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**External Evaluation of the In-School Instructional Coaching Program:
A Qualitative Study of the First Year of Implementation**

A Report for the CPS Office of Instructional Design and Assessment
Prepared by the PRAIRIE Group, UIC College of Education

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* Authors are listed alphabetically and produced this report collaboratively. They share responsibility for its contents equally. The conclusions drawn in this report reflect the viewpoints of the authors. While there are many potential viewpoints, these reflect a systematic analysis of data by external evaluators. We hope that the findings can facilitate improvement of these and related programs through open discussion and consideration of data-driven understanding.

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Evaluation of the In School Instructional Coaching Program
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Prepared for the CPS Office Instructional Design and Assessment
by the PRAIRIE Group, UIC College of Education

The UIC PRAIRIE Group served as an external evaluator for the CPS In-School Instructional Coaching (ISIC) program for the 2007-08 school year — the first year of the ISIC program implementation. This report is based on in-depth, qualitative data collection and analysis addressing key facets of coaches' activities, roles, responsibilities, the nature of supports coaches receive, and the impact they are having at the schools where they work.

During the spring of 2008, twenty coaches (six citywide specialists and 14 literacy coaches) from 17 schools representing 13 CPS Areas were interviewed and shadowed for a single day. In ten of the 17 schools, the principal and one teacher were also interviewed, and 25 additional coaches were interviewed via focus groups. Findings and analysis are presented for seven major programmatic themes, summarized below:

1. The nature of coaches' classroom activities. Coaches' work in classrooms involved the teacher to varying degrees, from minimal to extensive teacher involvement. We observed coaches working with teachers in three ways: assisting (14 instances), co-teaching (5 instances), and modeling (27 instances). In instances where we observed co-teaching and modeling (with teacher engagement), there were opportunities for teachable moments and insights on the part of teachers. Conversely, sessions comprised of assisting and modeling (without teacher engagement) provided few such opportunities. Findings suggest that sheer time in classrooms might not be enough to have an impact on teachers' practice because it does not take into account the nature and qualities of the interaction and, in particular, the teacher's engagement.

2. Coaches' use of tools in their work. Overall, the NTC tools were not observed to be integrated into coaching work, nor did coaches indicate in interviews that this was the case. All tools were mentioned at least once in interviews, but only the Collaboration Log and the Lesson Planning tool were observed in use. The Collaboration Log was the most often mentioned NTC tool; however many coaches indicated that they did not use the Log in a collaborative manner. Factors that may have influenced collaboration between coaches and teachers include: limited time with teachers, variations in teacher engagement, and expectations of principals in terms of how a coach's time should be spent.

Interaction Logs were viewed as cumbersome. Coaches varied in their approaches to completing the logs, with many "lumping" their interactions into a single entry. A lack of time on the part of coaches, combined with coaches' perceptions that the tool was not user-friendly, were likely contributors to coaches' frustrations.

3. Legitimacy of the coach's role. For the purposes of this report, we defined coaches' "role legitimacy" by fidelity, autonomy, expertise, and efficacy in their work. Eleven coaches in the sample displayed high levels of legitimacy, compared to six displaying moderate levels and three displaying low levels of legitimacy. Positive teacher reception, curricular materials, and especially principal support emerged as major contributors to coaches' legitimacy in their schools. Citywide specialists displayed and reported higher levels of legitimacy than did literacy coaches. The roving nature of the citywide specialist position may have contributed to their greater legitimacy, as principals were less likely to use citywide specialists for non-instructional tasks than they were with literacy coaches.

4. The role of data in coaches' work. We saw and heard numerous examples of the multiple ways that coaches use data in their work, including: "data conversations" at grade-level meetings, administering and assisting teachers to administer assessments, interpreting results, and coordinating testing periods such as ISAT. All coaches said they had some involvement in preparing students for standardized tests. Even if it was not part of their job description, coaches believed that test preparations became part of their scope of work. The majority of coaches also talked about the importance of classroom observation, examining student work, and other qualitative approaches to data collection as a means of understanding how to assist teachers and students.

5. Challenges coaches face in performing their role. Coaches identified a number of challenges in performing their role. For instance, there were multiple people who served as ‘bosses’ at different times and who had different needs. Citywide specialists voiced fewer concerns about this than did literacy coaches, perhaps because citywide specialists were less frequently in any one school and less available for additional duties outside of the classroom. All coaches recognized that they needed to do things above and beyond their formal job description, in part because it helped integrate them into their school communities and foster trust and confidence. Managing time was another significant challenge, as coaches’ days frequently involved multiple tasks and limitations on the amounts of time they could devote in particular directions. Finally, coaches were aware that there was an overarching model of what coaching should look like, but that there was a “real world” of their work, situated in Chicago Public schools, that might or might not challenge their ability to fully implement the components of the coaching model. Coaches accepted these challenges largely without complaint.

6. Supports for coaches. Of the various human resource supports coaches reported receiving, the most cited form came from colleagues within coaches’ content areas. Citywide specialists valued formal time collaborating with one another, while literacy coaches more often mentioned informal collaboration with one another as supportive. Citywide specialists also appreciated support that came from Area coaches, their supervisors at OMS, and OMS facilitators. Literacy coaches felt supported by the Area as well and by the professional development it offered. Coaches also mentioned principal support as important. We observed only a few instances of coaches receiving support: these included collaborations both with school administrators and with coaches in the same school. The rare instances where coaches in the same school collaborated with one another provided opportunities for coaches to share cross-content knowledge and obtain a richer picture of the school.

7. The impact of coaching in schools. The only direct source of evidence of impact came from perceptions and beliefs of the sub-sample of principals and teachers interviewed. Principals and teachers overall liked having coaches working in their schools. Both principals and teachers felt coaches had a positive impact on both the work of teachers and, to a slightly lesser degree, on student achievement. This suggests some overall coherence in the definitions of the role and purposes of coaching in the minds of those inside schools. Lastly, we saw no meaningful differentiations made about the work of and experiences with literacy coaches and citywide specialists

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

Report Background and Purpose

The UIC PRAIRIE Group, in collaboration with the CPS Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment serves as an external evaluator for the CPS In-School Instructional Coaching (ISIC) program for the 2007-08 school year — the first year of the ISIC program implementation. The broad purpose of this year’s external evaluation has been to provide the CPS Office of Instructional Design and Assessment (IDA) and other key stakeholders with in-depth, nuanced, and timely feedback regarding the qualities of and factors influencing coaches’ activities, roles, and responsibilities, with the aim of increasing CPS’ understanding of and ability to improve the ISIC program.

Because this was the first year of ISIC implementation, program planners decided to focus the evaluation on issues that would provide them with an understanding of the range and variability of coaches’ work and perceptions of that work. The following four programmatic issues and evaluation questions drove the data collection and analysis of the evaluation findings:

Issue 1 – Coaching Activities: What is the range of activities coaches engage in on a daily basis? How effectively and consistently do they perform these activities? What challenges do coaches face in their efforts to perform these activities effectively?

Issue 2 – Coaches’ Roles and Responsibilities: How do coaches define and assess their roles and responsibilities? How do other key stakeholders define coaching and their expectations of coaches?

Issue 3 – Supports for Coaches: How, and how effectively, are coaches supported? How, and how effectively, do coaches support each other? In what ways do existing structures for in-school instructional coaching within CPS facilitate and/or limit coaches’ development?

Issue 4 – Impact: What impact do coaches have on individuals and groups with whom they engage (e.g. teachers, administrators, other coaches)?

Report Content and Structure

This is the third in a series of evaluation reports that have focused on different facets of the above four issues. In an April 2008 data brief¹ we drew on an initial subsample of coaches we had shadowed and observed, in order to provide preliminary findings about the ways coaches approached and thought about their work. Our July 2008 brief² drew from the entire sample of coaches to address a subset of actionable programmatic issues that were of particular relevance to the program planners at the time of the report. Specifically, the July brief addressed the issues of: (1) coaches’ uses and perceptions of New Teacher Center (NTC) coaching tools; (2) coaches’ uses of data; and (3) coaches’ views of the supports they received or would like to receive. In the current report we draw on the full data sample, including targeted interviews with principals and teachers and focus group discussions with additional coaches, to provide rich, detailed descriptions and in-depth analysis of the programmatic issues listed above, while also addressing key emergent themes.

The next section of this report contains an overview summarizing the field-based methodology we used to gather and analyze data that draw from a purposeful sample of coaches, teachers, and principals. The third main section of the report includes findings and analysis of this study, organized around key trends and patterns we discerned through qualitative analysis of the data. We end each section with a brief discussion labeled “Summary and Implications.”

We conclude the report with a section entitled “Questions for Reflection,” in which we propose questions, organized by program issue, which can be used for discussion and dialogue. It is hoped that the

¹ PRAIRIE group (2008, May). *A first look at the activities and roles of in-school instructional coaches*

² PRAIRIE group (2008, July). *Key issues pertaining to coaches’ activities, roles, and supports*

Implications and Questions for Reflection portions of the report will prompt critical discussion and formative use of the evaluation findings and analysis.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data Sample and Collection

The sample for this external evaluation included 45 coaches out of a population of approximately 200 ISIC coaches, as well as 10 principals, and 10 teachers. Of the 45 coaches, we conducted full workday shadows and debrief interviews with 20 coaches: 14 Office of Literacy/Selected Curricular Reading Materials Adoption (SCRMA) coaches and six Office of Math and Science (OMS) citywide specialists (see Appendix A for observation and debrief protocol).³ This sample represented 17 neighborhood CPS schools within 13 different CPS Areas.⁴

In 10 of the 20 schools we also interviewed the principal and one teacher (see Appendix B for interview protocols). We selected a teacher with whom the observed coach had worked during the course of our observation. The purpose of the principal and teacher interviews was to obtain a fuller picture of the perceived utility and impact of coaching within individual schools, from the perspective of school personnel. In addition, we deliberately selected three schools in which there was both a citywide specialist and a literacy coach, in order to examine the ways in which these coaches did or did not work together.

In addition to the 20 coaches we shadowed, we conducted four focus group interviews with an additional 25 coaches: one focus group with citywide specialists and three focus groups with literacy coaches (see Appendix C for focus group protocol). We skewed the sample of coaches participating in focus groups to approximate the ratio of literacy coaches to citywide specialists. The focus group interviews added to the in-depth school data by providing input from a larger number of coaches across a range of coaching experiences. All data collection took place between the months of February and May of 2008.

Data Analysis

Observation, interview, and focus group data were analyzed by multiple researchers who read and coded the data based on the programmatic issues outlined in Section 1 of this report. We began by grouping observational excerpts and interview quotes by issue and then examined the content for range, variability, typologies, and patterns. This included a comparison between the two types of coaches in the sample. Where meaningful, distinctions between types of coaches are reported within the thematic sections.

In the process of examining the data using the programmatic issues as analytic frames, we also looked for emergent themes that could contribute to a nuanced understanding and, in particular, have an impact on planning of the ISIC program. For instance, we report on how the variability of coaching activities interacts with the contexts in which coaches work, and how this interaction shapes their roles and experiences. Similarly, in the course of data collection, coaches' use of NTC tools emerged as a central facet of their work, and was also of great interest and concern to program planners, as initially reflected in the July report.

Data Reporting

As mentioned above, because this was the first year of implementation of the ISIC program, the focus of the external evaluation has been on documenting and analyzing the range of activities and perspectives

³ We over sampled citywide specialists in order to get a richer understanding of their work than would be possible from a sample that represents the true proportion of citywide specialists to literacy coaches.

⁴ Although 20 coaches were sampled for the full data set, these coaches represent only 17 unique schools because three schools were purposively chosen that have both a citywide specialist and a literacy coach.

associated with the coaching role. Reflecting this focus, some portions of this report are primarily descriptive and typological. In such sections (for instance, those addressing coaching activities and data use), we have included extended excerpts from our observations and interviews to provide a rich picture of how coaching looked in schools. Throughout the report we have deliberately edited excerpts for continuity, while preserving content.

In areas where the research questions allowed for delving into beliefs and sense-making (for instance, around the themes of coaches' role legitimacy and coaching challenges), we have supplemented a description of the findings with nuanced analysis, often illustrating the analytic point with vignettes or extended excerpts. Because the majority of coaches were women, we have used female names and pronouns throughout the report when referring to coaches in order to protect the anonymity of our male participants. In all vignettes the school's and coach's names are fictitious. However, all quotes are authentic.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

As discussed in the previous section, analysis of the findings proceeded in a way that responded to the four key programmatic issues that are the focus of the evaluation, while also exploring themes that were emergent in the process of data collection and analysis. In order to present these themes as they emerged from the data, we have organized the findings and analysis section into the following seven thematic sections:

- Theme 1: The nature of coaches' classroom activities
- Theme 2: Coaches' use of tools in their work
- Theme 3: Legitimacy in the coach's role
- Theme 4: The role of data in the work of coaches
- Theme 5: Challenges coaches face in performing their role
- Theme 6: Sources of support for coaches
- Theme 7: The impact of coaching in schools

Each thematic section concludes with a brief discussion entitled "Summary and Implications." The purpose of this discussion is to provide a concise synopsis of the preceding section and to introduce ideas regarding some ways in which the findings and analysis could affect ISIC programming.

Theme 1: The Nature of Coaches' Classroom Activities

In our April brief we described the wide range of activities we observed coaches performing throughout their days. All coaches worked with multiple teachers during the days we observed them. However, we observed no patterns that would constitute a "typical" day in the life of a coach. In fact, most coaches, when asked if the day was a typical one, replied that it was not. The most consistent commonality among coaches' days was that nearly all of them alternated their time between working with teachers and engaging in some type of planning or administrative work (e.g., planning upcoming sessions, helping with SIPAAA, meeting with the principal).

In this section we delve more deeply into the nature of the activities identified by program planners as those that should comprise the bulk of coaches' time. According to program planners, coaches should spend the bulk of their time working directly with teachers in the following activities:⁵

⁵ This statement is based on initial interviews with program planners and ISIC literature regarding the underlying concepts of the ISIC program.

- looking at data
- planning lessons
- observing classrooms and providing feedback
- modeling and co-teaching

We explore the first two activities above (data use and lesson planning) in forthcoming sections. Here we focus on coaches' work with teachers in classrooms.

The three most common classroom instructional coaching activities we saw were: (1) assisting teachers, (2) co-teaching with teachers, and (3) modeling for teachers. In our observations we found that each coaching session consisted of only one of these activities. However, because coaches engaged in multiple sessions during the course of a day, some were observed engaging in different kinds of instructional activities with different teachers.

Assisting

Over the course of our data collection in schools, we observed a number of instances in which coaches entered classrooms and alternated their time between observing the teacher and circulating around the room helping individual students or small groups of students. We considered these instances to constitute "assisting" because the coaches were not strictly observing, modeling, or co-teaching.

We observed 14 instances of assisting among nine different coaches. In nearly all cases of assisting, coaches spent a portion (usually between 40 and 50%) of the time observing the teacher and a portion of the time (usually between 50 and 60%) circulating around the room working with students and/or keeping them on task. Coaches typically observed during time that teachers devoted to whole-group lessons and circulated during class time devoted to individual or small group work. There was very little variation among coaches with respect to how they engaged in assisting. While working with individual students and small groups, coaches helped students work through tasks by asking them questions and urging continued effort. Coaches also took this time to examine some students' work. In some cases, however, coaches used their time to help manage behavior in the classroom.

Co-teaching

We considered coaching sessions to be instances of "co-teaching" when a coach and a teacher worked in conjunction for relatively equal amounts of time within a class period. We observed five instances of co-teaching by five different coaches during our 20 shadows. Co-teaching sessions we observed consisted either of a coach jumping in to work with a teacher on a portion of a lesson or a coach and a teacher splitting specific components of a lesson between them. The following is an excerpt of an observed session of co-teaching:

The teacher has the students get into their groups and the coach introduces the lesson and its purpose. Then the teacher has students open their texts and reads aloud about the activity. While the teacher does this, the coach is preparing the materials. The teacher checks with the coach on whether she can do the next step at this point, and the coach says yes. The coach explains the process to the students; then the coach and teacher alternately explain the process for the students to rotate among stations.

Modeling

Modeling was the most common form of coaching we observed, with 27 instances among 14 different coaches. We considered an instance of coaching to be "modeling" when the bulk of the lesson was taught and/or directed by the coach and the teacher provided minimal teaching assistance. We identified a few different types of modeling scenarios. Some modeling sessions involved a coach leading a lesson with a teacher observing the session and circulating around the room to help individual students and/or groups of students. The following provides an example of this type of modeling:

We go to a special education K-3 pull out class. The coach says they'll start with writing, and the teacher passes out white boards to each student. The coach draws a square on the chalk board to represent the white board. The coach says, "Write the two letters that make the word 'at.'" Students say the spelling aloud. Students continue to add letters to 'at' to make new words. The coach walks around among students to check their work. She continues altering letters to make new words. The teacher observes. Later the coach says to the teacher, "Did you notice how this time I'm not giving them as many clues?" The teacher responds that she found the session to be helpful.

Other modeling sessions involved teachers who were in some way disengaged from the lesson itself. The three most common forms of teacher disengagement we observed were: (1) completing administrative tasks, progress monitoring, grading; (2) absent from the room entirely—left the room for long periods of time while the coach taught, absent for the day with a substitute present; and/or (3) focused almost entirely on maintaining behavioral order in the classroom. While these three scenarios differ with respect to the focus of teachers' attention, they all created a situation in which teachers were not visibly engaging with the work of the coach. The following illustrates a session in which a teacher was absent for a large portion of the modeled lesson, and the coach's reaction to the behavior:

After teaching the students about the steps involved in editing their writing, the coach circulates the room while students discuss their work. She circulates and asks open ended questions to students about how they'll proceed with essays. The teacher walks around the room disciplining students and the volume in the classroom is low. As the coach continues around the room, the teacher leaves the room and almost instantly the volume of the room increases substantially. Well after the class session was supposed to end, the teacher returns and the coach expresses to her that she wished she had remained in the classroom longer. The teacher shrugs and resumes her classroom activities.

Summary and Implications

Overall, based on our observations, coaches work in classrooms in ways that involve the teacher to varying degrees, from minimal teacher involvement to extensive teacher involvement. In instances where we observed co-teaching and modeling (with teacher engagement), there were opportunities for teachable moments and insights on the part of teachers. Conversely, sessions comprised of assisting and modeling (without teacher engagement) provided few such opportunities. Ostensibly, teachable moments could be addressed during collaborative pre- and post-conferences with teachers regardless of the techniques used by the coach in the classroom. However, as will be seen in a forthcoming discussion on collaboration, coaches have relatively little time for formal conferences. Given that working with teachers in classrooms is meant to be a primary component of a coach's role, these findings suggest that sheer time in classrooms might not be enough to have an impact on teachers' practice because it doesn't take into account the nature of the interaction and, in particular, the teacher's engagement. As ISIC moves forward it will be important to stress coaching practices that are likely to allow for teacher engagement, as well as the situational variables that make engaging practices most feasible.

Theme 2: Coaches' Use of Tools in their Work

Coaches were provided with a number of tools to aid them in their daily activities. We found few instances of tool use in our observations of coaches' work. This section explores the manner in which coaches used these tools and how they perceived their utility. Coaches made both positive and negative

comments regarding all of the tools. Many of these comments were general statements of liking and/or disliking. In the discussion that follows, we focus exclusively on those comments in which coaches went beyond a statement of preference and provided an explanation of the utility of the tools. We do so because an understanding of the relationship between use and perceptions is relevant to program implementation.

We begin with a discussion of the New Teacher Center (NTC) tools. The four NTC coaching tools that coaches learned about via ISIC training that they were expected to incorporate into their coaching work were; (1) Selective Scripting, (2) Analyzing Student Work, (3) Lesson Planning tool, and (4) Collaboration Log. We conclude with a discussion of the CPS Interaction Log.

New Teacher Center (NTC) Coaching Tools

In examining the use of the NTC coaching tools during our observations we saw the Collaboration Log in use twice and the Lesson Planning tool in use once. No other tools were observed in use. Additionally, when asked about the NTC tools in debrief interviews seven of the 20 coaches (35%) told us they had nothing to say about the tools and most of those who did had to be prompted to do so.

1. Selective Scripting

We observed no instances of the Selective Scripting tool in use during the observations, and it was mentioned least often by coaches in discussions of the tools. Moreover, the four coaches who did mention the tool indicated that they did not like it. For instance, one coach said that the tool was not useful because it was difficult to listen for content while using the tool to record what is being said in the classroom. “One of them is the scripted one that I don’t like at all...if I’m listening [in order] to write, I’m not listening for content, I’m not listening for comprehension. I’m not listening to what she’s saying, why she’s saying it. I don’t like that at all.”

2. Analyzing Student Work

We observed no instances of Analyzing Student Work in use during the observations; however, the five coaches who mentioned the tool were pleased with it. Coaches’ comments varied in terms of the elements of the tool they liked. Coaches mentioned that it was useful for differentiating students, tracking student progress over the years as they moved to new classrooms, and for tracking student work against the standards. One coach described her use of the Analyzing Student Work tool as a guide for teachers: “We’re starting to use the analyzing student work.... I said, ‘Well, let’s use this form to look at student work because it’s all laid out there for you.’ So that gives more of a guide.”

3. Lesson Planning tool

The Lesson Planning tool was one of the two NTC tools we observed coaches use. The one coach we observed using the Lesson Planning tool did so while working with a teacher to make preparations for an upcoming lesson.

We go to visit a teacher for a social studies lesson planning conference. The coach tells me that she and this teacher work together because the teacher really likes getting support for writing in her social studies classes. The coach works with the NTC lesson planning book to jot down some of what they discuss while the teacher goes to the restroom.

During a debrief interview following the coaching session, the coach who used the tool made the following comments about it:

There’s a lesson planning tool, and I like that... I’ll ask, ‘What are you working on? What is your plan for next week? Tomorrow?’ Whatever it is. They’ll say, ‘I want to do this,’ and ‘I was thinking about doing this.’ And we talk about, ‘What’s the objective? What do you want it to look like? Here’s an idea, let’s do this’ and we write it down and there’s my lesson plan right there.”

Of the five coaches who mentioned the Lesson Planning tool, three had a positive view and two had a negative view (e.g., that the tool was irrelevant because some curricula have built-in lesson plans). The only common perspective came from two coaches who commented that the tool provided a useful record for teachers.

4. Collaboration Logs

The Collaboration Log was the most commonly observed and mentioned tool (two observations and 11 mentions). One coach was observed referencing previously-completed logs as she prepared to meet with teachers before school started, while the other coach filled in the log *after* her exchanges with teachers.

Several coaches described their use of the collaboration log to us during debriefs. Three coaches reported that they do not use the Collaboration Log in conjunction with teachers; instead, they fill the logs out themselves either before or after working with teachers. The following comment is characteristic of this kind of reported use: “I like the collaboration log, but I don’t spend much time collaborating with it. If a teacher comes to me and says, ‘Hey, can you help me with writer’s workshop?’ I’ll fill it out [myself]....” It is apparent from the coach’s comment that she recognizes she is deviating from the intended collaborative use of the tool.

Coaches were quite consistent in their positive comments about the Collaboration Log. During debriefs, five coaches characterized the Collaboration Log as a helpful tool that in some way concretized, formalized and/or organized coaches’ work with teachers. Similar comments were made by several focus group participants. As explained by one coach, “I do like it because it gives the teacher written feedback...I like to see things on paper or to read. So to point those things out to teachers and...they have a record.”

Other coaches provided feedback on facets of the Collaboration Log they disliked. These perceptions varied more widely than the positive perceptions, but the two most commonly mentioned criticisms were: (1) teachers were made uncomfortable by the formal tool, and (2) the logs were only helpful for certain types of interactions such as coaching with new teachers as opposed to veteran teachers⁶. One coach described how veteran teachers resisted responding when asked questions directly out of the Log’s four quadrants. Rather than ask these teachers “What’s going well?” she preferred to ask questions such as, “What do you need?” or “How can I help?”

One factor that may have detracted from the collaborative use of the Log is that there was little time for collaboration in schools in general. Many of the non-classroom interactions we saw were catch-as-catch-can or impromptu, thus making it difficult for coaches to use a formal tool in collaboration with a teacher. Observations revealed that much of coaches’ one-on-one work with teachers took place informally and within whatever time frame a teacher could allocate. For example, pre-conferences, post-conferences, meetings, and consultations took place in hallways, on the go, or while teachers were preparing for a forthcoming class period. We observed very few instances in which a coach managed to get a pre- and post-conference with a teacher in the same day—those who did manage it had to do so in a truncated fashion. A far more common scenario was that of coaches engaging teachers in informal discussion about ways to help students. Again, such conversations were typically brief and/or rushed.

This lack of formal collaboration time may have implications for the use of coaching tools in a collaborative manner. Even when coaches were able to have pre- and post-conferences with teachers, the conferences took place while the teacher was engaged in other activities. This type of situation makes the use of a formal, side-by-side tool difficult and possibly unproductive. Often coaches interacted with teachers whenever they could catch up with them, and conferred about topics of immediate, pressing concern. In such instances, a Collaboration Log would not have been relevant to the discussion.

⁶ These comments beg the question of why and in what ways teachers were resistant to the tools. While such questions were beyond the scope of the current project, they may be worth considering in the future.

CPS Interaction Logs

Because the Interaction Log is not an NTC tool or, strictly speaking, a tool to guide or enhance coaching practices, we did not include questions pertaining to the Interaction Log in the original coach debrief protocol. However, after a few coaches mentioned the Interaction Log spontaneously, with comments that suggested the use of this instrument was an activity they closely identified with their role and responsibilities as coaches, we began asking about their perceptions of the Interaction Logs.

None of the 20 coaches we observed used the Interaction Log during our shadows. This may be because most coaches completed the Interaction Logs during time they had set aside for administrative tasks, usually after their formal coaching work was done, and thus not during the course of our shadow. However, one coach did log on during a debrief to demonstrate some difficulties she had with the log. First, she showed how the log was time-consuming in terms of the necessity to enter identifying information anew for each interaction via dropdown menus. Next, when she tried to log the time she had spent with the researcher, she demonstrated how difficult it was to find a code that would suitably describe the interaction.

Ten of the 20 coaches we interviewed made mention of the Interaction Log. In their comments they related if and how they used the log, and offered their views about the Log. During debrief interviews, coaches described different ways they used or completed the log. Of the ten coaches who mentioned the Interaction Log, only two indicated that they entered each individual interaction with teachers into the log. The remaining coaches said that they lumped their interactions into groups and entered them in this manner. The two coaches who mentioned the *way* in which they group interactions indicated that they grouped by individual teacher, for example:

So then what happens is I'll just lump all of it together. I would put it all in one. I would do a pre-and post-conference and an observation and put it all on one interaction, so the time we were in there for two hours of classroom observation time, plus I think I talked to her for about 15 minutes, and then whatever post-conference time.

Several of the coaches who described entering only grouped interactions into the logs also mentioned that they *are* aware of the expectation to enter each interaction individually. Of these coaches, a few commented that this expectation was only recently revealed to them: "Some of us, depending on our coordinator or our evaluators, were not informed that we were to be using it every day in the beginning of the year."

In a few cases coaches mentioned that they understood the need for the Interaction Log as a tool for accountability purposes. However, the predominant sentiment about the Interaction Log, expressed by coaches in interviews as well as focus groups, was negative. Several coaches were critical of the Log because they felt it was cumbersome and difficult to complete, as conveyed by the following comments of one coach: "It's cumbersome. I mean I do all this stuff and write down my times and everything, and then to go and enter the information into the survey monkey, it's like you know to do all the interactions that I do and to start a new log each [time]."

Two coaches mentioned concerns about the potential lack of anonymity and/or confidentiality of the logs. According to one coach, "Some things I don't like to write. I don't know who has access, so certain things I would not put [down], I would not write." Another coach perceived that many people have access to the Interaction Log data, and that this could compromise the anonymity of the reporting: "It's linked to the school. You put the school name and grade level. So if there's one math teacher in 6th grade at a school, who am I talking about?"

Two literacy coaches mentioned that they felt the Interaction Logs were redundant with reports they already gave their supervisors at the Office of Literacy. They expressed a desire to have the reporting tools linked in some way so as to avoid doing "the same thing over and over."

Summary and Implications

Overall, the NTC tools were not observed to be integrated into coaching work, nor did coaches indicate in interviews that this was the case. This finding contrasts findings from an REA report in which many coaches reported using the tools everyday. The Collaboration Log was the most often mentioned tool, however many coaches indicated that they did not use the Log in a collaborative manner. Observations revealed a potential factor contributing to the lack of collaborative use of the tools in general, to the extent that they are intended to be used in this manner: coaches rarely have time to collaborate with teachers, let alone use a formal tool to do so. Such factors influencing this lack of collaborative time possibly include: limited time with teachers, variations in teacher engagement (see the Activities section), and expectations of principals in terms of how a coach's time should be spent (see the Legitimacy section). Thus, addressing the logistics of collaboration between coaches and teachers will be an important factor to consider as ISIC progresses.

Interaction Logs were viewed as cumbersome and coaches varied in their approaches to completing the logs. Specifically, while most who mentioned the tool reported that they knew they were expected to enter each interaction separately, many "lumped" their interactions into a single entry. A lack of time on the part of coaches combined with coaches' perceptions that the tool was not user-friendly were likely contributors to coaches' frustrations. These frustrations were so strong in fact that despite an accurate knowledge of the expectations for completion of the logs, many coaches did not complete them in this manner.

Theme 3: Legitimacy in the Coach's Role

Analysis of observations and interviews with coaches indicated considerable variation in the degree to which coaches displayed and/or indicated a sense of having a respected, supported and effective role within their schools. We refer to this facet of coaches' practices and sense-making about their role as "legitimacy." In looking at legitimacy, we found that it could be evidenced by how the coach performed or reflected on her role. It could also be seen in how others responded to her role, such as teachers' and principals' demands and expectations of the coach.

Role legitimacy was manifest in coaches' work activities and/or expressed in interviews in terms of four role dimensions or factors, which we refer to as fidelity, autonomy, expertise, and efficacy.

- **Fidelity**: coach is able to spend the majority of time engaged in coaching or coaching-related activities
- **Autonomy**: time spent away from coaching or coaching-related activities is voluntary, as opposed to mandated
- **Expertise**: coach displays or expresses confidence in and comfort with the school's curricula
- **Efficacy**: coach reports a high level of satisfaction and efficacy in her work

We looked at the degree to which the above factors were present or absent in our observations of and interviews with coaches as a rough proxy for a coach's level of legitimacy within the school. Using these criteria, we determined the following breakdowns of displayed legitimacy levels:

Table 1: Displayed Levels of Coaches' Legitimacy

	High Legitimacy	Moderate Legitimacy	Low Legitimacy
Citywide specialists	4 (67%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)
Literacy coaches	7 (50%)	5 (36%)	2 (14%)
Totals	11 (55%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)

Exemplars of Legitimacy Levels

To set the stage for the discussion, we begin by illustrating each of these levels of legitimacy with a vignette derived from the data.

High degree of legitimacy

Marie is in her 4th year in a literacy coaching position in Remington school, which employs two full-time literacy coaches. Typically, she knows what her schedule will be for the upcoming week by the previous Friday and by Monday her time fills up. Still, she says that it is not so rigid that she can't help teachers who need her on the spot. While talking with me she occasionally steps out into the hall to chat with teachers passing by her door and checks in with them, offers help, and even receives gratitude. During the course of the day one teacher tells her, "I really like it when I talk to you [to help clarify the curriculum]." At one point we visit a 6th grade classroom where she has been invited to speak because they are studying a topic that Marie has a lot of personal experience with. In terms of her relationship with the school administration, she tells me that when she interviewed for the job, the AP got where she was coming from right away. "She gets it. It's kind of hard when a principal doesn't share or believe the same [philosophy and pedagogy]." As the day winds down we go to the Principal's Office. The principal has asked the coach to consult with a principal at a neighboring school on how to go about recruiting a teacher to become his SCRMA coach. Marie feels fortunate that the administration at Remington is so in sync with what she is trying to do as their coach.

Moderate legitimacy

Nicole is a citywide specialist and is working in Geneva school for the first time this year. She tells me that the principal does not participate in the decisions regarding the teachers with whom Nicole will work. However Nicole feels that the principal and the assistant principal do understand her role. I see no interaction between Nicole and the school administrators during the course of the day. She begins her coaching work for the day by meeting with a teacher she will observe later in the day. The teacher is only moderately engaged in the session as evidenced by the fact that she is doing other work during her conversation with Nicole. When we return to observe the classroom, Nicole spends her time assisting, with minimal interaction between her and the teacher. In the afternoon Nicole conferences with another teacher who displays far more engagement in the process, as evidenced by his close attention to their discussion.

Low legitimacy

Aparna's school (Joliet) is undergoing a lot of change this year and there have been a number of principals within the last few years. She was hired by the former principal with whom she negotiated what her role would be within Joliet. When the new principal arrived the first day of school, he disregarded her negotiations with the former principal. For example, Joliet had no AP for the first month and during that time Aparna was expected to do a number of the duties that normally might be the job of an AP (e.g., book ordering, inventory, lunchroom duty, substitute teaching). Aparna tells me that once the AP was hired not all of these duties were given to the AP, because the principal was accustomed to Aparna doing these tasks. Aparna adds to the story of her year by saying that many materials were hard to get and came in at odd times — one day a book shows up; teachers' manuals at another time. As we progress through the day Aparna visits a number of classrooms. In one, the teacher is in and out of the room which seems surprising given that it is a kindergarten class. She seems to be taking advantage of the fact that Aparna is

there. We pause a moment in a 4th grade room (“high performing,” Aparna tells me) where she and the teacher talk inaudibly. She says that this particular teacher does not like her but that she uses a short visit to “let her know I’m around.”

Common Themes Affecting Role Legitimacy

As previously stated, these vignettes represent three distinct points on a continuum of demonstrated and reported levels of role legitimacy in our sample. Thus, the vast majority of coaches in the sample experienced levels of legitimacy falling somewhere between the high and low extremes. By analyzing the data for patterns of legitimacy in coaching work and the coaching role, themes emerged regarding the ways the school context, principal support, and teachers’ views and interactions with coaches may augment or hinder legitimacy within a given school.

Principal Support

One emergent theme was that of principal support. In the illustrative vignette, the high legitimacy coach was observed interacting with her principal in amicable and productive ways. In addition, the coach reported perceiving a high degree of support from her principal, with regards to both her activities and her theoretical approaches to her work. As Marie put it, her AP simply “got it.” In contrast, the low legitimacy coach expressed concern over the principals in her school. Specifically, Aparna felt unsupported by her principal and AP.

Several of the seven literacy coaches with low and moderate levels of legitimacy (see Table 1 above) were observed performing, or said they performed, activities such as lunchroom duty, substitute teaching, and/or playground duty (this was also mentioned multiple times in the focus groups). This is not to be confused with non-instructional tasks that coaches did voluntarily, often to build rapport with teachers (e.g., helping teachers with bulletin boards). Rather, the instances of the duties mentioned here were mandated by the principal. While some coaches saw no problem with this, some felt that these duties reflected a lack of principal support. As one focus group participant stated: “If they [principals] don’t understand the position or if they feel like you’re free to them but you’re in their building then they’re going to do whatever they want to do with you. It causes a huge conflict.” It is important to note that no citywide specialists were observed performing, or reported being asked to perform these duties, possibly because they are not in-school staff members at any given school (see navigating challenges section for further discussion of this point).

Positive Teacher Reception

Coaches had a wide range of interactions with teachers. However, high-legitimacy coaches reported and were observed experiencing more instances of respectful and fruitful interactions with teachers at their schools than were low-legitimacy coaches. The coach in the high-legitimacy vignette was sought out by teachers who clearly saw her as an expert. The low-legitimacy coach was observed experiencing less engagement and more reluctance from some of the teachers in her school. It is important to note that all coaches were observed having both positive and negative interactions with teachers. However, open, receptive interactions with teachers were more prominent among high-legitimacy coaches.

Curricular Materials

Issues with curricular materials were more prevalent with low-legitimacy coaches. The low-legitimacy coach vignette includes evidence of materials delivery and distribution as problems at her school. By contrast, issues of materials delivery and/or distribution were markedly absent from the observations and interviews with the high-legitimacy coaches. For these coaches, materials appeared to be a matter that had been addressed either by someone else, or at an earlier time. Thus, these coaches did not mention materials as a constraint to their work.

Differences in Legitimacy between Citywide Specialists and Literacy Coaches

In examining the characteristics of the high legitimacy coaches, we noted that a slightly larger proportion of citywide specialists expressed feelings of legitimacy in their work than did literacy coaches. Specifically, we considered four out of the six observed citywide specialists to be of high legitimacy, relative to other coaches in the sample. In contrast, we considered seven out of the 14 literacy coaches to be high legitimacy.⁷

Summary and Implications

Coaches varied in the extent to which they displayed and perceived a sense of legitimacy in their work in a given school. While the majority expressed high levels of legitimacy, others expressed moderate or low levels. Each of the factors contributing to the level of coaches' legitimacy has implications for program planning.

Principal support, in the forms of consistency and understanding of proper use of coaches' time emerged as a major contributor to coaches' legitimacy in their schools. This finding points to the centrality of strong leadership from the principal that is consistent with the ISIC coaching model, as well as ongoing communication between principal and coach in that regard.

Citywide specialists displayed and reported higher levels of legitimacy in the schools in which we shadowed them relative to literacy coaches. The roving nature of the citywide specialist position may have contributed to citywide specialists' greater legitimacy, as principals were less likely to use these coaches for non-instructional tasks than the literacy coaches.

Theme 4: The Role of Data in the Work of Coaches

In this section we describe two different kinds of data use in the work of the coaches we observed and interviewed. One kind of use was that of coaches working with teachers to draw on a range of data sources in order *to assess student learning*. As we discussed in our July 2008 brief, both literacy coaches and citywide specialists cited student work as their primary data source for assessing teacher effectiveness. Coaches identified test scores, extended response journal entries, as well as work posted on classroom walls as examples of student data they drew upon in their work.

A second, less explicitly explored use of data was that of coaches collecting data *to document and reflect on their own work*. During our observations we observed coaches engaged in activities such as collecting qualitative data through observation, taking notes, and collecting examples of student work. Below we illustrate how these sources of data were collected and used by coaches.

Standardized Test Data

We asked coaches to talk to us about the role data plays in their coaching work. Most coaches' initial response revolved around their interpretations of the results of standardized test data, such as the ISAT and Learning First. One citywide specialist said that "We look at the trends we see with student work, and we look at the ISAT data from the previous years and talk about the issues on which we really need to focus and highlight when instruction is being given." A second citywide specialist described how she tried to keep teachers focused on using data to guide instruction and not simply prepare for the next testing period.

⁷ While this difference in proportion is relatively small, it is worth noting considering the very different models underlying the work of citywide specialists and literacy coaches.

So I use [student data] to identify content areas typically where the curriculum will meet those standards, to let the teachers know that they should be anticipating the instruction. A lot of times, they view, for example the ISAT, as what they are trying to meet in terms of standards. And so with the benchmark data, you can say, “Okay, well, here’s a relative” – and it’s always relative – “a relative weakness in measurement” instead of, “Now, just stop doing your instruction and teach measurement.” Here are some identifiable places where measurement is going to get some attention, so continue teaching.”

Half the coaches we interviewed said they attended grade level meetings, and six of those described having data conversations during those meetings (we observed one such conversation.) Coaches described instances of bringing in test scores and teachers bringing in student work to serve as the basis for discussion and strategic planning around what could be done. Three coaches told us that they used the meeting to reach consensus with teachers on what the data meant and then linked Illinois content standards to the next steps teachers could take to help specific students. In focus group discussions several coaches said they wished they had more time to look at data. The coaches in the two focus groups who discussed this issue all agreed that “you can’t do this in 15 minutes. You need a common planning period.” In all four focus groups coaches acknowledged that a supportive school administration helped give value to this area of their work.

Progress Monitoring

Five of the 14 Literacy coaches we shadowed reported directly conducting DIBELS progress monitoring, and we observed four coaches conducting progress monitoring with pull-out groups of students. One of the coaches made a point of explaining her rationale for engaging in an activity that might be seen as beyond her job description. “I feel I need to progress-monitor those kids because other people look at the data and they will question us – why aren’t these kids being progress-monitored?” Another coach told us that she helps out with the DIBELS “so instruction wouldn’t just shut down.” We observed another coach who had been on the phone with the manufacturer and was working to repair (by a “hard re-set”) CPS-issued palm pilots used to record DIBELS data that malfunctioned through no fault of the teachers.

Other Uses of Data

There were several other ways in which coaches described using data in their roles. Three coaches told us about the professional development workshops they gave to their staff on the use of specific data (e.g. DIBELS) and how to interpret standardized test scores. Two showed us made-up calendars and charts to help teachers keep track of the various tests and test dates upcoming. We saw separate incidences of coaches proctoring extended response tests, distributing and collecting test materials, uploading data into CPS systems, as well as providing print-outs of student scores to teachers. One citywide specialist told us she used student test scores and other “pieces of evidence,” rather than assessment tools, in order to conduct what she referred to as “data conversations.” In the quote below, she described the data sources for these conversations as coming from many places:

One form [of data] is from visits. So if I visit all the 3rd grade classrooms for instance, and they’re on a similar or same lesson, how the kids responded, and/or the teachers’ role in it and/or my role in it. That would be a good focus of discussion. So the evidence is what happened. Sometimes it’s the analysis of student work, like extended response or actual student products. Those are all good pieces of data to have discussions.

Not all coaches found the teachers they worked with to be willing partners in the use of available data to inform and guide their instruction. One literacy coach expressed some frustration in her efforts to connect with her teachers on this aspect of her work.

I understand the DIBELS data and the student writing assessment, like how to look at the students' writing, how to analyze it and think further into it. But it's hard for me to get teachers to sit down and do that. That's probably one of the areas of weakness, or areas of concern that I feel like teachers are kind of resistant to. They're doing the DIBELS. They don't believe in it. They do it because they have to, but they don't really want to sit down and talk about it.

This quote suggests that coaches recognize that some teachers question the utility of these tools to inform their instructional practice. The concern reflected in this quote may be linked to an absence of time (as coaches noted in focus groups) for teachers to adequately discuss and reflect on relevant data.

Coaches' Use of Qualitative Data

Among the 20 coaches we observed, only three characterized their own practices of observing teachers and classes, collecting examples of student work, or note taking as "uses of data." Nonetheless, roughly half the coaches described activities they engaged in with teachers that we would consider to be data use even if they did not characterize them in those terms. The following excerpt illustrates this:

I usually start with observations and letting teachers and kids feel comfortable with me so that everybody in the room doesn't turn around when I walk in. ...I used to take detailed observations because I can make notes on little things that I would talk to the teacher about – classroom management, grouping a lot of times, whole-class reading of the same story. And then we talk, and then I'll offer to go into a room and either demonstrate a lesson or work with the kids or work with her and both of us teach a lesson. And then usually I'll wait a little while and then go back and observe again and see if we need to tweak it or something's not working.

When it came to conducting classroom observations and simply visiting teachers and classes, two-thirds of coaches also noted that they needed to ensure that their observation and data collection was not perceived as spying for the principal or in other ways evaluating teachers' performance. One coach was quite explicit that she never went into classrooms with paper because she "finds it intimidating" for teachers. Coming in with nothing she thought made her entry into rooms easier.

Summary and Implications

We saw and heard numerous examples of the multiple ways that coaches use data in their work. We observed coaches directly conducting progress monitoring of DIBELS assessment. All coaches remarked that they had some involvement in preparing students for standardized tests, and many of the literacy coaches (including those in our three literacy focus groups) described how they accepted much of the overall responsibility at their school for test management. Even if that was not part of their job description, coaches believed that test preparations became part of their scope of work. The majority of coaches talked about the importance of classroom observation, examining student work, and other qualitative approaches to data collection as a means of understanding how to assist teachers and students.

While we heard coaches describe these various forms of data use, our observational data cannot corroborate these self-reports in any meaningful ways. We observed fewer instances and types of data use during our shadows than what coaches described. To the extent that support of teachers' data use is meant to be an integral part of the ISIC coaching model, next year's evaluation work could focus more closely on linking coaching to teachers' use of data to inform instruction.

Theme 5: Challenges Coaches Face in Performing their Role

Many professional roles require that individuals make adjustments as they come to understand their work environments and the context into which they work. ISIC coaches are no exception. In this section we describe how coaches responded to the realities they encountered in their school communities. Our data suggest that coaches adapted or modified their role and work in seeking to address those realities. A large proportion of the 45 coaches we interviewed talked about a model of coaching practice. Their description assumed a model that included pre- and post-conferencing with a willing and relatively small number of teachers. The model also involved accounting for their work in a variety of administrative ways (e.g. interaction logs). In these discussions, they regularly assessed the coaching model in light of the challenges they faced once situated in their schools.

In this section we focus on four challenges that were most prevalent in the data: (1) reporting to an array of bosses; (2) establishing their roles in schools; (3) managing their time in the face of multiple demands beyond their coaching roles, and (4) addressing the fidelity of the coaching model. We conclude this section with a composite vignette in order to portray how coaches adjusted their practice to the multiple challenges posed by the needs and demands of their schools and Areas. A composite vignette uses data from more than one source (in this case several sets of field notes) to develop an overall picture.

Reporting to an Array of Bosses

When we asked in interviews and focus groups discussions, both literacy coaches and citywide specialists were consistently clear about who were their formal supervisors (that is, to whom they directly reported). Both citywide specialists and literacy coaches are staffed out of the CPS Central Office. However, coaches also perceived that in reality they answered to multiple bosses. Principals had considerable say in what went on in their school. By virtue of the curricula in use, the Office of Literacy and the Office of Math and Science were intimately involved. Area coaches also had vested interests in the shape of the coaching work. The following excerpt from an interview with one coach captures some of the tensions that seemed to be created by the different messages coaches received from their various bosses about their role:

I have a coordinator, who's really helpful. I can email her, and she'll respond within an hour or two. However, it's a battle between – not a battle, that's probably not a good word – what my principal feels I should be doing and spending my time and what [my coordinator] feels. [My coordinator] says, "You have to learn how to say no." Lunchroom duty, I have to say no to that. Well, if I want a job next year, I can't say no to that, so that's kind of been a fight. Because if I put that on my schedule or in my log, we'll have to talk about it. You know. It'll come up.

Another coach described what it felt like to be pulled in multiple directions during the course of a single day:

...They all have different definitions and different needs. Your boss is at the main office here at the school. They all have different agendas and so you actually have three bosses and you're trying to cover...and is it quality? Some of it, no. It's not your best because you're running back here to fill out this, or you're trying to get a DIBELS thing for the Area office or the principal needs you to cover lunch duty, which we're not supposed to do. Somebody needs to go to the Academic Olympics.The spelling lady didn't show up the day she was supposed to take them to spelling. I walked in the door and she said can you take these kids to the Spelling Bee?

Hearing these two coaches explain that "you have to learn to say no," and that sometimes running in various directions "is not your best work," suggests that certain requests took time and attention away from other coaching duties. However, like many other coaches in our sample, they felt they had to

respond to and accommodate the needs that were right in front of them. It bears noting that this feeling was expressed much more frequently among literacy coaches than citywide specialists. We heard some instances from citywide specialists of extra things they had to do, but the majority felt that their work was straightforward and consistent with what they expected it to be.

One factor that might contribute to this difference between the two kinds of coaches is the difference in their time in a particular school. Citywide specialists were in each of four schools only one week per month, and it is possible that the bulk of their time was taken up in classrooms and working directly with teachers. By contrast, literacy coaches, who were in a single school on a daily basis in a “freed” position, may have been perceived as more available for duties beyond the scope of the coaching model.

Establishing their Roles in Schools

When we asked coaches how long it took them to feel comfortable in their role at their schools most said somewhere between three and six months.⁸ Citywide specialists differentiated across their schools and noted that being in any school for only one week each month made the overall process of establishing themselves quite challenging. Several of the literacy coaches in our sample had transitioned from being their school’s lead literacy teacher to being literacy coaches and had already established sets of relationships. For some literacy coaches, this meant that both they and their colleagues had to adjust to their new position. As one coach told us: “In some ways I think it’s easier and in some ways my biggest critics were my closest friends before. They don’t speak to me, and they give me the hardest time if I ask them to do something. And the ones who I really didn’t know before, they have no problem with it.” Another coach experienced fewer problems with her colleagues as the year progressed. She told us that “some of the seasoned teachers that have been in the building were not very receptive in the beginning and now they’ve kind of turned around and are now asking for a coach and so that’s been a big change.”

Time Management

Having enough time to do their coaching work and attend to all the needs in their school(s) was a third challenge that many coaches identified. When asked about her biggest challenges, one literacy coach mentioned the time it takes to multi-task and its impact on her work.

Sometimes I get involved with projects that take me off task as a coach, but if I’m assisting a teacher, it’s still all good. That means sometimes I have to make copies, produce things for teachers, and make transparencies and things of that nature. I don’t mind. They understand that I’m a team player and I’ll do everything so long as they give me enough heads-up, and whatever they need, I can help them. Time is a factor.

Coaches tended to identify the realities that presented challenges to how they organized their time, and then described how they addressed those challenges. The following extended description from a citywide specialist illustrates how she matched her use of time with the needs of the school:

I feel like I need to extend my services to every teacher in the school. Usually when I go into the school, I like to visit at least all the teachers who are using the curricula. However, I’ve found it’s really impossible to effectively coach every teacher in the school. ...So, what I have done is taken an assessment of how implementation is in particular teachers’ classrooms. And there are some teachers who I feel don’t really need my support as much, so I don’t really schedule myself to be with them for an extensive amount of time, but I do plan on talking with them about how things are going and offering my services. ...I have a teacher who has implemented four new curricula,

⁸ In one coach interview and in two focus groups, we heard of an Autumn meeting with ISIC coaches where it was announced that changes were going to be made to the length of their day. Early calibrations of the overall ISIC program may have contributed to the length of time it took individuals to feel comfortable in their role as coaches.

so that person gets a lot of my time. And I have another who is new to teaching and new to the curriculum and has a split classroom, so I try to make sure I spend time with that person as well. And I have two teachers who struggle with science, so I spend a lot of time with them.

Fidelity to the Coaching Model

A fourth challenge had to do with coaches' perceptions of what they perceived to be the ISIC model or the design for coaching compared with what it actually looked like in their schools. More than half the coaches we shadowed made specific comments about these differences. One citywide specialist summed it up this way: "Each school, each classroom demands maybe a different kind of relationship." A literacy coach agreed, and added: "I think it's clearly defined. It's just the definition we're not able to follow through with because of the relationships that go on within schools. So my role is defined that I work with teachers, mentor teachers, pre-conferencing, post-conferencing, but it's a coaching description that is built upon schools that have the materials they need and teachers going to PD, and we don't have that." We think these are important sentiments to take into consideration if the ISIC program intends to shift to the multi-school approach to coaching

Summary and Implications

Coaches understood that their work required them to respond to a number of different yet connected challenges. There were multiple people who served as 'bosses' at different times and who had different needs. Citywide specialists voiced fewer concerns about this aspect of their work than did literacy coaches, perhaps because citywide specialists were less frequently in any one school and less available for additional duties outside of direct teacher interactions. All coaches recognized that they needed to do things above and beyond their formal job description. They did so, not only because the tasks needed doing, but also because it helped integrate them into their school communities and foster trust and confidence. Managing one's time was another significant challenge as coaches' days frequently involved multiple tasks and limitations on the amounts of time they could devote in particular directions.

Finally, coaches were aware that there was an overarching model of what coaching should look like. They also recognized that there was a "real world" of their work, situated in Chicago Public schools that might or might not inhibit their ability to fully implement the components of the coaching model. Coaches accepted their challenges largely without complaint. We think these challenges in the different contexts of coaching raise some critical questions about how faithful coaches can be to the coaching model and how accommodating the model can be to coaches' experiences in CPS schools.

We conclude this section with a composite vignette, *drawn from several coaches' experiences*, that offers a detailed look at how coaches accommodate multiple challenges in the context of coaching at a given school. The composite vignette is particularly suitable to the representation of the complexity of this reality.

Composite Vignette

Renee is an experienced teacher and has worked supporting teachers in more capacities than just as a citywide specialist for ISIC. Like so many coaches, her work involves not only using her experience and training to best help individual teachers with instruction and curriculum, and to build the trusting relationships necessary to the work, but she has learned how to remain supple and open to accommodating needs and changes that might occur when the school administration, the AIO or the

Office of Math and Science ask her to focus on something in particular whether or not they correspond closely with the work she is doing with individual teachers.

She says that she is really comfortable coming to Bridge Elementary but there still are challenges. She is assigned four schools, and although two of the schools she worked in last year, Renee confesses that it is hard to build and maintain relationships when you are not there all the time. As a 15-year CPS veteran, and perhaps because she is a math teacher, Renee calculates how her time was divided this year: “I think it was seven potentially four-day weeks, but with holidays and all, report card pickup it’s not. It’s not even the 28 days usually [per school].”

At all four schools math class is scheduled at the same time for all classes, but at Bridge the principal adjusted teachers’ schedules to accommodate the days Renee was there. Others did not. This week, Renee had planned to help the 5th grade teachers get more comfortable using their science kits that had only recently arrived, but plans changed Monday and instead she is collecting pacing information on where each classroom is at in work, their units and textbooks. As she goes room to room, Renee also takes time to examine students’ journals for an additional sense of where they are at in the curriculum.

The AIO is coming to Bridge for classroom walk-throughs, looking at the walls and the room arrangements for indicators of the curriculum in use. This morning the principal asked Renee, since she was going from room to room this week, if she’d also do an inventory of materials teachers currently have and need for next year’s math classes. Between the pacing and inventory checklists it’s left Renee little time for coaching any individual teacher or for helping to get the 5th grade science curriculum going.

She doesn’t complain about her work as a coach. She likes her schools and being able to help teachers. She recognizes that she is asked to do many different things by different people, and that is sometimes a struggle, and for her that struggle is linked to how the job is defined by others. She understands the model of coaching and said she has read the research behind coaching but sees that the model doesn’t always match the realities. She wishes there was less ambiguity in what her different supervisors tell her she should be doing. Renee grows animated when talking about this issue: “If your job is to go into classrooms and to work with people, that takes conferencing with them before and after, and there would have to be that commitment by the teacher so they would give of their time. Which would mean two prep periods if you think about it, or before and after school if they do a pre and post conference. It has to be voluntary because by union rules you can’t enforce that. And there’s a difference between going into someone’s class to observe and being invited. Do they welcome you? Will they collaborate at whatever level?”

Theme 6: Sources of Support for Coaches

Sources of Support for Coaches

In the July brief we outlined the prevalence of different types of interactions and activities that coaches identified as supporting their work, as well as the prevalence of the supports we saw coaches receiving during our observations. In analyzing the nature of these supports for this report we found that while coaches were clear about the types of supports they received and valued, at times they provided little detail regarding how such supports aided them in their work. Thus, we begin the discussion below with a descriptive section on coaches’ self reported supports, outlining each type of support and providing examples from coach interviews. We end with an analysis of the supports we observed. Where possible, we also analyze the specific aspects of coaches’ work that these supports aided.

Fellow Content Area Coaches

The most common and consistently favorable support coaches spoke of came from their fellow coaches *within* their content areas. When discussing support from their colleagues, coaches provided very little information about how this collaboration supported their work.

Literacy coaches and citywide specialists differed slightly in terms of the types of collaboration they mentioned as being most supportive. Literacy coaches were more likely to cite informal collaboration with fellow literacy coaches (e.g., phone calls, emails, etc.). As one coach put it, “So, yes, we do collaborate. We have emails and telephone calls. We do share a lot of information.” Another expressed a desire for more formal meeting time provided by the Office of Literacy: “We do some of that [collaborating] but it’s more informal. It’s informal in that we would do [it] on our own. It’s not planned by Literacy. And that would be a good thing if it were planned.”

Citywide specialists were more likely to mention their formal Friday meetings with fellow Specialists as the form of collegial support upon which they most relied: “Let’s see, for each other, citywides, when we have Friday [meetings], one kind of meeting or another...we often support each other by discussing some things.”

Support from the Area and Content Offices

Coaches also valued the support they received from the Areas and their content offices. Four of 17 literacy coaches named the Area as a major source of support. They most often mentioned Area coach meetings and professional development provided by the Area. For example one coach commented, “We have a monthly meeting with the Area coach, as a matter of fact, and they have wonderful professional developments also.”

Citywide specialists, in particular, spoke about Area and content office supports. All but one specialist cited meetings with Area coaches, help from their manager, and/or working with OMS facilitators (OMS employees who serves as experts in each of the CPS-supported curricula) as major sources of support for their work. The following quote from the citywide specialist focus group illustrates how the newly introduced meetings with Area coaches have been supportive.

This year we have the monthly meetings with the [Area] coaches so information they might receive about teachers in the school, they share with us. So it’s been more open, not as secretive. It seems like in previous years they were told things and we were told things but we never met. So sometimes schools got double information.

Above, the coach points to improved communication and sharing among Area coaches and citywide specialists as a major benefit of these meetings. This suggests that one way in which meetings with Area coaches supported citywide specialists was through the sharing of important information that citywide specialists could bring to bear on any number of aspects of their work.

The following quote exemplifies sentiments shared by many citywide specialists regarding their appreciation of their manager and the OMS facilitators.

A facilitator...has more knowledge in the different areas of science. I would go to [a facilitator] with how to make these arrangements or [for] any suggestions I can take back to the school. Also, ...the [citywide specialist] supervisor. Any suggestions she has, and a listening ear, a lot of the time it’s just a listening ear ...there’s also a support even from the manager down to our supervisors. So they are a support.

The above quote suggests that facilitators and managers provided important support for different aspects of coaches’ work. Specifically, this coach appears to see the facilitator as a helpful source of content expertise, while she sees the manager as a useful “ear.” Thus, the facilitator can aid her in her direct content instruction and the manager can provide a form of social support for the coach’s concerns.

Support from principals

Almost half (nine) of the 20 coaches interviewed named their principals as a source of support. Most of these coaches simply indicated “yes” when asked in the interviews if they felt supported by their principals. However, the following quote was noteworthy as it echoed the findings presented in the

legitimacy section of this report. Specifically, this coach expressed appreciation for her principal's support of her role as an in-class instructional coach.

I think he [the principal] is very good about letting me decide what I need to do. He's not demanding that we sit down and "I want you to do this, this, and this" and that sort of thing. And I think he expects me to work with the teachers primarily and I do. I'm in many of the classrooms all the time. Literacy told us at one point, I think it was last summer, they wanted us in the classroom 80% of the time and I think I really am. And the principal pretty much goes along with that. Whatever Literacy is asking me to do then he will do it.

The above quote suggests that this principal supported the coach by aiding her in role definition and providing her some of the necessary groundwork for her development of legitimacy in her work.

Support from other coaches within the school

Three coaches named other coaches in their schools as supports, and two of these coaches were in the same school (i.e., they mentioned one another in their individual interviews). Neither of the coaches in the other two schools in which we observed and interviewed both a citywide specialist and literacy coach indicated that they collaborated with one another. The only other coach who mentioned collaborating with a fellow coach within her school was a literacy coach citing support from a differentiation coach. The three coaches who mentioned in-school collaboration elaborated very little on the nature of this collaboration other than to say that they shared information. However, when we discuss the observations of coaches receiving support below, our data suggest that such in-school, cross-content collaboration could be a very important support for coaches.

Desired supports

While all coaches were asked what supports they would like to receive that they are not currently receiving, very few indicated anything specific, and those who did showed no consensus on desired supports. Of the 20 coaches we interviewed only two said they felt isolated and wished for more types of support of any kind in or out of their school. The following exchange between a coach and a researcher illustrates these feelings of isolation.

I said once even to our AP, there's nobody in the building I can talk to—I can't vent! My husband...I go home and talk to him and he's not even a teacher. And when you are a teacher then there are people you can talk to who are teachers also and so there's nobody because I'm not an administrator and I'm not a teacher anymore.

Observed supports

Among the six coaches we observed receiving support, the most common forms were that of direct collaboration with principals and/or assistant principals (three instances) and with fellow coaches (three instances). The following is an example of a coach receiving support from a principal. The excerpt illustrates how the principal and the assistant principal lent support by collaborating to help the coach plan for a major upcoming task, and in organizing her tasks in preparation for the implementation of instructional coaching practices.

I follow the coach to the principal's office where she and the principal, along with the AP, meet to plan for the upcoming professional development day. They talk about something called a teachers' forum and decide that some of the time during the PD that has been set aside for the principal to speak will be use for the forum. They share ideas and work collaboratively on the planning of the PD.

The next is an example of a coach who received support from collaboration with a coach in her school. This excerpt from observation field notes describes how coaches from different content areas helped one another through learning from each other's practices and exchanging ideas about the school in general.

The citywide specialist talks to the literacy coach about a book ("The Differentiated Classroom") the literacy coach has lent her. They talk briefly about how Everyday Math stations lend themselves to small group work. The coaches talk about a time when the specialist can come and observe a class using literacy circles, centers and other small group activities. They comment and agree that some of the teachers are not functioning as a unit and that they don't share practices very much or very well.

As the above excerpt shows, this collaboration provided an opportunity for the coaches to develop their cross-content knowledge, plan for upcoming coaching work, and expand their understanding of the school culture. Thus, while observations of this type of collaboration were rare, this instance provides a glimpse into the type of learning that was possible when coaches within a school exchanged information. In closing, it is important to note that all mentioned and observed supports were people (i.e., fellow coaches, principals, managers), as opposed to structures, policies, or tools. The only reported support that fell outside the moniker of a human support was that of professional development provided by the Area.

Summary and implications

Nearly all observed and reported supports were human supports. The most often cited form of support came from colleagues within coaches' content areas, and differences emerged here among coach types. Citywide specialists valued formal time collaborating with one another, while literacy coaches more often mentioned informal collaboration with one another as supportive. Citywide specialists were especially appreciative of support that came from Area coaches, their supervisors at OMS, and OMS facilitators. Literacy coaches felt supported by the Area as well and by the professional development it offered.

Coaches also mentioned principal support as important. We observed only a few instances of coaches receiving support, and these included collaborations both with school administrators and with coaches in the same school. Although it was observed and mentioned only rarely, the instances where coaches in the same school collaborated with one another provided opportunities for coaches in sharing cross-content knowledge and in obtaining a richer picture of the school.

As the Office of Literacy considers placing coaches in multiple schools, fostering opportunities for cross-content coach collaboration could be worth considering in order to provide the best possible "coverage" of schools. In addition, given that citywide specialists saw great value in the expertise provided by OMS facilitators, the provision of curriculum/content experts that would be available to all coaches could be a fruitful endeavor as ISIC moves forward.

Theme 7: The Impact of Coaching in Schools

As we described in the Methodology section of this report, the purpose of the principal and teacher interviews was to obtain a fuller picture of the perceived utility and impact of coaching within individual schools, from the perspective of school personnel. In this section we present a summary of our findings and analysis from those interviews. Teacher and principal interviews were brief and preliminary by design so as to provide an initial look inside school. Thus, the majority of teacher, principal, and coach data did not triangulate in a way that provided significant insight into such interactions. In this section, teacher and principal findings are reported separately because we did not discover any significant patterns

of agreement within schools, save for a few remarks on coaches' impact and the overall value of coaching in the school. We begin the section with a discussion of findings and analyses (where possible) of principal data and conclude with a discussion of teacher data.

Principals' Perceptions

Based on analysis of 10 principal interviews, we identified three salient categories of principal perceptions of coaching in their schools: (1) the primary responsibilities of coaches; (2) what their teachers think about coaches; and (3) the kinds of impact they have seen from coaching in their schools.

The Responsibilities of Coaches

Overall, across the 10 interviews we conducted, what we heard principals identify and describe as the primary duties and expectations of coaches corresponded closely with what we observed and heard from the coaches themselves. Below we have grouped those duties and expectations into three categories of responsibility and listed them in order of the frequency of response: (1) curriculum and instruction, (2) social responsibilities, and (3) organizational and administrative.

1. Curriculum and Instruction Duties

Six of the 10 principals said that one major responsibility of their coach was to oversee and lead the curricular program(s) operating in their school, both new and existing. Four principals said modeling the curriculum was a major responsibility. In an unusual case one principal thought it was appropriate for a coach to not only model but to teach during prep periods, especially when that coach was deemed not a "hard worker" so that she could demonstrate that she knew the curriculum.

Half of the principals said that coaches should provide professional development and in-services for their staff, keep them up-to-date on best practices, and bring in ideas gained from meetings outside of the building. None of the principals specifically volunteered that coaches should take a leadership role in administering tests, whether standardized like the ISAT or ongoing such as DIBELS assessments. However, two specifically said that part of the role of coaches should help "increase academics" and "bring our scores up." The principals did not elaborate how they thought this was supposed to take place.

2. Social Duties

Seven principals talked about the importance of relationship building as an essential component of the work of an in-school coach, not only with the teachers but also with them. About one-third of the principals felt that it was important for the coach to do what was necessary to join their school community, sometimes even if it extended beyond these primary duties, as this quote from one principal illustrates: "I think some jobs that you need done in the school, sometimes it's easier to take someone who is not in the classroom, and sometimes you have to depend on that. I don't believe they should be subbing and I believe they should be in classrooms. But I also believe that they should be working with students and doing extra things." This view of doing things to join the school community matches up with comments we heard, especially from literacy coaches who said they understood that part of their effectiveness as coaches was dependent upon their ability to foster trust and build relationships within their schools.

3. Organizational and Administrative Duties

Three principals said that coaches should be involved with doing inventory, ordering, and updating supplies for teachers, and two mentioned that literacy coaches should take responsibility for helping to build classroom and the school's libraries.

What Principals Say Teachers Think about Coaches

Principal responses to what their teachers thought about coaches and coaching was limited in scope and contained little detail. Eight of the ten principals told us that they thought their teachers were glad to have

their coaches. One thought that her teachers were “waiting until they got their test scores.” The other said that while her newer teachers “are very open and want coaching, my seasoned teachers, some [of them] feel she comes in and forgets she is a teacher. They felt talked down to.” These two comments were the exception as most coaches were uniformly positive.

Three principals said that their teachers found that the coaches provided “somewhere to go with questions or with a particularly hard unit that they’re having trouble getting across to kids.” One principal said that in her Area “they have had lot of new initiatives and teachers felt overwhelmed.” She felt her coach served as “somewhat of mediator” among the Office of Literacy, the Area and the teachers’ experiences using new curricula. Another principal, who described her staff as mostly composed of very experienced teachers, reported that “they’ve learned a lot from her [the coach] and are able to carry on what she started.” Because the data are limited, we cannot say more than principals by and large told us that their teachers were pleased with the help they got from coaches.

Impacts Principals Have Seen from Coaching

Of the ten principals we interviewed, seven identified some type of positive impact they observed and/or perceived. The other three were not asked the question, perhaps due to time constraints in the interview. Two said that their scores had gone up and attributed some of that to their coaches. Three talked about how the coach helped their teachers talk about and use data. Two other principals mentioned that their teachers utilized new strategies and talked more with one another about instructional practices. Two principals also felt that the presence of the coach helped persuade some of their reluctant teachers to be more accepting of the literacy program and/or to become more comfortable with the CMSI curriculum. Three felt that coaching had helped specifically with their new teachers in them getting oriented and focused in their work.

Only one principal linked coaching directly to student outcomes, and this principal was highly enthusiastic about the impact her coach made in her school.

We started with the kids writing and she’s kept samples of their writing over time and I’ve looked at them from September to now. ...What the teachers tell me in taking the Learning First benchmark assessments, is that they really have noticed a difference in how much the kids are writing and they all felt, for the ISATs, that the kids wrote more than they would have been able to had they not concentrated so much on writing. ...Oh, and here’s the best! The fifth graders, after they had just finished the writing portion of their ISAT were taking a little break. They were out in the hallway, and so I said, so what did you think? [And they said] ‘It was so great, and now they’re all telling me how they used strategies that the Ms. B—now they didn’t use those words—how they were using strategies that Ms. B taught them. And then my cool 8th graders, [said] you know ‘Ms. B she taught us this strategy and that strategy,’ they also didn’t use the word strategy, but.... So is there an impact? Clearly. When kids are telling you that they are using tools that a teacher taught them, yes. And I wasn’t asking for that. I was just asking, how the writing [portion of ISAT] went.

With the exception of this one quotation, all data from principal interviews, whether concerning the responsibilities of coaches, their teachers’ views of having coaches and the impact from coaching was limited in scope and depth and did not reveal any meaningful consensus across schools save for a general sense of approval.

Teacher Perceptions

In this section we report on and analyze findings from the 10 teacher interviews we conducted. In reading these findings it is important to note that teachers’ familiarity and experience with coaches varied. In some cases the teacher was selected for us by the coach and had a strong relationship with the coach. In other cases, the teacher we interviewed had had infrequent interactions, and in one case had met with the coach for the first time during the day we observed. We have organized the findings according to two

salient categories of teacher perceptions: (1) how coaches work with teachers; and (2) the kinds of impact teachers have seen from coaching.

How Coaches Worked with Teachers

Three teachers told us that they meet with their coach daily while three said that they had only had one or two meetings the entire school year. Two of those three teachers did not automatically equate infrequent meetings with a criticism of their coach. Three teachers said that they debriefed their work with coaches routinely and another four said that when they met there was little time for either debriefing or pre-conference meetings. Half of the teachers said coaches sometimes worked with small pullout groups of their students. Three mentioned specific help from their coaches with DIBELS, either teaching the class while they pulled students out for running records or the coach doing running records (i.e., recording a student's accuracy in reading a passage while the student is reading). All ten teachers said that it was the coach who initiated the contact between them.

Only one teacher cited specific problems associated with the coach, and even this teacher saw her coach as highly knowledgeable. However, she expressed disappointment that her coach was not more available or collaborative with her. She told us the coach offered to do running records for her but never shared the results. She also described how her coach controlled the content of their grade level meetings which restricted the types of dialogue she felt teachers could have with one another. Among our sample, hers was an outlier experience.

We heard far more positive remarks about how coaches worked with teachers. Seven teachers identified and appreciated the lesson modeling that coaches did, such as this remark: "When she meets just with teachers it's to help us implement. So we'll talk about where we are at with Lucy [Calkins], what problems are you having, what are you seeing? And when she comes into the classroom, what I like is she will model how to do things and then as she models—as she did with Lucy—I slowly took over." Another teacher offered an example of how her coach helped her adjust to new aspects of her work. "The whole center thing is very difficult because it was new to do all those things and try to fit in everything else we were doing. So she was great. [She told me] 'Okay, that doesn't mean you have to have all centers up. This is how you can do it. You won't need as much space. So and so has a good system. Check it out. Things like that.'"

Similar to principals, teachers said that coaches helped them through modeling lessons and developing instructional strategies and comfort levels with the curricula. Unlike principals, teachers made no mention of the professional development coaches may have led. Three teachers did talk about how they appreciated it when coaches brought back the latest trends in research, what they as coaches had learned at their own professional development, and/or their experiences from other schools and classrooms. Explaining why having a coach was useful, one teacher said "because she's going to workshops. She's getting all these great ideas and bringing them back and showing them to us." Paradoxically, in one case where the teacher and principal interviews addressed a similar theme, the main concern of the principal of this school was that of her coach being out of the building at too many meetings.

Lastly, mirroring our finding with coaches, when we asked teachers whether they used the Collaboration Log with their coach only two out of ten said they used it and liked the organization it offered. Several had not even heard of it or other formal assessment tools their coach might have used.

Impacts Teachers Have Seen from Coaching

All but one of the teachers stated that there was some positive impact from having a coach in their school. The lone example of negative impact came from a teacher who described this year as her most stressful ever and attributed it to the presence of her coach. This was the teacher who was bothered by her coach dominating the content of her grade level meetings. Among the remaining nine teachers, the most common example of a positive impact was coaching assisting in teachers becoming more comfortable

with the curriculum and more confident in their instructional practices. Two examples refer to literacy coaches:⁹

I have finally gotten comfortable with guided reading. That's taken a long time, but I finally feel like next year we can start right away. And that's made a huge difference. I mean I could have gotten into it earlier in the year. My kids have made so much growth that I'm imagining how much further I could have pushed them if I'd felt [comfortable earlier].

The second example in which teacher and principal interviews converged on the same topic is from the school where the principal talked about the use of strategies among her 5th and 8th graders (see extended quote above). The teacher echoed her principal's enthusiasm for the contributions coaching made to improving writing in their school.

Like I said before, I believe our scores are going to go up because of that. Because a lot of new ideas and different things. They were doing some of the same things but just doing them in a different way that is more exciting. And the kids have been oh so excited, even my little special ed kids just learned how to write. I think it was helpful even to them.

Among the other examples of positive impact, individual teachers told us about new skills they acquired, new teaching strategies they tried, and/or how their coach helped them deal with difficult students. One first year teacher thought that his citywide specialist helped him see the importance of being fully prepared for class sessions. He said he also learned from this coach how to use group work with his students. Another teacher told us she had become a more reflective teacher and "I've gotten new skills now that I can have narrative writing. I never did narrative. I used to teach a lot informational writing. It never dawned on me, I hadn't realized it. Us working together really made me more reflective and wanting to seek out more balance in my teaching."

Summary and Implications

Principals and teachers overall liked having coaches working in their schools. Both principals and teachers felt coaches made a positive impact on both the work of teachers and to a slightly lesser degree to student achievement. How principals and teachers defined coaching work converged with one another, and with what coaches held for themselves, with a few minor exceptions. This suggests some overall coherence in the definitions of the role and purposes of coaching in the minds of those inside schools. Lastly, we saw no meaningful differentiations made about the work of and experiences with literacy coaches and citywide specialists.

4. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

ISSUE 1: Coaching Activities

- How can ISIC support coaches in more fully engaging teachers in the process of coaching?
- Given the range of teacher engagement, how might coaches keep teachers more engaged during coaching sessions?
- With time for collaboration in schools at a premium, how might current collaborative expectations for coaching tools be reexamined?
- If accurate reporting is crucial to the usefulness of the Interaction Log as a monitoring and program assessment tool, how can coaches be better supported so they have the necessary time to

⁹ In the schools we sampled that had both a citywide specialist and a literacy coach, teachers we interviewed talked more about their experiences with their literacy coach than with their citywide specialist. Thus, we have included more quotes pertaining to literacy coaches than pertaining to specialists.

complete the log? How can the log be used to benefit coaches' professional development in terms of informing their practices?

ISSUE 2: Coaches Roles and Responsibilities

- Given the apparent centrality of principal support in helping to determine a coach's legitimacy within the school, how can principals be better informed of the roles their coaches should and should not be performing, particularly for school-based coaches? What role can the Area play in this?
- How can principals be encouraged and supported in creating a culture among their teachers that welcomes coaching?
- As literacy coaches begin working in multiple schools in a similar fashion to citywide specialists, how can ISIC leverage this moment to utilize lessons learned from citywide specialists on how they function in multiple schools?
- Given that there are numerous levels of authority that are invested in the work of coaches, how does ISIC bring more coherence and consistency to the messages coaches receive concerning the definitions and scope of their job descriptions?

ISSUE 3: Supports for Coaches

- Given that colleagues played such a significant role as supports to coaches, how might ISIC assist in further developing peer relations as a support service for coaches?
- Coaches felt that the availability of curriculum experts to provide professional development was a big asset to improving their coaching practice. How can the range of curricular expertise be organized to continue helping coaches improve? Along with that, how can coaches be better canvassed and consulted on the specificities of their professional development needs?
- How can coaches develop skills with the coaching tools they find most useful as well as with those they have not been inclined to use?
- Nearly all of the comments on the Analyzing Student Work tool were positive, suggesting that this tool has potential for wider use. If so, how might ISIC do this?

ISSUE 4: Impact from Coaching

- Although limited, data on perceived impact from this year's ISIC program was favorable. What indicators would ISIC want to use in the coming year in order to more accurately assess the impact of coaching?

Appendix A:

**PRAIRIE Evaluation Team
ISIC Coach Shadow/Debrief Protocol 2007-2008**

School number:

Date/time/duration of visit:

Observer recording notes:

Date notes written:

Inventory of artifacts and materials collected and location in files:

PART 1. Insert description of activities with time intervals here.

This section should include detailed description of interactions and dialogue during observation, with time indicated at key activity intervals and descriptions of the kind of discourse occurring (e.g. co-teaching, coach teaching classroom with teacher present, coach teaching classroom independently, coach observing classroom, coach pulled for administrative task, coach/teacher collaboration pre/post lesson, examining student data, etc.)

As the coach moves through his/her daily activities, record:

- ***Activity***
- ***Location***
- ***Individuals present (e.g., teacher, students, administrators, etc.)***
- ***Physical layout of each location***

*****Pay particular attention to use of any assessment tools, including NTC tools, student data***

PART 2. Debriefing questions: To be used after shadowing

(Use these questions and prompts as a guide for covering the main topics in the debrief.)

(a) Activities

- How did you think today's coaching session(s) went?
 - What were you hoping to accomplish with this teacher? (What went well? were some of the challenges?)
 - I noticed you used ____ assessment tool as you worked with the teacher. Is that an NTC form? What is your opinion about it as a coaching tool?
- Is this a typical day in your role?
 - In what respects is it typical?
 - In what respects is it atypical?
 - Does this differ from your previous years as a coach (if applicable—find out how many years coaching)

(b) Role/Responsibilities

- Talk about your role and responsibilities:
 - Do you have a set schedule or plan for your coaching, or do you work “on the fly”?
 - Is your role clearly defined or ambiguous?
 - What is your understanding of your role?
 - How do you think the principal understands your role?
 - How do teachers understand your role?
 - What role does the use of data (e.g. student work, assessment) play in your coaching work?
 - Do you work with the Observation and/or Interaction Logs? How's that working?
- What are your expectations about what you will accomplish as a coach?
 - How are these expectations similar/different from the expectations communicated to you by your supervisor(s)?
- What do you feel have been your successes in your role so far? What have been your biggest challenges?
- Do you have any concerns or questions about your role?

(c) Assessment

- How do you assess the quality and effectiveness of your coaching activities?
- How do you assess impact of your coaching session on the teacher you are working with/

(d) Supports

- In your work today, did you draw on practices or concepts you've learned in the coaching PD sessions?
- Generally speaking, have you found the coaching PD useful in your work as a coach? How so/why not?
- Besides the NTC PD, have you attended other PD related to coaching that has been useful to your role as a coach?

- It seems that there are [Number] other coaches at this school. Do you collaborate with the other coaches? If so, in what ways? How does that collaboration happen? Is it useful? If not, why not? Would you like to?
 - Do you collaborate with other coaches in your department? If so, in what ways? Is it useful?
- As someone in the school regularly, how do you fit in with the overall school community? [cite any observed examples as prompts]
- Are there other supports you receive related to your role as a coach (e.g., meetings with managers, working with school administrators, etc.)? If so, are they useful? In what ways? Are there other forms of support you would like to receive?
- How long has it take you to feel comfortable in your role as a coach? (in this school, across your multiple schools).
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience as a coach?

Part 3. Additional comments and reflections on the shadow and debrief

(a) Analytic comments

(evidence from specific activities, interactions, comments that will contribute to evaluating the program; analytic comments may relate to particular program objectives, or to the program goals more broadly)

(b) Interpretive comments

(i.e. additional thoughts in which you relate your observations to broader issues and contexts beyond the immediate scope of the program objectives)

(c) Self-reflective observations:

(i.e. ways in which the event or activity observed affected you, how you responded to aspects of the activity that might influence your observations, etc. Also, reflections on methods and materials and how well they are working.)

(d) Follow-up needed:

(In this section identify any additional information that needs to be gathered, gaps filled, etc.)

Appendix B:

**PRAIRIE Group /ISIC Program
Teacher Interview Template**

Date/time/duration of interview:

Evaluator recording notes:

Date notes written:

Transcription:

Materials collected (file code if Attachments):

Interview questions, or summary of key topics discussed (file code if using an interview or focus group protocol):

[Introduction]:

We have been observing and talking with coaches in your school and a few other district schools to get a sense of how the In School Instructional Coaching Program is going. One of the most important aspects of the coaching program is how well it is providing support for classroom teachers.

In [DATE] we observed your [subject area] coach working with you. We would like to ask you a few questions about the support you've been getting from your school coach.

1. Describe how you set up your coaching sessions. Who initiates the meeting? How do you decide on a focus for the session?
2. Describe a typical coaching session. How do you and the coach work together? How do you debrief? Is there follow up? If so, how is that decided?
3. Talk about the collaboration logs. How do you and your coach use them in your sessions? Is the log helpful to you? How or how not? Do you have suggestions for how it could be improved? Does your coach use other documentation or assessment tools in your coaching sessions? [probe for lesson planning tools]
4. Tell us how you came to work with your particular coach [listen for history]
5. How often do you meet with your coach? Are there other kinds of supports your coach provides besides one-on-one meetings?
6. In what way(s) has your teaching changed by the assistance from your coach?
7. What do you see as the major kinds of supports you get from your coach, and through the coaching process? What is most useful to you about the coaching sessions? Are there aspects of it that are not useful? Are there ways it could be more useful?

8. What other kinds of supports do you get for your teaching of [subject matter]? Are these supports consistent with the support you get from your coach? Are there other kinds of supports you would like to receive?
9. In general, how do you and your colleagues feel about having in-school coaches?
10. Do you feel your coach is supported by the school administration? How so?

Insert Transcription of interview here:

Follow-up needed:

Analytic comments:

(i.e. initial thoughts about interactions, comments that might contribute to evaluating the program. Remember to refer back to program goals and objectives.)

Interpretive comments:

(i.e. initial thoughts that relate your observations to broader issues and contexts beyond the scope of the program objectives)

Self-reflexive observations:

(i.e. ways in which the meeting or conversation affected you, how you responded to the meeting/conversation that might influence your recording or interpretation of the content)?

Principal interview Protocol

Date/time/duration of interview:

Evaluator recording notes:

Date notes written:

Transcription:

[Before beginning the interview, take time to explain to (remind) the principal what we are doing and what we are trying to learn.]

As we described, we are helping the school district learn more about their ISIC program. We are talking with different district personnel, coaches and teachers and want to include what we learn from principals' vantage points about what is going on.

- How many coaches are present in your school?
- How long have they been here?
- How often are they here?
- How did they find their way to your school?

- From you vantage point, what are the primary responsibilities of the coaches in your school?

- Who do the coach or coaches report to?

- How many teachers are involved with the coach/coaches?

- Are there any particular criteria that are used to match coaching services with teachers in your school? What are they?

- What are the goals for coaching?

- What kind of recordkeeping is associated with the coaching work? [interactive logs, journals, reports generated]

- How do you think the ISIC work is going here?

- Have you seen any impact as a result of this coaching effort? If so, in what way(s)? [probe for examples of teaching practice, student learning]

- Have you had other coaches in your school before ISIC? How would you compare the different experiences?

- What do your teachers say to you about their experience with ISIC?

- What feedback do you get from the coaches?

- How does this program compliment or conflict with the other support services that are also in place for your teachers?
- How does the presence of coaches in your school contribute to your overall vision for your school? [probe for how the coach adds value to the school?] How do you support the work of coaching?
- What, if anything, would you like to see done differently with ISIC?
- When you have questions about the ISIC program to whom to go for answers?
- Are there any particular challenges that having ISIC coaching here presents for you and for your staff? [e.g., singling out individual teachers, layers of communication and bureaucracy, coaching autonomy vs. allegiance to whom] What can be done about that?
- Are there any (additional) issues or concerns you have about the ISIC program that you'd care to share with us?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Thank you very much for your time and your thoughts

Insert Transcription of interview here:

Follow-up needed:

Analytic comments:

(i.e. initial thoughts about interactions, comments that might contribute to evaluating the program. Remember to refer back to program goals and objectives.)

Interpretive comments:

(i.e. initial thoughts that relate your observations to broader issues and contexts beyond the scope of the program objectives)

Self-reflexive observations:

(i.e. ways in which the meeting or conversation affected you, how you responded to the meeting/conversation that might influence your recording or interpretation of the content)?

Appendix C:

**UIC PRAIRIE Evaluation Team
ISIC Focus Group Template 2007-2008**

.....
Location of focus group:

Date/time/duration of focus group:

Researcher(s) recording notes:

Date(s) notes written:

Participant list:

Name	Initials	School/area	Kind of coach	Dept./office report to

.....
***Start focus group by suggesting we go around the room and have each person describe briefly how they became a coach*

Focus Group Questions:

1. Talk to us about your roles and responsibilities as a coach.

Prompts:

How do you define your role as a coach?

What are your expectations for your own work?

Do you feel that roles and expectations are clearly communicated to you and those you work with?

How do you assess your fulfillment of your role as a coach?

Do you feel you face any challenges or barriers in fulfilling your role and responsibilities as a coach?

2. Let's talk about your activities and routines as a coach.

Prompts:

Do you implement any of the coaching practices that were covered at the Coaching Academy (PD) provided by the Chicago New Teacher Center? Have you found any of the practices particularly helpful?

Are there practices that you haven't found helpful?

What has been your experience using the interactive logs? What are the benefits? The drawbacks or challenges? Have you discussed the logs with your supervisor? Principal? If so, is that helpful?

What are some of the challenges you face carrying out your coaching activities?

3. The next topic we'd like to hear about are the supports you get as a coach.

Prompts:

Do you attend (NTC) PD? How useful is it?

What kinds of ongoing supports are you involved in? Who provides these supports? How effective are these supports in helping you work toward your goals as a coach?

What other forms of support would you like to receive?

4. We're interested in knowing about whether and how you collaborate with other coaches.

Prompts:

Do you collaborate and/or coordinate your work with other coaches at your school?

In your area and/or district department?

Are these collaborations helpful?

Do you get support to collaborate?

5. When you think back on this year, what are some of the ways in which you find you have had an impact at your school?

Prompts: What have been the benefits of the program to you? Your colleagues? The students?

6. You've answered a lot of questions that we have. Are there questions about the coaching program that we should be asking you? Do you have additional comments or suggestions about the program you would like us to know about?

****Thanks very much for taking the time to share your experiences and ideas with us****