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# The Professional Development and Coaching of School Teachers: Real-Time Feedback

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctor of Education Program

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The Professional Development and Coaching of School Teachers: Real-Time Feedback

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Instructional Leadership

Edward Kim, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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## **Abstract**

Teachers face many problems which directly impact student achievement. Some of these problems include lack of resources, high teacher attrition, and an overwhelming ratio of below grade level students. This study examines in-the-moment feedback as a form of professional development and coaching. The study seeks to understand if teachers deem this form of coaching and development as beneficial and high leverage in regard to positively affecting student achievement. Exploratory case study was used as the research design for this study. The population of this study was school teachers in urban school settings. The sample population entailed 11 school teachers currently working at an urban charter school district. An inductive analysis approach was employed using the nine steps of inductive analysis as identified and described by Hatch (2002). The findings revealed that, according to teachers, real-time feedback may positively impact student achievement when considering ten key tenets as outlined in this paper. Implications of this study suggest that real-time coaching and feedback—when received and implemented effectively—can and should be used to improve teachers’ instructional practices and have a positive impact on student outcomes. It is also implied that a shift in practice by teachers and leaders away from traditional coaching and feedback, to real-time coaching, could improve possibly improve teacher practices and student outcomes noticeably faster.

*Keywords:* urban education, charter, coaching, feedback, professional development, teacher improvement, training

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to Ms. Evelyn Murdock. Thank you for being the only teacher to push me, believe in me, and model black excellence. Because of you, I entered into the field of education so that I can provide a quality education to little brown and black children and empower them to excel beyond their wildest imaginations, just as you did for me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my former and current scholars in Chicago and Cleveland. Each of you taught me everything I know about what it means to educate and inspire a generation. While you were learning from me, I was also learning from you. I learned to persevere and to self-reflect. I worked harder each day so that I could get better for you.

Last but not least, to my husband and to my mother, I dedicate this dissertation to you. Without your encouragement, patience, and prayers I would not have had the strength to finish. I love you for all of the late nights and early mornings that you spent with me as a soundboard and a source of inspiration. Thank you.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Teachers and administrators at schools in urban areas of the United States face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas. These problems include lack of resources, high attrition rates among teachers, and a high ratio of students whose academic performance is below their grade level (Hammerness, 2016; Sydnor-Walton, 2013; Whilp, 2013). These challenges are also associated with poor academic achievement among students (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). For this reason, efforts have been made to understand and combat dynamics of underachievement in urban schools, including initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Fischer, 2011). American policy makers, university professors, and researchers have endeavored to understand how to create highly effective educators who improve academic outcomes for students in the lowest performing urban schools (Banks, 2015).

To receive their teaching qualification, American teachers complete training programs, many of them receiving guidance from distinguished mentor teachers in the process. However, when they reach the classroom, many teachers in the United States find they lack the tools needed to address their students' behavioral issues and academic deficiencies (Banks, 2015). This gap is related to the coaching and development of student teachers during their placement—a time when student teachers develop their efficacy in terms of instruction and classroom management (Crowe, 2013). Teachers at schools where educators receive in-house, consistent coaching and development perform better than their counterparts at schools without such support (Reinke et al., 2014). Therefore, school administrators across the country have strived to close this gap in teacher performance by developing teachers through coaching initiatives and professional development. The intent is that better performing teachers will be equipped to positively impact student achievement in urban underperforming schools (Chisum, 2014;

LePather, 2012; Stein, 2012). To this end, in order to garner experience and strategies in behavior management and effective pedagogy, preservice teachers should receive coaching and professional development that is relevant to urban school settings (Menzes & Maier, 2014; Saphier, 2011; Silva, McKie, Knechtel, Gleason, & Makowsky, 2015; Steiner, 2017).

Moreover, teacher coaching and professional development—particularly in-school coaching—deserve further attention from education researchers. Within the research presented in this dissertation, there are insights into how to create more effective teachers in urban schools and consequently improving student achievement. In this dissertation, the effect of coaching and professional development for new teachers on student achievement is examined. Perhaps by aligning the effects of coaching and development for new teachers in urban schools, educators can begin to see the progress in urban schools that they have strived for.

## **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework**

### **Background and Context**

Teachers and administrators at underperforming schools in urban areas face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas (Cucchiara, Rooney, & Robertson-Kraft, 2015). These problems include lack of resources, high attrition rates among teachers, and a high ratio of students whose academic performance is below their grade level (Hammerness, 2016; Sydnor-Walton, 2013; Whilp, 2013). Researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders have examined and debated how best to address these issues to help students in urban schools perform better academically (Banks, 2015). In the process, turnaround initiatives, urban teacher training programs, and school leadership residency programs have been devised and piloted (LeFloch & Barbour, 2014; Public Impact, 2014; Thielman, 2012). The problem is compounded by the fact that colleges and universities producing America's traditionally-

prepared teachers have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers who lack the classroom management skills and content knowledge needed to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic student diversity (American Federation of Teachers, 2012; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Greenberg, Walsh, & McKee, 2015).

## **History**

Researchers have identified teacher attributes that are linked to the academic success or failure of students in urban schools (Chukwumah, 2015; Fenzel, 2009; Michalak, 2009; Suffren & Wallace, 2010). Based on the relevant literature and historical experience, it appears that preservice preparation and professional development of teachers in urban areas have direct effects on the academic achievement of their students (Kalchman, 2015; Koedel, 2015). In addition, there is consensus among researchers on the importance of strong classroom management in urban school settings (DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013; Hall, Hughes, & Thelk, 2017; Walcott, 2012). Many early career teachers receive support and coaching in order to develop or improve their classroom management skills (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Kang & Nickel, 2012). It is essential that teachers in urban underperforming schools receive the most effective preparation and coaching on classroom management, as well as ongoing high-quality professional development (Howell, Faulkner, Cook, Miller, & Thompson, 2016).

Historical data gathered from across the relevant literature—mainly through case studies, interviews, and surveys of teachers in urban underperforming schools—has been used to explain common traits of successful schools (Chisum, 2014; Irish, 2014; Public Impact, 2014). In particular, researchers have found that, at successful urban schools, classroom and school routines and procedures are highly structured, quality and extensive professional development

for teachers is prioritized, and principals demonstrate strong leadership and presence (Hughes, 2012; Morgan, 2010; Suffren & Wallace, 2010). Given the importance of professional development for teachers on academic performance in urban schools, it may be worth examining this topic on a more granular level—through the lens of coaching.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This qualitative research study is based on a constructivist conceptual framework. Constructivism is a learning theory that is used to explain how people acquire knowledge and learn (Liu & Chen, 2010). Constructivist theorists posit that people learn by actively constructing their own knowledge (Scholnik, Abarbanel, & Kol, 2006). It is assumed that people construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences and those of others. A central belief is that knowledge is created within the learner and cannot be passed on without active participation from the learner. Through participation and experiences, people establish concepts, ideas, or theories about how they should behave, function, or act. In the process, people come to recognize that particular actions lead to particular results. It is at this point of learning that people form theories about how the world works, henceforth behaving accordingly (Liu & Chen, 2010).

In this research study, constructivism is used as conceptual framework in order to help the research participants and other researchers understand the research problem better. The problem that is explored through this research is that teachers in urban school settings receive coaching that is not conducive to improving instructional practices. To this end, constructivism is utilized to help the participants in this research and other researchers understand the effect of real-time coaching on teacher practice and student outcomes. Real-time coaching entails constructivist teaching methods—that is, providing in-the-moment feedback and requiring the teacher to learn and practice in the midst of their teaching. For this reason, teachers who

participated in this study were engaged in a deeper form of learning to aid in their professional development of key competencies required as educators (Lalor, Lorenzi, & Rami, 2014).

The focus of this qualitative study was on the impact of real-time coaching on student achievement in urban school settings. As such, the researcher drew conclusions by collecting data based on the experiences and situations of others. In addition, the researcher drew on her experience as an urban school teacher and, more recently, as a school leader with a Master of Arts in teaching, to understand and describe the experiences of participants in this study (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, constructivism became important in this study as the researcher began to reflect, to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge, and synthesize information gathered via data collection and field experiences to form new meanings and understanding.

### **Problem Statement**

In this study, the problem explored was the type of professional development and coaching that teachers in the United States receive, and the effect of that professional development and coaching on student achievement. Educators at schools in urban areas of the United States are failing to provide their students with high quality education (McMakin, 2012). In part, this failure is attributed to lack of professional development and coaching relevant to teaching in urban areas. Researchers have demonstrated the subpar academic performance of American students in urban areas, as well the direct correlation between below-average academic performance in high school and socio-economic success throughout the lifespan (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Teachers and administrators at urban schools face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas, including lack of resources, high attrition rates among teachers, and a high ratio of students whose academic performance is below their grade level (Hammerness, 2016; Sydnor-Walton, 2013; Whilp,

2013). These challenges affect student achievement at schools in urban areas (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). For these reasons, researchers have sought to understand dynamics of effective teaching at urban schools, and policymakers have sought to address obstacles to student achievement in urban areas, including through initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (Fischer, 2011; Harvard University, 2017).

However, the dual problems of academic achievement and quality education at urban schools have persisted despite the best efforts of policymakers' best attempts, including an increased focus on teacher preparation and development. In this study, the quality of teacher coaching and professional development was explored. This approach was chosen because poor academic achievement at schools in urban areas results from the quality and frequency of teacher coaching and professional development. Teachers in urban alternative school settings have different needs from teachers in traditional non-urban schools. Therefore, preparation and support for those teachers ought to be different and tailored to the unique needs of their students. With ongoing, tailored support, teachers who enter schools in urban areas can improve their students' academic achievement. Without that support, their students are likely to continue to perform poorly. Therefore, further exploration of real-time teacher coaching is warranted.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand teachers' perceptions of how professional development and coaching affect student achievement. The focus of this research was the professional development and coaching systems implemented in an urban charter school district. Teachers and administrators in urban school settings, much like the district that was the focus of this research, face challenges such as a lack of resources, high attrition rates among teachers, and a high ratio of underachieving students (Hammerness, 2016;

Whilp, 2013; Sydnor-Walton, 2013). The purpose of this research was to discover how to address the challenges faced by teachers in urban areas to improve the academic achievement of their students. A central topic of this study was the effect of professional development and coaching for teachers, including the extent to which educators who receive professional development and coaching can improve academic outcomes for students in the lowest performing schools.

### **Research Question**

How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement?

### **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance**

Researchers have identified direct links between certain attributes of teachers and professional development, on the one hand, and the success or failure of students in urban school settings on the other (Kalchman, 2015; Koedel, 2015). In particular, strong classroom management is understood to be important in urban schools (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Hall et al., 2017; Walcott, 2012). Many early career teachers receive support and coaching in order to develop or improve their classroom management skills. It is essential that teachers in urban underperforming schools receive the most effective preparation and coaching, as well as ongoing quality professional development (Howell et al., 2016).

Insights from this research on real-time teacher coaching as a method of coaching and professional development could be of direct benefit to educators and coaches in urban settings. It is hoped that education stakeholders will use this research to better understand the impact and efficacy of developing teachers through real-time coaching and in-the-moment feedback.

Researchers have demonstrated direct results of preservice preparation and professional development of teachers in urban areas on the academic achievement of students in urban areas (Kalchman, 2015; Koedel, 2015). However, few researchers to date have examined the effects of real-time coaching and in-the-moment feedback on teacher practice. The focus of this research was on structures used to support and develop teachers to improve student achievement in alternative urban school settings. On this basis, the researcher considers that results and conclusions from this research may be directly applied to the researcher's current school, as well as other schools whose staff participated in this study and schools that share similar characteristics to the schools included in this study. Education stakeholders may use this research to better understand how coaching and professional development can be implemented to prepare teachers for success in classrooms in urban schools.

### **Definitions of Terms**

Terms listed and defined in this section are directly related to the research and will be used throughout this study:

**Action step.** Specific efforts and changes that are made to reach improvement goals set by a school's leaders (Danielson, 2009).

**Alternative school.** Schools designed for students whose needs typically cannot be met in regular schools. Most students who attend alternative schools and programs are at risk of educational failure (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

**Coaching cycle.** A partnership between a teacher and an instructional coach. The coach engages in continuous and consistent observation of a classroom teacher, identifies a gap in the teacher's instruction or practice, and implements a planned action step through which the teacher will rectify the identified gap (Knight et al., 2015).

**Culturally relevant classrooms.** Classrooms in which teachers and administrators work to build relationships with students from culturally diverse backgrounds by meeting (and in order to better meet) their students' academic and social needs (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

**Feedback.** Deliberate and specific information about a person's performance in their efforts to reach a particular goal. Feedback is void of judgment, evaluation, and advice—it is simply an evidence-based conversation about a teacher's instructional practices from which a plan for improvement is devised (Butler, 2017; Scherer, 2016).

**Growth mindset.** The belief that attributes like intelligence, competence, or personality are changeable. People respond to challenges and setbacks differently depending on the extent to which they hold a growth mindset. People with strong growth mindsets exhibit different meaning-making processes, goals, motivations, and behaviors than people with weak growth mindsets (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).

**Preservice training.** Education, training, and preparation undertaken by student teachers prior to graduating and becoming an independent classroom teacher (Bauml, Castro, Field, & Morowski, 2013).

**Professional development.** Planned activities a teacher engages in to increase their awareness of teaching skills and practices. Professional development ranges from self-directed activities (e.g., reading journals and attending collaborative meetings) to formal in-services, usually designed by school administrators (Hope, 2017).

**Real-time coaching.** An innovative approach to improving the effective implementation of classroom management and instructional skills in which coaches provide in-the-moment, non-disruptive cues to teachers during actual instruction (CT3, 2013).

**Urban education.** There is no clear, uniform, common definition of “urban” education. However, the following definition will be used for the purposes of this study: School contexts that are concentrated in large, metropolitan cities across the United States, in which it is difficult to provide necessary and adequate education resources to the many students who need them. Often, outside-of-school factors such as housing, poverty, and transportation are directly connected to what happens inside of schools in urban settings (Milner, 2012).

## **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations**

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

Assumptions made in this study concerned the integrity of research participants. It is assumed that research participants would give truthful answers to interview questions. In addition, it is assumed that the researcher's observations of classrooms and professional development sessions would reflect normal practices in both settings. Limitations are potential weaknesses of a research study and are beyond the researcher's control (Simon, 2013). The limitations of this study included sampling, time constraints, setting, and transferability.

This study was conducted using 11 teacher participants. Due to the size of this sample, the scope of this study is limited to the perceptions and insights of a small number of teachers. Therefore, within the data collected for this study, there is little information about the attitudes of American teachers in general regarding the topic of this research (that is, real-time feedback as a form of professional development and coaching to enhance student achievement). Additionally, participants in this research were teachers from one charter management organization. The sample did not include teachers from multiple schools or networks. Hence, the scope of this study is limited to the experiences of one group of teachers within one small charter school network. In future studies on this topic, researchers could increase the number of participants and recruit participants from more than one network or school district to garner a more representative sample. Time constraints were a possible limitation in this study. Participants in this study were teachers at a school in an urban area who were invited to participate in interviews of at least one hour. Teachers are known to have busy daily schedules. As noted by Delva, Kirby, Knapper, and Birtwhistle (2002), people who experience time constraints (whether real or perceived) are less likely to respond to surveys or participate in interviews.

Another limitation of this study is its setting. The scope of this research proposed initially, which would have entailed a more expansive setting, could have been too large for the researcher to manage. The researcher narrowed the setting to four schools, all of which were in the same charter school organization. This approach is more practical for the researcher. However, it precluded the possibility of studying teachers in other urban alternative school settings, where dynamics of student achievement and professional development and coaching for teachers may have been different from the setting in which the study was conducted. Consequently, the researcher did not have an opportunity to compare and contrast views on feedback among teachers at multiple urban alternative schools.

Transferability became a potential limitation of this study. This research was conducted at several schools. However, these schools operated under the auspices of one charter school organization. Therefore, it is not possible to apply the findings of this study to other urban alternative schools outside of the organization in this study. Transferability is also a limitation of this study due to the small sample size used. In sum, conclusions drawn from this study are not generalizable and applicable to the entire population of teachers at urban alternative schools in the United States.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Delimitations are within the researcher's control and are characteristics that limit the scope of a study and define its boundaries (Simon, 2013). Delimitations denote the extent to which researchers can draw conclusions about a study's findings, reliability and/or validity. Delimitations of this study included establishing boundaries around the study's setting, sampling, and instrumentation. In addition, delimitations denote the choices researchers make in order to set boundaries and to ensure that their study is not too large to complete. The scope of this study

is limited to 11 teachers within a small charter school network. Purposeful sampling was used to select 11 participants, all of them school teachers. Although small and limited, this sample size is manageable for the researcher, allowing her to conduct the research in a timely manner.

However, as a result of this delimitation, the study may not be applicable to teachers in non-charter school networks.

The instrumentation used to conduct this study included semistructured interviews with direct open-ended questioning, as well as observations of each teacher who participated in this study (see Appendix A). Semistructured interviews were an opportunity for the researcher to collect detailed information about the research questions at hand. Through this approach, the researcher gained direct control over the flow of the research process, as well as the ability to clarify certain issues as needed during the research process (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Through semistructured interviewing, the researcher ensured that data collected were relevant to the research question at hand.

Using observation guides and field notes, observations were conducted to gather data. The researcher used observation guides to focus her attention while in the field. While observing classrooms and professional development sessions, the researcher gathered and recorded the most pertinent and relevant details in field notes. In observation guides, key actions, behaviors, conversations, and materials for the researcher to note while in the field were pinpointed. The researcher made minimal recordings of arbitrary details in field notes in order to allow for an uncomplicated and straightforward data analysis process.

### **Summary**

Teachers and administrators in underperforming urban schools face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas (Cucchiara, et al., 2015). For this

reason, maximizing student achievement in these schools has been a topic of considerable research and debate. Attempts to improve the quality of education in urban schools include turnaround initiatives, urban teacher training programs, and school leadership residency programs. By examining and aligning the effects of real-time coaching and ongoing professional development for new teachers in urban schools, perhaps educators can begin to affect the progress they desire in urban schools.

In this study, the researcher sought to answer the research question at hand: How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement? It is hoped that administrators and educators at urban schools will use insights from this study to better understand teacher perceptions of real-time coaching and in-the-moment feedback. Researchers have demonstrated that teachers in urban areas who receive preservice preparation and professional development are more effective in improving their students' academic achievement (Kalchman, 2015; Koedel, 2015). However, few researchers to date have examined the effects of real-time coaching and in-the-moment feedback on teacher practice. This research is focused on structures used to support and develop teachers in order to equip them to improve student achievement in alternative urban school settings. It is the researcher's hope that results and conclusions from this study may be applied to her current school, to other schools where staff participated in this research, and to schools with characteristics similar to the ones included in this study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to review and aggregate literature regarding key concepts relevant to this study: urban education, student academic achievement, teacher efficacy, and professional development and coaching of teachers. Within the literature discussed in this chapter, these concepts are positioned in the context of understanding the efficacy of approaches to improving student academic achievement in urban schools. Teachers and administrators in underperforming urban schools face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas (Cucchiara et al., 2015). For this reason, the question of how best to address these challenges to enhance student achievement in urban schools has been a topic of considerable debate and research. Attempts to improve the quality of education in urban schools have included turnaround and reform initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In this literature review, the constructivism as the conceptual framework of this study is introduced. Next, a review of the existing research, including seminal author John Hattie (2007), is outlined. Later in the chapter, methodological issues identified in the literature are reviewed, along with research findings from the review. Finally, a brief summary of the research is presented.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The school of thought in which this qualitative research study is grounded is known as constructivism. Constructivism is a theory of learning that is used to explain how people learn and acquire knowledge. Constructivists posit that people learn by actively constructing knowledge and meaning through experiences those of other people (Scholnik et al., 2006).

Since learning is an active process of knowledge construction, the learning environment should not impart knowledge but rather support the learners' construction of knowledge.

It follows that learners should be exposed to materials, experiences, and situations from which they can inductively build their own knowledge. (Scholnik et al., 2006, p. 13)

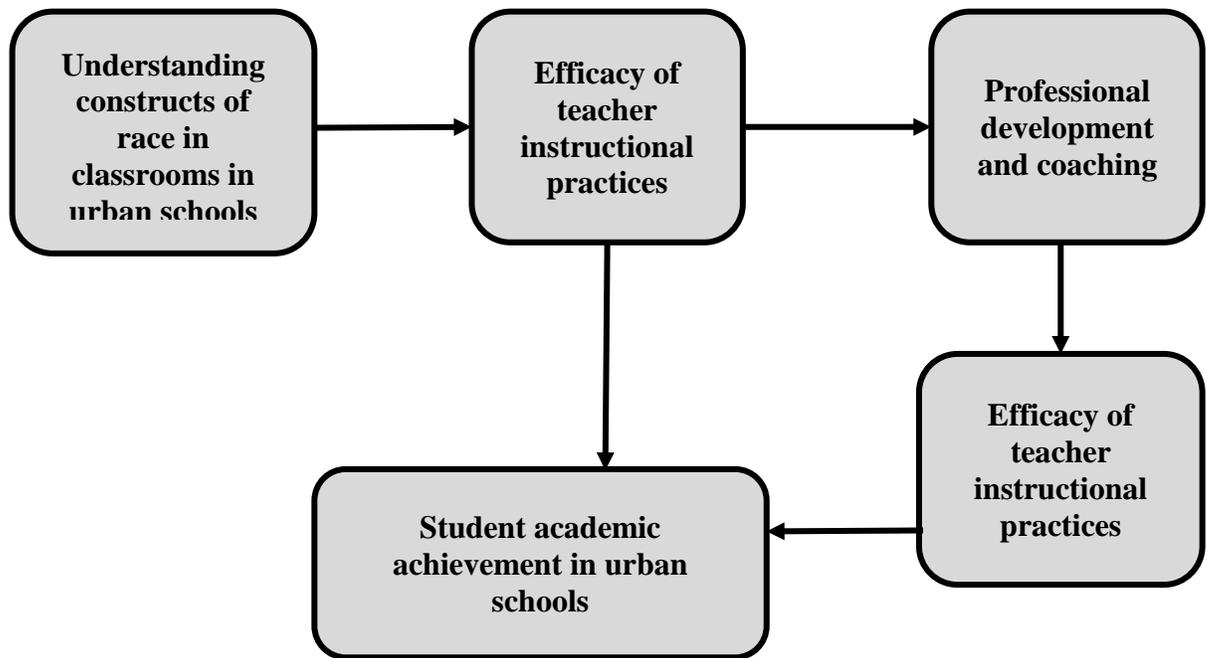
In order to measure an abstract construct, a solid theoretical understanding of the construct itself is necessary. To this end, researchers should define the construct and identify concrete indicators for the construct they intend to measure.

In using constructivism as the school of thought for this research, the researcher sought to help other researchers understand the topic better. “It is recognition through metacognition that tentative theorising can lead to the creation of new knowledge” (Berman & Smyth, 2015, p. 127). Constructivism becomes important as researchers reflect on learning that is taking place, integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge, and synthesize information from data and field experiences to form new meanings and understanding. In the remainder of this section, the constructivist conceptual framework of this research is explained in more detail, with reference to the literature discussed in the next section. The conceptual framework of this study was developed from relational thinking about the aforementioned core concepts within this research. Used in tandem with other planning devices such as a research matrix (Smyth & Maxwell, 2008), a conceptual framework is a powerful reference point for the researcher. It can be used to facilitate targeted work and evidence of alignment between epistemology, ontology and methodology.

This framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, is based on the researcher’s assumptions regarding the effect of professional development and coaching for teachers on the academic achievement of students in urban schools where students underperform. This topic is of particular interest to the researcher in her capacity, at the time of writing, as a principal in an urban charter school in a district where 63% of the students perform below grade level.

Historically, the school has been characterized by low student achievement and high turnover rates among teachers. Recently, the school has been managed by a top-performing charter management organization. In that time, student achievement and retention of staff have improved. However, administrators at schools in urban areas across the United States continue to grapple with similar challenges.

The focus of this study is the effect of professional development and coaching for teachers on academic success for students at schools in urban areas of the United States. At the outset of this study, the researcher's presumptive answers to this question were as follows: First, it is necessary for teachers at schools in urban areas to understand constructs and dynamics of race and receive adequate preparation to work in those environments. Teachers with a solid foundation in this respect, built upon knowledge and understanding of race in contemporary America, will demonstrate better practice and presence in front of students. The professional development and coaching a teacher receives to improve their efficacy in the classroom should be determined based on a teacher's effectiveness to this end. This approach to professional development and coaching for teachers should result in improvements in student academic achievement.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework for this research.

In the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1, the central idea of this research is illustrated: That teachers in urban schools perform better when they possess a solid understanding of urban education pedagogy, have previous experience working in urban schools, and receive continuous, high quality professional development and coaching. In this study, the central belief explored is that knowledge is created within the learner and cannot be passed on to another person without active participation from the learner. Through participation and experiences, people establish concepts, ideas or theories about how they should behave or function, coming to recognize that particular actions lead to particular results (Liu & Chen, 2010). By using constructivism as the conceptual framework for this study, the researcher sought to help participants in this research and other researchers better understand the problem being investigated—that is, whether most teachers in urban alternative school settings receive coaching that helps them improve their instructional practices. The researcher used a constructivist approach with a view to help participants and other researchers understand the effects of real-

time coaching on teacher practices and student outcomes. Real-time coaching entails constructivist teaching methods, through provision of in-the-moment feedback and requiring the teacher to learn and practice as they teach. Through real-time coaching, it is possible to engage teachers in deeper learning to aid in their professional development of key competencies they require as educators (Lalor et al., 2014).

### **Review of Research and Methodological Literature**

Within the literature discussed in this section, key concepts relevant to this research are placed in the context of understanding the role of professional development and coaching in approaches to improving teacher practice and student academic achievement in urban schools. Teachers and administrators in underperforming urban schools face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas. The question of how best to address those challenges to help students in urban schools perform better academically has been a topic of considerable public policy debate, academic research, and efforts to improve the quality of instruction received by students in urban schools. In this section, the literature on constructs of race and pedagogical gaps in urban education is summarized. Next, research is examined regarding teacher efficacy in urban schools. An overview of literature on effective professional development and coaching of urban school teachers is also presented. Finally, the connection is drawn between these three areas of literature and the topic of this research. Based on the researcher's review of the relevant literature, these three factors affect academic outcomes of students in urban schools. For that reason, further research on these topics is warranted.

### **Pressures Faced by Teachers**

Educators in urban schools are among the most heralded professionals in the United States. However, teaching in urban schools is one of the most stressful and high-stakes

professions (Haskvitz, 2008). Haskvitz (2008) noted that many urban school teachers are placed in school settings where they must manage the effects of violence, social constraints, and cultural challenges. At the same time, parents, administrators, and policymakers expect teachers to be highly accountable and to follow education initiatives that change frequently. Within the challenges faced by American teachers in their classrooms each day, there is an issue that is worth exploring as it relates to their ability to improve student academic outcomes.

**Classroom management.** Consistently, researchers have found that novice and veteran teachers view classroom management as an area of main concern (Sturges, 2011; Uriegas, 2012). It requires considerable time, practice, planning, and persistence for a teacher to develop an effective classroom management procedure. This process usually entails creating and implementing efficient classroom routines, policies, and procedures for participation in class discussions, forming cooperative learning groups, devising class assignments, and various other classroom activities and interactions (Sterling, 2009). Crucial areas of focus for any teacher, student discipline and classroom management serve as key indicators of a teacher's ability to conduct daily instruction effectively (Putnam, 2009). Curwin, Mendler, and Mendler (2008) contended that the foremost responsibility of a teacher should be implementing successful classroom management strategies and molding students into scholars who are able and willing to take ownership for their learning and behavior.

Furthermore, through effective classroom management, teachers facilitate delivery of quality instruction—and, in turn, better academic achievement for their students (Kariuki, 2009). Students determine a classroom's culture and climate through their behaviors, with direct effects on academic outcomes. Due to the significant impact of student behavior on classroom culture and teacher effectiveness, behavior and classroom management are the most common areas in

which classroom teachers need development and support (Oliver, Reschly, & Wehby, 2011). Researchers have also found that instruction time is less effective in disruptive classrooms. In addition, student grades and standardized test scores are lower compared to students in less disruptive classrooms (Oliver et al., 2011).

Classroom teachers understand the urgency and importance of implementing effective classroom management strategies into their everyday practice (Kaufman & Moss; 2010). Pedota (2007, p. 164) has noted that “it is extremely important that procedures are in place [in classrooms] that are consistent with school wide policy and that both students and parents know what is expected in terms of behavior and class work.” Teacher efficacy and student success hinge on proper management of student behavior. Through implementing rules, expectations, and consequences that are equitable, firm, and consistent, teachers can cultivate a classroom culture that is easy to manage, allowing for maximum instructional time (McGregor, 2012; Parkash, 2017; Pedota, 2007). Teachers who practice effective classroom management set themselves up for instructional success and, as a result, help their students achieve better academic outcomes.

**Accountability measures.** In the last two decades, teachers have faced constant changes and redirection regarding their accountability for the success and performance of their students. At state and national levels, expectations of teachers in this respect change often. State and local education policymakers have built on the foundations laid through initiatives such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the evolution of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. The result has been frequent changes in education policies and initiatives, with policymakers raising the stakes of standardized student academic achievement measures in the process. Standardized testing measures in several states—

such as Texas, Illinois, and Ohio—have changed frequently in the past three decades. For example, between 1980 and 2019, policymakers in Texas have changed the state’s approach to standardized testing five times (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Teachers are held accountable for how students perform on high-stakes standardized tests. For many teachers, the quality of their instruction is assessed and determined largely based on data regarding their students’ performance in standardized statewide assessments (Brighton, Hall, Jarvis, & Moon, 2007). By extension, in many schools or school districts, a teacher’s eligibility for promotion or salary progression is tied to how their students perform on standardized tests. Brighton et al. (2007) have contended that many teachers find high-stakes testing of their students stressful. In addition to teaching federally- or state-mandated standards and curricula, many teachers feel the need to teach their students content and strategies specific to performing well in standardized testing. However, the time constraints of the school year mean many teachers must prioritize one objective over the other. In many school districts, school funding—or even closures—are linked directly to student performance on state standardized assessments. In sum, teachers are held responsible for many indicators of the success of their school and students (Brighton et al., 2007).

Increasingly, teachers in the United States are expected to perform many functions in the lives of their students. In the 21st century, many teachers aspire to educate the whole child, seeking to cultivate strong character and ethical standing and foster real-life skills in their students, paying attention to their students’ home life, tending to their student’s social and emotional needs, and serving as a mentor and role model to their students (Lambert & McCarthy, 2006). The role of the modern teacher extends far beyond classroom instruction. Amid the new

pressures faced by teachers on top of their normal teaching duties, teachers require professional development and coaching to equip them for success in these endeavors.

### **Race in America's Schools**

The declining academic performance of American students compared to children in other countries is the result of many factors. These include reduced government funding for education, entrenched poverty, crowded classrooms, shorter school years, and greater diversity among students compared to other countries. Other reasons for declining academic performance among American students include racial disparities in American school systems and the academic achievement gap—particularly between White and Black students—that is created as a result. This topic has been at the forefront of recent discussions on student academic outcomes in the United States. The achievement gap has narrowed at times (Barton & Coley, 2010). However, it has persisted for the most part, with magnitudes of roughly 0.55 to 0.75 standard deviation between Black and White students within the same school districts and metropolitan areas (Reardon, Kalogrides, & Shores, 2016). In large metropolitan locations, many White students from more affluent backgrounds have wholly different school experiences—in terms of peer interactions, neighborhood safety, and enrichment activities—compared to the experiences of poorer, minority students in the same district (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2018).

Teacher attrition in schools with predominantly Black and Hispanic students is substantially higher than schools that serve a predominantly White student population (United States Department of Education, 2011). Teachers leave the field of education for many reasons (e.g., job dissatisfaction or low pay). However, an often-cited reason is the perceived behavior of students (Chen, 2013; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2008). On average, teachers report different perceptions of Black and White students, often holding more positive assumptions and

associations regarding White students compared to Black students. Teacher attrition is especially high in schools with high ratios of Black and/or Hispanic students. In part, attrition rates in these schools appear to result from many teachers' negative perceptions of Black and/or Hispanic students and their behavior (Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Wynn, et al., 2008; Sugai, O'Keeffe, & Fallon, 2012). Researchers have shown that high teacher attrition correlates with lower academic performance among students, as well as reduced student functioning (Chen, 2013; Hancock & Scherff, 2010; United States Department of Education, 2011).

For more than 30 years, education researchers in the United States have found that African American, Latino, and Native American students “are suspended or expelled in numbers vastly disproportionate to those of their white peers” (Bleyaert, 2009, p. 1). This finding holds true regardless of a student's grade level or geographic location. Unequal treatment of students of specific racial and ethnic backgrounds results from entrenched values and beliefs that persist within American social systems and institutions today. Many of the disparities and disadvantages into which children of racial minority backgrounds are born are perpetuated in urban education settings (Bleyaert, 2009; Pfleger & Wiley, 2012; Thompson, 2007).

Researchers from The Australian National University, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, and the University of Michigan (2018) found that American children and adolescents of color experience significant racial stereotyping from adults who work with them. The researchers found that adults working or volunteering with children demonstrated high levels of negative racial stereotyping toward non-White people of all ages. The most intense negative attitudes (lazy, unintelligent, violent and having unhealthy habits) were held regarding African-Americans. The researchers noted that African-American children were perceived more

negatively than children from other racial groups, except for Native American and Hispanic/Latino children.

Young black children were more than twice as likely to be rated as unintelligent or violence-prone compared with white children of the same age, with young Hispanic/Latino children also seen as more unintelligent or violence prone than white children. Black and Hispanic/Latino teens were between one and a half to two times more likely to be considered violent prone and unintelligent than white teens. (Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, 2018)

The negative predispositions teachers hold regarding the behavior and intelligence of minority students can be linked to the declining academic performance of those students.

### **Teacher Preparedness**

Another topic of discussion surrounding student achievement is the efficacy of American teachers' instructional practices. Within the current narrative on this topic, the lack of preparedness of American teachers is seen to result in lack of effectiveness in the classroom. Researchers have attributed some blame to colleges and universities where America's traditionally-prepared teachers train. Arguably, these institutions have become an industry of mediocrity, churning out first-year teachers without the classroom management skills and content knowledge they need to thrive in classrooms with ever-increasing ethnic and socioeconomic diversity among students (Greenberg, et al., 2015).

Researchers have suggested that new teachers would be more effective in classrooms if policymakers improved the quality of teacher preparation programs or changed the incentives for students selected into teaching (Chisum, 2014). If these objectives are not achieved through proposed reforms in the teacher training pipeline, student achievement will continue to decline

(Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014). As the bar is being raised for students via the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the same must be done for teachers. All teachers in the United States should meet universal and rigorous standards regarding mastery of subject matter and competency in teaching it (American Federation of Teachers, 2012).

Based on measurable qualifications, novice teachers in America's urban schools are less prepared for teaching than novice teachers in schools in other areas (United States Senate, 2016). In terms of teacher efficacy, novice teachers in urban schools feel less prepared to teach than teachers in other school settings who hold similar qualifications (Eckert, 2012). Novice teachers who believe they are underprepared for teaching tend to report a reduced commitment to teaching. Indeed, first-year teachers who feel underprepared are significantly more likely to leave the profession or switch schools.

Often, novice teachers in urban schools feel unprepared in the face of urban-specific stressors to which they were not exposed to (or prepared for) during teacher training. There is a need for high quality, district-specific induction programs to better support and prepare new teachers in urban schools. Implementing such programs should result in higher rates of teacher retention, teacher efficacy, and student achievement in urban schools (Eckert, 2012). High quality teacher induction programs tend to be structured, with a focus on professional learning and collaboration. Simply offering induction activities is not enough to improve retention among early career teachers. Understanding the professional development needs of novice teachers should be the first step in this respect, followed by targeted support through relevant induction activities (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

In the United States, teachers are entering the classroom through a variety of certification routes and programs, through which prospective teachers receive training in the areas of

curriculum, assessment, theory, pedagogy, and classroom management. Once certification is received, these teachers enter the classroom, where they face issues including disciplining students and writing referrals. When it comes to augmenting the support that first-year teachers receive, both preservice and beginning teachers benefit from a distributed mentoring model in which knowledge and skills are acquired from a variety of expert and peer sources. In the process, early career teachers interact with mentor teachers, university faculty members, school administrators, parents, and the school community. Researchers have argued that teaching should be an academically-taught clinical profession and ought to include ongoing professional support during the first two years of practice (Snyder, 2015).

By receiving expert mentoring, preservice teachers enhance their development of pedagogical practices in general and acquire effective classroom management strategies in particular (Leon, 2014). In addition, through expert mentoring, it is possible to foster in early career teachers a strong and positive professional identity. Teachers with strong professional identity are more likely to remain in the teaching profession. Through participation in peer mentoring, novice teachers are exposed to a forum in which they can share their teaching goals, discuss subject content, critique practice teaching videos, share their classroom struggles, and celebrate their successes. Overall, mentored preservice teachers receive much-needed psychological support, feedback, and can engage in an exchange of ideas with other educators (Leon, 2014).

However, fewer than half of new teachers surveyed in one study described their training as very good, with more than half describing their on-the-job learning as more helpful than their formal training (Ronfeldt, 2012). In the same study, teachers with master's degrees or content training in the subject they taught reported higher feelings of preparedness than other teachers.

New teachers viewed mentor programs and peer networks as the best ways to prepare teachers for the classroom. Teachers who received an alternative certification were more likely to report feeling unprepared than teachers who had received traditional training. Finally, new teachers were more likely to feel unprepared when teaching large numbers of students with special needs, or when teaching in low-income geographical areas (American Federation of Teachers, 2012). In sum, mentoring and induction programs for teachers can be implemented to rates of attrition in the professional—especially among new teachers.

In interviews with teachers, Monroe (2009) found that most teachers had gained instructional experience with students from diverse backgrounds, particularly African American children from low-income families, through student teaching placements. Teachers who had participated in placements in schools with large African American populations were more likely to view Black students favorably, dismissing deficit-based stereotypes. Through placements in schools with diverse student bodies, teachers gained experience and devised strategies to manage the behavior of difficult students and build relationships with those students. If more teacher training programs offered resident placements in urban schools, graduating teachers might be better prepared to manage behavior issues in urban classrooms.

Maring and Koblinsky (2013) conducted interviews with 20 teachers from schools in violent, socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. The researchers aimed to answer three questions: (a) What are the challenges faced by middle school teachers who work in schools that are located in violent communities?, (b) What specific strategies do teachers use to cope with violence-related issues in their classrooms and schools?, and (c) What support systems would help teachers respond more effectively to the needs of students affected by community violence? The authors found a link between teacher training in behavior management and effective school

leadership, on the one hand, and better resilience among teachers and their students on the other (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). Teachers in the study indicated challenges associated with their lack of training. One teacher stated: “If I could get some type of training . . . that would help me help [my students] better” (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013, p. 382). Teachers advocated for behavior management training to learn how to manage middle school students who exhibited aggressive, antisocial behaviors. Teachers also advocated for more effective school leadership, including a strong principal, responsive administrative staff and coaches, and clearer expectations of acceptable student behavior. The researchers also noted teachers’ desire for instruction in how to teach communication, social problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills to their students. In sum, Maring and Koblinsky (2013) highlighted that many teachers view training in effective behavior management and support from school leadership as indispensable in urban schools, especially those in violent communities (where many “turnaround” schools are located).

### **The Role of Professional Development and Coaching**

New and experienced teachers who receive professional coaching and support are more likely to teach effectively and to remain in their profession. Educators in urban schools where turnaround policies are being implemented face unique challenges in the classroom and require additional support and guidance. Students perform better at schools where staff receive in-house coaching. At the Carter School of Excellence, a school within the Academy for Urban School Leadership Network, a coach is available every day to provide additional support for teachers, whether instructional or behavioral. At other turnaround schools in the Academy for Urban School Leadership Network, students at schools with in-house coaches perform 23% better than students at schools without in-house coaches (Doyle, 2013).

In a quantitative study, Reinke et. al (2014) provided support for the idea that teachers at urban schools require ongoing and accessible coaching and development. The authors explored the effects of coaching and support on beginning teachers' knowledge and application of behavior management. Coaches actively planned and provided performance feedback to teachers on their implementation of behavior management plans. In pre- and post-tests conducted to determine the effectiveness of support plans developed, rates of office discipline referrals and teacher-issued reprimands were measured. Teachers who implemented behavior support plans for disruptive students, after receiving coaching on behavior management, reduced their rate of reprimands with students considered at-risk of behavioral issues. In addition, teachers who implemented behavior support plans reduced inappropriate student behavior that would have resulted in an office referral.

Other researchers have shown the need to increase the capacity of school staff to participate in school improvement efforts (Chisum, 2014). To this end, ongoing professional development for teachers is essential for successful turnarounds in urban schools. Mentoring programs, coaching, and targeted professional development can be implemented to increase retention and effectiveness of beginning teachers. Beginning teachers with access to in-school mentors and coaches receive more frequent, targeted, and collaborative professional development, with positive effects on instructional practice (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012). Rates of recruitment of new teachers and retention of existing ones are higher at schools with effective mentoring programs. Beginning teachers who participate in mentorships with other teachers are less likely to change schools or leave teaching early in their career, and overall report feeling more supported and effective at work (Hall et al., 2017).

## **Feedback Received by Teachers**

Teachers often seek feedback to improve their instructional practices—however, they do not always receive the feedback they desire (Khachatryan, 2015). As student academic achievement continues to decline in the United States compared to other countries (OECD, 2014), American teachers’ instructional practices have become the focus of considerable attention. Within the literature on this topic, it appears that student academic achievement hinges on the quality of school leadership and instruction by teachers (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2009; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; White & Bowers, 2011). Therefore, in order to improve student achievement, effective teaching and leadership in schools is paramount (Khachatryan, 2015). To date, the effectiveness of school teachers and leaders has been determined based on student results in standardized testing. However, specific information about a teacher’s instructional style (with a view to supporting teachers to improve their performance) cannot be derived from this data (Loeb, 2013). Darling-Hammond (2013) has argued that, in order to help teachers to improve their instructional practices, school leaders should assess the quality of teaching, provide frequent, concrete, and timely feedback about teaching, and engage teachers in reflection about the feedback data.

Researchers have examined whether teachers perform better in classrooms when they receive instructional coaching, including feedback from an instructional coach (e.g., Matsumura, Garnier, & Spybrook, 2012; McCollum, Hemmeter, & Hsieh, 2011). Within the literature, it appears that student academic achievement improves when school leaders allot sufficient time for “teacher coaching and developing the school’s educational program” (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013, p. 433). However, researchers to date have not examined *how* coaching and

development support from school leaders affects instruction and student academic outcomes (Khachatryan, 2015).

Supporters of the idea that feedback is critical to improving teaching practice agree on key tenets of effective feedback (Hattie, 2007; Shute, 2008; Sutton, Hornsey, & Douglas, 2011). Specifically, the person providing feedback should focus their comments on the task, not the learner; elaborate on their comments, but in units that are manageable for the recipient to understand; communicate specifically, clearly, and in language that is as simple as possible; reduce uncertainty between performance and goals; provide unbiased, objective feedback, either in hardcopy or electronically; promote a learning goal orientation; and provide feedback after learners have attempted a solution (Hattie, 2007). Within this approach, the question of whether feedback should be provided during the practice (or in-the-moment) is not addressed.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

In this study, the research method employed is a case study approach. Yin (2009) defined case study research “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Case study research, as explained by Zainal (2007), is suited to exploration and understanding of complex issues when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required. Using case study methods, researchers can move beyond quantitative statistical results to understand behavioral conditions through the actor’s perspective. In this way, researchers can use case study methodology to better explain the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Zainal, 2007). However, some methodological issues are associated with case study research.

In most of the research discussed in this literature review, a qualitative methodology was used. Qualitative research is suited to exploring complex phenomena through the eyes of individuals in their natural settings. Creswell (2013, p. 47) has noted that “we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study.” In order to accomplish those ideals, qualitative researchers acknowledge their *a priori* knowledge and its effect on their research, strive to capture data in the most natural context, utilize experiential methods such as participant observations and interviews, and triangulate across elements of their research.

Regarding qualitative research referenced earlier in this chapter (Snyder, 2015; Sterling, 2009; Sturgess, 2011; Uriegas, 2012), other researchers might question the quality of data collected via qualitative research methods, as well as conclusions drawn from that data (Morse, 2011). One problem associated with qualitative research is observer or researcher bias. In case study research, the researcher plays an important role in data collection and conclusions that are drawn from the data. “The researcher is the instrument in a qualitative study and therefore he/she must account for personal as well as professional experiences that may affect data collection, analysis and interpretation of data” (Hallberg, 2013).

In addition, “grounds for establishing reliability and generality are also subjected to skepticism when a small sampling is deployed” (Zainal, 2007, p. 5). Small sample sizes were employed in the qualitative studies mentioned in this literature review (Chisum, 2014; Hammerness & Craig, 2014; Kalchman, 2015; Leon, 2014; Whipp, 2013). Other qualitative studies noted in this chapter (Hallam, et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2017; Sydnor-Walton, 2013) were conducted in limited settings, with researchers focusing on a single unit or instance of study. For

these reasons, findings and conclusions from those studies have limited applicability in other settings or sample populations. Many researchers note generalizability and representativeness as limitations of qualitative research methods (Wiley, 2009).

In most studies discussed in this literature review, qualitative methodologies were utilized. However, by adopting a mixed methods approach, the researchers in question could have provided providing numerical and statistical data to support their qualitative data. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2006, p. 17) have defined mixed-methods research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.” Often, mixed-methods research is considered the bridge between qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). “The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, pp. 14–15).

Most of the data identified during the literature review for this research had been gathered through qualitative research. Through case studies, interviews, and surveys of teachers in underperforming urban schools, data were collected to explain common features of successful schools. For that reason, the researcher hoped to make further contributions to the literature on this topic through additional qualitative research. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) have described administering interviews, observations, and direct participation in urban underperforming schools as proven approaches to effective case study research in education settings.

## Synthesis of Research Findings

Within the literature discussed in this chapter, researchers have identified factors that affect the success of teachers (and, therefore, students) in urban schools. Those factors include pressures faced by teachers with regard to classroom management in urban communities, ever-changing expectations of teachers in terms of accountability, racial and cultural differences, teacher preparation and preservice programs, and professional development and coaching. Researchers have identified teacher preparation, including cultural and racial competency, and professional development of teachers as factors that affect the academic achievement of students in urban areas (Kalchman, 2015; Koedel, 2015). Support (i.e., professional development and coaching) and effective preparation for urban educators are consistent themes in the existing literature on this topic (Chisum, 2014; Doyle, 2013; Hallam et al., 2012; Reinke et. al, 2014). It is essential that teachers receive effective preparation and training on dynamics of culture and race—particularly through direct experience teaching in urban schools—as well as ongoing quality professional development and coaching (Howell et al., 2016).

Teachers in urban schools experience workplace stressors that result from racial differences with their students, changing accountability measures, challenging classroom management, and inadequate professional development and coaching. In turn, these stressors affect student academic achievement (Bleyaert, 2009; Brighton et al., 2007; Chisum, 2014; Sturgess, 2011; Uriegas, 2012). As a result of the pressures faced by teachers in urban schools, many students in urban areas experience low efficacy and high rates of attrition among teachers at their school. Both factors are impacted by social constructs of race. Teachers in urban schools who leave the profession cite their perceptions of, and ability to manage, student behavior as primary reasons. However, teachers who are prepared to serve in urban areas during their

preservice training, have had field experiences in urban school settings, and receive consistent professional development and coaching to effectively navigate student behavior and other obstacles—perceived or real—report feeling happier and more effective in their roles. As a result, those teachers are less likely to leave their school (or the profession altogether). Educators and researchers could draw on insights from this research to create professional development and coaching programs that improve student academic achievement more effectively.

Academic achievement of students in American schools is greatly affected by dynamics of racial disparity and constructs of race in American school systems. Academic achievement gaps along racial or ethnic lines—particularly between White and Black students—are one example of this phenomenon. Many white students from affluent backgrounds have school experiences that are wholly different—in terms of peer interactions, neighborhood safety, and enrichment activities—than the experiences of poorer, minority students in the same district (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2018). Teacher attrition in schools with predominantly Black and Hispanic student bodies is substantially higher than schools with White student populations (United States Department of Education, 2011). In part, these attrition rates result from negative perceptions many teachers hold about non-White students and their behavior (Anderson-Clark et al., 2008; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Wynn et al., 2008; Sugai et al., 2012). High teacher attrition correlates with lower academic performance among students at the school in question, as well as poorer student functioning (Chen, 2013; Hancock & Scherff, 2010; United States Department of Education, 2011).

## **Critique of Previous Research**

The research discussed in earlier sections reveal the pressures and stresses endured by many teachers and the impact this has on their practice and student achievement. Race and racial disparities appear at the forefront of teachers' struggles with classroom management. The coaching and professional development that teachers receive ought to be ongoing during the first two years of teaching (Snyder, 2015) in order to combat the issues and pressures teachers face when entering into the profession. Much of the research discussed in this literature review also highlights the idea that in order to better meet the needs of the nation's students, especially those in high-need schools, the education community must take collective ownership for preparing and supporting a critical mass of new professional practitioners (Banks, 2015). Right now, the training and preservice programs that teachers complete prior to stepping into their classrooms has been lack-luster and unsuccessful in preparing new teachers to be effective in the classroom (Greenberg, et al., 2015).

While some of the research discussed herein mentioned the need for the professional development and coaching of teachers (Chisum, 2014; Doyle, 2013; Hallam et al., 2012), further research is warranted regarding the impact that teacher professional development and ongoing coaching has on teacher efficacy and henceforth student academic achievement in urban schools. With much of the research being conducted under case studies, interviews, and limited opportunities to participate in the experiences being researched, it can be determined that the research—while valid and reliable—does warrant further exploration of the topic through observation and field notes. Additionally, many of the claims and findings are based upon research dated over 10 years ago. More recent and up to date information would prove to be a valuable contribution to the research community.

## Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter discusses some key factors which directly affect teacher practices and impact student academic achievement. Teachers in underperforming urban schools face very unique challenges when compared to their counterparts at non-urban schools (Cucchiara et al., 2015), such as but not limited to cultural/racial differences between students, ever-changing accountability standards, ineffective classroom management skills, and missing or subpar professional development and coaching. With this notion, there has been great debate and research regarding how to best combat these difficulties to ensure the improvement of student achievement in those schools, including the many attempts to improve the quality of education in urban schools through turnaround initiatives and urban teacher preparation programs.

Teachers endure struggles stemming from racial differences, accountability measures, classroom management, lacking/missing professional development and coaching, which in turn impacts student academic achievement (Bleyaert, 2009; Brighton et al., 2007; Chisum, 2014; Sturges, 2011; Uriegas, 2012). Due to the pressures endured by teachers, students in urban school settings suffer from many factors, such as teacher efficacy and high teacher attrition both of which are impacted by the social constructs of race. Teachers report the perceptions and ability to manage student behavior as a primary reason for leaving their jobs. However, teachers who are prepared during their preservice training, have had field experiences in urban school settings, and receive consistent professional development and coaching to effectively navigate these behaviors and obstacles—perceived or real—report being happier and more effective in their roles and henceforth staying in their roles for a longer amount of time. Moreover, this research on the claims presented in this dissertation could possibly provide insight for creating a more

effective professional development and coaching program as a means to positively impact student academic achievement.

The research discussed herein suggests that education policy makers could improve the effectiveness of new teachers by improving and changing the quality of teacher preparation programs (Chisum, 2014). If reforms of teacher preparation programs do not accomplish these objectives, it may result in teacher preparation pathways that will ultimately have a noticeably negative effect on student achievement (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014). Teacher interviews and surveys also reveal that teachers value professional development and coaching from their school leaders and need more of it (Data Quality Campaign, 2014). Under effective leadership manifested as professional development and coaching, schools can begin to see the progress and change they desire to see.

Schools are failing because of ineffective teacher practice and there is a need to embrace new leadership that focuses on academic progress and schoolwide culture—through improving teacher practice in urban school settings by means of professional development and coaching. This would entail possessing a great team of highly motivated, qualified teachers and administrators who are focused on student achievement, possesses a strong work ethic, and will not accept failure is the answer (Conrad, 2013; Stein 2012; New Leaders for School, 2012). By further examining the role of professional development and coaching for teachers in urban schools, perhaps educators can garner some insight regarding how to make the progress desired in urban schools.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

It is essential that teachers in urban underperforming schools receive the most effective and quality professional development and coaching that is on-going and relevant to their needs (Howell et al., 2016). This study explored how student academic achievement is impacted through the professional development and coaching received by teachers. The setting of the study is an urban charter school district in a Midwestern city. In this chapter, the study's research methodology is described. Identified is the study's research design, sampling method, and limitations. Also included is an explanation of the choice of the research design and the procedures and measures used to collect and analyze data. The chapter also discusses the validity of the research and the ethical issues in the study. Finally, at the conclusion of this study there is a brief summary of the key actions that emanate from this study's conceptual framework.

#### **Research Question**

This focus of this study is placed on the measures taken by an urban charter school district to improve student academic achievement within their schools through professional development and coaching. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement?

#### **Purpose and Design of the Study**

The design used to conduct research for this topic was an exploratory case study. Creswell (2013) defined case study research as, "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information"

(p. 97). A fundamental advantage of employing a case study is that it offered a complete description and analysis of the research topic, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of the participant's responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Case studies also provide flexibility and accommodate variation in procedures and analysis.

Case studies may be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory in nature (Yin, 2009). Exploratory case studies set to explore any phenomenon in the data which serves as a point of interest to the researcher. This is done using strategies such as asking general questions in order to open the door for further examination of the phenomenon observed. Exploratory case studies also require prior fieldwork and small-scale data collection to be conducted before the research questions and hypotheses are proposed (Yin, 1984). The literature of related research has shown that exploratory case studies are effective qualitative research designs to use when exploring the variables that impact student achievement in urban alternative schools (Hammerness & Craig, 2016; Kalchan, 2015).

The focus of this research is placed on teacher professional development and coaching systems put into place by an urban charter school district. The data was collected during this research study from interviews with teachers and observations of coaching and professional development implementation. The research design, therefore, is an exploratory case study. An exploratory case study is most appropriate for this study because this method of research allowed the researcher to be fully immersed in the field for an extended amount of time. The researcher also needed to collect data from multiple sources using multiple collection strategies, such as interviews and observations—all of which made exploratory case study research most appropriate. Quantitative design is not the best to employ for this research because quantitative research explores phenomenon through the collection of numerical data and statistical analysis,

and it doesn't call for the researcher to become immersed in the study. Since this study is based upon teachers' perception and insight, as well as the researcher's observation and notes, qualitative research methods were more applicable.

### **Research Sampling Method**

The population of this study is school teachers in urban school settings. The sample population entailed school teachers currently working at an urban charter school district in the Midwest. The teachers have worked in this setting and role for at least one year and will vary in grade level. Teachers included in the sample were elementary and middle school educators, serving grades kindergarten through eighth grade. All participants were invited to participate in interviews and observations.

The sampling method that was used for the study entailed purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases in order to garner the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002); such as identifying and choosing participants or groups of participants who are knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Participants for the study were recruited via email, Facebook, and LinkedIn giving them the option to participate in the research. The sample size is 11 school teachers who were currently working in an urban alternative school setting. The participants each completed an initial interview prior to beginning the formal research process.

### **Instrumentation**

Semistructured interviews were used in this study, with each interview entailing direct open-ended questions (listed in Appendix A) and observations of school teachers participating in this study. Semistructured interviews were important to this qualitative research study because

they fostered opportunities for the researcher to collect detailed information about the research questions at hand, as well as have direct control over the flow of process and the chance to clarify certain issues during the process when needed (Boyce & Neale, 2006). According to Neuman (2000), for exploratory research such as this study, open-ended interview questions are the most effective. It is useful “to ask questions that open up the topic and allow respondents to construct answers in collaboration with the listeners, in ways they find meaningful” (Neuman, 2000, p. 114).

This research is an exploratory case study. For that reason, the researcher used semistructured interviews to provide some flexibility in wording questions with each individual participant. It also provided the opportunity to probe for more information and clarification when appropriate (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The semistructured interviews included questions that elicit information about: The background of the participants, their experiences working in an alternative urban school setting, the impact of effective school leadership, training programs for teachers, and the quality of coaching and professional development (see Appendix A).

Observations and field notes from three schools were used to gauge the teachers’ firsthand experiences and their interactions with each other and the students. Qualitative observational data collection methods are important to this study because they contributed to the theoretical and conceptual development and the explanation of social processes in teacher development. In particular, this contribution to understanding professional development and coaching processes should improve understanding of teachers’ experiences of their practices and thus the impact on student achievement outcomes (Walshe, Ewing, & Griffiths, 2011). The researcher witnessed the prevalence of observations by school leaders, teachers’ use of classroom management and instructional techniques, professional development sessions, and

interactions between school leaders or coaches and teachers. Observations and field notes from school visits were essential in this study—qualitative researchers use these instruments to witness, experience, and document contextual information that can be discussed and analyzed for further exploration (Phillippi, 2017).

### **Data Collection**

Methods of data collection employed in this research included observations and interviews. The observations and interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants. Recorded detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed (Marshal, 2006) ensured that the data conveyed in the study is as accurate as possible.

#### **Observations**

With the use of an observation guide to help guide the study, teachers and school leaders/coaches were observed during classroom instruction, planning periods, and after-school professional development sessions. Observations took place at least three times per week for four weeks. Observations lasted for a minimum of 30 minutes. Teachers completed an observation doodle to indicate their preferred dates and times for observations to be conducted. Participants were also informed about what each observation entailed and focused on. All observations sought to determine whether or not teachers were being coached during their classroom instruction and/or during their planning periods and what each of the coaching sessions entail. Professional development observations also provided insight as to whether or not teachers are receiving coaching and/or mentoring to improve their instructional practices.

All observations were non-participant observations in which there is limited interaction with the people one observes; in this case the use of audio recording devices is appropriate as it resulted in a detailed recording of the communication and provided the researcher with access to

the contours of talk and body language (Creswell, 1998). All participants were notified about the recording of the observations and were invited to complete a consent form (see Appendix B). Field notes were crucial to this research study because it helped to recount the behaviors, activities, events, and other features of the observations. The notes focused on the teachers during professional development sessions and classroom coaching. The field notes served as evidence to produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, social situation, or phenomenon being studied at each of the three schools. The notes also were used to supplement the interview data gathered from the teachers and school leaders/coaches (Schwandt, 2015).

### **Interviews**

Interviews with teachers were conducted on an individual basis to increase the level of comfort in being open and honest in their responses. Each interview was conducted using a set of predetermined questions (see Appendix A), lasting between one to two hours in length. As previously mentioned, there was an initial interview with each of the participants to gather background information on the school and the professional development and coaching practices (see Appendix A). These questions were essential to understanding the data gathered from the observations. In addition to the initial interview questions, teachers were also interviewed prior to each coaching session and afterwards (see Appendix D). Questions asked beforehand were focused on the coaching points and desired outcomes of the coaching. Questions asked afterward were focused on the effect of the coaching, primarily to clarify questions the researcher had devised during and after the coaching session.

Lastly, teachers were asked a set of predetermined questions at the conclusion of the four-week observation period. These questions paid specific attention to the quality and effectiveness of coaching, leadership, and professional development (see Appendix A). Teachers

were provided with the predetermined questions three days prior to the interview. It was also disclosed that follow-up or probing questions may be asked during the interview to gain more clarity on the responses provided by the interviewee. Interviews were conducted in the classrooms of the teachers being interviewed. All participants were invited to complete an interview doodle to indicate their preferred times and dates to be interviewed.

### **Identification of Attributes**

The attributes that defined and guided this case study are urban schools, urban school coaches, urban school teachers, professional development, teacher coaching, teacher development, student achievement, effectiveness. The effectiveness of urban school teachers and urban school teachers were based upon student achievement data. While many factors directly and indirectly contribute to students' academic achievement data, the goal of this study is to examine the perception and impact of real-time coaching and in-the-moment feedback as methods of teacher development and support in urban alternative school settings.

Professional development and coaching of teachers is an attribute that the participants in this study were familiar with and each have experienced. The quality and frequency of these attributes were studied, observed, and discussed to garner an understanding as to why they are important and valuable. Interviews and observations were conducted to understand the quality and effectiveness of those attributes and further examine how those attributes have contributed to the participants' effectiveness in their roles.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis procedures provided a way of drawing inductive inferences and distinguishing the signal from the noise present in the data (Shamoo & Resnik, 2003). Inductive analysis is the approach taken for this study. Inductive analysis is an approach used in qualitative

research studies to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format, establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data, and develop of model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data (Thomas, 2003). Furthermore, Hatch (2002) mentions,

To argue inductively is to begin with particular pieces of evidence, then pull them together into a meaningful whole. Inductive data analysis is a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made. (p. 161)

For all data collected during this study, there was a nine-step process (as shown in Figure 2) employed. Hatch (2002) identifies the following nine steps:

1. Read the data and identify frames of analysis
2. Create domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis
3. Identify salient domains, assign them a code, and put others aside
4. Reread data, refining salient domains and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data
5. Decide if your domains are supported by the data and search data for examples that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships in your domains
6. Complete an analysis within domains
7. Search for themes across domains
8. Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among domains
9. Select data excerpts to support the elements of your outline. (p. 162)

These nine steps were used to analyze the information properly and efficiently.

## **Reading and Organizing the Data**

Raw data management is the process of preparing and organizing raw data into meaningful units of analysis. This is most commonly done by converting text and audio files into transcripts, photos, and charts. All observations and interviews in this study were recorded and the audio was transcribed using the *Transcribe* extension powered by Google Chrome.

According to Marshal (2006), recording detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed ensures that the data being analyzed in the study is as accurate as possible.

Each of the transcripts was read two to three times and summarized to provide thorough recaps of the important information elicited from the interviews. Afterwards, the researcher re-examined the interview questions and organized the collected data according to the questions, using tables. Research questions were inputted into the table, with data assigned to each question.

## **Reading and Coding the Field Notes; Deriving Domains**

During this step of data analysis, the purpose is to get a sense of the data holistically. The information garnered from the transcripts and summaries of interviews, observations, and other field notes were read several times and immersed fully into. Codes were developed in order to categorize the data into concepts, properties and patterns. The purpose of this is to identify categories and groups for the information that was being read. During this stage of analysis preliminary classification schemes emerged (Billups, 2014). The set of codes that was developed was used to extract themes.

## **Identifying, Grouping, and Interpreting Themes/Domains**

During this step of data analysis, groups of related data that have similar meaning were coded in several cycles (Billups, 2014), and eventually those groups became clustered into

similar theme categories. The data from this study's interviews, observations, and field notes were used to then create meaning for the groups which were labeled in order to allow for themes to emerge. The themes provided insight and answers to the research questions presented in this study.

### **Data Representation**

The final stage in the data analysis process entailed representing the data to readers through the themes that emerged. There are many ways to present the data to readers and other researchers. This qualitative study will present data analysis in one-sentence generalizations with data excerpts that support the written generalizations. By representing the data in this manner, the information will be presented in its simplest and most objective form. This will be done by creating an outline of the themes and finding supporting data excerpts for each theme. The presentation of the data and results are done in the following chapter.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a research study and are out of the researcher's control; delimitations, which are within the researcher's control, are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study (Simon, 2013). This section explains the limitations and delimitations of this particular research study. Delimitations are the choices that researchers make in order to set boundaries. They provide the extent to which researchers can draw conclusions about the study's findings, reliability and/or validity. For this particular study delimitations include setting boundaries around the study's setting, sampling, and instrumentation.

Time constraints were possible limitations of the study. The participants of this study were urban school teachers who were invited to participate in interviews of at least one hour.

Teachers are known to have full daily schedules. As noted by Delva et al., (2002), people who struggle with time constraints (whether real or perceived) are less likely to respond to surveys or sit in interviews because these possible respondents feel overworked as if they do not have the time to do so.

Setting is another limitation of the study. The scope of this research could have been potentially too large and entailed a more expansive setting. However, the researcher narrowed the setting down to four schools, all of which were in the same charter school organization. While this makes the research more manageable, it also limited the possibility of studying other teachers in other urban alternative school settings that may vary significantly from the settings in which they study is conducted. Consequently, there is not an opportunity to compare and contrast teachers across multiple urban alternative schools.

Furthermore, transferability became a potential limitation. While the research conducted was at varying schools, it was only conducted within one charter school organization. Therefore, it is not possible to apply the findings of the study to other urban alternative schools outside of the organization considering all alternative school settings are not mirror images of each other. Transferability is also a limitation due to the small sampling size of the study. The conclusions that are drawn from the study were not able to be generalized and applied to the entire population of all urban alternative school teachers.

The delimitations for this study entailed setting boundaries around the setting, sampling, and instrumentation tools used to conduct the research. The setting of the research took place at four schools within a charter school organization. The sample of the study is 11 school teachers in an urban alternative school setting located in the Midwest, who have worked in this setting and role for at least one year. These teachers were elementary school educators, serving grades

kindergarten through eighth grade. The instrumentation tools that were used to conduct the research are observations, interviews, and field notes.

### **Validation**

In this section, the credibility and dependability of this qualitative research study is validated. “Validation in qualitative research is to suggest that researchers employ accepted strategies to document the ‘accuracy’ of their studies” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250). In this section, potential problems or complications with the validity of this research are identified and addressed in order to demonstrate the credibility and dependability of this research (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). Triangulation is a validation procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study, rather than rely on a single incident or data point in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). By implementing triangulation as a validation method, the need for several reviews of data and information collected was identified. In the process, the researcher examined relevant sources and literature in more detail, ensuring the validity of findings and conclusions. The data and information in this study were drawn from various sources including interviews, observations, and field notes.

Member checking served as another validation method that is used within the study. It consisted of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The participants were asked to read the transcripts and field notes from the study, as well as review the summaries of the daily observations. The transcripts, field notes, and observation summaries were emailed to the participants individually. Engaging in this process presented an added layer of credibility to the study and the conclusions drawn from it. Rich and thick descriptions were

provided for all observations conducted, as well as notes that were taken during interviews. The purpose of a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study. Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

### **Expected Findings**

The objective of this qualitative case study is to understand teachers' perceptions of how student achievement is affected by professional development and coaching through real-time feedback. The focus of this research is the professional development and coaching systems put into place by an urban charter school district's as it pertains to improving student academic achievement through teacher improvement. It is my intent to contribute to the existing body of research on this topic. Based on the literature of this existing body of research, this section identifies the expected findings from each data analysis method that is used in this study.

### **Observations**

In my observations of classrooms and professional development sessions at each of the four schools in this study, I expected that teachers who were relatively effective in their classroom would receive at least one classroom observation and in-the-moment feedback coaching cycle conducted by administrative staff per week. Within the literature regarding teacher observations, teachers who receive regular feedback and coaching from coaches, mentors, or school administrators experience better improvements in student achievement and classroom management (Hallam, 2012; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012). In observations of professional development sessions, it was expected that all or most first year teachers would attend each session. In addition, it was expected that professional development session conveners

would focus on classroom management and engagement techniques. Within the relevant literature, urban alternative school leaders have been shown to emphasize developing teachers' efficacy as it pertains to managing student behavior and engaging students academically (St. John, 2013).

## **Interviews**

Interviews with teachers were conducted on an individual basis to increase the level of comfort in being open and honest in their responses. Each interview was conducted using a set of predetermined questions, lasting for at most an hour in length. In interviews for this research, it was expected that teachers would identify professional development (of any sort) and coaching from their school leaders as vital indicators of the effectiveness of teachers in alternative school settings.

Within the literature on this subject, coaching and development training for teachers is understood to impart attitudes and skills for positive learning, helping teachers to develop their ability and innovative methods to reach minority, poor, or disadvantaged youth. Therefore, it was expected that teachers who had received relevant coaching and training would demonstrate an understanding of, as well as the skills, innovative methods, and ability to teach students in urban schools effectively (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2013; McMakin, 2012). It was also expected that beginning teachers would report experiencing some difficulty in managing and engaging their students. Since research has shown that most teachers express their regret in not having served their training in an urban school setting (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2013), it was safe to expect to find teachers expressing frustration or concern in this capacity and yearning for support in this area.

## **Ethical Issues**

As stated by Creswell (2013), ethical research is honest, is shared with participants, and has not been previously published, plagiarized, or influenced by personal interest. The research that was conducted in this study was certain to maintain ethical standards. This was ensured through assessing potential conflicts of interest and researcher's position. Additionally, Borgmann (2006) stated that the ethically right choice in a given situation is the one that produces the most happiness and the least unhappiness for the largest number of people. In this case, the researcher made decisions that were assumed to bring the greatest benefit to participants in the study. The researcher maintained respect for all participants by preserving their confidentiality, communicating risks and benefits of participation in the study transparently, and minimizing possible harm to participants. Benefits for participants included understanding how mentoring, coaching, and professional development will set teachers up for success in the classrooms of urban alternative school settings. To preserve confidentiality all data was collected and stored in an encrypted computer file. The identity of the participants will remain confidential, as they will each be assigned a pseudonym. All participants were presented with a consent form and were provided with a detailed explanation of the purpose and stages of the research study.

## **Conflict of Interest Assessment**

In order to preserve integrity in this research study, a conflict of interest assessment was completed with Concordia University's Institutional Review Board. In this process, Institutional Review Board approval was granted for the researcher to commence the study. Next, the researcher sought approval from the Superintendent of the school district in which the study was to be conducted, obtaining approval from the Board Chairman of the charter management

organization. The researcher summarized and described the study to be conducted to the Superintendent and Board Chairman.

Participants also signed a consent form to take part in the research study; their signatures indicated that they have been provided an explanation of what the study entails and what was needed from them as participants. Participants for the study were recruited via email, Facebook, and LinkedIn giving them the option to participate in the research. The sample recruitment email template is located in Appendix C. Participants' interviews and some observations were recorded and video-taped, with the consent of the participants who each have signed a nondisclosure form (see Appendix D). To maintain transparency throughout this process, all participants were provided with the transcripts for to review, edit, and approve.

### **Researcher's Position**

The author was the primary and only researcher in this study. The researcher was responsible for conducting and transcribing all interviews and observations. At the time of writing, the researcher was an administrator within a charter management organization. The researcher's position in a supervisory role within the charter organization was assumed to have no impact on the data collected during observations and interviews—teachers who participated in this research did not report directly to the researcher, nor were they employees at the researcher's school. Additionally, participants each had the ability to review all transcripts prior to being used in the study. The researcher ensured that multiple perspectives were reported to preserve credibility throughout the study. Teachers were not compensated for their participation, nor were their performance evaluations impacted by their participation in the study. Considering the researcher's position within the organization and role as a graduate student, the researcher understood the content and setting that was studied. Through the researcher's role as an

administrative, the researcher could establish her credibility and trustworthiness among study participants.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the study's methodology and research design were described. The research question for this study, research setting, participants, data analysis, limitations, and delimitations were discussed. Issues regarding the study's validation and dependability were identified, as well as ethical issues that may have been impacted during the research process due to the researcher's heavy involvement in the process. In the following chapter, results of this study will be outlined and discussed.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

This case study was conducted to explore teachers' perceptions of how student achievement is affected by professional development and coaching. By using a case study approach in this research, the researcher was able to produce a complete description and analysis of the research topic without limiting the scope of the research or the nature of the participant's responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The guiding research question for this study was, "How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement?" The author was the only researcher involved in this study, with sole responsibility for selecting participants, collecting data, conducting interviews and observations, and analyzing data gathered. In this chapter, the sample and participants selected for this research are described. In addition, the research methodology utilized and data collected via observations and interviews are analyzed. Next, findings of the study are summarized. Results are presented in a later section of this chapter.

### **Description of the Sample**

The population in this study was school teachers in urban school settings. The sample population entailed school teachers working at an urban charter school district in the Midwestern United States. There were 58 teachers invited to participate in the study; those teachers were employed full-time at their current school. Of the teachers who were invited to participate, 22 responded. Of those 22 teachers, 11 were randomly selected to participate. Teachers included in the sample were elementary and middle school educators, teaching kindergarten through to eighth grade. Teachers in this study had worked in this setting and role for at least one year, at various grade levels. The maximum years of experience that a participant held as a classroom

teacher was five years. Each of the 11 teachers held a four-year university degree; eight held an undergraduate degree in education. Nine of the teachers were women below the age of 30; two were African-American, and seven White. Two of the participants were males, both under the age of 25—one White and the other African-American. In the following sections, each participant is described. Participants have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

### **Description of the Participants**

**Ashley.** Ashley is a 30-year-old White female in her fifth year of classroom teaching. For the past two years, Ashley has taught sixth and seventh grade math. In her first three years as a classroom teacher, Ashley taught fifth grade math. One of her core philosophies is that children need stability, especially in schools within underserved communities like the one she teaches in. Ashley expressed that stability is good not only for students—it is also good for teachers who plan to stay in the profession for a substantial amount of time. She contends that teachers have the opportunity to get better and become more self-reflective if they are able to see their own transformation through the students they serve. Ashley has hopes of becoming an instructional leader within the next two to three years.

**Gwen.** Gwen is a female, African-American teacher in her second year of classroom teaching. She currently teaches third grade reading. Gwen is 24-years old. She mentioned often that she always knew she would be a teacher. Her classroom is full of excitement and positive reinforcement, with frequent chants and celebrations of student success. She believes that all children can learn and deserve to be taught by good teachers, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, or zip code. Gwen noted that good teachers aren't always born—they can be created. This is done through being receptive to feedback and committed to professional growth. Now in her second year as a teacher, Gwen is proud of the progress she has made since

her first year. She makes it clear that she attributes this growth to being humble and reflective regarding areas for refinement of her skills as a teacher.

**Jessica.** Jessica teaches eighth grade writing. She is in her first year of classroom teaching. She stated that she always knew she would become a teacher. She wants to educate urban youth because she knows that they will someday grow up to be adults who will, hopefully, make a positive contribution to their country. Jessica desires to be the type of teacher who can mold young, urban students into creative, disciplined, driven individuals. She believes that all students can be successful, regardless of race, zip code, gender, or socioeconomic status, as long as they receive a quality education and the right character. Jessica stated that the administrative team at her school observes her practice frequently and provides substantial feedback. Some of the feedback, she contended, is very useful because she can understand it and apply it almost immediately. However, Jessica also explained that she still struggles with having an administrator in her room every day, in almost each block of instruction. She noted that it was overwhelming, but she understood that staff at her school just wanted to see her grow and improve in her practice.

**Brittany.** Brittany teaches eighth grade math. She is in her fourth year of teaching. She began her career at her current school and noted that she does not think she will ever leave the school. As a sixth grade math teacher, Brittany helped establish her school. She respects the idea (and research that supports) that stability is important for children. For that reason, she can't see herself leaving her current school. She does, however, aspire to a leadership role where she can impact more students. Brittany works at a charter school with a small staff. Her workload can be overwhelming, and frequent changes in the school's leadership result in regular changes in

initiatives and direction at the school. She finds it difficult to stay abreast of these frequent shifts in mission and vision.

**John.** John is the sixth and seventh grade English language arts teacher at his school. John has been teaching sixth grade for five years, although this is his first year teaching seventh grade. It is John's second year at his current school. He left his previous school because he felt that there weren't any opportunities for him to grow as a teacher or within his leadership position. He felt stifled because he received regular coaching or feedback on his leadership only when he requested it explicitly. John values strong and consistent leadership in schools. He stated that he hoped to one day become an administrator when the time was right, and when he felt confident in his educational knowledge and abilities. At his current school, John is observed on average twice a week by a school leader. He stated that he values their contributions because they know his students, they know the content, and they know him.

**Morgan.** Morgan is in her third year of teaching. She is a Teach for America alumnus. Morgan has plans to become an education policymaker, as she is in her first year of law school. In describing her educational philosophy, Morgan indicates a strong passion for social and education reform, particularly reform to directly benefit underserved communities. She hopes to impact the teaching profession by creating more opportunities for children to attend high performing schools without testing, tuition, or zoning. At Morgan's school, where she teaches second grade reading, there are 42 teachers and four school leaders. She receives three classroom observation sessions with feedback each week, and a coaching session at least once a week. She expresses gratitude that the school's leadership team works to improve student outcomes by improving teacher performance. However, she criticizes the emphasis on student data when it

comes to assessing teaching quality. She believes that test scores should not be used in this manner.

**Eve.** Eve is in her first official year of teaching and teaches fourth grade math. She is a career changer: Prior to teaching, Eve worked as a part-time after school tutor and a part-time sales associate. Her classroom reflects that reading is the most important subject. In her classroom is a handwritten quote that says, “How can you solve a math word problem if you can’t read it?” This philosophy is evident in Eve’s commitment to help her students improve at math by improving at reading. Eve tutors students at the school in reading for two hours each Saturday and for one hour each Wednesday. Eve recognizes that she spends a lot of time at the school, but contends that she is only doing for her students what her teachers did for her.

**Tyler.** Tyler is the fourth grade reading teacher at her school. She is in her fourth year of teaching. Prior to teaching fourth grade reading, Tyler taught sixth grade social studies for her first year of teaching. Tyler asserts that the leadership presence at her school can be overwhelming, and she does not particularly enjoy recurring observations during the week. She understands the importance of observations, yet she feels considerable pressure knowing that an administrator may enter her room at any moment. In response, Tyler finds herself seeking to be perfect in her daily instruction. Tyler states that, when leaders come into her room they are coaching her to get better, as well as assessing her effectiveness. She is comforted by the former idea and haunted by the other.

**Stanley.** Stanley teaches sixth and seventh grade science. He considers himself an island at his school because there is no one else who teaches science. He is the only male teacher on the school’s small staff of 10, as well as the only science teacher. Stanley teaches at a newly-founded middle school, which serves sixth and seventh grades only. He is in his second year of teaching.

Stanley described how much he has improved his practice since last year. He attributes this growth to his leadership team. He states that his principal and instructional coaches pushed him hard. They were often present in his classroom—sometimes too much. To Stanley’s dismay, his leaders provided him with feedback each time they observed him and held one-on-one meetings to discuss planning and practice. He noted that this was not an uncommon practice for first year teachers at his school. However, since he was obviously struggling with classroom management, the leadership team paid him a bit more attention than his colleagues. Stanley admits that he is performing better than last year only due to input from his leadership team.

**Danielle.** Danielle is an African-American, female teacher. She is in her second year of teaching and currently teaches fifth grade social studies at her school. Danielle believes that the growth of the teacher directly correlates to the growth of the student. She stated that the two are mirrors of each other. Danielle prides herself on having a growth mindset. She always asks questions and seeks advice from others. During her prep and planning time at work, she often finds her way into the classrooms of veteran and successful teachers. She believes that the best practices can be seen among the best practitioners. When she is not observing others, she can be found in her room teaching and applying things she has learned from her fellow colleagues. In addition, that is when Danielle is observed and coached by one of her building leaders.

**Allison.** Allison teaches kindergarten math. She is in her first year of teaching. Allison confided that she is unsure if the education field is right for her. She expressed feeling overwhelmed and disconnected at work. She has had similar conversations with her school’s leadership team. The leadership team and other teacher mentors at the school have tried to help Allison find success and happiness in her classroom. She stated that one of the biggest obstacles standing in her way is the idea that, despite feedback from her instructional coach, she is not

improving practice and effectiveness. Having seen such minimal success, Allison has started to feel defeated and a bit resentful toward those who are positioned to help her.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

The design used to conduct research for this topic was an exploratory case study. The research conducted in this study centered on professional development of teachers with regard to improving student achievement. Creswell (2013, p. 97) has defined case study research as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information.” Within the relevant literature, exploratory case studies are recognized as an effective qualitative research design for exploring variables that affect student achievement in urban alternative schools (Hammerness & Craig, 2016; Kalchan, 2015).

By employing a case study approach in this research, the researcher could develop a complete description and analysis of the research topic at hand, without limiting the scope of the research or nature of participant responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Through this study, the researcher sought to answer the following question: “How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement?” Observation and interviewing were utilized as methods of data collection. With permission from participants, observations and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Inductive data analysis was the model used to analyze the data. This approach to data analysis entails “a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made” (Hatch, 2002, p. 161). In the

following sections of this chapter, data collection and analysis procedures used in this study are described.

### **Data Collection**

Observations and interviews were used as methods of data collection in this study. At the start of the study, teachers participated in an initial interview of five questions (see Appendix D) just prior to a classroom observation. After the initial interview and classroom observation, teachers participated in a post-observation semistructured interview of two-to-four questions, depending on the amount of clarity the researcher required regarding the observation.

Observations and interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of each participant. By recording detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what was observed (Marshal, 2006), the researcher ensured that data conveyed in this study were as accurate as possible. At the conclusion of each observation, each teacher was interviewed a final time. Questions asked in final interviews are listed in Appendix A.

### **Observations**

With the use of an observation guide to help focus the researcher's attention, teachers and school leaders or coaches were observed during classroom instruction, planning periods, and after-school professional development sessions. Teachers completed an observation poll to indicate their preferred dates and times for observations to be conducted. Observations took place two times per week for four weeks. Each observation lasted for no longer than one hour. Observations were conducted to determine whether teachers were receiving coaching during their classroom instruction and/or planning periods, and what each coaching session entailed. All observations were non-participant observations, in which there was limited interaction between the observer (that is, the researcher) and those being observed. The researcher used an audio

recording device to capture an accurate and detailed recording of communication in the observation setting. All participants were notified in advance that observations would be audio recorded and were invited to complete a consent form (see Appendix B). Students were not included in this study.

By making field notes throughout this study, the researcher recounted participant behaviors, activities, events, and other features noted in observations. In field notes, the researcher focused on teachers during classroom instruction and coaching. Field notes were used as evidence to with which produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, social situation, and phenomenon studied at each of the three schools in this study. Notes were also used to supplement interview data gathered from teachers (Schwandt, 2015).

## **Interviews**

The interviews with teachers were conducted on an individual basis to increase their level of comfort and to garner open and honest in their responses. Interviews were conducted in the classrooms of the teachers being interviewed. Each interview was conducted using a set of predetermined questions (see Appendix A), lasting between one to two hours in length. The interviews were audio recorded using Voice Recorder. As previously mentioned, an initial interview was conducted with each of the participants to gather background information on the school and the coaching practices (see Appendix D). Those questions were essential to understanding the data gathered from the observations. In questions asked beforehand, the focus was on coaching points and desired outcomes of coaching. In questions asked afterward, the focus was on the effect of the feedback and coaching, and questions that arose during and after the coaching session were clarified. Lastly, teachers were asked a set of predetermined questions at the conclusion of the four-week observation period. Those questions paid specific attention to

the quality and effectiveness of coaching, leadership, and professional development (see Appendix A). Teachers were provided with the predetermined questions three days prior to the interview. It was also disclosed that follow-up or probing questions may be asked during the interview to gain more clarity on the responses provided by the teacher. Interviews were conducted in the classrooms of the teachers being interviewed.

### **Member checking**

Member checking served as a validation method used within the study. It consisted of taking the data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The participants were asked to read the interview transcripts and the summaries of the daily observations. Participants were also asked one general follow up question: How would you describe the benefits and drawbacks of the coaching you receive from your school leaders? The participants were asked to engage in this process as an added layer of credibility to the study and the conclusions drawn from it.

### **Data Analysis**

The inductive analysis method was used to analyze the data collected during this study. This method was used to condense the extensive and varied raw data into a brief, summary format, and to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary of my findings. The findings were derived from the raw data and were used to develop a theory about the underlying structure of the teachers' experiences (Thomas, 2003). For all data collected during this study, a nine-step inductive analysis process as described by Hatch (2002) was employed. In the following sections, steps taken to conduct inductive data analysis are summarized and described.

1. Read the data and identify frames of analysis
2. Create domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis
3. Identify salient domains, assign them a code, and put others aside
4. Reread data, refining salient domains and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data
5. Decide if your domains are supported by the data and search data for examples that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships in your domains
6. Complete an analysis within domains
7. Search for themes across domains
8. Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among domains
9. Select data excerpts to support the elements of your outline (Hatch, 2002, p. 162)

### **Reading and Organizing the Data**

During interviews with teachers, the researcher took notes and recorded their audio responses. The audio was then transcribed using the *Transcribe* extension powered by Google Chrome. According to Marshal (2006), recording the detailed, concrete descriptions shared during the interview ensured that the data was conveyed and presented as accurately as possible. Each of the transcripts were read three times and summarized to provide thorough recaps of the important information elicited from the interviews. After initial readings of the data, the researcher returned to the research question for this study and organized the collected data according to the questions using tables.

The following research question guided the organization of data for this study: How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement? The

researcher separated the question into two categories, or domains, to begin identifying relationships within the data. “Creating domains is the key inductive element in this model; the data are read searching for particulars that can be put into categories because of their relation to other particulars” (Hatch, 2002, p. 164). The first category was *coaching and development*, and the second was *improving student academic achievement*. To breakdown the data further, the two initial categories of data were organized according to recurring foci. Through this process, two additional domains were created within each of the initial categories (see Appendix E). The domains were *leadership practices* and *feedback components*. Next, the coding process was initiated.

### **Rereading and Coding the Data**

The transcripts and summaries of interviews, observations, and other field notes were reread several times and immersed fully into. During this step of data analysis, the purpose was to get a sense of which domains were important to my study and which weren't. The goal was to narrow the focus by studying the categories that emerged from my domain analysis. This was done using the guiding questions provided by Hatch (2002). In rereading the data and identified domains, the researcher asked: Are these included terms important in order to understand the data? Are these the only terms included in this domain? Are there additional included terms that may have been missed, or that will show up later (Hatch 2002)?

Additionally, codes were developed and assigned in order to help keep track of the domains and break down the data even further into concepts, relationships and patterns. During this stage of analysis of preliminary classification, 27 codes emerged (Billups, 2014). Those set of codes were further organized into 10 final salient codes by using deductive reasoning and asking myself three guiding questions: Is there enough data to support the existence of this

domain? Are the data strong enough to make the case for including this domain? Are there other data that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships expressed? (Hatch, 2002). Next, the 10 coded domains were used to extract and analyze themes.

### **Identifying, Grouping, and Analyzing Themes**

During this step of data analysis, groups of related data that had similar meaning were coded in several cycles (Billups, 2014), and eventually those groups became clustered into similarly themed categories. The data from this study's interviews, observations, and field notes were used to then create meaning for the groups which were labeled in order to allow for themes to emerge. This was done by looking within each domain for special relationships between and among certain included terms. The newly created and refined themes provided insight and answers to the research questions presented in this study, and allowed for the discovery of new links, new relationships, and new domains (Hatch, 2002). After reviewing the domains and finding connections among them, the researcher integrated the pieces to answer the question: How are the pieces related to the whole? This question will be answered in the following chapter.

### **Data Representation**

The final stage in my data analysis process entailed representing the data through the codes that emerged. There are many ways to present the data to readers and other researchers. For this study, the researcher chose to present data analysis in an outline using the final codes to explain emergent themes with data excerpts to support the themes. In this way, data for this study was presented in its simplest and most objective form. In the section headed Presentation of Data and Results, the final codes are used as subheadings and excerpts from the data are used as supporting details and evidence of my findings.

## **Summary of Findings**

The objective of this qualitative case study was to understand teachers' perceptions regarding the impact that professional development and coaching with regard to its impact on student achievement. The focus of this research was placed upon the professional development and coaching systems put into place by an urban charter school district's as it pertained to improving student academic achievement through teacher development. Based on the original data gathered from this study, this section summarizes the findings from the data analysis method that was used.

### **Observations**

From observations of the classrooms and professional development sessions across each of the four schools, teachers were relatively receptive to the recurring classroom observations and in-the-moment feedback coaching cycles conducted by a school administrator. The teachers expressed that receiving frequent feedback and coaching greatly contributed to their effectiveness and success in the classroom. Participants indicated that it significantly improved their classroom management and pacing, and allowed for them to obtain better outcomes for their students' academic achievement.

Classroom observations often entailed a school administrator—usually a dean of school culture or an instructional coach—who would enter a teacher's classroom, observe the teacher and students for an average of 10 minutes, and provide quick real-time feedback. The delivery of the feedback would vary in form. Leaders were seen giving teachers cues on whiteboards from the back of the room; writing next steps on a post-it note and passing it to the classroom teacher; staging a quick interjection from the observing administrator to model a specific teacher move; and coaching the teacher through a headset while the administrator stood afar and unseen to

students. Many teachers admitted that some methods of feedback and coaching were more invasive than others, yet understood the impact it has had on their practice.

Some teachers appeared uncomfortable receiving real-time feedback, reporting that it sometimes felt intrusive. For that reason, they preferred to receive written feedback before or after—but not during—their instruction. The teachers who felt this way were also teachers who were in their third year of the profession or beyond. Novice teachers and teachers who began their teaching career at their current school, expressed a certain level of comfort or acceptance of real-time feedback. Those teachers also had a more generally positive perception of real-time feedback and its impact on their ability to improve student academic achievement.

During observations of professional development sessions, it was noted that most teachers valued the content that was shared in the sessions. Those participants reported that they understood that they had much to learn about their profession and appreciated the knowledge and expertise shared by their school leaders. In addition, it was observed that, in sessions attended by novice teachers, professional development coordinators tended to focus on improving classroom management and engagement techniques. School leaders reported that, when they focused on developing their teachers' efficacy in managing student behavior and engaging students in academic content, their teachers effected greater improvements in student outcomes more quickly.

## **Interviews**

Interviews with teachers were conducted on an individual basis to increase their level of comfort and to elicit open and honest responses. Each interview was conducted using a set of predetermined questions, lasting for at most an hour in length. In interviews, it was identified that teachers view professional development and coaching from school leadership as vital

indicators of their effectiveness in classrooms. The participants agreed that coaching and developing helps foster their attitudes and skills to be positive and centered on student learning and developing teachers' ability to embrace innovative methods to reach their students. It was also identified that beginning teachers who reported difficulties in managing and engaging their students received more frequent observations and feedback cycles.

Many teachers admitted to feeling overwhelmed initially by having an administrator constantly in their rooms giving cues, coaching, and feedback. However, the general consensus among teachers was that they had become accustomed to the frequency and the discomfort eventually decreased as their practice improved. Improvement in practice was measured by administrators using student academic achievement data and classroom observation notes. If over time, student data improved and observation notes indicated teachers were consistently and effectively implementing feedback, the school leader would shift his or her coaching focus and more than likely decrease the amount of weekly observations.

Altogether, four themes manifested and provided answers to the research question at hand in this study. The themes were as follows:

1. In general, teachers found it helpful to know that school leaders prioritized consistently providing teachers with feedback that is tailored, quick and powerful.
2. Teachers reported that they learned better by having the opportunity to receive in feedback in-the-moment and to practice implementing the feedback when it counts the most—in front of the students.
3. Real-time feedback was better received from leaders with proven track records of success and effectiveness.

4. Teachers in this research reported that observation and feedback cycles, coupled with professional development sessions laden with practice, resulted in improvements to their effectiveness.

### **Presentation of the Results**

This study is focused on answering the research question at hand: How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement? The methods of data collection that were employed during this study include observations and interviews. To capture thorough representation of the participants' experiences and perspectives, the observations were documented by taking detailed field notes, and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts and field notes were analyzed using Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis model. Using this model, 10 final codes were extracted from the data. These codes will serve as the headings for each of the following sections to organize and present the results of my analysis.

#### **Code 1: High-leverage**

Each of the participants expressed it was most helpful when their administrators and school leaders provided feedback and coaching that was high-leverage. High-leverage feedback was explained as being focused on an action step that would make significant improvement in teacher practice and student outcomes. John said,

When leaders come into my room, I expect for them to tell me something that I can use, and I can see the immediate improvement in my classroom and my kids. No one wants help if it really isn't helpful. The goal is for me to get better as a teacher and for my kids to get better because I'm a better teacher. If the feedback I'm receiving from my leaders can't accomplish those two things, what's the purpose?

Stanley said something similar:

I remember last year, my first year, they were in my room all the time. I know I was frustrated because I felt like I was always on stage. But as the school year progressed I realized just how helpful their presence and feedback was. They would suggest things from the back of the room for me to do in-the-moment, I'd do it, and then I'd see the impact it had on my students almost simultaneously.

Allison had somewhat of a different experience than John and Stanley, although her thoughts on feedback and coaching were similar.

As a first year teacher, Allison struggled to find success in the classroom. However, she reported feeling most confident and effective when she was receiving real-time coaching from a school leader:

This year has been really challenging. My principal and assistant principals are in my classroom every day, sometimes multiple times a day. Everyone here knows that I am struggling, particularly with classroom management. I often find myself in the classroom, in front of the students, not knowing what to do next when things aren't going according to plan or when students are giving me a hard time. But, when a school leader comes in to either observe or coach me, I find comfort in knowing that they always tell me the right direction to go in. The feedback or cues they give me are always high leverage. The things they have me do in-the-moment while they are in here are extremely helpful and I can see the impact right away. If they were not in here as often as they are, I would probably live in a perpetual state of struggle and so would my students.

## **Code 2: Consistency**

The teachers collectively agreed that consistency is important to have when receiving feedback and coaching. Observations, professional development, and coaching ought to occur on a regular basis and should follow a logical sequence and schedule. Teachers expressed that they are better equipped and prepared to effectively receive and implement feedback that is recurrent and methodological. Ashley said, “I know what to expect and when to expect it. My school leaders follow the same pattern and protocol when providing me with feedback and coaching. It provides a higher level of comfortability knowing what to expect.”

Teachers also reported that, in order to garner positive results that were reflected in teacher practice and student data, consistent coaching and implementation of feedback was needed. Brittany said,

Teachers need to consistently get better, which means we need consistent feedback from our leaders. It also means that we need to be consistent with practicing and applying the feedback. I have heard several teachers complain about the feedback or action steps they receive from admin. They’d say things like, “that doesn’t work” or “this isn’t helping me” or “how does this help my students?” And I’d think to myself, “well it’s not working for you or your students because you don’t do it all of the time; you don’t practice or plan it out; or you’re not doing it how you were shown.” Sometimes, depending on which teacher is complaining, I might even venture to think the leaders are the ones who aren’t observing, coaching, or supporting consistently. Like sometimes they’re in there and sometimes they’re not. Sometimes they are helpful and sometimes they aren’t.

### **Code 3: Alignment and Relevance**

It was often mentioned in interviews that it is important to receive feedback that is aligned and relevant to the needs and interests of the teachers and students. John said,

When they tell me to do something, I am always concerned about how their directions will fit into the scope of what we have going on. It seems to work out because our leaders are aware of what's happening in the classrooms and can make sure that the feedback is relevant to the content being taught and to the skill level of the students.

Stanley said,

When you can understand and see how the feedback is aligned with the goal or goals that you have set, it makes it easier to receive. At least for me... I'm still somewhat new at this, so it helps a ton when my coach provides me with feedback that I know is purposeful and useful in helping me improve in a particular area and help my students reach a certain goal.

Participants mentioned that if they had been working on something in particular with one school leader, then they would find it beneficial to work on that with other school leaders. In gist, teachers expressed that when the school leaders have an aligned vision on what good instruction looks like and what teachers should work on, then the feedback and coaching is more impactful.

Brittany explained,

A vision of excellence should be created by the school's leadership team but shared by everyone in the building. Everyone needs to share one common vision and goal and it needs to be really clear as to how to get everyone to reach that goal. Our school leaders currently do not share an aligned vision of excellence for the teachers here. So, when they pop into classrooms and provide feedback to us, and sometimes it has nothing to do with

what a different leader is working on with us, then it loses its power and effectiveness.

And then, we can't get better, and our kids won't get better.

#### **Code 4: Manageability**

Participants noted that in order to successfully implement feedback, and for coaching to be effective, the action steps and directions they received from their school leaders needed to be manageable. Teachers expressed that granular and specific feedback helps them feel like they can actually accomplish the goal at hand. Jessica stated,

I get so overwhelmed with people in my classroom all of the time. But when my coach gives me feedback, I appreciate that it's so small and concise yet powerful that I can do it relatively successfully. I don't need to spend additional time that I don't have trying to plan, practice, and implement the feedback, I can just get better in two to four minutes on the spot.

Like Jessica, Eve was in her first year of teaching after obtaining her qualification. Eve said:

The last thing I need is something extra on my plate. The school I work for is extremely challenging and requires a lot out of my time. I even work on Saturdays. So, when my principal gives me something to do to help me improve, I find it most beneficial when I can actually tackle it and do it.

Allison expressed that she often found it difficult to keep up with certain time consuming and cumbersome action steps proposed by her school's leadership team:

I think I feel this way [unsuccessful] because of my students' grades and test scores. Just last week, over 60% of my students failed their end of module assessment. My Assistant Principal of Instruction asked to meet with me to go over their assessments together. This meeting was over an hour long and entailed going through each assessment, finding the

most common misconception, planning a reteach lesson, and identifying additional supports inside and outside of the classroom for each student. That was in addition to my weekly lesson plans, grading, parent conferences, and extra school responsibilities. The feedback I received in the meeting regarding my students' data was helpful, but it added a huge undertaking on my to-do list. That action step not only took an abundant amount of effort and attention but also an abundant amount of time. And I left the meeting feeling like there's no way I'm going to be able to do this in a decent amount of time.

### **Code 5: Delivery**

Teachers discussed varying forms of feedback delivery they had experienced. Real-time feedback had been described in three forms of delivery. Teachers described and were seen receiving real-time feedback via a walkie-talkie, through messages and cues written on a small whiteboard or post-it note, or from leaders and coaches interjecting to model or pose a question to/for the teacher. Teachers had their own perceptions regarding the methods of delivery they have experienced.

Gwen expressed that real-time coaching was best done through a walkie-talkie. "At first it was uncomfortable, but now I am used to it," Gwen said. "The walkie helps me receive the cues and feedback quicker and more clearly than having to stop and read a post-it note, or to make sure to keep looking for my Dean in the classroom holding a whiteboard with cues. It's not intrusive and the students don't even know what's going on." During a classroom observation of Gwen being observed and coached by her Dean of School Culture, you could see Gwen moving around the room as the students were working in groups. Gwen was wearing a walkie-talkie and earbud. The Dean was situated in the hallway, sitting at a desk with a computer. On the screen you could see and hear Gwen's classroom in live action; the Dean had set up a camera to capture

the actions, behaviors, and decisions of the students and Gwen. The Dean gave Gwen two cues to improve her practice in-the-moment, and Gwen implemented the feedback immediately. The students did not hear the Dean's coaching tips, nor did they see the Dean. The response displayed by Gwen and the students after the implementation of the feedback was authentic and seamless.

Morgan stated, "I prefer to receive feedback on a post-it note or some other piece of paper." She expressed that during her first year of teaching she had a coach who would only provide in-the-moment feedback via modeling or interrupting.

It was too much. I was already overwhelmed and felt like I didn't have much autonomy.

And then to have someone in my room every day, interrupting me, providing me feedback that I didn't even understand... it was the worst. But this year we found a common ground. My coach comes in and writes me a quick little note, I read it, and when the opportunity presents itself I implement the feedback that was just given.

"Seeing is learning for me," Eve said.

A lot of this stuff I learned about during my coursework in undergrad, but I hadn't really seen it before I started actually teaching. So, it's helpful when admin provides me with feedback in-the-moment and models it in-the-moment to ensure that I know what it is supposed to look like, sound like, and feel like.

### **Code 6: Timeliness**

Participants indicated that it is vital for leaders to consider the timeliness of the feedback and coaching when observing and developing teachers. The teachers mostly agreed that it is important to deliver the feedback much sooner than later. It is also effective when leaders come into the classroom at the most appropriate time and provide the feedback at the most appropriate time.

Jessica said, “It’s always better when my coach gives me my feedback while she is in my classroom.” When asked to explain a bit more about this perspective, she said,

My students benefit the most when I can help them while they are practicing and doing the work. This is the same for me, and other teachers too I assume. When my coach comes in and helps me on the spot, I can get better on the spot. I remember during my student teaching; my mentor teacher would watch me teach a lesson and then email me days later with things I needed to fix or change. I know that any advice is helpful, but I always felt like it was too late to do anything because the moment had already passed. I also couldn’t even remember the lesson she was referring to because it was so long ago. But now I feel like I am able to get better faster because I am receiving feedback faster. Changes are being made within minutes instead of days.

Tyler and Danielle held similar perceptions of the timeliness their leaders possess when developing their instructional practices.

“I hate that my assistant principal comes to observe me during points in my lesson that aren’t areas of concern,” Tyler stated. “He never really comes to see me when I am pulling a small group or during my direct instruction. These are points in the instructional block that has the biggest impact on my students. I could use some feedback during those times. Definitely not during morning meeting or independent practice.” Danielle felt it was somewhat disruptive when her principal interjected during inopportune moments. “When I am in the middle of a sentence or when I am chatting with a student, sometimes he would interrupt and provide me with a cue or small piece of feedback,” Danielle explained. “But it knocks me off my square because it came at the wrong moment. I was completely focused on something else, and now I have to figure out where to pick back up while also putting the feedback into action on the spot.”

## Code 7: Practice

Many teachers mentioned that practice was important to the feedback and coaching they received from their leaders. They expressed that being able to practice the action steps in-the-moment was most helpful because leaders and teachers would be able to see how students would respond to the shift in instruction. Ashley said,

I get the most excited when I get the chance to try something different—and perhaps something better—and practice until it’s perfect and can be done in front of the students.

I get even more excited when I see that my students are benefitting from that change.

Stanley agreed that practice is important:

There’s nothing worse than being told what to do, without being *shown* what to do. I find it most helpful for a leader to come into my room, provide me with feedback, subtly model the feedback, and then find the opportunity for me to practice the feedback in-the-moment, in front of them and the students.

During professional development sessions, Jessica was seen practicing “the art of consequences” with the school’s Dean of School Culture. Jessica and the Dean planned how and when to issue a consequence. The planning included reviewing classroom data to identify the most common inappropriate behavior seen in Jessica’s classroom; students were often tracked “shouting out” or not raising a hand in the air before asking/answering a question. Jessica and the Dean scripted the verbiage to use when issuing a consequence to a student who shouted out in class. After scripting, Jessica stood at the front of the room with her fellow colleagues and practiced issuing a consequence to a teacher for shouting out in class. The Dean directed Jessica to practice this action step three times in front of the room, often stopping at the point of error during the practice.

It's intense but it's helpful. I feel prepared going into my classroom tomorrow and properly issuing a consequence. It's like I'll remember [the Dean] telling me to pause after stating the expectation, and I'll hear her in my head telling me to use a warmer tone or to have a closer proximity to the student. I don't think I would know *exactly* what to do if we didn't practice together today.

### **Code 8: Knowledge and Expertise**

It was expressed that it is helpful when leaders have knowledge and expertise in the content area they are providing the feedback and coaching. Teachers admitted they are more receptive and buy into the feedback more when they believe in the wisdom of the coach. Many also indicated that they perceive more experienced and knowledgeable leaders to be more effective in their approach and have a sharper lens for identifying areas of growth. "Of course, it's hard for me to implement the feedback if I don't think the person delivering the feedback knows enough about the topic," Brittany noted. "It's different having a novice principal this year. I find it hard to just roll with what she tells me to do because I don't necessarily think it's the best feedback."

Tyler explained that she understood the importance of feedback and observations, but embraced it only when done effectively. She said:

My leadership team is very present, but each of them are different. My instructional coach this year has a very thorough protocol for delivering feedback and coaching. I think it is a very strong protocol because it makes sense and I can see the effectiveness. She can come into the room and notice right away what is the best area to coach me on. She always identifies a quick action step that I can do that is high-leverage for me and my students. Her lens is sharp. You can tell she has been doing this for years. She's good.

She is helping me to become ‘good’ and it is evident in the growth that my students have made just from me trying out the things she suggests.

Allison said, “It’s comforting to know that my leaders are all experienced and have been in leadership for a while. I feel confident that they are leading me in the right direction as a first year teacher.”

### **Code 9: Growth Mindset**

Mostly all of the participants indicated that it is important for teachers and leaders to have a growth mindset in order for feedback and coaching to be effective. Participants described a growth mindset as the idea that people can be better and do better if they work hard, self-reflect, and are open to feedback and constructive criticism. “These core characteristics empower teachers to be resilient and strive for greatness,” Danielle stated. “Without believing that you can grow and that our students can grow, we can’t actually grow. It starts with wanting to improve, then believing you can improve, and then actually taking the steps to improve.” Gwen stated her perception about real-time feedback. She explained,

It’s hard sometimes to have an administrator in your room several times a week, or even several times a day. It’s even harder when you don’t believe that their presence is purposeful or needed. I’m only in my second year of teaching, so I know that there are lots of areas in which I can improve and refine my practices. But I can’t do that if I don’t believe that I can actually succeed and in teaching my students. Honestly, it starts and ends there. I have to be open to feedback and I have to be reflective in my practices.

Someone who thinks they know everything, more than likely won’t implement the feedback that they receive. Leaders would also probably struggle with developing those kind of teachers and I’m sure their students will suffer consequently as well.

Ashley reflected on her mindset during her first year of teaching. She confessed, “I didn’t think all of my students could do well and learn.” She continued,

I thought many of my students were just stuck and there was nothing I could do differently or better to help them. I didn’t they could grow and I didn’t think I needed to grow. One day my principal and I met to discuss why my students weren’t improving on their benchmark assessments across time. I remember saying, “they just can’t do the work.” That was the wrong answer. Long story short, I started receiving intensive support from my school leadership team. I wasn’t very happy about it because it meant harder work and longer hours, but I wanted to keep my job. It paid off. My most struggling students began to demonstrate improvement. I could see a dramatic shift in my practices as well. I began to understand the power of working hard and believing a goal can be accomplished. My leadership team modeled that mindset for me. They believed that anyone and everyone could grow, and they proved it *to me through me*.

### **Code 10: Differentiation**

Teachers expressed that it was important for leaders to tailor their approach with the teachers as it pertains to feedback and coaching. Differentiation was recurrently mentioned throughout the interviews with the participants. Many expressed an appreciation for their leaders entering having an individualized approach that is centered on a specific teacher and a specific group of students. John, who has been teaching for five years, said,

I know feedback is important, coaching is important, and no matter how long a teacher has been teaching there is always room to grow. But I think it is just as important for teachers to receive feedback that is most useful for them. What may be a good idea or area of growth for one teacher, might not be the same for another. And what might work

for one group of kids might not work for another group. So, the admin team needs to change things up depending what teacher they're dealing with.

During a professional development session held one Tuesday afternoon at Jessica's school, teachers were divided into clusters and separated into different classrooms. There were three different sessions happening at the same time with different foci in each session. Each session was tailored to meet the varying needs of the teachers. After the professional development session, Jessica said,

I'm glad I don't have to spend two hours after school, sitting in a [professional development session] listening to my principal talk about something that either doesn't pertain to me or doesn't make sense to me. Our [professional development session] are based upon common trends that the leadership team sees across the building and they divide us into groups based upon which of those trends we need the most help with.

Stanley reported that administrators at his school took a similar approach in professional development sessions:

Our leadership team conducts a walk-through of the building each morning for about an hour, popping into each of the classrooms. They take notes and quickly confer outside each classroom about the best feedback to deliver us. Depending on what the action step is, one leader comes back into the classroom and delivers the real-time feedback to the teacher. Each leader has their area of expertise. So, depending on what the teacher needs help with will determine who delivers the feedback and coaching. Most times my real-time feedback and coaching comes from our Director of Curriculum and Instruction because this is the area that I could use the most work in. It's helpful to know that they differentiate based upon our needs.

## Summary

Overall, participants reported that feedback and coaching were vital components of improving instructional practices and student outcomes. The 10 codes that emerged from the data represent aspects of in-the-moment feedback to take into consideration when used as a form of professional development and coaching. The findings revealed that real-time feedback may positively impact student achievement if it: is high-leverage, consistent, aligned and relevant, manageable, delivered in the most suitable format, conducted in a timely manner, includes opportunities for practice, comes from a leader with knowledge and expertise, is received and given by educators with a growth mindset, and is differentiated to meet the needs of all involved and impacted. Appendix E includes each of the initial domains and codes that were extracted from the raw data and is organized into final codes and themes. The four themes that manifested from the data analysis were:

1. In general, teachers found it helpful to know that school leaders prioritized consistently providing teachers with feedback that is tailored, quick, and powerful.
2. Teachers noted that they learned better by having the opportunity to receive in feedback in-the-moment and to practice implementing the feedback when it counts the most—in front of the students.
3. Real-time feedback is better received from leaders who have proven track records of success and effectiveness.
4. Teachers appreciate observation and feedback cycles, coupled with professional development sessions laden with practice, because it positively impacts their effectiveness.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of this research study, present conclusions, and outline connections and implications. In the following sections, results of this study are summarized, analyzed, and discussed. Limitations and implications of the results of this study in the context of the existing literature, practice, policy, and theory are identified. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and learning.

### **Summary of Results**

Teachers and administrators at underperforming urban schools face unique challenges compared to their counterparts at schools in non-urban areas (Cucchiara, et al., 2015). The question of how to address these challenges to improve academic achievement in urban schools has been the topic of much debate and research. Initiatives to improve teaching (and therefore, academic results) in urban schools have included coaching and ongoing professional development for teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of real-time feedback and coaching provided with a view to improving their teaching practice. In this study, the researcher sought to answer the following research question: How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement?

This question was devised in order for the researcher to examine how teachers received, implemented, and reflected on in-the-moment coaching and feedback from school leaders as it relates to improving student outcomes. Using a qualitative case study approach, information was gathered through observations and interviews. Rich and descriptive data about teachers in this study were derived from observations and interviews. By recording detailed, nonjudgmental,

concrete descriptions of observations (Marshall, 2006), the researcher conveyed data as accurately as possible.

Based on the results of this study, teachers view feedback and coaching as vital components of efforts to improve instructional practices and student academic outcomes. There were 10 codes that emerged from the data. Those codes represent aspects of real-time feedback that should be taken into consideration when feedback is used as a form of professional development and coaching with a view to improving student outcomes. The researcher found that real-time feedback may result in improvements to student academic achievement if that feedback is high-leverage, consistent, aligned and relevant, manageable, delivered in the most suitable format, conducted in a timely manner, includes opportunities for practice, is delivered by a school leader with relevant knowledge and expertise, is received and given by educators who demonstrate a growth mindset, and is differentiated to meet the needs of all parties involved in and impacted by the feedback process. Four themes were identified through the data analysis for this research:

1. In general, teachers in this research found it helpful to know that school leaders prioritized consistent, tailored, quick, and powerful feedback to teachers.
2. Teachers in this research noted that they learned better when given the opportunity to receive feedback in-the-moment and to practice implementing the feedback when it counted the most—in front of their students.
3. Teachers in this research responded better to real-time feedback when it was delivered by a school leader with a proven track record of instructional success and effectiveness.

4. Teachers in this research preferred observation and feedback cycles that were coupled with professional development sessions including practical components. Teachers in this research reported that this approach to feedback resulted in their effectiveness improving.

### **Discussion of the Results**

The purpose of this section is to describe and interpret the findings of this study in light of the researcher's original research objective. Results of this research will be discussed, along with analysis of teacher perceptions of real-time feedback and coaching based on results of this study. The four themes identified from the findings of this research will be used as headings in the discussion of results, with a view to answering the following research question: How would teachers in an urban alternative school setting describe in-the-moment feedback as a form of coaching and development with regard to improving student academic achievement?

#### **Theme 1**

As the first theme within the data for this study, it was identified that in general, teachers found it helpful to know that leaders at their school prioritized consistent, tailored, quick, and powerful feedback for teachers. Participants in this research appreciated that their school leaders knew how to improve instructional practices through high-leverage and impactful coaching that could be implemented quickly. Teachers in this research felt that by receiving feedback that could be applied quickly in their practice, they could bring about rapid improvements in student outcomes. Teachers in this research reported that their view that students perform better (both academically and behaviorally) when teachers improve their instruction.

Teachers in this research also described differentiation as an important factor in real-time coaching. Participants reported that they saw value in receiving coaching and feedback tailored

to their needs and the needs of their students. An individualized approach centered on a specific teacher and a specific group of students appeared to be among the most useful types of real-time coaching. Based on results of this study, it appears that real-time coaching is an opportunity for school leaders to witness teachers and students in action and offer feedback and coaching in-the-moment regarding specific areas of refinement that are relevant to particular teachers and students. In addition, professional development sessions result in greater improvements to teacher practice and student outcomes when sessions are differentiated, with instructors tailoring their approach to specific needs of individual teachers and students.

Teachers in this study viewed consistency (both for teachers and students) as important in improving teacher practice. Participants reported consistent improvements in their practice as a result of real-time feedback and coaching on a consistent basis, with improvements in their students' performance as a result. In this study, consistency was used to convey a twofold meaning—constant and uniform. Teachers in this study expressed their desire to receive real-time feedback and coaching on a regular basis. In addition, they felt that all school leaders should deliver their feedback in the same way. On this basis, it appears that in order for teachers to improve their instruction (and, as a result, their students' academic performance), school leaders should maintain a uniform protocol and approach to delivering feedback and coaching.

## **Theme 2**

As the second theme within the data for this study, it was identified that teachers felt they learned best via feedback given in-the-moment. Teachers in this research valued the opportunity to implement feedback when it counted the most—in front of their students. Each participant in this study reflected on their experiences of real-time coaching. Many participants expressed some level of discomfort with certain protocols. However, all participants saw value in receiving

feedback while teaching. By receiving in-the-moment feedback, teachers in this study reported that they benefited from three aspects of improving one's practice: Implement the feedback immediately, practice in an authentic setting, and witness an instantaneous positive impact on their students.

Based on results of this study, it appears that teachers are more likely to implement feedback while leaders are present and when time permits. Both factors are present when teachers receive feedback and coaching in-the-moment. In addition, it appears that teachers prefer to practice in authentic settings—i.e., with students or in classrooms. By practicing in the classroom with students, teachers and leaders can assess more accurately what works and does not work when it comes to improving teachers' instructional practices. In real-time feedback and coaching, there is an opportunity for teachers to witness instant improvements (or deterioration) in student performance. Teachers who change their approach or refine their practice based on feedback, witnessing positive outcomes in their students as a result, may be more likely to continue to implement their amended practice.

### **Theme 3**

As the third theme within the data for this study, it was identified that teachers were more responsive to real-time feedback when it comes from leaders who have proven track records of success and effectiveness in classrooms. Participants in this study felt that school leaders can have a direct and instantaneous impact on other teachers' practice by providing feedback in-the-moment. For this reason, it is important that feedback is aligned to the needs of the teacher and their students, relevant, and high-leverage. Based on the results of this study, teachers are more receptive to—and more likely to apply—feedback from leaders they view as knowledgeable and experienced. On the other hand, it is possible that teachers will not apply

feedback and coaching from school leaders if they believe the school leader in question lacks the requisite knowledge and experience.

Some teachers in this study felt that a school leader's protocol toward and delivery of feedback was almost as important as the content of the feedback or coaching provided. On this basis, school leader's approach to coaching and staff development is important in addition to their knowledge and expertise regarding instructional practices. Teachers in this study valued protocols and approaches tailored to meet their individual needs and those of their students. To provide in-the-moment feedback while minimizing disruption in classrooms, school leaders require skill, preparation, discernment, and timeliness. Participants in this research felt that feedback successful and experienced leaders were more likely to deliver feedback in this manner.

#### **Theme 4**

As the third theme within the data for this study, it was identified that teachers feel that observation and feedback cycles, coupled with professional development sessions laden with practice, best equip them to improve their effectiveness. Practice is a crucial component of improvement in many disciplines. Based on the results of this study, teachers require practice in order to improve their instructional effectiveness. Through practice, leaders can identify teachers' skill gaps and errors, even as they implement feedback and action steps. Whether in the classroom or during a professional development session, teachers who practice feedback in front of their leaders are more confident in their ability to implement feedback consistently and correctly, benefiting their students.

In delivering feedback and coaching in-the-moment, leaders should stop the teacher at the point of error and offer a correction. In this way, the teacher is made aware of the error and can improve instantaneously. As revealed by the participants in this study, practice and planning are

the initial stages of improvement. By receiving feedback from a school leader in-the-moment during instruction with students, teachers can put into practice their new knowledge immediately. In addition, under the observation and feedback cycle, teachers and leaders should revisit feedback received in-the-moment to plan the steps and action needed in order for the teacher to implement the feedback effectively in future without a school leader present. During the planning session, leaders should embed opportunities for the teacher to practice the feedback, stopping at the point of error. Practicing in this manner presents another layer of real-time coaching for the teacher, creating an opportunity for the teacher to improve their practice quickly.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

The literature supports that school leadership and the caliber of teacher instruction are the two most vital facets of student academic achievement (Rivkin et al., 2005; Branch, et al., 2009; White & Bowers, 2011). Therefore, in order to improve student achievement, there ought to be a focus placed on improving the effectiveness of teaching through leadership (Khachatryan, 2015). The most common discussed method for doing so entails providing effective and on-going feedback and coaching to classroom teachers, as also researched in this study. This section discusses the results of this study in relation to the literature, and is organized according to the emergent themes of this study. The four themes that will guide the discussion are as follows:

1. In general, teachers found it helpful to know that school leaders prioritized consistently providing teachers with feedback that is tailored, quick, and powerful.
2. Teachers noted that they learned better by having the opportunity to receive in feedback in-the-moment and to practice implementing the feedback when it counts the most—in front of the students.

3. Real-time feedback is better received from leaders who have proven track records of success and effectiveness.
4. Teachers appreciate observation and feedback cycles, coupled with professional development sessions laden with practice, because it positively impacts their effectiveness.

### **Theme 1**

In general, teachers found it helpful to know that school leaders prioritized providing teachers with consistent feedback that is tailored, quick, and powerful. The idea that teachers need consistent and accessible coaching and development is supported by a study conducted by Reinke et. al (2014) which explored the effectiveness of coaching and support on teachers' behavior management knowledge and application. In the study conducted by Reinke et. al quantitative study, coaches actively planned and provided performance feedback to teachers on their implementation of behavior management plans. The data indicated that after receiving coaching, teachers reduced their rate of reprimands with at-risk students and decreased the level of inappropriate behavior among those students resulting in office referrals. The findings from Reinke's (2014) study closely aligns with the findings of this study which reveal the positive effects of targeted coaching and specific feedback. Participants expressed that when they received feedback from leaders that was ongoing and consistent, they noticed the improvement in their instructional practices and their students. When teachers did not receive training and coaching from effective school leaders, it was more likely for those teachers to less effective and possess feelings of incompetence in the classroom (Doyle, 2013; Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). In a study conducted by Sharplin, Stahl, and Kehrwald (2016), real time coaching teachers

reported experiencing significant improvements in their pedagogic practice [and] were able to identify a skill gap or barrier, either through direct coaching . . . Respondents reported particular benefit from the fact that the coach picked up on aspects of their practice that they themselves had not noticed. (p. 12)

As the results from this study also revealed, differentiated and tailored feedback is an important aspect of teacher development. Receiving feedback and coaching in-the-moment is effective in improving teachers' instruction and students' performance when the feedback and coaching is differentiated. Teachers described their perception of real-time coaching as being most powerful and impactful when it is tailored to meet their specific needs and the needs of their students. The literature also supports the idea that understanding what teachers and students need should be one of the first steps taken when providing support and development (Chukwumah, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2013; Kang & Berliner, 2012). However, some literature contradicts this idea and conveys that feedback and coaching should not be centered on the teacher. Instead, feedback should always focus feedback on the task not the learner (Hattie, 2007).

## **Theme 2**

Teachers noted that they learned better by having the opportunity to receive feedback in-the-moment and to practice implementing the feedback when it counts the most—in front of the students. Teachers often seek feedback to improve their instructional practices, however there is a disconnect between the feedback they receive and the feedback they desire (Khachatryan, 2015). Teachers stated that they desire feedback that is timely, specific, and relevant. These tenets were identified as pillars of feedback that is most useful for quickly improving instructional practices and student achievement. In order to positively impact teachers'

instructional practices, Darling-Hammond (2013) states that leaders should assess the teaching itself, provide frequent feedback about the teaching that is concrete and timely, and engage teachers in reflection about the feedback and implementation. Whether in the classroom or during a professional development session, the teachers who have the opportunity to practice feedback with their leaders and reflect upon it with their leaders are more confident in their ability to consistently and correctly implement the feedback so that students are benefiting.

The literature denotes that when school leaders allot for sufficient time to be “spent on teacher coaching and developing the school’s educational program” there is a likely to be substantial positive student gains (Grissom et al., 2013, p. 433). Supporters of the idea that feedback is critical to improving any practice also agree that there are definitive key tenets of effective feedback (Hattie, 2007; Shute, 2008; Sutton et al., 2011). Feedback, according to seminal authors, feedback should be specific clear, and as simple as possible. Teachers communicated that they value real-time feedback and coaching because the leader is able to give quick and granular pieces of advice or cues that can be done immediately. The feedback when delivered in this manner is manageable and simple so that teachers can feel capable of achieving successful implementation. This idea is also supported by a study conducted by Ottley, Coogle and Rahn (2015, p. 22), in which they found “Immediate feedback supported [teachers’] learning through the real-time practice opportunities in the classroom context. [A teacher] had previously received delayed feedback, which was received after her university supervisor had observed her classroom practices. She indicated that the immediate feedback was ‘more effective’ than the delayed, because with delayed feedback, ‘it is hard to go back and think about what the exact situation was and all the details as to what was happening with the children.’”

### **Theme 3**

Teachers preferred to receive real-time feedback from leaders with proven track records of success and effectiveness. An effective school leadership team is an essential aspect of providing teachers with feedback and coaching (American Federation of Teachers, 2012; Leon, 2014; Reinke et. al, 2014). Teachers expressed their concern in having novice school leaders who are responsible for teacher development and improvement. The literature supports that teacher training from effective school leadership promotes resilience and efficacy among both teachers and their students (Branch et al., 2009; Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). Teachers champion for establishing a more effective school leadership, including a strong principal, responsive administration/coaches and clearer expectations for students. Teachers described the direct correlation between the expertise of school leaders and the effectiveness of their feedback and coaching and how it permeates through student outcomes and teacher practices.

The notion that teachers are more apt to receive and implement feedback from a school leader or coach with more knowledge and expertise challenges some seminal authors who suggests otherwise. Foltos (2014) suggests that teachers are more open to coaches and leaders who do not assert their knowledge and expertise, and instead position themselves as collaborators and peers. Foltos (2014) stated,

There may be some role for coach as expert, but clearly there must be more effective collaborative strategies for coaches to employ if they hope to build [teacher's] capacity to improve teaching and learning. . . . They strive to build relationships with their teachers by building trust and respect. Coaches report that their success rests on creating a relationship that is friendly, personalized, manageable, supportive, and private.

#### **Theme 4**

Teachers appreciate observation and feedback cycles, coupled with professional development sessions laden with practice, because it positively impacts their effectiveness. Research supports that possessing a growth mindset is necessary in order for feedback and coaching to be effective (Fraser, 2017; Hallam et al., 2012; Seaton, 2018). Teachers need to believe that they can grow and improve, students need to believe they can grow and improve, and school leaders need to know the same about themselves and their teachers and students. Participants in this study acknowledged the importance of having a growth mindset as it relates to being receptive to real-time coaching and being willing to implement it. Real-time coaching can be intense and requires teachers to believe in its effectiveness and their ability to improve in-the-moment. Schools should model this concept by hiring coaches who strive to develop and grow their teachers through more frequent, targeted, and collaborative professional development anchored towards growth in instructional practice (Hallam et al., 2012). Being effective in this endeavor builds teachers who are less likely to change schools or leave teaching early in their career, and overall possess higher sense of support and effectiveness (Hall et al., 2017).

Additionally, when teachers possess a growth mindset, they are likely to value the coaching and feedback they receive from school leaders. Professional development and the observation and feedback cycle that teachers participate in are designed and conducted to improve instructional practices and student outcomes. Having a growth mindset about this will allow the teacher to possess more receptivity and willingness for planning, practice, and implementation. Dweck (2016) contends that people have a mindset about improvement and achievement that is either fixed or growth-oriented. The belief that one's abilities are static and cannot be improved is considered a fixed mindset. The belief that one's abilities can be

developed and improved with practice and reflection is considered to be a growth mindset. In a study conducted by Hope (2017), it was revealed that teachers with a growth mindset were also perceived more positively by their school leaders and coaches than teachers with a fixed mindset. Hope (2017) states teachers with a perceived growth mindset are cited as wanting feedback as soon as possible to improve their practice, whereas the teachers with a perceived fixed mindset did not seek feedback and sometimes dismissed feedback” (p. 41).

### **Limitations**

In this section, limitations of the research design utilized in this study are discussed, along with methodological improvements that could have been made to strengthen the study. Limitations are potential problems in a research study and are out of the researcher’s control (Simon, 2013). The limitations of this study included sampling, time constraints, setting, and transferability.

### **Sampling**

This study was conducted using 11 teacher participants. Due to such a small sample size, the study was limited to the perceptions and insights of just a small portion of teachers. Therefore, the data collected does not provide much information about the larger population’s attitudes about real-time feedback as a form of professional development and coaching as it pertains to student achievement. Additionally, the participants were all teachers from one charter management organization and did not include teachers from multiple schools or networks. Hence, the study was limited to the experiences of only one group of teachers within one small charter school network. A possible difference that could improve this study would be to increase the number of participants as well as recruit participants from more than one network or school district to garner a more representative sample.

## **Time Constraints**

Time constraints faced by teachers on a daily basis presented some limitations while conducting research for this study. The participants of this study were urban school teachers who were asked to participate in interviews each lasting for at least one hour. Teachers are known to have full daily schedules. As noted by Delva et al., (2002), people who struggle with real or perceived time constraints are less likely to respond to surveys or sit in interviews because these possible respondents feel overworked as if they do not have the time to do so. Knowing this, participants may have provided shorter and more concise responses during the interviews to preserve time. A difference that could have possibly improved this study entails decreasing the time spent on one interview and splitting the interview into two sessions across two days. This could have possibly helped the participants feel as if they were not sacrificing a substantial amount of time in one day.

## **Setting**

The study's setting was another limitation. The scope of this research could have entailed a more expansive setting. However, the researcher chose to include only four schools, all of which were within the same charter school organization. This decision was made to make the research study more manageable, but it also limited the possibility of studying other teachers in other urban alternative school settings which may vary significantly from the settings in which the study was conducted. Consequently, there were not any opportunities to compare and contrast teachers across multiple charter school networks nor other urban alternative school districts.

## **Transferability**

Furthermore, transferability became a limitation due to a small sampling size, the limited setting, and perceived time constraints. While the research conducted were at varying schools, it was conducted within one charter school organization. Therefore, it is not possible to apply the findings of the study to other urban alternative schools outside of the organization considering all alternative school settings are not mirror images of each other. Transferability is also a limitation due to the small sampling size of the study. The conclusions that have been drawn from the study are not able to be generalized and applied to the entire population of all urban alternative school teachers.

## **Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

The purpose of this section is to explain the implications of this study's results as it pertains to practice, policy and theory. Constructivist theory was the conceptual framework used to drive this study. Results of this research are discussed in relation to constructivism and the connected literature. Since this study employed a qualitative research design, the implications are not generalizable and cannot be applied to other places and populations. However, the implications of this study's results can be transferred to other similar populations.

## **Practice**

The gap in practice explored in this study is the improvement of student outcomes through teacher coaching and professional development. This study explored teachers' perception of real-time feedback as a form of coaching and professional development that is used to improve student academic achievement. Seminal authors have stated, that coaching and feedback—when done well and effectively— can and should be used to improve teachers' instructional practices and have a positive impact on student outcomes (Kariuki 2009; Menzes &

Maier, 2014; Parkash, 2017; Saphier, 2011; Steiner, 2011; St. John, 2013). The results of this study implies that real-time coaching could be a beneficial form of coaching and feedback. When teachers receive feedback and coaching in-the-moment, during their instruction and while they are with students, they are able to practice, implement, and assess the feedback they have received. This also allows for students to be immediately and positively impacted.

Traditionally, the coaching and feedback cycle between school leaders and teachers often entails a school leader observing a teacher during an instructional period and *later* providing the feedback and coaching to the observed teacher. In this practice, the feedback is delayed and the learnable moment—perhaps for both, teacher and students—has come and gone. A shift in practice by teachers and leaders away from traditional coaching and feedback, to real-time coaching, could improve teacher practices and student outcomes noticeably faster. “Conventional coaching is predicated on the ‘hope’ that teachers improve based on the direction and guidance of their coaches. There is no immediate feedback. Feedback is delayed, significantly diminishing its effectiveness” (Center for Transformative Teacher Training, 2013).

## **Policy**

As previously mentioned, the results of this study cannot be generalized and applied to all teachers who receive coaching and feedback from their school leaders. However, the teachers in this study indicated their preference to receive feedback and coaching that is in-the-moment and from school leaders who are knowledgeable and experienced. The results also indicated that, as a result of receiving real-time coaching and feedback from knowledgeable and experienced school leaders, teachers felt their instructional practices improved, along with student performance and achievement. Therefore, it might be safe to say that the results yielded from this study imply that school leaders should receive more training and professional development on coaching and

providing feedback to teachers in-the-moment. Certification courses and training programs might consider incorporating real-time coaching strategies and practices as teachers in this study deem it valuable and impactful.

Moreover, effective preparation programs for educational leaders might consider modifying their curriculum to include the topic of real-time feedback. The literature states that school leaders are able to achieve school improvement as it pertains to student achievement when they have competent and effective teachers (Chukwumah, 2015; Hughes, 2012; Michalak, 2009; Parkash, 2017). For that reason and as the results of this study imply, school leaders should focus on their own training and development around real-time coaching in order to build teachers' competence and effectiveness. Doing so could improve student achievement noticeably and quickly.

## **Theory**

The school of thought that shaped this qualitative research study is known as constructivism. Constructivism is learning theory which explains how people acquire knowledge and learn. It is a theory of learning which posits that people learn by actively constructing their own knowledge through experiences (Scholnik et al., 2006). The theory proposes that people construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences and those of others. The results of this study imply that teachers have shaped their perception and understanding of real-time coaching and feedback through their own experiences and those of their students'. As teachers received feedback and coaching in-the-moment, they were able to make meaning of its purpose and impact on their instructional practices and their students' performance.

Another theory of constructivism highlights that knowledge is created within the learner and cannot be passed on without active participation of the learner. Through participation and

experiences, people then establish concepts, ideas or theories about how they should behave/function/act it is realized that particular actions lead to particular results. It is at this point of learning that people form theories about how the world works and henceforth act accordingly (Liu & Chen, 2010). The findings in this study supports this theory. The results show that teachers perceive real-time coaching and feedback to be effective because they are able to actively participate in the process with their school leaders. Teachers expressed their appreciation of being able to understand how the feedback and coaching they receive directs them to act, and how those actions lead to improved results in-the-moment.

Additionally, the constructivist theory supports the results of this study because it states that “learners should be exposed to materials, experiences, and situations from which they can inductively build their own knowledge” (Scholnik et al., 2006, p. 13). The results show that teachers who received coaching in-the-moment, while in the classroom with students and facing situations they could learn from, were able to learn better and quicker. They were able to learn, practice, and engage in a deeper form of learning to aid in their professional development of the key competencies required as educators (Lalor et al., 2014).

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In this section, suggestions are proposed for future research on implementing real-time coaching and feedback to improve student achievement. The recommendations made in this section are derived from the data in this study and evolve from the methodological practices used in this study.

#### **Data-Driven Extensions**

The data showed that teachers perceive real-time coaching and feedback to be effective in terms of improving student outcomes. An extension to this study could entail examining more

closely the academic outcomes of students receiving instruction from teachers who are provided with real-time coaching and feedback. Extending the study in this manner would allow researcher to determine if teachers' perceptions regarding real-time coaching and feedback are closely aligned to what student achievement data indicates.

Another extension to this student would be to interview school leaders regarding their perceptions of real-time feedback and coaching as it relates to improving student outcomes. Since the data garnered from this study implicates that school leaders could benefit from receiving training on providing teachers with coaching and feedback in-the-moment, it might also serve to be beneficial to examine the perceptions of this form of professional development from school leaders who already practice it. The current study does not offset the biases of teachers regarding the topic, therefore the perceptions of the school leaders should be explored to get more all-encompassing data.

Additionally, the results indicated that teachers perceived real-time coaching and feedback to be more effective when received from school leaders who had the knowledge, expertise, and a proven track record of success. Perhaps, it may be beneficial to extend the research to explore the difference in effectiveness between school leaders with and without training on providing feedback and coaching to teachers in-the-moment. The results of a study conducted under those pretenses may be able to further support the implication that preparation programs for educational leaders should include real-time coaching and feedback in the curriculum.

### **Methodological Design**

Changes could be made to the methodological design of this study in future research—for example, a larger sample size of teachers. Due to the small sample size used in this research,

findings were limited to the perceptions and insights of 11 of teachers. Therefore, data collected provides little information about attitudes among teachers more generally regarding real-time feedback as a form of professional development and coaching as it pertains to student achievement. In addition, there was no way to determine if teachers felt pressured to respond in a certain way during face-to-face interviews for this research. For this reason, anonymous surveys could be included in future research. Through to anonymous surveys, participants may respond more honestly and thoroughly than in interviews. Surveys could also be used to gather quantitative data with which to draw transferable conclusions from qualitative data gathered. This study was a qualitative study with a small sample size. As such, results and implications cannot be generalized or applied to other populations.

Furthermore, the overall design of the study could be changed to a mixed-methods approach. In future research on this topic, qualitative and quantitative data could be gathered and analyzed. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2006, p. 17) have defined mixed-method research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.” Mixed-methods research is often considered the bridge between qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). Choosing only one method limited the extent to which the researcher could answer the research question for this study. Forethought, proper planning, and organization are required to conduct mixed-methods research. However, by using a mixed-methods approach, researchers can better address study weaknesses and limitations of the sort this researcher experienced using a singular method.

Another recommendation for further research would be to expand the setting to traditional districts. This study only included teachers within one charter school district, severely

limiting the scope of the data. Perhaps by expanding the setting to include traditional and nontraditional school districts, the data gathered would be more representative of the population. Since the body of existing literature does not include a vast amount of data on this topic, it would be useful to successfully conduct a larger study that examines the perceptions of a larger, more exhaustive sample teachers that more closely represents the larger population.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand teacher perceptions of real-time coaching and feedback as a form of professional development designed to improve student outcomes. Using a qualitative approach, the researcher conducted observations and interviews to better understand the perceptions and experiences of participants in this research. Based on results of this study, teachers in urban schools value feedback and coaching from school leaders, and even more so when it is received in-the-moment. Teachers in urban schools consider that, through real-time coaching, they are equipped to improve their instructional practices—and, as a result, academic outcomes for their students. In this study, in-the-moment coaching was most effective and best received by teachers when it was high-leverage, consistent, aligned and relevant, manageable, delivered in the most suitable format, conducted in a timely manner, included opportunities for practice, was delivered from a leader with knowledge of and expertise in instruction, was received and given by educators with a growth mindset, and was differentiated to meet the needs of everyone involved in and impacted by the feedback in question.

Implications of this study could be used to inform education practice, policy, and theory. First, real-time coaching could be an effective form of coaching and feedback. A shift in practice by teachers and school leaders, away from traditional coaching and feedback and toward real-time coaching, might result in faster improvements to teacher practices and student outcomes. In

addition, school leaders should receive more training and professional development on coaching and providing feedback to teachers in-the-moment. Directors of preparation programs for educational leaders might consider modifying their curriculums to include the topic of real-time feedback.

In proposing recommendations for further research on this topic, closer examination was recommended of the academic outcomes of students receiving instruction from teachers who receive with real-time coaching and feedback. It was also recommended that researchers interview school leaders regarding their perceptions of real-time feedback and coaching to improve student outcomes. Exploring difference in effectiveness between school leaders who have received training on providing feedback and coaching to teachers in-the-moment, and leaders who have not received training, was also recommended. In addition, methodological adjustments to future research on this topic were recommended, including use of a mixed methods research approach, a larger sample of teachers, incorporating anonymous surveys to encourage honest and thorough responses, and a larger setting, including traditional districts. It is the researcher's hope that, within these recommendations and insights from this research, other researchers will find inspiration and opportunities to continue to examine this important topic.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your role at this school?
2. Why did you choose to work at this school?
3. Why did you choose to work for this organization?
4. Are you satisfied with the amount of support you receive in your role?
5. What types of support do you receive in this role?
  - a. How often do you receive it?
  - b. From whom do you receive it?
  - c. How would you describe the quality of the support?
6. Do teachers receive coaching from administrators or mentors?
  - a. What types of coaching do they receive?
  - b. How often do they receive it?
  - c. From whom do they receive it?
  - d. How would you describe the quality?
7. Do teachers receive professional development from administrators or mentors?
  - a. What types of PD do they receive?
  - b. How often do they receive it?
  - c. From whom do they receive it?
  - d. How would you describe the quality?
8. What impact does coaching and professional development have on student achievement?
9. How does teacher coaching and professional development affect the success or lack of success of new teachers working in urban alternative schools as it relates to student achievement?

- a. Can you draw a correlation between these components and student learning?
  - i. Explain your thinking.
- 10. What role does real-time teacher coaching play in improving teacher practice and student academic achievement in urban alternative school settings?
- 11. Do you think you are supported enough to effectively teach or lead in an urban underperforming school such as this one?
  - a. Why or why not?
  - b. What can you attribute your success, or lack thereof, to in this school setting?

## Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

Attn: Research participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

The interview will take approximately one hour of your time. I do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken at Concordia University–Portland require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
- the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Jasmine Williams as research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Jasmine Williams and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- the actual recording will be destroyed immediately upon transcription and your approval; all other materials will be kept in an encrypted file for three years
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

### Quotation Agreement

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be quoted directly.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

All or part of the content of your interview may be used:

- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations
- On other feedback events
- In an archive of the project as noted above

By signing this form I agree that:

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participants Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researchers Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Contact Information**

This research has been reviewed and approved by Concordia University–Portland. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Jasmine Williams

[contact information redacted]

## Appendix C: Recruitment Sample Letter

Greetings,

My name is Jasmine Williams and I am a doctoral student at Concordia University at Portland. The reason that I am contacting you is because I am conducting a research study about the teacher training programs, urban school leader preparation, teacher induction programs, and professional development and coaching systems put into place by an urban charter school district. I am currently seeking volunteers from Breakthrough Charter Schools as participants in this study.

Participation in this study involves consenting to one to two classroom observations and at least one professional development session. The other tasks involve participating in a pre-observation interview and two additional interviews. Participation in this study would take approximately two hours of your time. I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Concordia University–Portland Institutional Review Board.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at [email redacted]. I will then send you a link to a site in which you can indicate your dates and times of availability for when you would like to participate in the observations and interviews. A confirmation email will be sent to you indicating that you have been signed up for one of those times, and provide you with further information concerning the location of the study. If you have to cancel your appointment, please email me at [email redacted].

Thank you in advance for all of your support and help in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

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Jasmine Williams  
Doctorate Candidate  
Department of Education  
Concordia University–Portland

## Appendix D: Coaching Observation Questions

### Before Coaching Session

1. What is usually the focus when leaders come into your room to observe?
  - a. Why?
2. How long does observations and coaching usually last?
3. How do you generally receive coaching?
  - a. How often do you generally receive in-the-moment coaching (non-verbal cues, modeling, take over, etc.)?
4. Do all teachers receive this sort of coaching? Why or why not?
5. Are there usually any hurdles or obstacles that stand in the way of effective coaching in the classroom?

### After Coaching Session

1. How do you think that went?
2. How did that feel?
3. Did the coaching you received help you drive towards the desired outcome of the lesson??
4. *Any other questions that may have arose during the researcher's observation of the coaching session.*

## Appendix E: Domains, Initial Codes, Final Codes and Themes

Domain	Initial Codes	Final Codes	Themes
Coaching and Development	See the impact Presence Tone	High-leverage Differentiation	In general, teachers found it helpful to know that school leaders prioritized consistently providing teachers with feedback that is quick, tailored, and powerful.
Feedback Components	Following a set protocol Organization Respect for time Learning styles Pedagogical Beliefs Specific feedback	Consistency Alignment and Relevance	
Leadership Practices	Granular and bite-sized sited action steps Trust Perseverance Malleability	Manageability	Teachers noted that they learned better by having the opportunity to receive in feedback in-the-moment and to practice implementing the feedback when it counts the most—in front of the students.
Improving Student Academic Achievement	Receptive to feedback Having a sense of urgency Understanding how others learn Striving to increase effectiveness One thing at a time Perfect practice Naming the gap Working towards a goal Being aware of the situation Knowing your people Meeting your people where they are Having experience Open door policy Sticking with it Intentional planning Sharing a common vision	Delivery Timeliness Practice Knowledge and Expertise Growth Mindset	
			Real-time feedback is better received from leaders who have proven track records of success and effectiveness.  Teachers appreciate observation and feedback cycles, coupled with professional development sessions laden with practice, because it positively impacts their effectiveness.

## **Appendix F: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### **What does “fraudulent” mean?**

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### **What is “unauthorized” assistance?**

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

**Statement of Original Work (Continued)**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

**Jasmine Foster**

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Digital Signature

Jasmine R. Foster

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Name (Typed)

June 7, 2019

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Date