needs in these ways. Throughout this section I draw on my observations of Sarah's coaching as well as her self-reported reflections on her work.

Sarah's Differing Approaches to Coaching Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren

Sarah and Kathryn had developed a close relationship over the past few years as Sarah helped Kathryn develop word study and guided reading in her classroom. In Kathryn's words, they just “hit it off” (Interviews 1 & 2, December 12, 2008). Sarah's perception of Kathryn was that her confidence was waning and she needed to be reminded of what she already knew. She explained

[Kathryn] very much knows what she's doing. She studies this stuff...She knows this stuff and so what I do with her is just, it's more of a reminder. Because yeah, she knows probably every bit as much as I do when it comes to especially reading 'cause that's one of her areas of specialization. And, it's just a reminder because this year's been very

overwhelming for her and all kinds of things and you know new routines and new groupings and she's got a lot going on in her personal life too. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

Indeed, because of the changes going on in Kathryn's personal life, Sarah noted that her approach to teaching had been very different than in years past. Kathryn's different mindset led Sarah to shift her approach to coaching. In the coaching interactions that I observed, Sarah offered very few new ideas to Kathryn. Instead, she worked to help Kathryn "see the light at the end of the tunnel again" (Interview 4, January 26, 2009).

Sarah described Rachel as a teacher who was eager to try new things in her classroom and willing to take risks. She based this on Rachel's willingness to take on writer's workshop during the previous year. She felt that Rachel struggled with her confidence in being able to meet students' learning needs. Therefore, Sarah's approach to their coaching interactions was to help Rachel build confidence with her instruction. Rachel often sought clear-cut, black and white answers to her questions when interacting with Sarah. Rather than simply providing those answers, Sarah wanted to provide enough support to allow Rachel to reach decisions about her teaching on her own and to move away from seeing Sarah as "the person that has all the answers" (Interview 4, January 26, 2009).

Sarah's goal for her coaching interactions with Lauren was to begin to build a relationship with her because she was a new teacher in the school. Sarah wanted Lauren to see her as a support in the school and to feel free to seek out answers to her questions. Sarah found Lauren to be quite willing to talk about her past teaching experiences and to be well versed in the components of balanced literacy. Many of their informal interactions were conversations addressing the way the district's implementation of balanced literacy differed from the schools where Lauren had taught in the past. Lauren was still trying to make sense of what was expected of her at Blue Mountain.

Meeting Teachers Where They Are

Having described specific differences Sarah identified and that I observed in her approaches to coaching with Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren, I now identify strategies Sarah used to determine the types of support that were most appropriate for her teachers and specific ways that she matched her coaching to meet their needs.

Strategies for determining where teachers are. In her goal to “meet teachers where they were,” Sarah first had to determine what they were ready for. Much of this determination was based on her relationships with her teachers that had developed from working with them over the years, both as a fellow teacher and in the position of reading specialist. Sarah’s goal was to build on teachers’ strengths as she continued to help them grow and develop. Her main strategies for identifying teachers’ unique needs were questioning and observation.

At the beginning of each school year, Sarah asked her teachers to complete a survey addressing their comfort level with 22 different aspects of the district’s balanced literacy framework. The teachers would rate their comfort level from 1 (low) to 5 (high) on topics such as guided reading, literacy centers, interactive word walls, or teaching phonics. They also ranked their top five areas of need. Sarah considered this survey as a way to see in broad strokes where her teachers were rather than as a diagnostic tool to identify teachers’ specific needs. The survey also helped Sarah gain entry into teachers’ classrooms. She used teachers’ responses as a place to start conversations regarding any help they needed with the topics with which they were less comfortable.

When talking with teachers, Sarah often had them describe what they were currently doing in their classrooms and what they wanted to know. Indeed, the planning meetings with Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren all started with these types of questions. Through the teachers’

answers, Sarah was able to gauge their current levels of understanding. Her approach to coaching on a topic would vary based on whether or not teachers were already trying it in their classrooms or if they would be starting from scratch.

Sarah also paid attention to the clues teachers provided in the ways they approached her for help. She would consider

...how the topic was broached. Is it something [the teachers] asked me? Is it something I went to them about? It's the way they ask it sometimes. And that could be the, "*(sighs)* I just can't do all this," to "I really need some help with my guided reading. I just don't feel like it's going." That kind of gives you an idea of what they're ready for, what they may be open to. A person that comes with an attitude of I can't or you know, just, you're gonna' have to be real easy—baby, baby steps. But a person that's saying, "I'm trying to do guided reading, it, I just can't get it going," then I feel like they're already there with me. They want to work on it. They're already in that mindset. So I guess that to me would be two different levels of support. But I try to take a lot of cues from what the teachers tell me when we're having the conversation. (Interview 1, November 11, 2008)

Sarah also paid attention to the options that teachers selected when she gave them choices as to the type of support she could provide. She felt their choice indicated what they were ready for. She believed teachers that chose to have her come and observe their teaching and provide feedback were at a much higher comfort level with an instructional practice than teachers who opted to have her model the practice.

While Sarah identified strategies for gathering information in order to match her coaching to teachers' specific needs and personalities, she also admitted that she was not able to provide the same level of differentiated coaching for all of the teachers at Blue Mountain simply because she did not have enough time to get to know all of them on such a personal level. This was especially true during the course of the study as the new assessment program required a great deal of Sarah's time.

Anticipating teachers' concerns. Sarah valued the relationships she had built with her teachers and because of this wanted to provide support for them as they took on the process of

change. She was aware that change is uncomfortable and can be overwhelming for teachers and worked to anticipate and address teachers' concerns in proactive ways. One way Sarah did this was by offering to share her own practice with teachers first. By offering to come and model instruction in their classroom rather than asking to come and observe, she in her own words "put myself out there first" (Interview 1, November 11, 2008). She believed this would help her teachers grow more comfortable with her and to see her as a support rather than an evaluator.

Sarah was also concerned with bolstering teachers' confidence with new practices. At the end of each coaching session, she tried to leave teachers with a feeling of accomplishment and a specific plan for how to move forward in their practice. This was evident in both her group coaching sessions and those with Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren. One specific way she boosted teachers' confidence was by working to address their practical concerns such as scheduling difficulties or the need for additional materials. For example, one of the issues she worked with Kathryn to address was the lack of time in her schedule for the language arts block, while she provided Rachel with instructional materials to address the needs of her students struggling with reading. She also dealt with such practical matters with Lauren as she made specific suggestions about how to fit word study into her daily schedule and how to organize the materials in ways that allowed the students to participate more independently. Finally, Sarah was vigilant about following up with teachers after their initial interactions to check on the teachers' progress or need for additional support.

Perhaps the most telling example of Sarah's anticipation of teachers' concerns was the way she chose to introduce the district's new assessment program to the faculty at Blue Mountain Elementary at the beginning of the school year. Sarah was to deliver the message regarding the district's move to DIBELS and was worried about how some of her teachers would

react to the change. As noted in Chapter V, Sarah was an avid reader of educational literature and cited Hall and Hord’s (2001) Concerns Based Adoption Model as influential over her thinking. She used this model to help plan her presentation for the faculty. Sarah began her 45 minute presentation by showing teachers the information presented in Figure 19. She explained to the teachers the specific parts of the district’s assessment program that would be changing, and those that would remain the same. She framed the changes as what was over, or ending as a result of DIBELS and what would remain unchanged. Throughout the presentation, she reminded teachers that the high quality instruction they had been providing students would not change as a result of this new assessment program. She ended the presentation by asking teachers to complete a short writing prompt naming their concerns after having heard about the upcoming changes.

What’s Over	What Isn’t
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of hours of instructional time in order to assess • current assessments (with one exception) • 45 minutes needed to assess a single student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balanced literacy • benchmark assessments 3X/year • running records • using data to inform instruction • high quality instruction for all students

Figure 19. Information presented by Sarah to the faculty of Blue Mountain describing the impact of the district’s adoption of DIBELS on their practice.

When Sarah and I later talked about the way she chose to introduce the faculty to the changes in the district’s assessment program, she explained that she intentionally structured the presentation in such a way to reassure teachers and to avoid having them internalize the message that they should throw out everything they had been doing in their classrooms because of the new assessment. She said,

When I created that PowerPoint I mean I had my concerns model with me. And, 'cause I, like I said I had been going through that I and just thought, "That makes so much sense." Because people are in different places. That's why I had [the teachers] do that writing prompt right after it is 'cause I wanted to see where they were. You know, "Where are you? 'Cause like Lauren, she's done DIBELS. So it was, hmm, okay, whatever. But then it was other teachers that really gave me the, "What does this mean for me? How is this gonna' help me teach?" You know they're not really ready for, they're not in the same place Lauren is. (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Through this presentation, Sarah's goal was to scaffold teachers' understanding of DIBELS and its impact on their classroom. She felt she succeeded with this framing of the new assessment program and found that teachers did not abandon their instructional practices as she had worried they would.

Building on relationships with teachers. One of the reasons Sarah was able to anticipate teachers' concerns as well as she did was because of the strong relationships she had with them. Because many of the teachers at Blue Mountain knew Sarah before she moved into the role of reading specialist, she found that they understood her position as a messenger for the district. Her relationships also allowed her to approach teachers in non-confrontational ways. She explained, "I've been with these teachers...and have those relationships. I can go up to a teacher and say, 'So, how's word study going?' And that just starts the conversation" (Interview 1, November 11, 2008).

The influence of Sarah's strong belief in the importance of relationships was obvious in her interactions with Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren as well as in her descriptions of her work with them. Sarah was very much aware of some of the challenges Kathryn was facing in her personal life and because of this chose to take a side-by-side approach to coaching with her. She explained,

I want her to feel like I'm there with here. I'm not coming at this as you know I know more than you do and so forth. But just kind of empathizing I guess. Saying, "Yeah, I know." 'Cause I do know a lot of what's going on with her. And I know this is tough. And just validating those feelings. Validating that, what she was saying. But then,

moving into refocusing it on the kids. This is better for the students. (Interview 4, January 26, 2009)

Sarah and Kathryn's long-standing relationship help Sarah understand the source of Kathryn's struggles.

Sarah also counted the growing of a relationship as a sign of success in her coaching. When asked to evaluate whether or not her coaching had been effective with Lauren, Sarah believed that having established a relationship with her was a positive outcome of their interactions. As a new teacher in the building, Sarah was pleased that Lauren had come to see her as a support and felt free to approach her when she had questions or needed assistance.

Offering choice. Sarah offered her teachers choice in a variety of ways during her coaching interactions with them including the choice of whether or not to invite her into their classrooms. Once teachers offered an invitation to Sarah, one of her goals for coaching was to build teachers' confidence in their own abilities and encourage their ownership of new practices. She also wanted to respect their autonomy in their classrooms.

One way Sarah did this was by providing choice over the types of support teachers might receive. For example, the following exchange took place between Sarah and Rachel at the end of their planning meeting as they decided on a plan of action for supporting Rachel's guided reading instruction.

Sarah: Do you want to see just the whole group or do you want to just see how the *Reading With Strategies* works? Or do you want to see how it all gets put together? You tell me what you want.

Rachel: I want to see how I need to teach it.

(Planning Meeting, September 22, 2008)

Sarah placed the power in Rachel's hands to name the type of support that would be most beneficial for her as they ultimately decided that Sarah would model an entire guided reading lesson.

Another type of choice that Sarah provided for her teachers was the choice over which ideas they ultimately were comfortable trying in their classrooms. This type of choice was evident in the planning meeting that took place between Sarah and Lauren. Lauren first described the way she had been conducting word study in her classroom. Sarah then reaffirmed Lauren's instructional choices while offering alternatives.

Sarah: Well and that's perfectly appropriate if you wanted to just keep doing it that way—if you wanted to do [the sorts] all in order. I would suggest that you do a little more with it then. Meaning, like I told you, there's some activities...

Lauren: (*talking over Sarah*) Which that's the part I'm struggling with since I would rather do more activities with it.

Sarah: Well, and depending on, since you're doing pictures there're some different things to do. In your notebook....

Lauren: (*interrupting*) I don't think my kids need [the picture sorts] that much anymore. I think we could skip the pictures.

(Planning Meeting, October 20, 2008)

In this instance, Lauren chose to take up the new practices that Sarah offered. However, later in this same conversation, she chose not to try the assessment tool that Sarah offered to her.

Guiding teachers' thinking. Sarah valued teachers' input into their coaching interactions and worked to validate their experience and opinions. However, there were times when what the teachers suggested seemed to run counter to the ideas about literacy instruction endorsed by the district or Sarah herself. When these tricky moments arose, Sarah relied on her relationships with teachers to help her know how to redirect their thinking in productive ways. Sarah explained that she would take what the teachers said and tweak it in a way that validated their contribution yet addressed the teachers' concerns in a way that Sarah was more comfortable with and felt allowed

her to stay true to her own beliefs. Such an instance occurred as Sarah conducted a training session on the scoring procedures for DIBELS. For one particular measure, teachers were to mark a 1 on the score sheet for each correct response and a 0 for each incorrect response. A teacher suggested that instead of marking each correct response that they only mark the incorrect ones. Sarah acknowledged the teacher's contribution to the discussion, but then explained the reasoning for not altering the marking on a standardized measure.

At other times, Sarah used teachers' comments as a starting place to expand their thinking about a new idea or to reframe their thinking if needed. For example, in the exchange below, Sarah validated Kathryn's suggestion of using language textbooks as an independent activity for students during reading and writer's workshop.

Kathryn: You can have, count on [activities in the language textbooks] as a backup and they can also be working on like independent reading and things like that too?

Sarah: Um-hm. You can choose to have 'em do that *or* [emphasis added] "Well, okay, well go back to your topic list and pick a new topic. I've taught you how to go through this process.

(Planning Meeting, September 11, 2008)

However, Sarah then quickly offered an alternative that was more in line with the focus of their conversation, which had been identifying language activities that students could complete inside the writer's workshop (i.e., identifying subjects and predicates in their own writing as opposed to completing a textbook page). In this way she worked to expand Kathryn's thinking regarding appropriate independent activities aligned with the ideas behind writer's workshop.

Considering students' needs. Sarah was aware that teaching is a very personal activity for teachers. One way she looked to shift teachers' perspective from change as something negative that was happening to them to a more positive view of change was by drawing their attention back to the students in their classrooms. She would encourage teachers to look at students'

assessment data and recognize the wide range of needs they demonstrated. She then offered suggestions for ways to meet those varied instructional needs. She found that teachers were more likely to find ways to use new practices if they saw the practices would be more beneficial for their students. She used this approach during her planning meeting with Rachel as they were talking about ways to group her students for guided reading. As Rachel pushed Sarah to tell her into which groups to place a few of her students who had multiple needs for reading, Sarah encouraged her to think differently about grouping. She said

I know we're so used to thinking of [students] as running record level and that's where they fall. But you're giving me a lot of information about what it is that's putting them where they are. So let's think of 'em kind of in that, like strategies. Like what strategies do these kids need? You were saying [they] have trouble decoding words still so they need, they could be together to work on some of those decoding word attack strategies. (Planning Meeting, September 22, 2008)

In this way, Sarah encouraged Rachel to stretch her thinking about grouping by focusing on the strategic needs of her students.

Putting aside personal preferences. As noted above, while Sarah had many personal beliefs about literacy and reading instruction, she did not believe that her opinions were the only ones that were valid. There were times that she chose to put aside her personal preferences regarding instruction in order to provide the type of support her teachers needed. During the interactions I observed with Lauren, for example, Sarah explained the district's spelling assessment and stressed the importance of using it to tailor instruction to students' developmental spelling levels. However, she did not force the issue when Lauren quickly opted to continue having all of her students complete the same sorts.

A second example of Sarah's willingness to meet teachers where they were even if it meant promoting practices she did not personally favor occurred the year before as Sarah worked with Rachel to establish literature circles in her classroom. Sarah did not like to use prescribed

roles for students as they participated in literature discussion groups as she felt they restricted students' responses. However, she recognized that some teachers, like Rachel, needed the additional structure the assigned roles provided. She taught Rachel how to use the roles in her classroom, explaining her concerns as well. Sarah's ultimate hope was that Rachel would phase out the roles. While Sarah was willing to bend on issues that she felt were matters of personal preference, as noted earlier in this chapter there were ideas that she felt were non-negotiable for teachers such as using student data to inform instruction and providing instruction at students' individual levels.

Celebrating small steps and successes. A final way that Sarah worked to meet teachers where they were was in her expectations for the outcomes of her coaching interactions. Though she was charged with facilitating a close implementation of the district's balanced literacy framework, Sarah felt her first priority was to meet her teachers' needs, not to ensure fidelity of implementation. She was aware that the district's framework could be overwhelming and chose to work with her teachers on one component at a time. After several years of a school-wide focus on guided reading, Sarah was willing for teachers to individually choose their own path and indicate the next component they were ready to tackle. She said,

Across this building I feel like teachers have gotten really good at the guided reading piece. And so now I feel like okay we need to move on to something else like the writing or working on even read alouds, or the independent reading. It's kind of like the teacher would have to pick—where do you feel comfortable next? (Interview 3, January 23, 2009)

Sarah's interactions with Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren also demonstrated her willingness to celebrate small successes. During my observations in Kathryn and Rachel's classrooms, little seemed to change with their instruction based on their coaching interactions. In our final conversations, both teachers acknowledged they had not yet been able to make the changes in their practice they had discussed with Sarah, though they both still had intentions of working

towards that end. In her last interview, I asked Sarah to evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching she had provided for the three teachers. She believed that their work together had made a difference, though her interpretation of success was quite different than might have been expected. She was aware that other than Lauren beginning to implement word study in her classroom, no major shifts in instruction had resulted from the coaching interactions with the teachers. However, she was able to identify evidence of success with each teacher.

As noted earlier, Sarah's goals for her interactions with Kathryn had shifted due to her changed mindset towards her teaching. So, while she may not have seen the outcomes she would have desired in years past, Sarah felt that she had been able to help Kathryn walk away from their interactions with greater confidence in her teaching.

As for Lauren, Sarah was happy that she continued to have her students working with word study. However, what Sarah considered the real success from their interactions was that they had established the roots of what she hoped would be a productive relationship.

Finally, Sarah was aware that it would take more time to build Rachel's confidence in her own ability to meet the needs of all of her students and perhaps to shift her instructional focus. However, Sarah felt that Rachel's shift in thinking regarding the grouping of students, which was a drastic departure from the experiences she had in the past, was an important first step. Sarah expressed her long-term view of success in coaching in describing her hopes of the outcomes of her interactions with Rachel.

Even if [Rachel] just picks up one little piece of, you know maybe it's, maybe how I, we figured out the vocabulary word issue on a running record or maybe it's just thinking about different ways to group the kids. Then it's worth it. I don't expect [teachers] to take everything and immediately incorporate it. (Interview 4, January 26, 2009)

While these outcomes might seem inconsequential to some, they may indicate that the defining of success needs to shift to accommodate these smaller successes within professional

development that is attempting to address teachers' personal beliefs.

Tensions Associated with Meeting Teachers Where They Are

While Sarah was anxious to meet her teachers where they were, there were obstacles that prevented her from always being able to do so. The most prevalent of these constraints was time. While Sarah was in her third year as a reading specialist, this was only the second year that she had worked with her teachers in a coaching role. In her first year as a coach, she worked with approximately a quarter of the teachers at Blue Mountain. Before the new school year began, her goal was simply to see more teachers. As we talked in November, she was discouraged that she had not been able to meet that goal, and in fact had spent considerably less time with teachers than in the previous year. The district's adoption of DIBELS had consumed much of the time Sarah had used for coaching in the past. In addition to her regular responsibilities, during the first few months of the school year she was required to train the school's assessment team, conduct the first round of benchmark testing, and then establish intervention groups based on the results of that testing. She also led grade level meetings during the time that she had used for coaching in the past. All of these activities associated with the new assessment program left little time to get to know new teachers. The district's use of DIBELS also removed the automatic in she used to have with new teachers. She explained,

I know again this year has been very different because of this whole reading assessment thing. Usually by now my new teachers would know exactly, they knew who I am but would know all the things that I can help them with. And I still have new teachers saying they don't know the questions to ask. And that wears me out because normally that would not be the case 10 weeks into school....Because we [used to do] all of our reading assessments the second week of school, I got to know them real quick because I had to train them on the assessments. So it was like, BAM. You know who I am and we move on. Well, this year it's, "Oh, you don't have to do them. So, by the way I've got two weeks I'll [sic] won't be available." And so I feel like I missed out on that critical piece

this year. I don't feel like...I know my new teachers as well as I need to. (Vision Interview, October 24, 2008)

Finally, Sarah found that more of her coaching time was needed to establish new intervention groups after more students were identified as needing additional support following a second round of benchmark testing.

Summary

Sarah's attempts to differentiate her coaching to meet her teachers' needs were directly connected to her beliefs about the importance of establishing trusting relationships with teachers. As she worked to determine what her teachers were ready for, she learned to pay attention to the clues that teachers provided through their conversations and actions. She gathered these clues together to help her paint a picture of each of her teachers and then matched her support to their needs. However, there are limitations to her approach, namely time. It takes a great deal of time to establish the types of relationships that Sarah valued and time to see change in teachers' practice.

Through her efforts to meet teachers where they were, Sarah was able to tap into some of their beliefs about teaching and learning. However, this uncovering of beliefs was not intentional; rather it was an accidental happening based on the relationships Sarah was able to build with teachers. Though uncovered in a rather haphazard manner, they were useful clues for differentiating coaching. This raises the question of whether there might be ways to take a more systematic approach to uncovering teachers' beliefs in order to design more personalized versions of coaching that attempt to address teachers' beliefs. This notion will be considered further in Chapter VII.

Conflicting Beliefs within Coaching Interactions

Throughout this work, I have investigated the impact of teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction and education on their participation in coaching as well as the influence of the reading specialist's beliefs on her work as a coach. In this final section, I examine these beliefs in action as I explore instances within coaching interactions between Sarah and the teachers in which there were competing beliefs at work. Similar interactions were described in Chapter V. However, though competing beliefs appeared to be at work within those interactions, neither the teacher nor Sarah recognized their presence. The interactions I share here are ones in which Sarah did recognize the conflict and addressed it. At times these competing beliefs centered on the activity of coaching while at other times beliefs about the content of the coaching interactions were in conflict. For each interaction, I considered the beliefs that were at odds and how Sarah responded to the conflict.

Sarah and Rachel's beliefs regarding the purpose of their coaching conversations came into conflict as they worked together to finalize student assignments for guided reading groups. Rachel's purpose for the activity was to ascertain how to group her students and what materials to use for instruction. As noted earlier in this chapter, Sarah's goal for their interactions was to help build Rachel's confidence in her decision making regarding ways to meet her students' needs. After having established the reading groups, Sarah asked Rachel what level text she would use with one of the groups to which Rachel responded, "That's why you're here" (Planning Meeting, September 22, 2008). Rachel did eventually suggest a text level of 18 and Sarah talked about why her selection could be appropriate. Rachel twice more asked, "So level 18?" as Sarah continued to share her thinking. Sarah eventually agreed with Rachel's selection.

During her final interview, I asked Sarah to reflect on this interaction with Rachel. She explained why she had persisted in not answering.

I want her to understand the thinking behind it. Because I could've said, "Start this group at a level 18 on word attack strategies." And the next time it came up, she wouldn't know, she wouldn't know what to do....So I try to do a lot of thinking aloud so hopefully they can take on some of that. (Interview 4, January 26, 2009)

Sarah was very much aware that Rachel often saw her as a person with all of the answers and therefore was willing to push Rachel to think for herself, even if she eventually knew she would give in and provide the answer Rachel wanted.

The conflicting beliefs within the coaching interactions with Lauren and Kathryn dealt with the content of the coaching, not the activity of coaching itself. Sarah and Lauren's beliefs regarding assessment were at odds over the course of two different grade level meetings that Sarah led around DIBELS. On three different occasions in those meetings, Lauren suggested having students practice the test measures in a whole group setting in order to familiarize them with the format of the test, a common practice in the district where she last taught. To Sarah, this suggestion was akin to teaching to the test, which was an unacceptable practice. Lauren first made this suggestion when the first grade team met in September and Sarah's response was to acknowledge the comment, but then redirect the conversation. In the second meeting in November, Sarah ignored the suggestion the first time that Lauren offered it and answered another teacher's question instead. However, when Lauren mentioned it again, Sarah stated her concerns regarding the practice, though she did stop short of forbidding it.

Beliefs about word study were what came into conflict during one of Sarah and Kathryn's coaching interactions. As Kathryn explained that she was thinking of incorporating a weekly spelling test into word study in order to address concerns raised by a few parents, Sarah's reaction was swift, direct, and clear. While she did not tell Kathryn she could not do this, she

stated why it would not be a good idea and reminded Kathryn of the ways word study was beneficial for her students. At one point Sarah said, “I know you know word study and you know what it’s supposed to be...I don’t want you giving in to parents” (In-Class Support, October 24, 2008).

Just as Sarah’s coaching was differentiated to meet her students’ needs, so were her reactions when competing beliefs arose. Because Sarah and Kathryn had a well-established relationship and Sarah felt confident in what she knew of Kathryn’s understandings about word study, she was comfortable offering a direct and pointed response. When she reflected on this interaction, Sarah explained,

With [Kathryn] it’s more just getting her back to what she knows. Again no, that wouldn’t be how I worked with all the other teachers because again, some of ‘em may not be on the road in the first place, so it’s a whole different structure. But with her it’s just getting her back on where she was going. (Interview 4, January 26, 2009)

Similarly, Sarah’s decision of how to respond to Lauren was also based on the strength of their relationship. Their relationship was very new and Sarah wanted to nurture it, therefore when Lauren offered her suggestion for the first time in September, Sarah was not sure how to respond. She wanted Lauren to feel comfortable participating yet did not want the practice to take root within the first grade team. So, Sarah chose to redirect the comment in a way that emphasized the limitations of the instructions of the assessment measures. When the suggestion was raised twice more by Lauren in November, Sarah felt she had to address her concerns regarding the practice.

The group setting in which the conflict arose between Sarah and Lauren also impacted the way Sarah chose to address it. She encouraged her teachers to share their ideas and therefore did not want to threaten Lauren’s comfort level with participating. She explained,

I like this format where we get to share ideas. But again it’s, I still have to be very aware of one teacher say, giving a suggestion and then everyone taking that and doing it until

we eventually are all just teaching the test. And I just, because it had, did come up so many times it was time to finally just say, “No. Not comfortable with that.” (Interview 4, January 26, 2009).

Through her responses, Sarah tried to balance her beliefs that teachers needed to participate as equals in their interactions and to take ownership of their participation with her beliefs regarding acceptable assessment practices.

While Sarah was able to respond when she recognized competing beliefs, the teachers never seemed to acknowledge the differences in thought. There were also times, such as those shared in Chapter V, when Sarah was unable to recognize the conflict. One possible reason for these missed opportunities for developing teachers’ beliefs is the difference in the level of awareness Sarah had about her beliefs than the teachers. Overall, Sarah’s vision of ideal practice and beliefs were much more clearly defined and as such, it may have been easier for her to recognize beliefs that were contrary to those she held. This raises questions about the importance of helping teachers and coaches develop greater awareness of their personal beliefs.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into the way Sarah’s beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching influenced her work with teachers. She believed in growing strong relationships with teachers, honoring their autonomy, and building on their personal strengths within coaching interactions. Her desire to meet teachers where they were led her to consider thoughtfully her interactions with teachers as sources of evidence for gauging their current understandings of instructional practices, much in the same way I used my conversations and interactions with the teachers in this study as sources of evidence of their beliefs. Sarah’s efforts to match her coaching with teachers’ needs provides an example of how coaching can be differentiated to support teachers’ development. She anticipated their concerns, offered choice,

guided their thinking, and asked them to consider their students' needs all in an attempt to provide the most supportive coaching she could. Similarly, she was willing to put aside her personal preferences and celebrate the small successes her teachers made. When Sarah recognized conflicting beliefs within coaching interactions, she was able to differentiate her response to match her goals for the interactions.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings of this study of the influence of beliefs within the professional development setting of literacy coaching. I begin by returning to my research questions and summarizing the methodological and research findings related to each question. I then address the contributions of this study both to understandings of beliefs and of coaching. Building on these contributions, I discuss implications of the findings. Finally, I identify the limitations of this study and consider directions for future research.

Summary of Results

My first research question looked to identify specific beliefs about literacy instruction and education held by the reading specialist and teachers. While this is not an unusual purpose of research addressing teachers' beliefs, I relied on a unique combination of data collection methods to allow for an expanded understanding of the content of teachers' beliefs. As the participants responded to the surveys, at times they were confronted with statements of beliefs that were not part of their explicitly held systems of belief. For example, most of the teachers indicated they rarely thought about the purpose of schooling. However, when prompted to respond to items addressing those ideas on the EBQ, they were forced to consider consciously their beliefs regarding these topics. In this way, the surveys strengthened my understanding of the participants' beliefs as they tapped into areas of belief that might otherwise have remained hidden and allowed teachers to develop a greater awareness of their own beliefs (as also seen in

Olson & Singer, 1994). Similarly, the teachers' written vision statements offered opportunities for personal reflection on their beliefs and to explore ideas previously unconsidered, such as the connections between their visions of ideal practice and the kind of society they hoped for in the future.

Though the surveys offered valuable information about what the participants believed, I argue (as do others, e.g. Baumann et al., 1998, Muchmore, 2001) that survey data alone is an insufficient way to represent what teachers believe. Moving beyond the arguments of the biases associated with self-reported data (Baumann et al.; Olson & Singer, 1994) and the limitations of forcing teachers to choose between predetermined responses that may not be the most accurate representations of their beliefs (Olson & Singer; Pajares, 1992, Muchmore), I identified other factors contributing to the insufficiency of survey measures including differences in interpretation of survey items, variability in the accessibility of ideas and language presented within the measures, and differential response strategies reported by teachers when confronted with challenging items.

Through the use of the surveys and written vision statements, I was able to capture snapshots of the participants' beliefs that they felt were representative of their ideas about literacy instruction and education. However, in order to consider the larger notion of *how* they held onto those beliefs, these measures alone were insufficient. Therefore, I turned to interviews to add another dimension to the understandings developed through the written data. My conversations with the participants around their survey and vision statement responses opened spaces for them to offer competing views they held and to provide their reasoning behind their beliefs. I was also afforded glimpses into their beliefs over time—both how they had reached the point where they currently were and hints of ways they might shift in the future. Suddenly, their

beliefs that had seemed so clear cut and orderly based on their survey responses once again became murky, which is much more akin to the theoretical understandings regarding the nature of belief examined in Chapter II.

Moving beyond the methodological findings for the first research question, the data indicated that the teachers held similar orientations to literacy and education. Sarah's scores on the EBQ and LOS placed her with the progressivism and constructivist orientations. Based on this data as well as her vision statement, Sarah believed teachers should act as facilitators and work to involve students in their own learning. Students should also work together with the literate environment of the classroom to learn to be respectful, responsible, productive members of society.

Kathryn was identified as holding progressive and eclectic beliefs according to her scores on the EBQ and LOS. She envisioned a singular role for herself in the classroom in which she could focus on teaching rather than the clerical aspects of teaching. She believed teachers should act as facilitators and that students should be active participants in their own learning. As for the larger purposes of schooling, she felt schools should prepare students for the real world by developing their social skills and imparting essential skills and knowledge such as reading and writing.

Rachel's identified orientations on the EBQ and LOS were contradictory. Based on her scores she held both traditional and constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning. She believed these differences were a result of her students. She found herself in a new grade level and struggled with her students' lack of independence as learners. Though she at times took on a more traditional role in the classroom, she believed teachers should be facilitators of learning and

students should actively work together. She was an advocate for integration across the curriculum and believed in the importance of a strong classroom community.

Lauren's scores on the EBQ and LOS placed her within the progressive and eclectic orientations. She believed teachers should be facilitators of learning and work to encourage a love of learning in their students. She valued developmentally appropriate activities and believed in the need for students to learn from each other. Laure also saw a direct connection between her classroom and society at large as she worked to build her students' independence and social skills.

A final understanding emerging from my consideration of the first research question was that while the overall views of literacy and instruction were quite similar across the participants, their individual interpretations of educational ideas (i.e., integration) varied greatly, despite the use of a common set of language.

Through my second research question, I began to test some of the theoretical assumptions regarding the structure of belief systems as I addressed the need to move beyond a literal understanding of the content of teachers' beliefs to a consideration of *how* those beliefs were held. A range of sources of evidence formed the foundations of the beliefs held by the reading specialist and teachers. Personal experiences both with teaching and as learners were the most frequently cited sources of evidence. The teachers identified few specific voices of authority, though they indicated a willingness to use the word of another as a source of evidence as noted in their attributions of belief to their interactions with people close to teaching—mainly their coworkers and Sarah. Other sources that undergirded their beliefs included their experiences with professional development and participation in teacher education programs.

My analysis also allowed me to begin to identify beliefs held more or less centrally by the teachers. These findings offer a process for examining teachers' talk about their work as a way to hypothesize the relative centrality of their beliefs. I also began to document connections between subsystems of beliefs as teachers raised similar issues across topics or provided similar rationales for a variety of instructional practices with which they engaged. Methodologically, this advances understandings of *how* beliefs are held and ways to uncover this through educational research.

Question two also allowed me to explore how the teachers held specific beliefs about literacy instruction and how that ultimately impacted their coaching interactions. Kathryn and Sarah worked together on writer's workshop, yet Kathryn held core beliefs about the nature of writing that were theoretically incompatible with writer's workshop. She also believed that teachers needed to be good writers in order to be good teachers of writing and saw writing as having a functional purpose, though I was unable to classify these beliefs into specific types.

Rachel held conflicting beliefs about the materials that should be used in guided reading. She held a core belief that students should be engaged in grade level text and a derived belief that they should read texts at their instructional levels. Her beliefs about the use of ability to group students for guided reading were also core beliefs.

Lauren held core beliefs about the active engagement of students and scaffolded instruction. She held conflicting beliefs about the nature of spelling instruction. Her belief in the effectiveness of a traditional approach to spelling was a core belief while she held a newly formed derived belief that word study might also support her students' spelling development.

The final research question focused on the impact of the beliefs held by Sarah and the teachers on their participation in coaching. Lauren was the only one of the teachers to take up the ideas presented to her by Sarah during coaching interactions even though she held conflicting

beliefs about word study including a belief based on her trust in Sarah as a voice of authority that word study would support her students' spelling development and a more centrally held belief that traditional spelling instruction was effective. Within the school context in which she found herself, she was willing to act on her derived belief about word study, as conducting traditional spelling instruction was not permitted in the district. However, questions remain about the durability of this newly formed belief.

Though Kathryn's and Rachel's experiences with coaching were perhaps not as impactful on their practice as they had been in the past, their previous personal experiences with Sarah fed their belief that coaching was a worthwhile investment of their time. Over the last 2 years, they both had received quite a bit of support from Sarah and had experienced success with new practices because of their work with her. However, neither took up the ideas Sarah offered them in the coaching interactions I observed. Both held beliefs that were inconsistent with the practices that Sarah offered, though neither consciously acknowledged this inconsistency or challenged Sarah's ideas. Sarah also seemed unaware of the differences in belief that may have limited the teachers' willingness to take ownership of the ideas she presented. There were other factors beyond their specific beliefs about literacy instruction that may also help explain the lack of change in their practice. Kathryn's personal feelings of frustration and discontent seemed to exert greater influence on her practice than her educational beliefs. She also struggled with finding the time she felt was necessary to bring about a shift in her practice. In addition to her beliefs, Rachel specifically cited factors including the nature of the support she received, the materials used for instruction, and time constraints as reasons for the lack of change in her teaching.

Sarah's beliefs had an impact on her participation in coaching as well. However, the beliefs that were most influential in her coaching interactions were her specific beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching. These beliefs led her to focus on affective aspects of coaching such as relationship building and considering teachers' unique needs first and foremost, which in turn impacted her work as a coach. She made efforts to position herself in ways that helped maintain relationships and differentiated her coaching practice to meet teachers where they were. She also developed specific strategies for determining what teachers needed based on clues they provided through conversations and actions.

As noted above, there were times when competing beliefs were present within the coaching interactions but neither the teachers nor Sarah were aware of their influence. However, there were also times when Sarah was aware of differences in her beliefs and the beliefs of the teachers. In these instances, Sarah provided differentiated responses that allowed her to maintain relationships while still attempting to push teachers' thinking in new ways.

Contributions to Understandings of Beliefs

As explored in Chapters I and II, theory addresses broad conceptualizations of beliefs as interconnected, multi-dimensional, dynamic, situated entities while research explores very isolated, narrow facets of beliefs. Though the study of teachers' beliefs has become more prevalent in literacy research, conceptualizations of beliefs remain quite limited. Researchers commonly investigate the content of teachers' literacy-related beliefs and the consequences associated with them as noted in the strands of research identified in the review of literature in Chapter II. Pajares (1992) refers to these isolated beliefs as beliefs subconstructs and argues they provide only a limited understanding into the broader systems of beliefs. Study of beliefs

subconstructs leads to the fragmentation and isolation of beliefs about teaching (Eisenhart et al., 1988) and fails to honor the more connected nature of beliefs and belief systems.

Researchers have identified starting points for the study of teachers' literacy-related beliefs by identifying *what* teachers believe and connecting these beliefs to instructional practices, and these are valuable findings. To understand teachers' beliefs, it is critical to know what they believe. However, the work of Green (1971) and Rokeach (1972) over three decades ago highlights what is missing from this body of literature. Green argued that beyond knowing *what* teachers believe, it is actually much more important to understand *how* they believe. This includes a consideration of the evidence on which teachers base their beliefs, how centrally they hold their beliefs, and the way connections between beliefs within their belief systems ultimately affect their actions. This concern for how beliefs are held is a missing piece in the study of teachers' beliefs, one that this study has begun to address. Specifically, the findings in this study advance understandings of the connectedness of beliefs and offer a process for considering how beliefs are held.

In the study, I examined the connections between teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction and their larger educational beliefs. While many studies addressing teachers' literacy-related beliefs have captured teachers' beliefs about what reading is or how it should be taught, this study also considered connections between these types of beliefs and teachers' larger beliefs regarding the philosophical purposes of schooling. For example, items on the LOS, EBQ, and visioning statement all addressed teachers' beliefs about their role in the classroom as well as the role of students. The EBQ and vision statement also helped uncover teachers' beliefs about the connections between school and society. This consideration of beliefs beyond those specific to literacy is crucial, because as Abernathy (2002), Moje (1996), and Pajares and Graham (1998)

found, teachers' beliefs about their students or their own role in the classroom at times can exert more influence on their instructional practices than their specific beliefs about literacy.

This study also began to uncover ways that beliefs situated in other contexts in life could become intertwined with teachers' beliefs situated in the context of school. For example, Kathryn's personal beliefs seemed to impact her actions in her classroom as she became frustrated and disillusioned with the role of teacher. While the purpose of this study was not necessarily to uncover connections to beliefs outside of teachers' educational beliefs, Kathryn's beliefs became difficult to ignore and could not be separated from who she was as a teacher. Her experiences reiterate the importance of considering the situated nature of beliefs and teachers' histories of participation (Rogers, 2003) as proposed by the broader conceptualization of belief discussed in Chapters I and II.

Along with addressing the interconnectedness of beliefs, this study began to consider the sources of evidence undergirding teachers' beliefs and ways to use knowledge of those sources to determine the centrality of beliefs. Theoretical assumptions regarding the centrality of belief posit that more centrally held beliefs are based on personal interactions with objects of belief and are highly connected to other beliefs (Rokeach, 1972). These beliefs also tend to be difficult to change (Green, 1971; Rokeach, 1972). Building on the theorizations of belief regarding the relationship between the sources of evidence and the connectedness of beliefs, this study proposed a process for hypothesizing the centrality of beliefs, pushing forward Green's argument that determining how beliefs are held is more important than identifying their content. This is an idea that has rarely been considered and certainly not systematically addressed in studies of teachers' literacy-related beliefs. A more purposeful consideration of the connectedness and

centrality of beliefs holds implications for professional development and teacher education. These are discussed later in this chapter.

Contributions to Understandings of Coaching

Coaching holds the potential to serve as an ideal space to nurture teachers' ideological becoming as they shift their ways of "thinking, doing, and interacting" (Greenleaf & Katz, 2004). In Chapters I and II, I argued for the need for helping teachers develop into independent thinkers, or to as Ball (2006) describes it "to step out on their own ideologically" (p. 54). Indeed, successful professional development does just this as it builds on teachers' existing beliefs (Richardson et al., 1991) and opens spaces for teachers to examine and reflect on their beliefs (Calderhead, 1996) in the hopes of both strengthening and refining them (Bullough & Baughman, 1997).

Within professional development such as coaching, the role of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses must be considered. An authoritative discourse reflects the dominant ideologies of the world. It can be thought of as "tradition" or "the official line" (p. 344) and must either be completely affirmed or rejected as it is (Bakhtin, 1981). Internally persuasive discourses, on the other hand, are open to change. Rather than being externally authoritative, they are taken up as one's own. Bakhtin explains "the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's....it is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions" (p. 345). Rather than having teachers take up new ideas in the form of the authoritative discourses of others, it is crucial that teachers grapple with these discourses and begin to assimilate them as part of their own internally persuasive discourses. Indeed, Bakhtin describes ideological becoming as "the process of

selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 341). He also argues that this work occurs in contact zones where authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses struggle.

Coaching interactions hold the potential of serving as such zones.

In this study, however, the coaching interactions did not seem to spur teachers to participate in ideological becoming. While Sarah offered a discourse with which the teachers could have engaged, none of them chose to take up that work and Sarah did not force them to do so. For Lauren, Sarah’s discourse around word study was an authoritative discourse that she chose to accept without attempting to assimilate it into her internally persuasive discourse. So, she took on this new discourse, but did not take ownership of it.

Kathryn and Sarah took a different approach. They simply chose not to fully participate in the discourse that Sarah offered. They asked questions about activities and procedures, but did not address the underlying assumptions on which the practices were based. As Sarah offered the reasoning behind her suggestions, they listened but did not engage with the ideas. For example, in the coaching interactions presented in Chapter VI, as Sarah explained her concerns about Kathryn’s idea of reincorporating spelling lists and tests into word study, Kathryn replied with “um-hm” and “yeah” (In-Class Support, October 24, 2008), but never offered her own reasoning or engaged in the dialogue. Similarly, as Sarah explained why Rachel’s text choice might be appropriate, Rachel responded with “um-hm”, “right,” and twice with her original question of “so, level 18?” (Planning Meeting, September 22, 2008). Again, she was willing to listen to Sarah talk, but did not seem to hear or acknowledge the larger discourse. The teachers held at least some beliefs that were in conflict with the ideas that Sarah offered, though neither consciously acknowledged the conflict. If there had been a greater awareness on the part of either

the teachers or Sarah, those same interactions could have acted as a space to wrestle with those conflicts and engage in ideological becoming.

The lack of ideological becoming within the coaching interactions may be in part a result of Sarah's beliefs about coaching and her purposes for the interactions. Her goal for interacting with teachers was simply to offer them support and new ideas, not to change their beliefs. Sarah was interested in having teachers understand "the why" and therefore offered explanations and rationales for the practices she shared. However, there was no real expectation that the teachers had to act on these ideas, either in her eyes or in the eyes of the teachers. They saw what she offered as suggestions they were free to use or not use.

Killion (2009) describes this type of coaching as coaching *light*. Coaching light is distinguished by coaches' intention for and beliefs about their role rather than the activity in which they engage as a coach. From this perspective, coaches are more interested in establishing relationships with teachers than improving their teaching and students' learning. Coaches who coach light provide support without the expectation that what teachers learn will be put to use in their classrooms. They also avoid challenging conversations with teachers. One belief that may lead to coaching light is the belief that since coaches have no supervisory responsibilities, they cannot impose on teachers. Killion argues, "Coaches can't afford not to impose on what teachers believe and how that impacts their actions. Their work is too important, and without conversations about beliefs, deep change is unlikely" (p. 27).

While coaching light leads to positive relationships with teachers, it does not encourage changes in teachers' beliefs. Bakhtin (1981) argues that ideological becoming is not an easy task—it requires struggle. As Freedman and Ball (2004) explained, "the social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with tension and conflict" (p. 6).

Yet as described above, a coaching light approach leads coaches to avoid such conflict. For Sarah, while she was willing to address conflicting beliefs, she did so in ways that preserved the coaching relationship more than spurred new thinking in her teachers. Though Sarah was aware that her coaching was ultimately about students, that awareness was not always what drove her interactions with teachers.

Killion (2009) offers an alternative to coaching light in which coaches engage in what she calls “high-stakes interactions” (p. 23) such as those in which personal and professional beliefs are considered as well as the influence they have on practice. She refers to this as coaching *heavy*. This type of coaching is “driven by a coach’s commitment to improve teaching and learning, even if that commitment means risking being liked” (p. 23). Killion reiterates that coaching heavy does not mean coaching with a heavy hand; it just means working for a significant impact. While relationships are still important, they are not seen as more important than teaching and student learning.

Bakhtinian theory suggests that teachers need to consider new ideas in light of their previous beliefs about teaching and learning (Bakhtin, 1981). Killion’s (2009) notion of coaching heavy may be one way to accomplish this. However, this take on coaching would require coaches to approach their teachers in flexible ways. Coaching may need to look different in each classroom in order to engage teachers in the difficult work of ideological becoming. This study indicates that coaches are more than capable of considering the individual needs of their teachers and appropriately adjusting their work as a coach. While I would argue Sarah was engaged in coaching light, she was also poised to be able to coach heavy. She differentiated her support based on what she knew about her teachers. These understandings were in part a result of her close observation of the teachers’ discourses—what questions they asked and how those

questions were framed, and how they responded to her offers of support. Thus, she had several tools available to her and was willing to address teachers as individuals. For Sarah, the shift may have to occur in her own beliefs about her role as a coach and the purpose of coaching in order to engage teachers more purposefully in a consideration of their beliefs.

Implications

In this study, I have demonstrated specific ways to move beyond a sole focus on what teachers believe in order to consider how they hold those beliefs. I have also discussed ways that teachers' beliefs and differences in how they are held may impact the participation of teachers and coaches in literacy coaching. In this section, I address specific implications these findings hold for understanding and addressing teachers' growth and professional development.

Green (1971) argued that beliefs grow and change as part of a system. The findings of this study have highlighted that connected nature of teachers' beliefs. Thus, attempts to address teachers' beliefs or bring about change in beliefs may require attention to more than singularly held beliefs. For example, to bring about a shift in Rachel's beliefs about guided reading, one might also have to address her beliefs about instruction for struggling readers, preparation and planning, instructional materials, and meeting students' unique learning needs.

Effective professional development builds on teachers' existing beliefs (e.g., Richardson et al., 1991). Thus, tailoring professional development, such as coaching, to address teachers' current understandings requires knowing more than a few of their beliefs in isolation. One must develop an understanding of their larger systems of beliefs in order to address the spectrum of beliefs associated with a new instructional practice or idea more specifically.

Along with examining ways beliefs were connected, this study identified sources of evidence that proved to be meaningful for the teachers when holding onto their beliefs. Personal experiences with teaching and as learners were the most frequently cited sources of evidence. Understanding the sources of evidence that teachers provide for their beliefs allows us to consider the types of experiences that might prove to be more personally persuasive and supportive of change. When teachers hold derived beliefs based solely on their trust in different authorities, the durability of those beliefs may be limited. If the source of authority vanishes (i.e., the district changes instructional approaches, a new coach enters the picture, there is a change in co-workers), so too might the teachers' associated beliefs and practices.

A better understanding of the connected nature of beliefs and the sources of evidence on which they are based also helps in the consideration of the centrality of beliefs. The process for hypothesizing the centrality of beliefs proposed in Chapter V takes these two factors into consideration while attempting to identify how centrally held beliefs might be. Having a broader awareness of how beliefs are held allows an understanding of which beliefs might be more or less amenable to change. Based on theorizations of belief, one would expect core beliefs to be more centrally held than derived beliefs and as such, harder to change. Therefore, professional developers might start with teachers' beliefs that are more open to change until teachers become more engaged in the change process.

Those working with teachers in professional development may also need to learn to listen with different ears in order to recognize the clues teachers provide about their beliefs and sources of evidence for those beliefs as they talk about their practice. Within this study, teachers' talk evaluating and/or justifying their own practice was particularly useful in identifying how they held their beliefs.

Supporting teachers in the growth and development of their beliefs about literacy instruction is not easy work. As noted above, this means a consideration of a wide range of connected beliefs and of the centrality of those beliefs. However, when asking teachers to refine their beliefs, coaching interactions may be the space for this difficult work. The one-on-one nature of support allows for individualization of professional development in a way that one-shot workshop sessions cannot.

From this study, we see that coaches may intuitively be thinking about teachers' beliefs in their efforts to build productive relationships. Sarah certainly was able to learn much about where her teachers were including some of their beliefs about instruction without an intentional effort to identify belief. Seeing as she was successful in her efforts to differentiate her coaching based on that evidence, it raises the question of how she might have further been able to individualize her support if she had been intentionally considering their beliefs. Sarah demonstrated the kinds of habits of mind (i.e., listening for verbal cues from teachers, building on her observations of their teaching) and the goal of providing personalized support that might also have allowed her to consider teachers' beliefs in her efforts to meet them where they were.

For coaching to be a successful setting for addressing teachers' beliefs, coaches may have to shift the approach they take to coaching from coaching light to coaching heavy. To do this, they may first need to examine their own beliefs about the role they play as a coach and their goals for coaching interactions. While there were many positive aspects to the coaching I observed Sarah engaged in with her teachers, I would argue that her coaching did not spark the types of struggle that would ultimately lead to shifts in teachers' thinking and believing. As Killion (2009) argues, "Coaching heavy occurs when coaches ask thought-provoking questions, uncover assumptions, have fierce or difficult conversations, and engage teachers in dialogue

about their beliefs and goals rather than their knowledge and skills” (p. 24). She argues that while these interactions will prompt teachers to question their practice, it also provides them with an increased sense of professionalism, stronger feelings of efficacy, and greater satisfaction with teaching.

This study also has implications for considering the awareness that coaches and teachers have of their own beliefs. Greater awareness of beliefs may allow teachers and coaches to recognize when they have entered contact zones and to engage in the struggle of ideological becoming. In order to challenge authoritative discourses or to work to assimilate them into one’s internally persuasive discourses, they first must be recognized.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study including issues around sampling, observations, timing, teachers’ awareness of their own beliefs, and the impact of my presence in the research site.

This study captured the work of 1 reading specialist and 3 of the teachers with whom she worked. While this sample size was intentional for the scope of this study, only having access to the coaching practice of 1 reading specialist may have limited the types of coaching interactions that were observed. As there was no district-wide expectation for what would occur in coaching interactions, Sarah’s practice may or may not have been representative of the coaching work of other reading specialists in the district. Sarah also worked only with teachers who voluntarily engaged in coaching interactions. Coaches do not always have this option, and working with teachers who did not volunteer to participate in coaching may have changed the nature of the interactions observed.

The sampling for the teacher participants in the study varied from the original design, which included a two step consent process. I planned to have all possible teacher participants complete the survey measures and initial interviews before purposively selecting 3 teachers with a wide variety of preexisting orientations towards teaching and literacy instruction to continue into the second phase of the study. However, as described in Chapter III, the initial recruitment of teachers resulted in a limited pool of volunteers, leading to the decision to consent teachers for both phases of the study at the same time. Thus, the purposive sample became one of convenience. I was interested in whether teachers who held vastly different beliefs from Sarah might participate in coaching in different ways than teachers with similar beliefs. The change in recruitment also limited my ability to examine this idea, as I was not able to select teachers with a range of beliefs. Finally, Rachel joined the study during the second month of school, forcing an accelerated data collection schedule in order to complete all research activities, though they were scheduled at her convenience.

Timing was also a limitation of the study in several ways. First, the study was conducted over a relatively short amount of time, which may have limited my ability to see changes in teachers' practice as a result of their coaching interactions. The classroom observations I conducted were also restricted to a 6-week time period that as described in Chapter III, allowed me to observe only a limited range of instructional activities. Though I had hoped to trace how teachers addressed coached information in their teaching, I was rarely able to capture instruction that addressed their coaching interactions. For example, Kathryn worked with Sarah on writing instruction, yet I observed only one writing lesson. The observations were scheduled at the teachers' convenience and because of the naturalistic design of the study, I did not make requests regarding the types of instruction teachers should carry out during my observations.

The limited amount of time Sarah and the teachers spent engaged in coaching activities was also a limitation of the study. As described in Chapters V and VI, the district's adoption of a new assessment program placed constraints on Sarah's time, which significantly reduced her availability for working in teachers' classroom. Thus, the amount of coaching interactions I was able to observe was quite limited. This was an unanticipated limitation of the study and while Sarah was frustrated by this change in her practice, it was the reality of her job during the time I was engaged in the research site. Though I observed at least one cycle of coaching for each teacher and was able to draw the initial conclusions shared in Chapters V and VI, additional coaching interactions would need to be examined in order to confirm those hypotheses.

Time also influenced the type of data I was able to collect regarding Sarah's beliefs. I conducted the same number of interviews with Sarah as I did with the teachers. However, as described in Chapter V, the nature of those conversations varied considerably from those held with the teachers, especially in the final four interviews. Sarah and I spent much of our time talking about her beliefs regarding her role as a coach and her understandings about her teachers. In future work, I realize the need for additional conversations with the coach.

The teachers' awareness of their own beliefs and their ability to verbalize them also arose as a limitation of the study. While I used a variety of techniques to tap into teachers' implicit beliefs, they were not equally effective with each participant. Therefore, this limitation also rests in the instrumentation. A wider variety of approaches for surfacing teachers' beliefs may have provided additional understandings of the teacher's beliefs. However, the stimulated recall interview proved to be a useful tool for all participants and could have been utilized earlier in the study and more often.

Finally, my presence as a researcher may have influenced data collection. As noted above, Sarah's time for coaching was quite limited. During my time at the research site, Sarah reported coaching interactions with five of her teachers—the three consented for the study and two new teachers. When asked if my presence had changed the teachers with whom she chose to interact or her interactions with Kathryn, Rachel, and Lauren, Sarah felt things would have been the same regardless of my presence. I was aware before the study began that my conversations with teachers might influence data collection as it forced them to consider beliefs that might otherwise go unexamined. I attempted to trace the effect of my presence throughout the study, asking teachers about the impact of our conversations. They acknowledged that our conversations caused them to reflect on their practice, but identified no negative effects.

Directions for Future Research

While this study made strides in furthering understandings of teachers' beliefs and the influence they have in coaching interactions, it also raised new questions. Though I examined the centrality of beliefs, I did not tap into another dimension of belief, that of intensity. Intensity of belief can vary independently from centrality. I hypothesize it would also influence participation in coaching and hold implications for professional development. Also, now that possible ways to describe how beliefs are held have been identified, what types of beliefs might be more easily abandoned?

The limited amount of coaching I was able to observe was a limitation of this study as noted above. While I saw hints of specific ways that beliefs might function as tools within coaching interactions, the following questions remain to be addressed: How do beliefs function as entry points for teachers or coaches within coaching? How might they function as roadblocks?

How are beliefs used within professional development—as weapons or shields? Questions also linger about the specific impact beliefs have on the discourse and activity of coaching. How does the nature of conversation and activity change once tensions in beliefs arise? Who moves and what does this movement look like? How do coaches negotiate this tension?

Finally, questions remain about ways to broaden the consideration of the discourse communities in which teachers participate and the impact these might have on their beliefs and personal growth and development. Which discourses ultimately are more internally persuasive for teachers?

Conclusion

The study of teachers' beliefs involves much more than simply identifying what teachers believe. As this study has shown, it also involves a consideration of the sources of evidence on which beliefs are established as well as the connections that exist between beliefs. This study has also shed light on ways that beliefs may impact coaching, both through the influence of the coach's beliefs on his/her work and of the teachers' beliefs on the ways they choose to participate in coaching interactions. While this study examined the specific beliefs of these participants as captured over a finite amount of time, the implications of the findings for future work with teachers' professional growth and development are promising. Bakhtin (1981) argued, "When someone else's ideological discourse is internally persuasive for us and acknowledged by us, entirely different possibilities open up" (p. 345). Hopefully with a better understanding of *how* teachers believe, opportunities will exist for coaching to serve as contact zones in which these new possibilities for understanding and belief can emerge.

15. I organize my classroom so that my students have an opportunity to write in at least one subject every day.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

16. I ask the parents of my students to share their time, knowledge, and expertise in my classroom.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

17. Writers in my classroom generally move through the processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

18. In my class, I organize reading, writing, speaking, and listening around key concepts.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

19. Reading instruction should always be delivered to the whole class at the same time.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

20. I teach using themes or integrated units.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

21. Grouping for reading instruction should always be based on ability.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

22. Subjects should be integrated across the curriculum.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

23. I use a variety of grouping patterns to teach reading such as skill groups, interest groups, whole group, and individual instruction.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

24. Students need to write for a variety of purposes.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

25. I take advantage of opportunities to learn about teaching by attending professional conferences and/or graduate classes and by reading professional journals.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

26. Parents' attitudes toward literacy affect my students' progress.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

27. The major purpose of reading assessment is to determine a students' placement in the basal reader.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

28. I assess my students' reading progress primarily by teacher-made and/or book tests.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

29. Parental reading habits in the home affect their children's attitudes toward reading.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

30. At the end of each day, I reflect on the effectiveness of my instructional decisions.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

LOS Scoring Sheet

Directions: Place the number of your answer in the space provided. Recode answer for items with an asterisk (*).

Beliefs	Practices
*1. _____	2. _____
*3. _____	4. _____
5. _____	6. _____
7. _____	9. _____
8. _____	10. _____
*11. _____	14. _____
*12. _____	15. _____
13. _____	16. _____
*19. _____	17. _____
*21. _____	18. _____
22. _____	20. _____
24. _____	23. _____
26. _____	25. _____
*27. _____	*28. _____
29. _____	30. _____
Beliefs Score _____	Practices Score _____
Total Score _____	

*Recoding Scale: 1=5 2=4 3=3 4=2 5=1

Interpreting the LOS Score

Total Score

If your total score is in the 90-110 range, you are most likely a traditional teacher.

If your total score is in the 111-125 range, you are most likely an eclectic teacher.

If your total score is in the 126-145 range, you are most likely a constructivist teacher.

Beliefs Score

If your beliefs score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.

If your beliefs score is closest to 61, you have beliefs similar to an eclectic teacher.

If your beliefs score is closest to 69, you have beliefs similar to a constructivist teacher.

Practice Score

If your practices score is closest to 51, you have practices similar to a traditional teacher.

If your practices score is closest to 56, you have practices similar to an eclectic teacher.

If your practices score is closest to 63, you have practices similar to a constructivist teacher.

Appendix C

Teacher Visioning Writing Prompt

This writing activity is designed to elicit images of your ideal classroom. Please feel free to describe in the next few pages what you dream about or hope for, even though it may be somewhat or even very different from your current classroom. Close your eyes and envision an ideal day in your classroom, the day you always wish you could have. Imagine yourself walking into your classroom. You can look around the room, and you can hear and see the activities going on.

What do you see, feel, and hear when you walk around your ideal classroom?

What are you doing in your ideal classroom? What is your role? Why?

What are your students doing in this ideal classroom? What role(s) do the students play? Why?

What kinds of things are the students learning in your ideal classroom? For instance, what topics or texts are they working on? Why are these important for them to learn?

What is the relationship between what goes on in your ideal classroom and the kind of society you would like to see in the future?

Appendix D

Guiding Questions for Visioning Interview

1. Before we start, do you want to elaborate on what you wrote in any way? Do you want to add/revise anything you said?
2. How did this become your vision of the ideal classroom?
3. Why do you believe this is the ideal classroom?
4. How does your vision compare to what you are currently doing in your classroom? Does your vision match your actual teaching experiences? Why/why not?
5. What is the relationship between your ability to carry out your vision and the school where you currently teach?
 - Does the school have a vision?
 - What is the relationship between your vision and the vision of the school?
 - Is your vision school specific, or would this be your vision regardless of where you teach?
6. What is the relationship between the kinds of students you teach and your ability to carry out your vision?
 - Do you think your vision would be different/the same if you had different students?
7. Has your vision of the ideal classroom changed since you began teaching? If so, how has it changed? If not, why do you believe it has remained the same?
8. If your vision matches your reality, how did you make that happen? Do you think you will be able to maintain this ideal classroom in the future? If your vision does not match your reality, do you anticipate in the future that you will be able to reach this ideal you hold? Will you/How will you work to do this? What aspects are you trying to achieve right now in your classroom?
9. How often do you think about your vision?
10. On what is your vision based?
 - Did any of it come from your own background as a student or teacher?
 - Have you ever seen/been part of/read about a classroom like this?
 - Does it come from your experiences in your undergraduate work?
 - Does it come from your professional development experiences?
11. Is there anything else about your vision that's come up today that you'd want to add or clarify?

Appendix E

Guiding Questions for Initial Interviews

Teacher Background

1. How long have you been teaching? What grades have you taught? Where?
2. How did you come to your current position?
3. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
4. Before you obtained a job, what did you expect teaching to be?
5. How has your experience differed from or been similar to those early expectations?
6. What do you find to be the most challenging part of your job? the least challenging?
7. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
 1. Do you plan to continue in this field? If so, in what capacity (e.g., teacher, administrator, specialist)? If not, when do you plan to leave, why, and what other fields/jobs do you intend to pursue?

Reading and Learning to Read

1. When a student enters ____ grade, what should he/she be able to do in terms of reading?
 - On what are those expectations based? personal convictions? district standards?
2. When that student leaves this grade level, what can he/she do?
 - On what are those expectations based? personal convictions? district standards?
3. What can a really good reader do?
 - Is the difference in good and struggling readers quantitative or qualitative?
4. What accounts for the differences between a good and struggling reader?
5. Is it possible to help a struggling reader become a good reader?

The Students

1. Describe the students in your class.
 - Is this a typical group of students for this grade level?
2. Describe a student who is having great difficulty in reading.
 - What do you think is the cause of this difficulty?
 - What are you doing about it?
 - (repeat probes for each question below)
3. Describe a student who is just slightly behind in reading.
4. Describe a student who is doing really well.

The School

1. Do you feel there is a characteristic way of teaching reading in this school?
 - If so, how did this way of teaching come to be? On what is it based?
 - If not, do you know of other teachers who have similar styles to you?
2. Do you know what the other teachers are doing?
 - If so, how? Do you observe in other classrooms? Do you exchange materials, ideas, methods? Do you talk with other teachers?
3. Describe any professional development you have addressing reading in the school?
 - Have you found this professional development to be useful? If so, how?
 - If not, what type of professional development would you find useful?

Appendix F

Orientation Descriptions from the EBQ and LOS Shared with Participants

EBQ

Orientation 1 (identified in text as Traditionalism):

- believes in the importance of learning a set of predetermined facts and skills that not everyone may be able to possess
- believes in the importance of schools in transmitting essential knowledge and the predominant culture
- believes in the value of drill and practice in learning
- believes in a strong authority roles for teachers
- believes in a passive roles for students
- believes effectiveness in education can be measured through student academic achievement

Orientation 2 (identified in text as Progressivism):

- believes in the importance of letting students discover “facts” through “logical” inquiry, learning those facts and using those skills that are most relevant to the students in their relationship to the world
- believes that the schools play a central role in fostering the intellectual process
- believes in the importance of the inquiry method in learning
- believes that teachers serve in the role of facilitator
- believes in the active involvement of students in their own learning
- believes effectiveness in education is measured by success in producing “productive” citizens

Orientation 3 (identified in text as Romanticism):

- believes in the importance of directing attention onto the child (being child-centered)
- believes school should be a place where children are free to experience themselves and society around them by being fully involved in choosing the direction of any program or evaluation
- believes schools are sources of new social ideas and individual self-awareness
- believes knowledge is created for each individual through their understanding of how current social issues relate to them
- believes that teachers should serve as guides in the natural development of each child
- believes effectiveness in education can't necessarily be measured

LOS

Profile 1 (identified in text as Traditional):

- uses traditional reading methods such as basal reading instruction
- teaches using primarily direct instruction
- views students as "vessels to be filled"

Profile 2 (identified in text as Eclectic):

- uses some traditional and some constructivist reading methods
- frequently "basalizes" literature selections
- combines traditional and constructivist views about student learning

Profile 3 (identified in text as Constructivist):

- uses whole text and integrated instruction
- teaches using primarily an inquiry approach
- views students as using prior knowledge to construct meaning to learn

Appendix G

Code Book

Parent Node	Child Node	Description	Example
Content of Beliefs	assessment	beliefs about conducting assessments and use of assessment data	running records help determine appropriate text level for guided reading
	community	beliefs about having a sense of family in the classroom; often deals with affective goals for the classroom	morning meeting is a way to teach students to respect each other
	balanced literacy	beliefs about the district's framework for literacy instruction or the individual components included within it	balanced literacy is a flexible framework that allows teachers to find specific approaches that work for them
	guided reading	beliefs about the purposes and procedures associated with guided reading instruction	small group instruction in guided reading is more valuable than whole group instruction
	inquiry	beliefs about inquiry as an approach to instruction	not giving students the answer; having them figure it out on their own
	integration	beliefs about curriculum integration and descriptions of how it is carried out	integration is a way to fit in all of the required standards
	writing practices	beliefs about desirable and undesirable writing practices as well as descriptions of the types of writing instruction teachers provide	writing needs to be modeled
	developmental	beliefs about the natural development of a child; what kids are ready for	students aren't ready to handle free choice in centers; they're young and not mature enough
	good readers	beliefs about what makes a good reader and what a good reader can do	good readers use context clues, pictures, etc. to help figure out words
	grouping	beliefs about ways students should be grouped for instruction; includes criteria for, challenges of grouping, and effectiveness of grouping	grouping may be around reading level or common skill or strategy
	literacy as a meaning-making process	beliefs about the purposes behind reading or descriptions of what reading is	the purpose of reading is to understand what is read

content of beliefs	meeting students' needs	beliefs about the unique learning needs of students and efforts to address those needs	some students need direct, systematic phonics instruction which they receive in intervention groups
	purpose of schools	beliefs about the overarching purpose of schools; desired outcomes of schooling	to build students' responsibility and decision-making
	role of students	beliefs about what students should be doing in classrooms and how they should participate in their own learning	students should be active participants in their learning
	role of teacher	beliefs about what teachers should be doing in classrooms	teacher as facilitator
	role of textbooks	beliefs regarding the importance or influence of the district provided textbooks; expectations for textbook use at Blue Mountain; ways teachers use textbooks in instruction	textbooks are resources at Blue Mountain; the basal is supportive of phonics instruction
	shoulds and should nots	beliefs about acceptable and unacceptable practices for teaching reading; descriptions of good or bad reading instruction; teachers' perceptions of what is expected of them	should not only teach out of the basal as it is only written toward a certain level of student so not all needs will be met
	struggling readers	beliefs about what makes a struggling reader as well as descriptions of what struggling readers do as they read	lack of exposure to reading at home can result in struggles with reading; fluency is choppy because of decoding issues
Basis for Beliefs	instructional programs/larger context	beliefs attributed to experiences within specific instructional programs or experiences in larger context of a particular school or district	the scaffolding aspect of Reading Mastery was helpful
	experiences as a learner	beliefs attributed to personal experiences as learners (both in school and out)	I need to see things to understand them, so I think modeling is important
	experiences with higher education	beliefs attributed to experiences with higher education (both undergraduate and postgraduate); does not include specific teaching experiences within those programs, but rather coursework	I don't feel like college prepared me for teaching.
	experiences with teaching	beliefs attributed to experiences with teaching; they were present for these experiences and have firsthand knowledge of them	having students make text connections has been helpful in the past

Basis for Beliefs	it works	beliefs attributed to having seen something they do work or having seen it work for others	having students tap as they read helps build expression instead of sounding like robots
	professional development	beliefs attributed to experiences with professional development	the balanced literacy workshop was phenomenal – I understood how it was really supposed to work
	literature	beliefs attributed to things read	I read about word walls and created one in my classroom
	other people	beliefs attributed to interactions with others; does not include observed teaching	learned about academic choices from Jessica
	voices of authority	beliefs based solely on the word of another	Sarah was my guide for learning how to do writer’s workshop
thinking & talking about own practice	change in practice	specific changes participants identified in their teaching or classrooms	I’ve started posting my agenda on the board so I make sure to cover everything
	evaluating own practice	considering practice and indicating whether good/bad, effective/ineffective, successful/unsuccessful, etc.	it’s hard to stick to just a few points in writing conferences
	justifying practice	rationales (and sometimes outcomes) for instructional practices	using the same level text for all students but changing the instruction that goes along with it
	looking forward or problem solving	offering possible solutions to identified concerns or specific plans for changing in the future	next year want to create worksheets to go along with guided reading books so students have opportunities to practice that form of comprehension
	questioning practice	second guessing; Is it right?; How do you...?	second-guessing current practices in guided reading
interactions with coaching	teachers’ goals	what teachers hoped to gain from their interactions with Sarah	reassurance; okay that I’m doing this
	reactions to support	how teachers responded to the coaching (both actions and ideas)	never had such a wide range of abilities in guided reading and wanted to know how to help lowest readers
	expectations	teachers’ feelings about what they were expected to do with information from coaching, how they were expected to participate, or what they expected the outcome to be	Sarah makes suggestions, but doesn’t tell what to do

interactions with coaching	evaluations	teachers' evaluations of the outcomes of coaching interactions	the modeling didn't work because I didn't really get to see it
	challenges & constraints	issues that negatively impacted the outcomes of coaching	couldn't figure out how to use the strategies materials
	weight of Sarah's word	value teachers placed on Sarah's opinion	respect her opinion because she's still working with students/has been in my classroom
role as specialist	beliefs as an influence	ways Sarah specifically identifies her own beliefs as impacting her work as a coach	doesn't like the fact the school has chosen to buy a packaged writing program
	meeting teachers where they are	importance of providing individualized coaching support; ways she works differently with different teachers; differentiation based on teachers' needs	Kathryn needs reassurance; intentionally created PowerPoint to reassure teachers nervous about change
	importance of ownership over learning	Sarah's beliefs about the need for students and teachers to have buy-in and be engaged in their own learning	if teachers don't understand the idea, they won't follow through with it
	job responsibilities	description of the activities included in her job description; her perceptions of her role; the district's perception of her role	not an administrator; conduct intervention groups
	positioning	ways Sarah positions herself with her teachers or is positioned by others	I'm not an expert; I learn from the teachers
	relationship	beliefs about the importance of knowing teachers and building relationships; impact on coaching	I know my teachers; have trust in faculty

Appendix H

Participants' Responses to the EBQ

Questions	Sarah	Kathryn	Rachel	Lauren
1. Demonstration and recitation are essential components for learning.	4	4	5	3
2. There are essential skills all students must learn.	4	5	5	4
3. The curriculum should contain an orderly arrangement of subjects that represent the best of our cultural heritage.	3	3	4	2
4. Students need and should have more supervision and discipline than they usually get.	3	3	5	2
5. Drill and factual knowledge are important components of any learning.	3	2	4	2
6. There are essential pieces of knowledge that all students should know.	4	5	5	4
7. The student should be a receiver of knowledge.	2	2	4	2
8. The teacher should be a strong authority figure in the classroom.	3	1	5	3
Traditionalism (mean out of 5)	3.25	3.125	4.625	2.75
9. Students learning from other students is an important component of any learning environment.	5	5	5	5
10. Schools exist to foster the intellectual process.	3	3	5	4
11. Teaching should center around the inquiry method.	3	3	4	3
12. Teachers should be facilitators of learning.	4	4	4	5
13. Ideal teachers are constant questioners.	3	4	5	4
14. Right from the first grade, teachers must teach the student at his/her level and not at the level of the grade he/she is in.	3	2	2	4
Progressivism (mean out of 5)	3.5	3.5	4.167	4.167
15. Schools should be sources of new social ideas.	3	2	5	4
16. Schools exist to facilitate self-awareness.	2	3	4	4
17. No subject is more important than the personalities of the students.	2	1	4	3
18. Students should be allowed more freedom than they usually get in the execution of learning activities.	3	2	3	3
19. Schools exist to preserve and strengthen spiritual and social values.	3	2	3	3
20. Students should play an active part in program design and evaluation.	4	4	3	3
21. The curriculum should focus on social problems and issues.	3	3	2	2
Romanticism (mean out of 5)	2.86	2.429	3.429	3.143

Appendix I

Participants' Responses to the LOS

Questions	Sarah	Kathryn	Rachel	Lauren
1. *The purpose of reading instruction is to teach children to recognize words and to pronounce them correctly.	1	2	2	2
2. When students read text, I ask them questions such as "What does it mean?"	3	4	5	4
3. *Reading and writing are unrelated processes.	1	1	1	1
4. When planning instruction, I take into account the needs of children by including activities that meet their social, emotional, physical, and affective needs.	4	4	4	4
5. Students should be treated as individual learners rather than as a group.	5	5	5	4
6. I schedule time every day for self-selected reading and writing experiences.	5	3	4	2
7. Students should use "fix-up strategies" such as rereading when text meaning is unclear.	5	5	5	3
8. Teachers should read aloud to students on a daily basis.	5	4	5	5
9. I encourage my students to monitor their comprehension as they read.	5	5	5	5
10. I use a variety of prereading strategies with my students.	5	5	4	3
11. *It is not necessary for students to write text on a daily basis.	1	2	1	2
12. *Students should be encouraged to sound out all unknown words.	1	1	3	2
13. The purpose of reading is to understand print.	2	2	3	3
14. I hold parent workshops or send home newsletters with ideas about how parents can help their children with school.	3	3	5	4
15. I organize my classroom so that my students have an opportunity to write in at least one subject every day.	4	4	5	4
16. I ask the parents of my students to share their time, knowledge, and expertise in my classroom.	2	2	5	4
17. Writers in my classroom generally move through the processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising.	2	3	5	4
18. In my class, I organize reading, writing, speaking, and listening around key concepts.	3	4	5	4
19. *Reading instruction should always be delivered to the whole class at the same time.	1	1	2	2
20. I teach using themes or integrated units.	4	3	5	4
21. *Grouping for reading instruction should always be based on ability.	2	4	5	3
22. Subjects should be integrated across the curriculum.	5	5	5	5
23. I use a variety of grouping patterns to teach reading such as skill groups, interest groups, whole group, and individual instruction.	3	5	3	4
24. Students need to write for a variety of purposes.	5	5	5	5
25. I take advantage of opportunities to learn about teaching by attending professional conferences and/or graduate classes and by reading professional journals.	5	5	5	5
26. Parents' attitudes toward literacy affect my students' progress.	4	5	5	5
27. *The major purpose of reading assessment is to determine a students' placement in the basal reader.	1	1	1	2
28. *I assess my students' reading progress primarily by teacher-made and/or book tests.	1	2	2	2
29. Parental reading habits in the home affect their children's attitudes toward reading.	4	5	5	5
30. At the end of each day, I reflect on the effectiveness of my instructional decisions.	4	5	5	5
BELIEFS ORIENTATION (closest to 51=traditional; closest to 61=eclectic; closest to 69=constructivist)	69 CON	66 CON	65 EC/CON	63 EC
PRACTICES ORIENTATION (closest to 51=traditional; closest to 56=eclectic; closest to 63=constructivist)	57 EC	59 EC	69 CON	60 CON
OVERALL ORIENTATION (90 to 110 = traditional; 111 to 125 = eclectic; 126 to 145 = constructivist)	126 CON	125 EC	134 CON	123 EC
* Responses Recoded for Scoring				

TRAD=traditional; EC=eclectic; CON=constructivist

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