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Executive Coaching as a Model of Professional Development for School Superintendents

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EXECUTIVE COACHING AS A MODEL OF

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR

SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

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150 Pages

This study is a utilization-focused program evaluation that describes the impact of an executive coaching model on the professional learning of superintendents who participated in the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL). The program evaluation is a knowledge-focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative evaluation of the ISAL cohort program. A qualitative approach is used to describe the lived experiences of superintendents who participated in the coaching model provided through the ISAL cohort program. The results were intended to inform general practice and to provide recommendations on the use of a coaching model in the professional development of superintendents for the ISAL design team.

This study provides insights to the extent the ISAL cohort superintendents found value the coaching model and what they learned from their coaching experiences. The data collected included surveys, interviews, and a limited analysis of documents provided by ISAL participants. These four components, combined with the evaluator working closely with the ISAL design team, provided the data necessary to identify patterns of

effectiveness and to identify general lessons that could be learned from the use of a coaching model in professional development programs for educational leaders. The evaluation provides additional understanding to both the overall impact of the ISAL program on the professional development of superintendents, as well as the specific impact of the coaching model used within the ISAL program.

Two considerations for further study were also provided. The first consideration is to conduct future evaluations to expand the analysis of the five ISAL leadership lenses as they were applied through the coaching model. A second consideration for further study is to examine the differences in the experiences of ISAL participants when viewed through various demographic aspects such as gender, race, level of experience as a superintendent, and type of district.

KEYWORDS: Coaching, Executive, Leadership, Professional Development, Superintendent

EXECUTIVE COACHING AS A MODEL OF

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SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview

The expectations for public school superintendents have shifted in a historic manner in more than a decade since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005; Young & Mawhinney, 2012). During that time period, the roles for superintendents have been altered from what formerly involved primarily management functions, to the current state of requiring them to be leaders of learning for school systems (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Houston, 2001, Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013; Wilmore, 2008).

Over the past 70 years the role of the superintendent within public education has broadened from that of simply maintaining an institution that creates future workers by teaching cultural norms and beliefs, to the complex role of serving as a change agent within an system that effectively deals with not only the educational, but also the social and professional needs of dynamic learning organizations (Fullan, 2001; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). While superintendents have always needed to juggle a variety of issues at once, today there is increased complexity in maintaining a balance among the roles of serving as a teacher-scholar, business manager, statesman, applied social scientist, and an effective communicator (Kowalski, et al.,

2011,). Achieving large-scale instructional improvements requires a vastly different conception of how educational leaders lead (Elmore, 2004). Roots of this can be traced back to the work of Selznick as he explored the misaligned leadership focus on efficiency and time management versus leadership of institutional systems (1957). The complex nature of the work of superintendents, combined with a dynamic work environment and ambiguous changes, will require a significant amount of job-embedded professional learning for both novice and veteran superintendents alike (Kowalski, et al., 2011; Honig, 2012,; Orr, 2007).

Over the past decade, the focus for school improvement has expanded beyond the school level, site-based management models, to the district level by expecting superintendents to ensure the efficacy of building-level leaders impact on student achievement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). To effectively lead today's schools, superintendents must possess the ability to view schools as systems and to effectively align the internal and external influences on the system that will result in the increased achievement for all students (Selznick, 1957, Heifetz, Grishow, & Linsky, 2009, Sanders & Kearney, 2008, Wilmore, 2008;).

The problems currently facing public education today are not simply complicated, they are also complex (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Lytle & Sokoloff, 2013; Sargut & McGrath, 2011). The distinction between complicated and complex systems provides insight to the challenges of superintendents. In order to illustrate the difference between complicated and complex systems, Sargut and McGrath (2011) identified the following three properties of complexity:

"Complicated systems have many moving parts, but they operate in patterned ways. The electrical grid that powers the light is complicated: There are many possible interactions within it, but they usually follow a pattern. It's possible to make accurate predictions about how a complicated system will behave.

Complex systems, by contrast, are imbued with features that may operate in patterned ways but whose interactions are continually changing. Three properties determine the complexity of an environment. The first, multiplicity, refers to the number of potentially interacting elements. The second, interdependence, relates to how connected those elements are. The third, diversity, has to do with the degree of their heterogeneity. The greater the multiplicity, interdependence, and diversity, the greater the complexity." (p.70).

Lytle and Sokoloff have observed that even the small public school districts consisting of a few elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school meet the three aforementioned criteria of a complex system because multiplicity, interdependence, and diversity each exists in the system (2013).

While the education system of the 20th century was built on the premise of delivering basic skills to a fairly homogeneous population, the 21st century education system needs to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills at a college level to a much more heterogeneous group of students (Harvey, et al., 2013). With the change in leadership expectations for superintendents comes the need for educational leaders who are skilled at organizing schools into professional learning communities and effectively distributing appropriate leadership responsibilities (Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks,

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Memon, & Yashkina, 2007). Research converges on the need for today's school

superintendents to be the lead learner of the district improvement process (Fullan, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Given the increased accountability for student achievement that has been placed

on public schools over the past decade, both novice and experienced superintendents

need job-embedded professional learning that will support their efforts to become leaders

of learning in their respective districts, rather than managers (Louis et. al, 2010).   Over

the past decade, a significant amount of time has been devoted to identifying the

necessary leadership skills and competencies that will result in increased student

achievement. This has resulted in the development of policy standards such as the

Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards and the Interstate School

Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008 Educational Policy Standards for School

Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008; Wilmore, 2008).

Ample research exists about the necessary skills and knowledge required to

effectively lead a school building or a school district and clearly principals' efforts to be

instructional leaders needs to be supported by an aligned central office staff (Honig,

Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newton, 2010). Knowing what to do is not the problem.

Rather, additional research on effective professional learning models that enable

executive level school leaders to create high-reliability school systems is needed

(Marzano, 2009). While several studies have identified effective professional

development models for school principals, very few studies exist that identify effective

professional models using a job-embedded coaching approach for superintendents, one

promising professional learning approach for educational executives. Of the 143

dissertations and theses related to coaching that were conducted between 2000-2011, only six focused specifically on executive coaching in public schools (Lavendt & Kauffman, 2011). Since coaching has shown promise as an effective professional development model for building-level administrators, additional investigation on the effectiveness for district-level administrators is warranted (Reiss, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

Over the past decade, revisions to the educational leadership standards have been made, as well as advances in the identification of effective professional development programs for school level leaders, such as principals and teachers (Council of Chief State School Officers, National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008; Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). However, during the same time period efforts to identify effective professional development models for school superintendents remained a work in progress (Teitel, 2006).

The purpose of this utilization-focused program evaluation is to describe the impact of a coaching model on the professional learning of superintendents in a coaching cohort. This program evaluation is a knowledge focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative evaluation of the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL) cohort for superintendents.

The ISAL cohort program was developed by the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), with an initial cohort beginning in 2010, a second in 2012, and a third in 2015. This program evaluation focuses on the experiences of participants in ISAL cohort I and II, since cohort III has only recently began and participants have not

completed the program. As a formative evaluation, this study focuses on ways the IASA can improve upon and enhance the ISAL program, rather than rendering a definitive judgment about the program's effectiveness (Patton, 2012). Specifically, this program evaluation will focus on the impact of an executive coaching model as used by the ISAL cohort program and offer recommendations to the ISAL design team.

In response to the lack of sustainable professional development models for superintendents, the IASA created ISAL in order to provide practicing Illinois superintendents with experiences that build exemplary knowledge and skills essential for successfully impacting student achievement. While the effects of professional development programs designed for educational leaders, such as Harvard's Executive Leadership Program for Educators and The University of Virginia's Executive Leadership Program for Educators, have been studied, a need exists for additional examination of other programs that provide experienced superintendents with leadership development opportunities (Haslam, & Turnbull, 2011; Orr, 2007). A study of the ISAL cohort program would serve to partially address this need.

Research Questions

This program evaluation will seek to address the following questions:

1. To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value the coaching model?

    a. How did the coaching model support superintendents participating in the ISAL program?

b. To what extent were ISAL superintendents committed to coaching process, including the frequency of meetings and the attentiveness necessary to be present regularly for coaching?

c. What were the factors that either positively or negatively impacted the motivation of ISAL superintendents to engage their coaches?

2. What did ISAL cohort superintendents learn as a result of their coaching experiences?

a. How did the coaching model impact the superintendents' professional growth?

b. How did ISAL superintendents use what they learned from the coaching approach?

Conceptual Framework

If school districts are to achieve the goal of educating each child to his or her fullest potential, then the instructional leadership focus for superintendents must be to create large-scale change in school systems so that they function as high-reliability organizations and the actions of all members are aligned with a consistent instructional focus (Marzano & Waters, 2009). To accomplish this, adaptive leadership practices are essential for superintendents accurately diagnose the school system and effectively address adaptive challenges (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Superintendents cannot accomplish these tasks in isolation, therefore distributive leadership practices are essential to school systems attaining transformative change (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). The importance of educating each child to his or her fullest potential is

not merely a function of the current political climate, but rather a basic precept of social justice.

It is essential that today's school leaders focus their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision to students who are or have been traditionally marginalized (Theoharis, 2007). In order to accomplish this, only the most impactful and effective adult learning approaches must be used to provide superintendents the necessary professional learning opportunities that will lead to increased achievement for every student.

Based on adult learning theory, professional development for both novice and experienced superintendents must acknowledge the fact that they are members of a community of practitioners (Wenger & Lave, 1991). One approach is to organize the interactions between both novice and experienced superintendents and expert sources that provides focused learning and problem-solving focused on measureable outcomes (Wenger & Lave, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011). In order for leaders to cultivate a community of practice, each member of the organization must be empowered to maintain their own autonomy while supporting the advancement of the mission. The use of a coaching model for professional development is one way to achieve this (Reiss, 2007). The Adult Dyadic Learning Model serves as a framework for viewing the impact a coaching model has on the professional development of both novice and experienced superintendents (Marx, 2009).

This study examines the ISAL program's use of executive coaching as a model of professional development in support of superintendents as they address the adaptive challenges in public school districts. The ISLLC 2008 leadership standards will provide direction as a scaffold of support with respect to the common expectations for school

leaders. Embedded within the ISLLC 2008 standards are the theoretical concepts of adaptive leadership, distributive leadership, instructional leadership, and social justice practices.

Changes to the educational system that will simultaneously increase achievement for all students and address social justice issues related to groups of students whose voices have traditionally marginalized present both technical and adaptive challenges for school leaders (Heifetz, et al. 2009). Adaptive leadership skills are required to advance such changes. School leaders need to adeptly assess the system, distinguishing between technical challenges and adaptive challenges, in order to facilitate organizational learning in areas that the organization may not even know needs to be addressed.

A distributive leadership approach, supported by the concept of professional learning communities, as a conceptual framework that will support the large-scale change throughout a school system. A distributive leadership framework is appropriate for this study in order to view how a coaching model can enable superintendents to successfully influence instructional leadership practices at a variety of levels throughout their given school system (Leithwood, et al., 2007).

Distributive leadership supports school improvement efforts through a shared leadership approach, rather than leadership derived solely from the personality or abilities of a single school leader (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). In a distributive leadership framework, the "other school leaders and followers also matter in that they help define leading practice" (Spillane et al., 2001, p.27). Distributive leadership is particularly applicable in today's climate of increased accountability for school leaders

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because rather than looking at what leaders do, as has been the traditional focus, distributive leadership looks at how, when, and why leaders do what they do, as well as who does it with them (Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Distributive leadership can be used as an analytical framework or tool that enables a school system to assess the impact of organizational change on instructional practices by examining various leadership practices of teachers, principals, and superintendents (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

The principles of distributive leadership that should be incorporated into a framework for superintendent professional development include: (a) the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance; (b) instructional improvement requires continuous learning; (c) learning requires modeling; (d) the roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution; and (e) the exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity (Elmore, 2004, p.66-8).

These principles of both adaptive leadership and distributive leadership have significant overlap with the principles of effective executive coaching models for professional development. Effective coaching models for school leaders require: (a) building relationships by developing trust and rapport; (b) providing instruction that is characterized by listening, questioning, and observing; and (c) providing feedback by collaboratively establishing goals and then building reflective practices (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). Executive coaching provides a viable professional development option that could be used to address the major issues that superintendents

face, such as instructional program coherence, conflicting state and federal mandates, a shortage of fiscal resources, and negative relationships with school boards (Reiss, 2007).

It is generally agreed upon by researchers that in order to be impactful on large-scale change, professional development for superintendents should be (a) focused on the instructional needs and student outcomes of the school district; (b) provide opportunities for collegial interaction, dialogue, and feedback; (c) be connected to sources of external expertise, while allowing for superintendent flexibility; and (d) be sustained and continuous (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). While executive coaching has been utilized in the business sector since the early 1980s, much of the research on the field was anecdotal and not focused on educational leadership (Natale & Diamante, 2005).

Although professional development programs using a coaching model have been implemented with building-level administrators, benefits can be gleaned for superintendents (Haslam & Turnbull, 2011). Depending on the needs of the superintendent who is working with a coach, the goals and action plans could be related to the need to increase current or gain new skills, improve overall professional performance, enhance professional growth and development, or for overall organizational improvement (Reiss, 2007). It should be noted that coaching and mentoring differ in that a coach will explore a range of possible solutions with the coachee, while a mentor will typically share their own experiences with the mentee. A mentor will typically work with an individual who is a novice in the field, but a coach would effectively work with individuals throughout a variety of points in their career, ranging from novice to experienced (Reiss, 2007). It is because of this flexibility that the coaching model, as

opposed to a mentoring model, serves as a viable option for career-long professional development for superintendents.

Coaching for executive leaders also supports the need for leaders to develop the two core competencies of the practice of leadership, diagnosis and action (Heifetz, et al., 2009). For leaders in all fields to be effective, not only do they need to diagnose and then take action on the system, but they also need to diagnose their own behaviors and then take appropriate actions. The coaching model fully supports both self-reflection, as well as reflection on the needs of the organization (Reiss, 2007).

In conjunction with a coaching model, the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs) in order to provide ongoing, job-embedded learning would be effective for superintendents. The benefit would be that an executive coach could also work with a leadership team, to serve as a guide in implementing a PLC if that is not part of the current district culture (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

The concept of PLCs is an adaptation of an idea presented by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, which stressed the importance of leaders cultivating communities of practice (2002). Wenger et al. define communities of practice as, "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their understanding on an ongoing basis" (2002, p.4). While it is not necessary for members of a community of practice to interact on a daily basis, they do share insights, work collaboratively to solve problems, and develop standards and methods for advancing the organization. The ISAL cohort program is an example of this type of community of practice.

In order for leaders to cultivate a community of practice, members of the organization must be valued and voluntarily engaged in the fulfilment of the organization's strategic plan or mission. Members of a community of practice are empowered to maintain their own autonomy while supporting the advancement of the mission. As noted previously with the overlap between distributive leadership and effective executive coaching models, there is also significant overlap between distributive leadership and the concept of cultivating communities of practice.

Building upon the concepts of communities of practice are networked improvement communities (NIC). The networked improvement community model most closely resembles the ongoing professional learning component of the ISAL cohort program. Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow espouse that a NIC could be described as an intentionally formed social organization that shares common interests and arranges human and technical resources for the purpose of improvement; all of which are key components of the ISAL cohort program (2011).

The concepts of adaptive leadership, distributive leadership, communities of practice, PLCs, and NICs converge on the importance of the use of a coaching model to enable superintendents to address the adaptive challenges that are inherently present as the need for educational leadership increases. The dynamic relationships of these core concepts provide the conceptual framework of this study.

Significance of the Study

This study serves as an evaluation of executive leadership coaching by examining the impact of the ISAL program's use of executive coaching as a professional development model for school superintendents. This utilization-focused program

evaluation will test the theories that comprise the ISAL approach to executive coaching in Illinois among superintendents. The evaluation seeks to conduct a knowledge-generating evaluation of the ISAL cohort for superintendents. Specifically, this program evaluation will focus on the use of a coaching model to support the professional learning of practicing superintendents. The results of this evaluation inform general practice, provide recommendations for the ISAL design team, and develop future evaluations (Patton, 2012).

Definitions

In order to provide relevant discourse, several terms that will be used in this study require a common understanding. Given the nature of the content-specific vocabulary used in this study, distinctions need to be made between seemingly overlapping terms such as coaching and mentoring or professional learning communities and networked improvement communities, as well as other terms from the field. For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are offered.

Adaptive Leadership: The practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive (Heifetz, et al., 2009, p. 14).

ISAL Coach: An individual who supports a school superintendent by communicating in a nonjudgmental manner, asking empowering and reflective questions, listening deeply, remaining neutral in interactions, probing for potential solutions, summarizing and paraphrasing what the superintendent says, creating a safe and trusting atmosphere, helping to maintain progress on action plans, accepting superintendents for where they are currently in life, and allowing for space and reflection (Reiss, 2007).

ISAL Coachee/client: Recipients of coaching who value and actively seek coaching when they want to learn, grow, continuously develop, and achieve desired results while holding their coaches and one another accountable for proactive problem-solving and leadership in response to global and local issues of the day. (International Association of Coaching, 2010). The term "client" is also interchangeable with "coachee" (Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandall, & Whitworth, 2011).

Coaching: Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential (International Coach Federation, 2014).

Distributive leadership (as related to education): Leadership focused on empowering others to transform teaching and learning. The leadership "involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning" (Spillane, 2001, p.24).

Executive Coaching: An experiential and individualized leader development process, conducted as a partnership between a superintendent, the executive coach, and the school district, that builds the leader's capacity to achieve short and long-term organizational goals through one-on-one and/or group interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect (Ennis, Goodman, Otto, & Stern, 2012).

High-reliability School System: School districts that establish non-negotiable goals in every classroom that results in enhanced academic achievement for all students (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Instructional Leadership: Leadership that provides application of best practices to enhance student learning throughout a school district, resulting in an effective instructional program with increased achievement for all students (Willmore, 2008; Council of Chief State School Officials, 2008).

Mentor: An individual who helps the educational leader gain procedural knowledge; acquire cognitive, skill-based, and affective learning; and technical skills such as time management, self-organization, and self-confidence. This differs from a coach in that a mentor works only with novice leaders while a coach will work with leaders who have a range of experiences (Marx, 2009; Reiss, 2007).

Mentoring: A one-to-one relationship in which a more experienced individual (mentor) assists a less experienced individual (mentee) by furthering the mentee's professional and personal development through the sharing of information, assistance, and guidance (Marx, 2009).

Networked improvement community: An intentionally formed social organization, sharing common interests and with norms for affiliation, that arranges human and technical resources for the purpose of improvement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011).

Professional learning community: A system of professional development that provides all educators within a school district job-embedded learning in support of a guaranteed and viable curriculum that is focused on increasing student achievement for all learners (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Social justice leadership: School leaders who "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing

conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision"
(Theoharis, 2007, p. 223).

Limitations of the Study

As a utilization-focused, knowledge generating evaluation, this study focuses on ways the IASA can improve upon and enhance the ISAL, rather than rendering a definitive judgment about the program's effectiveness. This study was limited to Illinois superintendents who participated in either the first or second IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL I or ISAL II) cohort program. As a program evaluation, this study provides findings that serve as "lessons learned" for the ISAL design team and are not necessarily intended to provide generalizations for other professional development programs for superintendents.

Approximately twenty-five superintendents participated in each of the first two ISAL cohorts. The data collected consisted of surveys, interviews, and documents provided by the ISAL participants who were willing to participate. Given this limited group of potential participants, the sample size was relatively small. In order to minimize this limitation, the researcher included all interested participants in the survey portion of this study, while the interviews were conducted with all willing participants to the point of data saturation. Additionally, a theoretical sample was created of participants who provide key feedback and provide additional opportunities for follow up with those individuals. Finally, a data saturation method was used to ensure there is ample opportunity for trends to develop in the responses.

The evaluator is also a colleague of a number of the ISAL participants, as well as the developers of the ISAL program. During the course of this study the researcher

became a participant in the ISAL III cohort program, although the participant pool for this study is limited to ISAL I and II. Due to the preexisting collegial relationships between the researcher and some of the participants, there is the possibility that limited unintentional bias might exists in the participant interview responses. The researcher has taken extra precautions to minimize the risk of bias.

Summary

Given that we are in a time of rapidly changing expectations for leaders in public education, the issue of effectively meeting the professional learning needs of school superintendents needs to be addressed. Currently, after completing graduate coursework from a university program, superintendents typically receive sporadic, on-the-job training related to various topics as they arise throughout their career. There is a need for systematic and cohesive professional development programs for practicing school superintendents in order to bring about increased achievement for all students.

The ISAL cohort program has attempted to fill this void in professional development for superintendents in Illinois. Given ISAL's use of an executive coaching model, the ISAL program is worthy of a program evaluation in order to determine the extent to which a coaching model can bring about meaningful and sustained improvements in the educational leadership practices for superintendents.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review will examine the changes to the role of school superintendents over the past two decades, identify adaptive leadership as a core theory for changes necessary to meet adaptive challenges, discuss distributive leadership as a relevant approach for addressing those changes, and explore professional development models such as executive coaching, professional learning communities, and networked improvement communities that could be implemented to facilitate ongoing learning for superintendents (Bryk, et al., 2011; Fullan, 2001; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Finally, the conceptual framework from Chapter 1 is elaborated as a theory of change in this evaluation of the ISAL I and ISAL II cohorts.

Prior to the last decade, the typical roles and responsibilities for superintendents were relatively clear (Conley, 2003). Given the prevailing concept of the local control that was held by a board of education, school districts were able to somewhat buffer the impact of state education agencies and changing times.   That left superintendents primarily beholden to the wishes and demands of the local governance body, as opposed to state or federal entities. However, just as the focus for students has moved from compliance to engagement within the classroom, so has the focus shifted from compliance to engagement for superintendents (Schlecty, 2005).

In order to be successful in the 21st century, superintendents will need to master new commonplaces of school leadership such as utilizing a systems approach to district leadership, dealing with less-than-ideal governance structures, having a clear understanding of learning and assessment, focusing on the issues of race and class, developing school-level leaders, leading in a collaborative manner, and engaging all stakeholders (Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013).

For a number of years educational leaders have had standards and performance expectations that outlined the required professional knowledge and skills for the job (Council of Chief State School Officers, National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008), however the standards alone are not intended to provide the ongoing professional learning that superintendents require. Superintendents have been shown to have a concerted interest in their own professional learning, although meaningful opportunities have not been readily available for experienced superintendents and only minimal opportunities have existed for novice superintendents (Orr, 2007).

In response to the lack of sustainable professional development models for superintendents, the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) created the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL) in an effort to provide practicing Illinois superintendents the learning experiences that build the exemplary knowledge and skills essential for successfully impacting student achievement. ISAL simultaneously provides executive coaching for participants while building a professional learning community as an additional level of support using a cohort model.

Section One: Changing Role of Superintendents

Legislative Impacts

In the decade since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the

expectations for public school superintendents have shifted in a historic manner

(Bellamy, T., Crawford, L., Marshall, L., & Coulter, G., 2005). Through sweeping

legislative changes at both the federal and state levels of government, the roles for

superintendents have been altered from what formerly involved primarily management

functions, to the current state of requiring them to be leaders of learning for school

systems (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Harvey, Cambron-McCabe,

Cunningham, & Koff, 2013; Houston, 2001; Wilmore, 2008). A review of these changes

will provide some insight to the external forces that are acting on public education in the

United States.

Federal Legislative Impact

Three decades of a progression of federal reports and legislative initiatives have

brought about historical shifts within public education and have altered the roles and

responsibilities of superintendents. The focus on accountability for school districts to

meet the educational needs of all children has consistently increased over the past thirty

years and can be linked to at least three federal sources: (a) a report from the National

Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 titled A Nation at Risk; (b) the 2001

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly

referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); and (c) the current proposal to

reauthorize ESEA, called The Blueprint for Reform (Department of Education, 2010).

When published in 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* had a profound impact on the way we think about education (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The federal report outlined deficiencies with four aspects of the educational process: content of the curriculum; low expectations for students and outcomes; the quality, use, and amount of instructional time; and the quality of teaching and teachers (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). As negative as the report was, it wasn't until 2002 when President George Bush signed his version of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act entitled, *No Child Left Behind Act,* into law that educational accountability became a national focus and the current reform measures took center stage.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 introduced the term "Adequate Yearly Progress," along with a newfound focus on the performance of various subgroups of students. This was an effort to ensure all students met standards as measured by standardized tests in most states. As a result of NCLB, for the first time in history the federal government penalized school districts financially for consistently low-performing schools and subgroups of the population. However, NCLB did have some positive outcomes. Along with the negatives of test-driven accountability that were demanded by NCLB also came clearer expectations for learning and a focus on closing the achievement gaps that existed between various sub-groups of students (Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013). However, just prior to the full negative effects of NCLB taking effect and virtually all school districts being identified as not making adequate yearly progress, the Obama administration introduced their own version of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which he named

the *Blueprint for Reform* (2010). The *Blueprint for Reform* was accompanied by various waivers from NCLB that were designed to protect school districts from being labeled as a "failure" and further jeopardizing federal funding.

The *Blueprint for Reform* acknowledged that public education in the United States was falling behind other countries that it had once led and it recognized that the key to success was a shared responsibility for parents, schools, and communities (Department of Education, 2010). This policy document was intended to serve as a framework that would guide the collaborative efforts to systemically improve public education in the United States (Department of Education, 2010). *The Blueprint for Reform* outlined five key priorities: (a) college- and career-ready students; (b) great teachers and leaders in every school; (c) equity and opportunity for all students; (d) raising the bar and rewarding excellence; and (e) promoting innovation and continuous improvement (2010).

State Legislative Impact

In additional to federal influences such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the Blueprint for Reform (2010), the decades since the passage of Senate Bill 730 have seen significant focus on the changing roles of educational leaders (Martin, 2012).

As a result of the forty-seven point education reforms put forth in 1985 by Senate Bill 730, the Illinois Administrators Academy program was developed. This was the initial attempt to create a vehicle of professional development for Illinois school leaders. Although the Administrators Academies served to fill a gap in the professional development needs for school leaders, it did not provide an ongoing, cohesive system that was ultimately needed for true professional growth.

More recently, over the past five years superintendents in Illinois have also been confronted with unprecedented legislative mandates from the state level. With the passage of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) in 2010 and Illinois Senate Bill 7 (SB 7) in 2011, superintendents were required to implement significant changes to the evaluation process for both teacher and administrator evaluations. This included the process for dismissal, conducting a reduction in force, and rehiring practices. Specifically, PERA (2010) called for streamlined teacher rating categories, substantial prequalification requirements for teacher and principal evaluators, and most importantly for the first time there was a requirement that student growth measures be incorporated as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluations. PERA was soon followed by SB 7 (2011), which implemented new methods for teachers to acquire tenure, processes for layoff and recall rights, the dismissal of tenured teachers, and mandatory training for Board of Education members.

In addition to federal and state legislation, Illinois adopted the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 and school districts have since been phasing in the standards in preparation for a new state-wide assessment, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The transition from the previous Illinois Learning Standards to the new CCSS, in conjunction with the preparation for a new state-wide assessment and the procedural changes to teacher and principal evaluation and dismissal processes, are significant examples of how external political forces have greatly increased the level of complexity in the roles for superintendents.

Professional Standards

In addition to the legislative impacts on education, significant changes have been made to the national educational leadership standards. These changes have impacted the role of superintendents in the same manner as the legislative changes (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013; Wilmore, 2008). The revised Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Educational Leadership Policy Standards of 2008 (ISLLC 2008) resulted in the need for superintendents to serve as instructional leaders through distributive leadership practices and provided a renewed focus on the importance of social justice practices. A review of these changes will provide some insight to the external forces that are acting on public education in the United States.

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards of 2008

Following the implementation of various legislative changes and in response to new research on educational leadership, in 2008 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) approved the revisions to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Educational Leadership Policy Standards (Wilmore 2008). The revisions to the 1996 version of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (ISLLC 1996) resulted in the development of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards of 2008 (ISLLC 2008).

The ISLCC 2008 standards outlined the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required of district-level leaders (Wilmore, 2008). The specific ISLLC 2008 standards include: (a) setting a widely shared vision for learning; (b) developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth; (c) ensuring

effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (d) collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; (e) acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and (f) understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural context (Council of Chief State School Officials, 2008).

Prior to 2008, professional standards had placed too much emphasis on the knowledge and skills required, and not enough focus on the leadership behaviors that research has shown to have most significant impact on student achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2006; Marzano & Waters, 2009). This was a shift from superintendents being effective administrators to educational leaders.

The ISLCC 2008 standards were designed to be policy standards that would, "provide a framework for policy creation, training program performance, life-long career development, and system support" (Council of Chief State School Officials, 2008, p. 11). While the ISLLC 2008 standards did not provide a significant departure in content from the ISLLC 1996 standards, there were fundamental shifts that included: (a) an increased focus on the learning of each child; (b) a view of principals and superintendents as educational leaders, as opposed to school administrators; and (c) an increased need for educational leaders to collaborate with faculty (Wilmore, 2008). In order for a superintendent to be a leader of learning, rather than simply a manager, a commitment to "the learning of every student, collaboration with all stakeholders, high expectations, examination of assumptions and beliefs, and a system of continuous improvement based on evidence" is required (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p.13). Interestingly, these same

traits noted by Sanders and Kearney have significant overlap with the ISLLC 2008 standards previously noted.

The new professional standards, combined with various legislative impacts previously noted, are examples of the external forces that require superintendents to move from roles that are primarily managerial in nature, to roles that require the majority of time be spent serving as a leader of learning. A parallel to this shift also exists in the field of business leadership.

Just as superintendents need to move from being effective managers to leaders of learning, Collins proposes that in order to be an effective business executive, one must move from being a Level 4 effective leader to a Level 5 executive leader (2001). According to Collins, while Level 4 effective business leaders catalyze commitment of employees and stimulate higher performance standards, Level 5 executive leaders, "build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (2001, p. 20). Superintendents who move from being primarily a manager to a leader of learning are similar to business leaders who move from Level 4 to Level 5 leadership. The process of self-actualization for school leaders was a primary focus of the original ISAL design team.

In order for superintendents to accomplish the paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will that Collins promotes, they need to rely on a combination of distributed leadership, instructional leadership, and social justice practices. Not only do distributive leadership, instructional leadership, and social justice practices align with superintendents' ability to serve as a leader of learning, but the three concepts align with the shifts in ISLLC 2008.

First, the increased focus on the learning of each child is directly supported by superintendents increasing their focus on social justice practices. Next, the view of superintendents as educational leaders, as opposed to school administrators, requires them to be seen as instructional leaders. Finally, the increased need for educational leaders to collaborate with faculty requires the use of distributive leadership practices that exist within the ISAL cohort program. A more detailed examination of distributive leadership, instructional leadership, and social justice practices follows.

Distributive Leadership

Distributive leadership practices support superintendents in this paradigm shift by providing a lens for looking at how school districts are designed and "lived" organizations, as well as how these concepts interact with each other (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). While Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) were on the forefront of exploring the theoretical concept of distributed leadership, it is important to first examine the Robert Greenleaf's concept of servant-leadership (Young & Mawhinney, 2011). Through stewardship for both the individual and organization, Greenleaf notes that institutions are best served by a team of leaders consisting of a balance of operators and conceptualizers (Greenleaf, 1977). In Greenleaf's view, a successful district-leadership team would address the vision, mission, and goals with operators who use effective interpersonal skills to collaboratively accomplish various day-to-day tasks. At the same time, conceptualizers would use their skills to analyze the operations of the institution and make the necessary adjustments to goals, while simultaneously maintaining a focus on long-range planning.

Consistent with Greenleaf's emphasis on servant leadership, is the wide-spread rebuttal in current literature of the "superstar" or "savior" leader who acts heroically to single-handedly lead an organization, only to leave the organization flailing when the leader moves on and a significant leadership void is realized. Fullan notes that instead of seeking superstar leaders, a more productive focus would be to seek out "clear-headed, persistent learners, with an eye on the big picture" (2011, p.21; Collins, 2001). It is through these leadership traits and a stewardship of the district vision that districts are able to maintain focus on meeting the learning needs of all students, even during times of change or limited resources.

Collins also discusses the importance of creating a "climate where truth is heard," which is especially challenging given the complexity of today's educational systems (2001, p. 74). To accomplish this, Collins identified four basic practices: (a) leading with questions, not answers; (b) engaging in dialogue and debate, not coercion; (c) conducting autopsies, without blame; and (d) building in "red flag" mechanisms (2001, p. 75-9). There is a significant overlap with these practices and the core leadership lenses of the IASA School of Advanced Leadership program.

As an outgrowth of Greenleaf's examination of servant leadership and Collins' and Fullan's beliefs that optimal organizational leadership comes from a type of shared leadership, distributed leadership may serve as an appropriate theoretical model for viewing the leadership style necessary for 21st century superintendents.

Advanced leadership skills by superintendents are required in order to affect the large-scale changes necessary to ensure that all children achieve to their potential. Large-scale change in transforming school districts into high-reliability organizations

necessitates distributive leadership from superintendents in that they must view districts through both the formal and informal organizational structures in order to adequately respond to the needs of the district (Spillane & Coldren, 2011).

Distributive leadership in schools can be described as educational leadership focused on enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, while creating a shared culture of expectations that supports the organizational coherence around common goals that are necessary for a school district to become a high-reliability organization (Elmore, 2004). Additionally, distributive leadership involves activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organizational members or are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices (Spillane, 2006).

The term distributive leadership may lead one to think that accountability is somehow diminished because "everyone" is responsible for outcomes, however the opposite is actually true. According to Elmore:

"Distributive leadership does not mean that no one is responsible for the overall performance of the organization. It means, rather, that the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result" (2004, p.59).

Distributive leadership supports the organizational coherence around common goals that is necessary for a school district to become a high-reliability organization (Elmore, 2004). It requires superintendents to have a high-level view of all of the inner-workings of the district, as well as the willingness and ability to be "hands-on" at times and directly involved in key tasks. A metaphor for this would be a ballroom that has a balcony overlooking the dance floor. In this example, a superintendent would typically assume a balcony view of the dance floor. However, at times the superintendent would enter the dance floor and participate in the dance, and then return to the balcony once the dance is finished (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Distributive leadership also provides an analytic framework through which to view a given school district. According to Spillane and Coldren, three distributive perspectives are of importance with respect to the work of superintendents: the leader-plus aspect, the practice aspect, and the situational aspect (2011). The combination of these three aspects gives some insight to the need for job-embedded professional development for 21st century superintendents.

First, the leader-plus aspect acknowledges the presence of a number of leaders, both formal and informal, within any given school district (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). This leadership is spread throughout the school district both intentionally and accidentally. Leadership may be intentionally distributed through the work of various committees, but then unintentional teacher leaders may excel within a given committee and force other leaders to reconsider certain roles and responsibilities.

Secondly, the practice aspect looks beyond the roles and responsibilities of leaders within the district and instead focuses on the interactions among the various

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leaders and their followers. It is through this practice aspect that individual behaviors are deemphasized and collaborative, collective, and coordinated distributed leadership behaviors are viewed as important for success (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). According to Spillane and Coldren, collaborative distribution occurs when two or more leaders work together on the same project, at the same time (2011). An example of this would be two leaders who are co-facilitating a workshop. They are working together on the same project, at the same time, towards the same outcome. Collective distribution occurs when two or more work on a common project, but independent of each other. This might occur when a building-wide instructional coach and a literacy coach both work with a team of second grade teachers to improve writing instruction.   Finally, coordinated distribution takes place when multiple leaders work on different parts of the same project, each being interdependent on the other's success (2011). This might involve a building principal accessing the necessary supports for a grade level to have a common planning time, a literacy coach working with teachers to provide job-embedded modeling in order to increase the fidelity of a given writing strategy, and teacher leaders creating common assessments and analyzing the results with the entire team.

The third distributive perspective, the situational aspect, examines how organizational routines and tools enable and constrain leadership practice (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). The situational aspect looks deeply at organizational routines that lead to a recognizable and predictable pattern of behaviors. Examples of the situational aspect of leadership include not only the process a grade level team might look at student assessment data throughout the year, but also the tools they use and the questions they might ask as a result of the data analysis. It is the combination of these three distributive

leadership perspectives that requires an examination of the necessary professional development to support the learning of school superintendents.

Consideration of these principles in a professional development framework for superintendents are important because not only do they address the learning needs of leaders, but also the learning of all members. The principles of distributive leadership have significant overlap with the principles of effective professional development, as well as the coaching and mentoring models for professional development.

Social Justice Theory

If superintendents are to lead the way for schools to close the achievement gap for all learners, then they will need to have the desire and ability to remove barriers that "derive from economic, social, cultural, linguistic, gender, or other sources of discrimination or disadvantage" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p.25). While there has always been a need for educational leaders to address issues that are related to learner diversity, previously mentioned changes to the role of superintendents over the last decade have created a renewed sense of urgency.

To realize the democratic ideal, superintendents need to seek out ways to reach out to students and families who are most marginalized, for whatever reason, by our society. This is because a distributed perspective closely examines the relationships between leadership and management practice and classroom instruction (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). If this is true, then district-level leaders need to possess a belief system that is rooted in social justice theory in order to be fully committed to using distributed leadership practices to empower building-level leaders to create cultures of caring and acceptance in every school, in spite of barriers or resistance. Lyman, Strachan, and

Lazaridou have shown the importance of the values held by an organization's leadership in affecting the behavior of the organization as a whole (2012). Overlap exists between the values of social justice theory and distributed leadership. Just as distributed leadership takes a holistic view of the relationships between and among various leaders and followers as previously noted, social justice theory examines ways leaders influence others through expanded circles of concern (Lyman et al., 2012).

Today's superintendents require professional development that enables them to develop a distributive leadership approach so that they are able to support building principals in their efforts to cultivate inclusive school cultures. In a review of the research, principals who were effective in promoting a democratic culture within their school were committed to all students, had compassion for students and their families, and had confidence in the intellectual abilities of all students (Tillman, 2004). However, before exploring the topic further, a definition of social justice for leadership is necessary.

Social justice leadership in schools can be defined as leaders who "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). To that end, social justice is defined by the actions of the leaders and on a broad sense, how leaders deal with basic human rights and a sense of fairness (Lyman et al., 2012). Social justice leadership for superintendents means that they must support principals when they are confronted with resistance to their efforts. This resistance could be displayed by groups who want to maintain the "momentum of the status quo, obstructive staff attitudes or beliefs, insular and privileged

parent expectations, and even the daily demands of the principalship" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 238).

In order to counter the resistance to changes in the social justice landscape, superintendents must model social justice leadership by ensuring that all district and building-level leaders eliminate ineffective programs, enhance the social justice capacity of the staff, and most of all raise the achievement levels for each student. Ensuring that this occurs will require the use of ongoing equity audits that examine disparities among various subgroups. As a final link back to the reason students attend school in the first place, to learn, it has been found that when principals believed it was their moral obligation to focus on the academic achievement of marginalized students, the students benefited through increased test scores and resistance to social justice leadership was reduced (Theoharis, 2007).

Instructional Leadership

Superintendents are now, more than ever required to believe in and be committed to, "learning as the fundamental purpose of school, diversity as an asset, continuous professional growth and development, lifelong learning, collaboration with all stakeholders, high expectations for all, and student learning" (Sanders & Kearney, 2008, p. 16). This is a significant departure from the traditional role of superintendents and requires the development of a strong professional culture throughout the district, ensuring rigorous curriculum and instruction, and providing systems of assessment and accountability (Sanders & Kearney, 2008). In order for 21st century superintendents to be leaders of learning, they will need to have an unprecedented focus on the coherence and effectiveness of the instructional program.

Instructional program coherence can be defined as, "a set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and are pursued over a sustained period" (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Byrk, 2001, p. 299). To observe program coherence in action, one would look for the following indicators: (a) an instructional framework that is understood and used by all staff in the district to guide teaching, learning, and assessment practices; (b) working conditions for all staff that show support for the instructional framework, including hiring practices, evaluations, and professional development; and (c) the strategic coordination of supports and resources (Newmann et al., 2001).

In addition to creating and sustaining a strong professional culture, superintendents must focus on curriculum and instructional practices. Marzano addressed the need for leadership of a rigorous curriculum and instruction, as well as a system for assessment and accountability through a meta-analysis of 27 reports involving 1,210 school districts (2009). As a result of his research, Marzano was able to establish a statistically significant correlation between district-level administrative actions and average student achievement (2009). Marzano postulates that the key district-level leadership actions required to support student achievement involve establishing nonnegotiable district goals that are focused on achievement and instruction (2009).

Embedded in the leadership actions provided by Marzano is the concept of schools performing as tightly-coupled system, as opposed to the traditional loosely-coupled education systems (Weick, 1982). This parallels the idea of the high reliability organization: the failure of some students is unacceptable just as a nuclear accident or

plane crash is unacceptable. The key to student achievement is for the superintendent to ensure that once collaboratively created, nonnegotiable goals for student achievement and instruction are established, that effective monitoring processes with related professional learning systems are in place.   Effective monitoring practices that are focused on student achievement include ensuring that the district curriculum is aligned with state standards, the widespread use of formative classroom assessments by all students, appropriate supports for underperforming students, and reporting and monitoring mechanisms that demonstrate student growth based on various topics (Marzano, 2011; Schlecty, 2005). In order to accomplish the effective monitoring practices outlined by Marzano, superintendents will need to understand and model the use of best practices for student learning.

As emphasis of the importance for superintendents to focus on the learning of all students, Wilmore stated that in order "to provide an effective instructional program, superintendents must lead the district in the application of best practices to enhance student learning" (2011, p. 36). Since superintendents come from various educational backgrounds (i.e., math teachers, literature teachers, first grade teachers, and physical education teachers), it is imperative that they have an understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach in a 21st century classroom with a cross disciplinary emphasis. Additionally, superintendents need to establish learning as the priority, facilitate discussions around best practices, implement professional development plans to support learning, and then monitor the effects of the activities.

The importance of professional development for superintendents in the area of teaching and learning was reinforced through the most recent annual study of Illinois

superintendents. In the study, superintendents cited teaching and learning as one of the top priorities for their own professional development (Durflinger & Maki, 2007). Given the nature of our understanding of teaching and learning, it is safe to assume that as the need for professional development for classroom teachers will remain high throughout their careers, so will similar professional development needs for superintendents.

Section Two: Professional Development for Educational Leaders

Introduction

There is a need for a more effective model of professional development for practicing educational leaders, including superintendents, because the traditional workshops, conferences, Administrators' Academies, and in-services that have been a staple for educational leaders in Illinois for years are not capable of producing the results necessary. Terms such as sporadic, inauthentic, disconnected, and unresponsive have been used by scholars when referring to these traditional approaches of professional development (Sappington, Pacha, Baker, & Gardner, 2012). In order for school districts to realize significant gains in closing the achievement gaps for students, a framework of formal and systematic professional development that focuses on both the individual and collective growth of the administrators is essential (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Based on adult learning theory, professional development for superintendents must recognize the fact that they are members of a community of practitioners (Wenger & Lave, 1991). There needs to be interaction between both novice and experienced superintendents and expert sources that provides focused learning on how to fully

participate in communities of knowledge and practice (Wenger & Lave, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011).

Traditional methods of professional development such as workshops, conferences, and in-services have been shown to have between 5-15% effectiveness with respect to application of new concepts, while coaching as a form of professional development has been shown to have between 80-90% effectiveness enabling adult learners to acquire new skills (Reiss, 2007). Additionally, the infusion of professional learning communities into the landscape of professional development for public education over the past decade, as well as the more recent concept of networked improvement communities, has demonstrated the need for ongoing and job-embedded adult learning that is focused on continuously monitoring and assessing measureable goals and outcomes in order to positively impact student achievement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Penuel & Riel, 2007; Moolenaar, 2010). Therefore, further examination of the use of a coaching model coupled with a networked improvement community for professional development is warranted. One example of executive coaching embedded in a networked improvement community as a model of professional development is the IASA School of Advanced Leadership (ISAL), which was developed by the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA).

The ISAL cohort program was designed to fill the gap in professional learning for superintendents through a combination of on-site seminars, professional social networks, and executive coaching. A program such as ISAL was needed because few cohesive professional development programs existed for practicing superintendents in Illinois and surveys have shown that many principals and superintendents do not believe that

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university programs have adequately prepared them for the challenges they will face in schools (Sun, 2011). Superintendents have been shown to have a concerted interest in their own professional learning, although meaningful opportunities have not been readily available for experienced superintendents and only minimal opportunities have existed for novice superintendents (Orr, 2007).

It is generally agreed upon by researchers that in order to be impactful on large-scale change, professional development for educational leaders should: (a) be focused on the instructional needs and student outcomes of the school district; (b) provide opportunities for collegial interaction through a collaborative culture, dialogue, and feedback; (c) be connected to sources of external expertise, while allowing for superintendent flexibility; and (d) be sustained and continuous (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; VanClay, Soldwedel, & Many, 2011). Professional development for educational leaders needs to be driven by the gap between student achievement goals and actual results with the learners involved in the process of identifying their own learning needs. In addition to being job-embedded and continuous, professional development needs to be provided through expert sources in order to deepen the theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned and so that it may be integrated into a comprehensive or large-scale change process (Hawley & Valli,1999). When these attributes are present in leadership development programs, studies have shown positive impacts on the superintendents' ability to establish goals and direction for themselves, as well as their districts; create a shared focus for district activities; further develop the district leadership team; and increase community engagement (Orr, 2007; Teitel, 2006).

Professional Development Frameworks

A professional development model that compliments the eight principles provided by Hawley and Valli is the Adult Dyadic Learning Process Model (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Marx, 2009). The Adult Dyadic Learning Process Model was developed by researching the dyadic interactions of both coaches/coaches and mentors/mentees. Commonalities in the one-on-one relationships in both coaching and mentoring were documented and five overarching themes, with twenty subsets, were identified. The five themes included: (a) Learner-Oriented, (b) Openness, (c) Exemplifying, (d) Friendship, and (d) Trust (Marx, 2009).

The Leaner-Oriented Theme enabled mentees and coaches to move towards self-efficacy, albeit to various degrees. Sub-themes included the experiences being goal directed, or focused on results; a high value placed on honest feedback; reciprocity was prevalent in the experiences and was exhibited through significant "give and take" in the relationships; and positive criticism was valued.

The Openness Theme allowed participants to share freely. Sub-themes included empowerment through a free sharing of perspectives: (a) listening, which was critical to the two-way learning process; (b) commonalities, such as both participants coming from the same perspective; and (c) transparency, which proved to be critical in building trust for dyadic learning.

The Exemplifying Theme allowed for the modeling necessary to facilitate learning. The ability for participants to learn from each other's experiences was critical. Sub-themes included expert practice, which was exhibited through role playing or intense discussions about a situation; expert knowledge, whether used by a coach to lead the

coachee through questioning or by a mentor to advise a mentee, proved valuable; role modeling, provided a sense of comfort for the coaches/mentees in knowing that solutions were possible; and experience sharing, through which both the learners and instructors felt enriched.

The Friendship Theme impacted the affective domain of learning and centered on the relationships that developed between coaches/coaches and mentors/mentees. Sub-themes included familiarity, which enabled the conversations to go deeper over time; food and drink, which participants felt made the exchange of ideas flow more naturally; relaxed atmosphere, showed that as stress levels were reduced, perceived learning increased; and intimacy, was seen as important factor on the learning environment when comparing the difference between meeting face-to-face, as opposed to over the phone or via e mail. While at first this theme might not seem to be as relevant as the others, it is important not to underestimate its value to the process.

The value of the Friendship Theme was documented in one of the few research-based programs designed specifically for novice superintendents by a major university, the New Superintendent Seminar Series. One of the noted key components was the importance of the "open and supportive group, as evidenced by observation and participant feedback. Participants underscored its importance by staying together during meals and breaks, staying in the same dorms (when possible), and creating group norms on getting to know each other during breaks" (Orr, 2007, p.338).

The final theme, the Trust Theme, is an essential underlying component as to whether or not the dyadic relationships would be meaningful. Sub-themes included confidentiality, which was essential when dealing with business or personal issues;

action-learning, which involved the use of real problems into the learning environment and then working collaboratively to solve them; self-disclosure, which meant transparency not only to oneself, but also to the other dyad member; and deep conversation, which was shown to flourish in the one-to-one settings.

Collectively, the five themes of the Adult Dyadic Learning Model serve as a way of viewing the impact coaching or mentoring models have on the professional development of both novice and experienced superintendents. If we were to analyze coaching or mentoring through the Adult Dyadic Learning Model and then compare it to the eight principles for professional development provided by Hawley and Valli, we would see consistent overlap and a dynamic interaction between the model and principles. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Professional Development and Dyadic Learning Model

Principles for Professional Development (Hawley & Valli, 1999)	**Adult Dyadic Learning Process Model** (Marx, 2009)
1. Driven by the gap between student achievement goals and actual results	**Learner-Oriented** - Goal Directed
2. Involve the learners in the process of identifying their own learning needs	**Learner-Oriented** - Goal Directed, Feedback **Openness** – Empowerment, Listening
3. Job embedded	**Trust** – Action Learning **Exemplifying** – Expert Practice
4. Organized around collaborative problem-solving	**Learner-Oriented** - Goal Directed, Feedback, Reciprocity, Positive Criticism **Openness** – Listening, Commonalities, Transparency

Table Continues

5. Continuous and on-going	**Trust** – Action Learning, Confidentiality, Deep Conversation **Friendship** – Familiarity, Relaxed Atmosphere, Intimacy
6. Provided by experts or using expert sources	**Exemplifying** – Role Modeling, Experience Sharing
7. Deepen the theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned	**Exemplifying** – Expert Practice, Expert Knowledge, Role Modeling, Experience Sharing
8. Integrated into a comprehensive or large-scale change process	**Exemplifying** – Expert Practice, Expert Knowledge, Role Modeling, Experience Sharing **Learner-Oriented** - Goal Directed **Trust** – Action Learning

As observed in Table 1, the Dyadic Learning Model, which incorporates the coaching and mentoring models, successfully aligns with the eight principles. Given the successful combination of these eight principles for professional development and the coaching/mentoring models, a replicable framework is still needed in order to determine the implications for the professional development of practicing superintendents.

Limited studies have been completed to examine models for professional development would best support experienced superintendents in their pursuit of creating and sustaining high-reliability school districts. Current professional development options include structured state-level programs sponsored by professional organizations, such as the IASA School of Advanced Leadership and the Missouri Academy for New Superintendents, which utilize varying forms of professional learning communities, networked improvement communities, mentoring, and coaching.

ISAL Theory of Change

In response to the lack of impactful professional development models for superintendents, the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) created the IASA School of Advanced Leadership (ISAL) for the purpose of providing current Illinois superintendents with meaningful experiences that build exemplary knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are essential for positively impacting student achievement in their respective districts. This is accomplished through an intended transformation of both the superintendent and school district (ISAL, 2014).

With an ultimate focus on improving student achievement in Illinois, ISAL has two stated outcomes: (a) to create leadership coherence that results in skillful and transformative influence on district learning systems; and (b) to develop leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions that result in program, policy, and process alignment and the achievement of district student learning goals (ISAL, 2014). The first ISAL cohort was established in 2010 and at this point, two ISAL cohort programs have been completed thus far, each designed to be two years in length. ISAL I included 23 graduates and ISAL II, began in January, 2013 with 22 participants (Illinois Association of School Administrators, 2013).

The ISAL theory of change is aligned with the strategies identified by Senge that lead to a deep learning cycle. This is accomplished by integrating the learning with the ISAL participants' role as a superintendent; connecting the learning with other members of each superintendent's leadership team; providing opportunities for practice and a feedback loop; connecting with the core business of the superintendents, which is student

achievement; building learning communities that extend beyond the actual ISAL

program; and embedded reflection through the use of coaches (Senge, 2006).

According to the ISAL Academy Overview document, in order to accomplish

these two learning outcomes, dual learning pathways are provided to participants (2014).

The learning pathways and their components are as follows:

Path One: Adaptive Performance Challenge to Lead District Improvement and
Innovation
  Components
- Assessment of Core Organizational Purpose: Vision/Mission/Goals
- Data based assessment of current state
- Assessment of Coherence (Programs, Processes, Policies to district learning goals)
- Gap Analysis and district performance goal development
- Leadership learning across five research-based lenses linked to student achievement
- Professional District Leadership planning with benchmarking linked to student achievement
- Ongoing *performance* coaching

Path Two: Leadership Development Challenge to Transform Self as Leader
  Components
- Assessment of Core Values/Personal Vision
- Assessment of Coherence within leadership practice (360, self)
- Gap analysis and leadership goal development related to skills needed to accomplish the district plan
- Leadership learning across five research based lenses linked to student learning
- Personal Growth Planning with benchmarking related to leadership behaviors
- Ongoing *development* coaching focused on leadership behaviors

A key component in development of personal and district growth plans is the

optional 360 degree evaluation for ISAL participants. The 360 degree evaluation was

designed to provide participants with external information from various stakeholders that

would then serve as the basis for the development of the growth plans. In order to

facilitate transformational results such as those listed above, the ISAL program provides

an executive coaching model and a networked improvement community, both of which are also critical components of effective adult learning theory (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Reiss, 2007; Wenger & Lave, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

The structure of ISAL includes quarterly meetings on a weekend as a cohort group eight times over the course of the two year program. Additionally, the ISAL participants are assigned a coach, with whom they interact with online, via telephone, and in-person between the weekend cohort sessions (IASA, 2013). The coaching is provided by a practicing or retired superintendent who completed a training program on the blended coaching model provided by Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, WI. Blended coaching utilizes both instructional and facilitative coaching methods and focuses on a systems approach to school improvement (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). The core components of the ISAL program are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Core Components of the ISAL Cohort Program

Component	Content
Thematic sessions	• Quarterly meetings on weekends over the course of two years, for a total of eight sessions
Collaborative inquiry sessions	• Development of a professional network of cohort superintendents
Reflection	• Built-in reflective activities • Optional 360 degree evaluation
Individual learning activities	• Development of an Individual Growth Plan
Active Learning	• Development of a District Growth Plan
Coaching	• Sessions with coach to support the development of District and Individual Development Plans

The comparison of the components and content shown in Table 2 identifies how the ISAL cohort program utilizes the executive coaching model in conjunction with a networked improvement community. The coaching model is evident through the use of: (a) thematic sessions, which provide opportunities for learning from expert sources; (b) structured opportunities for reflection based on a 360 degree evaluation; and (c) the direct coaching opportunities. The networked improvement community is apparent through the use of collaborative inquiry sessions, as well as individual and active learning activities that require participants to develop and assess through a personal and professional growth plan.

The combination of the various ISAL program components are designed to facilitate the self-actualization of superintendents and impact their professional development of superintendents to lead school districts through the transformational changes and adaptive challenges that stand in the way of systemic change required for increased student achievement (Collins, 2001; Heifetz et. al, 2009; Senge, 2006).

While the ISAL model is designed to focus on the learning needs of both novice and experienced superintendents, Missouri currently has a professional development model in place for novice superintendents, The Missouri Academy for New Superintendents (MANS). A brief review of the MANS program is provided for a comparison to the ISAL cohort program.

The purpose of the MANS academy is to develop educational leaders in Missouri who are prepared to meet the changing role of 21st century superintendents. The MANS program seeks to accomplish this by providing a one year program intended to promote reflection, communication, the development of interpersonal skills, and a structured

program of effective mentoring (Missouri Association of School Adminstrators, 2013). The specific professional development models used include retreats, regional roundtables, and an electronic network. The program also assigns a mentor/coach to each participant.

The stated purpose of the mentor/coach component is "to assist the academy member in focusing on the development and achievement of leadership goals during the course of the year" (MASA 2013). Additionally, "the mentor/coach will also be able to provide expertise on critical school district leadership topics such as finance, school law, etc." (MASA, 2013). The mentors/coaches are trained through MASA and provide both in-person sessions (four times per year) and via electronic means (i.e. telephone or e-mail contact) at least every two weeks (MASA, 2013).

With respect to MASA's implementation of a coaching/mentoring component, the fact that MASA uses the two terms "coaching and mentoring" interchangeably would indicate that there might need to be additional clarification with respect to the interchangeability of these terms, since important distinctions exist. While MANS does provide a level of support for novice superintendents in Missouri, it doesn't however meet all of the principals for adult learning as highlighted by Hawley & Valli (1999). Specifically, the length of the program, one year, is not conducive to career-long supports such as a networked improvement community component that exists in the ISAL cohort program.

Professional Learning Communities

From 1953 through 2000, research on the impact of professional social networks in education has moved from a relatively flat, minimal number each year, to a gradual

increase between 2000 and 2005, and then dramatically increased between 2005 and 2009 (Moolenaar, 2010). Social networks are an important component of professional development for educators because the networks provide a source of expertise from outside one's immediate circle, as well as enabling more individuals to become experts in various areas, rather than attempting to make everyone an "expert" on everything (Penuel & Riel, 2007).

The importance of creating professional learning communities (PLCs) in order to provide job-embedded learning and to support a guaranteed and viable curriculum is well documented (Van Clay, Soldwell, & Many, 2011; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; DuFour & Fullan, 2013). PLCs provide a "bottom-up" form of professional learning for school districts. A superintendent might benefit from a coach working with a district leadership team to serve as a guide in implementing a PLC, if that is not part of the current district culture, due to the ability of PLCs to create a common language and focus around school improvement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

PLCs are focused around three broad concepts which include: (a) ensuring that all students learn; (b) building a collaborative culture; and (c) establishing a focus on results (VanClay et al., 2011; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). Ensuring that all students learn requires that educational leaders focus on everything from a guaranteed and viable curriculum, to a balanced and cohesive system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, to school-wide pyramid of interventions. In order to build a collaborative culture, superintendents must ensure that a shared vision, mission, values, and goals exist; that high performing collaborative teams are present in all schools; and norms for

intentional collaboration within teams have been established (VanClay, et. al., 2011; Bottoms, 2010).

Since professional learning communities are typically used within a defined system such as a school or district, the model does not adequately represent the type of social learning network that exists in ISAL. Given that ISAL more closely represents an array of collectives, meaning a cohort of superintendents with common learning interests, yet differing district and professional goals, a networked improvement community provides a better description of the social learning network that is present in the ISAL cohort program. The next section provides further examination of networked improvement communities.

Networked Improvement Communities

Due to their realization that current educational research practices in the field are not addressing the issue of systemic improvement for public schools and in their subsequent pursuit of a science of improvement, Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow presented the relatively new concept of networked improvement communities (2011). Networked improvement communities (NIC) are defined as an intentionally formed social organization, sharing common interests and establishing norms for affiliation, that arranges human and technical resources for the purpose of improvement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011). NICs are an attempt to address three seemingly simple questions: (a) What problem are we trying to solve?; (b) Whose expertise is needed to solve the problem?; and (c) What are the social arrangements that will enable this work? (Bryk, et al., 2011). When these questions are viewed in relation to the ISAL cohort program, the presence of a networked improvement community is apparent.

When schools are viewed as networked learning communities, the complexity of the interactions becomes apparent, and yet it is that complexity that holds the potential for unprecedented improvement opportunities. Within educational systems, the complexity arises from the interactions of improvement attempts at the classroom level, district level, and inter-institutional levels. As long as attempts for improvement remain within the same level, the outcomes are limited. However, when the three different levels interact in a coordinated, albeit complex, arrangement to solve a common problem, they become a networked improvement community.

NIC have rules and norms for its members and sources of expertise are an integral component, just as the structure of the ISAL cohort established norms for regular meetings with various expert sources. A NIC requires common achievement targets that are shared across each member, just as ISAL establishes both common and individualized measurable learning outcomes for participants.

In order for a NIC to make progress on complex problems, a mapping process is used so that all of the components will be identified and a shared language among NIC members will be established. The first step in mapping the problem is to create an agreed upon roadmap that organizes the issues in a common space (Bryk, et al., 2011). Although the roadmap may be complex, it gives all members the ability to appreciate all of the components.   Once the roadmap has been established, a program improvement map is needed to identify the drivers, or forces causing the interactions of the various elements. The complexity of a well-done program map will reinforce the idea that there is probably not one simple solution, thus helping practitioners and policymakers avoid the pitfall of seeking a silver-bullet solution (Bryk, et al., 2011).

The final component of NIC that relates to the work of school improvement is the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) improvement cycle. The PDSA improvement model provides a structure for members of the NIC to have disciplined inquiries about the various solutions (Bryk, et al., 2011).

The ISAL cohort program, with a coaching model as the foundation, has the potential to serve as a model of a NIC in that it incorporates the concepts that Bryk, et al. believe are needed for a true NIC to exist. This is incorporated into the recommendations of the study in Chapter 5. According to Bryk, et al., a core group of leaders are needed for a successful NIC because sustained improvement efforts are not self-organizing. The leaders of the ISAL cohort have the potential to fulfill this role after the official ISAL cohort program has ended. This leadership structure could provide an integrating hub that seeks partnerships and a governance structure. It is for these reasons that the concept of NIC is integral to understanding the professional development outcomes ISAL has for superintendents.

Coaching

Coaching is a viable option that could be used to address the major issues currently facing superintendents (Haslam & Turnbull, 2011). Numerous national reports cite warning signs that something must be done to support district-level leaders. These warning signs include high turnover rates for superintendents, the perceived shortage of future leaders, conflicting state and federal mandates, a shortage of fiscal resources, and negative relationships with school boards (Reiss, 2007). Strategies to address these concerns and accompanying evaluations of the effectiveness of the strategies are needed.

Several overlapping definitions exist for executive, or leadership coaching. Coaching is a relatively new area that grew out of several fields including psychotherapy,

cognitive behavioral therapy, counseling, and consulting (Reiss, 2007). Coaching is a change process. Coaching can be defined as a collaborative alliance focusing on a results-oriented change or transformation (Natale & Diamante, 2005). A coach can be an individual who comes from either inside or outside the coachee's organization. Coaching is intended to facilitate learning by enhancing the coachee's sense of self-efficacy through increased self-awareness, skills, or knowledge. Coaching exemplifies the concept of personalized learning (Marx, 2009). According to Reiss, the International Coach Federation's definition of coaching is:

> Coaching is an ongoing relationship which focuses on the client taking action toward the realization of their visions, goals, or desires. Coaching uses a process of inquiry and personal discovery to build the client's level of awareness and responsibility and provides the client with structure, support, and feedback. The coaching process helps clients define and achieve professional and personal goals faster and with more ease than would otherwise be possible (2012, p. 4).

The coaching definition used by the International Coach Federation provides reasons why coaching has more potential to enact changes within novice and experienced superintendents, rather than simply mentoring for the purpose of skill acquisition. A coaching model allows the coachee to have more ownership of the problem, as well as the solution. In blended coaching for example, the coach is focused not only on the fact that the coachee is learning new skills, but also that the coachee is changing old ways of "being" (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). This is an example of coaching focusing on changing behaviors, not simply teaching new skills.

Superintendent professional development must be differentiated for novice, early-career, advanced-career, and veteran superintendents in order to meet changing needs throughout their respective careers (Sun, 2011). This hypothesis is based on a cumulative understanding of related literature, but warrants further study. In support for the need for additional research, Teitel shared the following:

> "For programs that use coaches, what are the best strategies coaches can use to support the superintendents and their change efforts in the district while building capacity, in preparation for the coach to no longer be involved? In what models do the coaches end up taking on too much work?" (2006, p.8)

A coaching model provides flexibility as a professional development tool because it can be used for a variety of reasons. Depending on the needs of the superintendent who is working with a coach, the goals and action plans could be related to the need to increase or gain skills, improve overall professional performance, enhance professional growth and development, or for overall organizational improvement (Reiss, 2007).   It is because of this flexibility that the coaching model serves as a viable option for career-long professional development for superintendents.

To gain a better understanding of what a coaching model attempts to accomplish with participants, it is helpful to review the core competencies required for successful coaches. According to Reiss, coaches: (a) communicate in a nonjudgmental manner; (b) ask empowering and reflective questions; (c) listen deeply; (d) remain neutral in interactions; (e) probe for potential solutions; (f) summarize and paraphrase what coachees say; (g) create a safe and trusting atmosphere; (h) help monitor/maintain

progress on action plans; (i) accept coaches for where they are currently in life; and (j) allow for space and reflection (2007, p.64).

Additionally, and distinguishing the coaching from mentoring models, coaches do not tell coachees what to do or pass judgment. In order to be successful, coaches need to be competent in four areas: (a) setting the foundation, (b) co-creating the coaching relationship, (c) communicating effectively, and (d) facilitating learning and results (Reiss, 2007). These four areas of competencies of coaching are what make the ISAL coaching model more effective than traditional mentoring.

The benefits of using coaching as a professional development model for superintendents are that it can be used to sharpen the skills of high-potential individuals, including mid-career and veteran superintendents, and also to ensure the success, or decreasing the failure rate, of novice superintendents.

Blended Coaching

A blended coaching model, as used by the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL), provides an overlap of the instructional aspects of traditional mentoring and the facilitative aspects of coaching. Blended coaching is an approach that recognizes the situations when a coachee needs support in learning new ways of "doing," as well as other times when a coachee needs to learn new ways of "being" (Bloom, et al., 2005).

Blended coaching relies on the coach's ability to fluidly vacillate between instructional coaching methods and facilitative coaching methods based on the varying needs of the coachee (Bloom, et al., 2005). For example, when a coachee needs to learn a new way of "doing," then the instructional method would be most effective approach

because the focus would be on the coach providing feedback on possible resources and strategies. This resembles what was described earlier as traditional mentoring and subsequently, runs the risk of stifling the coachee's sense of efficacy in being able to problem-solve independent of the coach.

Conversely, a blended coaching model relies on facilitative coaching methods when the coachee needs to learn new ways of "being." The facilitative approach more closely resembles what has been previously described as coaching and is more reflective and experimental in nature, develops problem-solving skills, and shifts the locus of control from the coach to the coachee (Bloom et al., 2005). This is appropriate when the coachee needs to develop a new way of approaching a situation or to gain a deeper perspective.

Blended coaching also encourages a coachee to view school improvement issues through a systems approach. The complex and simple, intentional and unintentional systems present within a school district are valued by the blended coaching model (Bloom et al., 2005). As coaches use a systems approach with the coachee, issues are identified, but rather than focusing on the superficial causes, coachees are guided to seek out the systemic causes. This leads to more productive, long-term solutions that have an impact on school improvement (Bloom et al., 2005).

Team Coaching

The potential use of a coaching model with leadership teams in order to have an impact on transformative changes within a school district is worthy of additional examination. There is scarce research or discussion about the use of a coaching model with leadership teams. The current study of coaching is predominantly focused on

coaching in a one-on-one setting. However, the idea of coaching for executive leadership teams is important when examining the ISAL cohort program because the potential exists for participating superintendents who experience coaching in the program to return to their districts and attempt to implement a coaching model with members of their administrative team. Stober notes, "there are many group efforts within organizations that might benefit from a dedicated coach, much like athletic teams benefit from someone coaching them as a whole" (2007, p.72). Reiss also provides some general guidelines for coaching a group versus an individual (2012). When working with a group, a coach will need to begin by establishing group norms and explain what coaching is and what it is not. The two models for coaching groups are coaching multiple people with a common goal or coaching multiple people with multiple goals (Reiss, 2012).

Coaching a group consisting of multiple people who have a common goal must begin with identifying the common goal. An example of this would be a district leadership team who is looking for ways to increase community involvement in each of the district's schools. Once the common goal is clearly defined, the coach structures multiple meetings in order to work with both individuals and the group as a whole. Individual members will typically have different action plans designed to accomplish the common group goal. This model is recommended for groups of four to twelve members.

Successful group coaching requires that groups remain a manageable size and that meeting timeframes are such that participants remain engaged. Similar to coaching with individuals, confidentiality is essential to success. Finally, accountability must be built into the goal setting, action planning, and progress monitoring discussions (Reiss, 2012).

The use of coaching with leadership teams in order to impact large-scale changes within districts warrants additional consideration and study. The benefits include cost-effectiveness, efficiency, creating a community of support, and building upon team strength. Challenges that require planning include: (a) maintaining confidentiality and trust; (b) mandated participation versus voluntary; and (c) the need for the coach to have advanced facilitation skills. Given the benefits and considerations of the challenges, group coaching may be included as a viable option in the framework for professional development for superintendents that will be discussed below.

Coaching versus Mentoring

Within a coaching model, the coach acts as a guide for the coachee, as opposed to a mentor, who will instruct the mentee how to best accomplish a task. While a mentor might simply just share the way "they had done it" in the past with the mentee, a coach will use a more inquiry-based approach to lead a coachee to potential solutions with a focus on reflective practices (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). In fact, a co-active coaching model assumes that the coachee is naturally quite capable of creatively problem-solving and taking necessary action (Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, & Whitworth, 2011).

While mentoring programs have been in place for classroom teachers for years, and are increasingly in place for building principals, systematic mentoring or coaching models are lacking for superintendents (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Reiss, 2007). Additionally, the terms mentoring and coaching are often used interchangeably; therefor defining each term as used in the context of educational leadership is essential.

Mentoring can be defined as a one-to-one, or dyadic, relationship in which a more experienced individual assists a less experienced individual. This occurs when the mentor assists the mentee by furthering the mentee's professional and personal development through the sharing of information, assistance, and guidance (Marx, 2009). According to Reiss, mentors guide from their own experiences, have a focus on helping novice mentees feel more comfortable in their new position, and "are not typically trained to work with the inner self, as coaches are" (2007, p.64).

Mentors can successfully assist their mentees in a variety of ways including (a) gaining procedural knowledge; (b) acquiring cognitive, skill-based, and affective learning; and (c) improving technical skills such as time management, self-organization, and self-confidence (Marx, 2009). However, mentoring is typically viewed more as the mentor teaching a mentee, whereas coaching might be viewed as a collaborative learning process rooted in reflective questioning. Mentoring will help an individual learn new skills in order to do their job more effectively, while coaching is focused on a higher level of creating meaningful and lasting change in the individual (Reiss, 2012).

Summary

In order for school districts to achieve the goal of educating each child to his or her fullest potential, superintendents and other school leaders in the organization must create large-scale change in which school systems function as high-reliability organizations with tightly coupled emphasis on student learning. The actions of all members within the school system must be aligned with a cohesive instructional focus.

The most effective type of professional learning for today's superintendents involves that which is directly linked to district improvement goals for student learning, involves superintendents sharing their learning with district leadership teams, is flexible to adapt to differentiated learning needs, and is continuous and reflective in nature. Distributive leadership theory plays an important role in the discussion of the required leadership approaches for superintendents when they are seeking to make systemic changes within school districts because a team approach is essential. The IASA School for Advanced Leadership has been designed to provide superintendents with the professional development framework to have a significant impact on the achievement of all students.

Within the ISAL model, executive coaching provides an additional support for current superintendents to make the transformational changes necessary. Distinctions between the roles of a coach and a mentor are important when discussing impactful professional development models for leaders. Blended coaching, as opposed to mentoring, provides a reflective, questioning culture in which the superintendent has the potential to move to a level of self-actualization that is necessary for addressing adaptive challenges.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

Chapter 1 discussed the unprecedented changes to the roles and responsibilities for public school superintendents in the decade since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, Coulter, 2005). During this time period, the expectations for superintendents have been altered from what formerly involved primarily management functions, to currently needing to be leaders of learning for school systems under a social justice imperative (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013; Houston, 2001; Theoharris, 2007).

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on two connected topics; the changing role of school leaders and professional development models for school leaders. Impacting the changing role of school leaders was a combination of external forces on public schools, such as accountability-focused legislation at both the federal and state levels, as well as new professional standards for school leaders. Professional development models for school leaders were also examined, with focused attention given to the IASA School for Advanced Leadership and the executive coaching model.

Chapter 3 provides details on the methodology and procedures used to describe the lived experiences of superintendents who participated in an executive coaching model

provided by the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL). Chapter 3 outlines how

the data were collected and analyzed for this utilization-focused evaluation by describing

(a) the purpose of this study; (b) research questions that are addressed; (c) the

positionality of the researcher; (d) the methodology for this knowledge-generating

evaluation; (e) the process for selecting participants; (f) data collection and analysis; and

(g) issues related to reliability, validity, and ethics (Merriam, 2002)

Purpose of the Study

This utilization-focused program evaluation describes impacts of a coaching

model on the professional learning of superintendents who participated in ISAL. This

program evaluation is a knowledge-focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative

evaluation of the ISAL cohort program. This program evaluation provides insights on the

theories that comprise the ISAL approach to executive coaching in Illinois among

superintendents by assessing the program theories. Specifically, this evaluation generates

knowledge, or lessons-learned, on a theory of change used by ISAL designers and

facilitators: that superintendents need to be adaptive leaders who focus on capacity

building throughout their respective organizations. The results are intended to inform

general practice for the ISAL development team, as opposed to providing concrete

recommendations that would be implemented immediately (Patton, 2012).

Research Questions

The impetus for the research questions in this evaluation is the ISAL program's

use of leadership coaching in support of Illinois superintendents to become high

performing leaders so that their respective school districts attain high levels of student

achievement. Since this is a utilization-focused evaluation of the ISAL program, the core

research questions were designed collaboratively by the researcher and the ISAL design team. In order to evaluate the impact of the executive coaching model used in ISAL, this program evaluation seeks to address the following questions:

1. To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value the coaching model?

   a. How did the coaching model support superintendents participating in the ISAL program?

   b. To what extent were ISAL superintendents committed to coaching process, including the frequency of meetings and the attentiveness necessary to be present regularly for coaching?

   c. What were the factors that either positively or negatively impacted the motivation of ISAL superintendents to engage their coaches?

2. What did ISAL cohort superintendents learn from their coaching experiences?

   a. How did the coaching model impact the superintendents' professional growth?

   b. How did ISAL superintendents use what they learned from the coaching approach?

Research Design

In order to deeply explore and generate insights of the research questions posed in this program evaluation, predominately qualitative research methods were employed. This utilization-focused program evaluation of the ISAL cohort program uses an integrative process/outcome approach (Patton, 2008) with a program theory emphasis (Chen, 2005). The integrative process/outcome approach involves, "the systemic

assessment of the crucial assumptions beneath implementation, and the causal processes of a program" (Chen, 2005). Integrative process/outcome evaluations rely on mixed methods to gather data about the program. According to Chen, the general steps of this type of evaluation include: (a) clarifying the program theory, (b) collecting and analyzing the data, and (c) characterizing the program in its entirety, and then by its parts (2005).

The researcher approached this evaluation with a constructivist philosophy, for the purpose of describing, understanding, and interpreting the lived experiences of participants and coaches in the ISAL program. A constructivist paradigm portrays the world as "socially constructed, complex and ever changing" (Glesne, 1999, p. 5). By approaching the study from a constructivist or interpretive perspective, the researcher assumes, "Reality is socially constructed, that is there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event" (Merriam, 2002, p. 8).

The overall purpose of this utilization-focused program evaluation is to assist the ISAL leadership in understanding the experiences of the participants and coaches and thereby have information that may be acted on for the design of subsequent ISAL programs. Qualitative research is characterized by the belief that the purpose of the research should not only be on seeking meaning and understanding, but also that the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 2002). The evaluator being viewed as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data was particularly relevant for this program evaluation in that the researcher has not only participated in a coaching process, but is also a participant in ISAL III. This issue is further described in the Positionality of the Researcher section of this chapter. In the true

spirit of qualitative research, the positionality of the researcher in this case is viewed as something that adds to the quality of the research, instead of detracting from it, since the researcher has taken an inductive approach to analyzing the data.

According to Patton, a utilization-focused program evaluation is, "Evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses….Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings" (2008, p.37). As a utilization-focused, knowledge generating evaluation of ISAL, this study acknowledges the idea that a system such as ISAL and the use of a coaching component to provide professional development for school superintendents is a complex system.

To seek a simple cause and effect answer would not likely produce the desired result for the ISAL design team (Patton, 2008). There are numerous ways to focus a program evaluation. The focus for this evaluation is to generate knowledge or "lessons learned" on the ISAL coaching experience, as opposed to monitoring, comparing, or rending a judgement on effectiveness of the program (Patton, 2008).

The distinction between a user-focused approach versus a deductive or inductive approach is the way the evaluator engages with the intended users (Patton, 2008). In this case of this dissertation, the researcher serves as the evaluator and the intended users are the ISAL design team. While inductive methodology is used as a basis for theory development, the ongoing interaction between the evaluator and ISAL leadership allows it to be characterized as a user-focused evaluation.

An inductive approach is often used by researcher when an existing theory fails to explain a phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). In this case, members of the ISAL design team were curious about the gap between their perceived relevance and efficacy of the

coaching model within the program and the reality of how ISAL participants were using the coaching model. In order to remain consistent with an inductive approach of the evaluation, the researcher employed grounded theory strategies to describe the lessons learned across multiple realities and within the context of the ISAL program (Merriam, 2002).

Grounded Theory (GT) is defined as generating a theory from data that has been systematically gathered and analyzed in the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The theory that the researcher eventually draws out of the data is closely intertwined with the data collection and analysis. To successfully create grounded theory, researchers use a constant comparative method to, "build theories from the ground up by inductively analyzing their data not only after they collect it, but also as they are collecting it" (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffle, 2014, p. 382).   This is accomplished by first coding the data, then systematically comparing the data across categories, next creating themes, and finally identifying a theory (Vogt et. al, 2014).

Grounded theory also enables the researcher to identify, "flexible guidelines, rather than rigid prescriptions" (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). Particularly useful in a program evaluation, grounded theory focuses on studying the phenomenon or process that is occurring. Grounded theory provides a means by which a more complete picture of the entire setting is obtained. The result is a description of relationships between and across categories (Charmaz, 2006). The processes used to develop grounded theory served as an integral role in analyzing the data for this evaluation, however the final step of actually establishing a grounded theory was not conducted due to the fact that this was a utilization-focused, knowledge generating evaluation of ISAL.

Finally, there is a question in utilization-focused evaluations about the extent the evaluator engages the end-user in establishing a theory for the evaluation (Patton, 2008). For the purpose of this dissertation, establishing a theory with the ISAL design team is not an issue. The ISAL leaders designed the program based on a systems framework, which is perfectly aligned with the focus of this evaluation. A system framework has five basic premises: a) the whole is greater than the sum of the parts; (b) parts are interdependent such that a change in one part has implications for all parts and their interrelationships; (c) the focus is on interconnected relationships; (d) systems are made up of subsystems and function within larger systems; and (e) systems boundaries are necessary and inevitably arbitrary (Patton, 2008, p. 365-67). This alignment of a systems theory for the evaluation being conducted with a systems approach utilized by the ISAL design team creates the potential for a meaningful product when the final evaluation is ultimately shared.

Data Sources

Data for this knowledge-generating program evaluation was derived from: (a) ISAL participant surveys, (b) interviews of both the participants and coaches, and (c) a review of the available individual and district growth plans of the participants. These three components were originally selected for this program evaluation because they will provide the data necessary to identify patterns of effectiveness and provide general lessons that could be learned from using a coaching model in the ISAL cohort program (Patton, 2012).

Participant Selection and Sampling

In order to maximize the pool of willing participants, the assistance of IASA and ISAL leadership was obtained. It was the evaluator's intent to increase the likelihood of participation by partnering with IASA to invite the former ISAL cohort members to participate in the study and to let them know that IASA and ISAL leadership is interested in the results of the study. Each of the participants from the ISAL I (N=23) and ISAL II (N=21) cohorts were sent a Letter of Consent and invited to participate in the survey portion of the study (see Appendix A). The letters were sent to the e mail addresses of ISAL participants provided to the researcher by the ISAL leadership. All ISAL cohort members who responded had the opportunity to complete an online survey (see Appendix B). The survey results were then analyzed to determine the order in which survey participants would be invited to participate in the interview phase.

After the initial e mail, a follow up e mail was sent approximately three weeks later to those who had not responded to the original request in order to verify that they had received the original e mail. No other requests were made, as per the approved IRB 2014-0274 protocol.

An information-orientated selection of interviewees was used to determine which survey respondents would be invited for an interview. The information-orientated selection process was appropriate because the researcher sought maximum variation cases, or cases that will provide "information about the significance of different and perhaps opposing circumstances" (Brinkman, 2013, p. 58).

The survey results were then analyzed and through the use of maximum variation sampling, invitations to participate in the interview phase were sent in sequential order

based on the respondents' ranking of the effectiveness of the coaching as being either the most significant or least significant part of the ISAL experience (Brinkman, 2013; Merriam, 2002). As interviewers were conducted, the two extremes were sought out first, then working towards the more common respondents. This continued until the researcher determined the point of data saturation had been reached from the interviews (Vogt et. al., 2012). A total of 18 interviews were recorded and transcribed out of a pool of 29 possible participants.

Surveys

The purpose of the surveys was to: (a) obtain demographic information, (b) compare the different ISAL components, (c) gain insights on the effectiveness of the coaching model in order to assist with the interview phase, and (d) to rate the perceived overall effectiveness of the ISAL program. The survey was appropriate as an initial information gathering tool because: (a) the size of the pool of potential respondents; (b) the questions were predominantly structured, forced choice questions; and (c) this information needed to come directly from the ISAL cohort participants (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012).

The online survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey, a well-known online survey company. The survey consisted of 20 questions consisting of the following breakdown: seven demographic questions, twelve forced-choice, and one open-ended question. Out of the 12 forced-choice questions, eight were Likert-scale, three were information-gathering, and one was open-ended. The Likert-scale questions used a five point scale.

Each of the 23 participants from the ISAL I cohort and the 21 participants from the ISAL II cohort were invited to participate in the survey portion of the study (see Appendix A). A total of 29 out of the 44 ISAL I and II participants completed the survey, giving it a response rate of 66%.

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to describe the lived experiences of coaches and coachees during the ISAL experience. A total of 18 interviews were conducted and of those, nine were coachees, five were coaches, and four were both a coach and coachee. The interview questions were semi-structured in that the wording of the questions was predetermined with an interview protocol, yet the questions were used flexibly during the interviews based on the participants' responses and the need to ask probing or follow-up questions (Merriam, 2009). The types of questions asked were categorized as either experience/behavior questions or opinion/values questions (Patton, 2002). The resulting data was analyzed through the use of open-coding in order to identify recurring patterns or common themes in the initial round of coding (Merriam, 2002). Interview questions for coachees and coaches may be found in Appendix D.

The interviews were recorded with the interviewee's permission and then transcribed to facilitate the coding process. Interviews were primarily conducted via telephone, with one face-to-face interview. This was due to geographic distance required to be traveled for a face-to-face interview was prohibitive for both interviewees and the evaluator. During the interviews, both clarifying and elaborating probes were used to gather additional data (Creswell, 2008). The length of each interview was typically around 30 minutes, however in each case ample time was allowed to adequately

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understand the interviewee's perspective on ISAL's use of the coaching model (Vogt, et. al., 2012).

Document Analysis

After the interviews, documentation related to the ISAL participants individual and district growth goals was requested from participants and reviewed by the researcher. The return rate of documents was low, with only three complete sets returned.   While the return rate was lower than the researcher had hoped for, the growth plans were analyzed and the results provided a minimal level of triangulation for the surveys and interviews. The intended purpose of analyzing the growth plans was to identify what the coaching process involved, as well as what work the coach and coachee focused on during their meetings. Although the document analysis portion of this program evaluation did not occur as planned, the evaluator acknowledges there is a limited negative impact on the overall study because a thorough analysis of the documents may have provided insights to the ways in which coaching might have supported the ISAL participants in their growth process.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

Given a continuum of the purposes of research, which ranges anywhere from explanatory/confirmatory to descriptive/exploratory, the nature of these interviews were descriptive/exploratory (Vogt et al., 2012). The results of the interviews were transcribed and then the data was deconstructed and rebuilt to identify patterns and create themes. This was accomplished through an in-depth process that used open-coding, axial coding, abduction, and constant comparison strategies with respect to the five ISAL lenses: (a)

vision for learning; (b) coherence; (c) relationships/culture; (d) change - technical and adaptive; and (e) capacity building.

To accomplish the open coding of the interview transcripts, each discrete idea provided by the participant was coded to represent an underlying concept that links to the use of a coaching model and/or its perceived effectiveness (Merriam, 2002). This is also referred to as the act of analyzing a whole sentence or paragraph in order to identify the major idea (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this process the researcher's interaction with the data was exploratory in nature and the researcher remained open to any theoretical possibilities that might be discovered (Charmaz, 2006).

In order to organize the data into a format that could be analyzed at a deeper level, each discrete idea was entered into a spreadsheet. The interview data resulted in a total of 477 discrete statements. Initially the data were looked at individually to create open codes that were tightly aligned to the interviewee's meaning as possible.

Throughout the open coding process of labeling and categorizing the discrete ideas, the researcher paid particular attention to the range of potential meanings for words or terms (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As this process of deconstructing the data was completed, the researcher then began to reconstruct the data using axial coding.

In order to reassemble the data that was fractured into meaningful categories and themes, the researcher used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding is defined by Strauss & Corbin as, "The act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions" (1998, p. 124). These categories were then linked to the ISAL lenses.

After the evaluator identified categories and subcategories using axial coding, the data was then grouped into two broad categories that were aligned with the two core evaluation questions, (a) identifying the value of the ISAL coaching model, and (b) identifying the learning that resulted from the ISAL coaching model. Of the 477 discrete statements, 252 statements related to how the clients and coaches valued the coaching model, and 225 statements related to what the clients or coaches learned from the coaching model, relating to the second evaluation question.

It should be noted that disagreement exists among leaders in the field of grounded theory as to the productive use of axial coding in its truest form (Vogt, et al., 2012). Although a grounded theory was not generated for this evaluation, grounded theory processes were utilized to analyze the data. Given varied thoughts on the productive use of axial coding, instead of strictly using axial as provided by Strauss & Corbin, the researcher used axial coding as a process or strategy to identify categories and subsequent subcategories in order to derive meaning from the data (Charmaz, 2006). When done in conjunction with constant comparison and abduction, the result was effective in identifying themes for this knowledge-generating program evaluation.

The process of constant comparison during open coding was utilized until the data reached a point of saturation, or when not only patterns were identified, but also no new ideas or concepts emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Vogt, et. al., 2014). Constant comparison can be defined as, "The recording and gradual development of more refined codes and categories that continues as evidence is gathered" (Vogt, et al., 2014, p. 392). The researcher used constant comparison in conjunction with theoretical sampling to identify themes for the categories that were created during the axial coding stage of the

process. Although open coding, axial coding, and theoretical sampling are presented here as what might be perceived as a linear process, in reality the process was fluid and the researcher moved back and forth throughout the data analysis.

As the analysis progressed, theoretical sampling allowed the researcher to align the original 477 discrete ideas into five themes. These themes included: (a) vision for learning; (b) coherence; (c) relationships/culture; (d) change-technical and adaptive; and (e) capacity building. Developing the five themes originally proved challenging until the researcher used the idea of abduction. Abduction first required the evaluator to acknowledge that themes or theories do not simply emerge from the data, but rather that the evaluator plays an active role in that process (Vogt, et al., 2014). Simply put, abduction involved the evaluator taking a step back from the problem and allowing his mind to "be abducted" as new or creative approaches to solutions could be identified Vogt, el al., 2014).

This process led the researcher to refocusing on the purpose of the study, which is a utilization-focused program evaluation, and to test the systems theory used by ISAL in creating the program. Ultimately, the five themes that were identified for aligning the categories were the same categories used by ISAL.

Positionality of the Researcher

In order to address concerns related to validity of this research, the positionality of the researcher must be addressed in relation to the program being evaluated (Merriam, 2002). The researcher is a practicing superintendent in the state of Illinois and is currently participating in the third cohort of the ISAL program, ISAL III. The data analyzed in this study was obtained from the ISAL I and ISAL II cohort participants and

their coaches. Finally, the researcher's interest in the topic of executive coaching models for school leaders is rooted in positive experiences with an informal coaching experience as a new superintendent.

In order to address any issues related to researcher bias, Merriam suggests several strategies for promoting validity and reliability, including the following that were utilized when conducting this research: (a) triangulation; (b) adequate engagement in data collection; (c) researcher's position or reflexivity; (d) peer review; and (e) the use of rich, thick descriptions (2009).

First, in order to achieve triangulation of data, all ISAL I and ISAL II cohort superintendents were invited to participate in this study. This enhanced the ability of the researcher to triangulate the data received from the surveys and one-on-one interviews with coaches and clients. The results of each survey respondent were included in the final analysis and subsequent interviews were conducted with each willing participant to the point of data saturation. Next, the amount of time spent during the data collection phase spanned several months and was significant. This enabled the researcher to become sufficiently submerged in the data that patterns (Merriam, 2002).   Additionally during this time, and also during the coding process, peer review was utilized on a limited basis. A more focused peer review process will also be conducted during the submission of the final evaluation to the ISAL leadership. Finally, rich, thick descriptions from the interviews are provided in the Chapter 4. These descriptions will provide context and a meaningful connection to the survey data that was obtained for the evaluation.

Validity and Reliability

Several steps were taken in order to address the issues of reliability and validity of throughout the coding process. First and foremost, the researcher remained close to the data throughout the open-coding process by continuously remaining cognizant of the respondents' intended meaning and often referring back to notes taken during or immediately following the interviews (Charmaz, 2006). This enabled the researcher to maintain the integrity of the participants' words, while minimizing the unintentional infusion of the researcher's point of view.

With respect to reliability, the issue of consistency of the coding must be addressed (Vogt, et. al., 2012). For this research, verbal coding, as opposed to numerical coding, was used, therefore quantifying the correlation coefficient was not possible. Verbal coding, however, is appropriate for analyzing the interview transcripts due to the relatively small size of the number of interviews (Vogt, et. al., 2012). Since the threats to consistency typically arise when conducting observations and especially with multiple observers, and the data for this program evaluation will come from open-coding of interview transcripts by a single researcher, the probability for high levels of consistency exists.

Summary

The combined utilization-focused and grounded theory approaches to evaluation has resulted in an inductive, knowledge-generating analysis that is based on the lived experiences of twenty-six participants of the ISAL cohort for superintendents. The program evaluation focused on the use of a coaching model to support the professional

learning of practicing superintendents. The results are intended to inform general

practice in the field, specifically the members of the ISAL leadership and design teams.

This knowledge-generating program evaluation consisted of participant surveys,

interviews of the ISAL participants, interviews of the ISAL coaches, and a limited

document analysis of the participants' ISAL growth plans. These four components

provided the data necessary to identify patterns of effectiveness and to provide general

lessons that could be learned from the use of a coaching model in professional

development programs for educational leaders.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this utilization-focused, knowledge

generating, program evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to describe the impact

of a coaching model on the professional learning of superintendents who participated in

the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (Patton, 2008). This program evaluation

provides a knowledge-focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative evaluation of the

IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL) cohort program.

The findings presented in this chapter are organized around the primary research

questions, which is consistent with the recommended format for a utilization-focused

evaluation (Patton, 2008). The chapter includes three sections. The first section

discusses the survey results and participant interviews. The second section presents the

findings for the research question: "To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents

find value the coaching model?" The third section presents the findings for the research

question, "What did ISAL superintendents learn as a result of their coaching

experiences?" Sections two and three also address the sub questions associated with the

two central research questions.

Additionally, sections two and three are organized around the five themes

identified by the ISAL program. These themes included: (a) vision for learning; (b)

coherence; (c) relationships/culture; (d) change-technical and adaptive; and (e) capacity

building. Pseudonyms have been used in the presentation of these findings in order to

protect the anonymity of the participants.

Section One: Survey Results and Participant Interviews

Survey Results

The purpose of the surveys was to obtain demographic information, compare the

different ISAL components, gain insights on the effectiveness of the coaching model to

assist with the interview phase, and to rate the perceived overall effectiveness of the

ISAL program. In order to maximize the pool of participants, each of the participants

from the ISAL cohort I (N=23) and ISAL cohort II (N=21) were invited to participate in

the initial survey portion of the study. A total of 29 out of the 44 ISAL I and II

participants completed the survey, giving it a response rate of 66%.

To begin with, the overall satisfaction of participants with their entire ISAL

experience was overwhelmingly positive. When survey participants were asked about

their overall satisfaction with the ISAL I cohort program and given the response choices:

(a) extremely satisfied, (b) very satisfied, (c) moderately satisfied, (d) slightly satisfied, or

(e) not at all satisfied, 22 responded with "extremely satisfied" and six said they were

"very satisfied." The lowest rating was one response of "moderately satisfied."   This

overall satisfaction for the ISAL experience provides important context as the various

ISAL components are more closely examined.

Over the course of the two year ISAL experience, participants attend quarterly

weekend "instructional" sessions, have opportunities for structured and unstructured

networking, and receive coaching related to their individual and district growth plans. Survey participants were given the opportunity to rate their perceived benefit of the various components: (a) quarterly weekend sessions, (b) professional networking opportunities, and (c) coaching, on a five point scale ranging from extremely beneficial to not at all beneficial. Table 3 provides the participant responses grouped by the highest two ratings and the lower three ratings.

Table 3

Perceived Benefits of the ISAL Components

	Extremely/Very Beneficial	Moderately to Not beneficial
Quarterly weekend sessions	28	1
Professional networking	27	2
Coaching	19	10

It should be noted that the three components in Table 3 were not being compared to one another, but rather each respondent could have chosen to rate each component as "extremely beneficial" if they believed it to be accurate. This is important evidence of the initial quandary of the ISAL design team. Specifically, if the overall ISAL experience is very positive for superintendents, then why is there a disconnect for some ISAL participants with the coaching component? This phenomenon is essentially the basis for the entire program evaluation being conducted.

Respondents were also asked to rank the ISAL components based on the impact it had on improving their performance as an educational leader. This question included the three previous components, (quarterly weekend sessions, professional networking opportunities, and coaching) while adding the growth plan and leadership goal

development components. Table 4 provides the number of respondents who ranked the various components as either first or second in having the most impact on their educational leadership.

Table 4

Ranking of the ISAL Components

	Ranked #1	Ranked #1 or 2
Quarterly weekend sessions	8	14
Professional networking	11	18
Coaching	3	9
Personal Growth Plan	3	9
Leadership Goal Development	4	7

The information gathered from this question reinforces the prior quandary noted, which was why was the coaching not viewed as a more impactful component of ISAL? While this data reinforces the need to delve into the coaching component, additional insights are obtained about the perceived impact of the professional networking component.

In the previous question (see Table 3), the quarterly weekend sessions and professional networking opportunities were rated as being almost equally beneficial. However, when participants were asked to rank the components, rather than simply rate them, the impact of the professional networking separated itself as being more impactful. The importance of the professional networking component, or networked improvement communities as discussed in Chapter 2, has implications for further study and is discussed in the Recommendations section of Chapter 5.

The survey included one open-ended question that inquired about ways to improve the coaching aspect of the ISAL program. Although this topic is explored in more in depth during the interview phase, the information served as an opportunity to conduct preliminary open-coding on the question. This is meaningful to share in these findings because this includes suggestions for improvement from all of the 29 survey respondents, as opposed to only the 13 respondents selected for an interview. Table 5 provides not only the statements, categories, and frequency, but also sample quotes of the categories that were selected by the evaluator as being representative of the given category.

Table 5

Improvements to Coaching Component

Category	f	Respondent's statement
Compatibility	4	"More intentional parings of coaches with ISAL participants."
		"Allow ISAL cohort members to rotate coaches in the second year to get a variety."
		"As best as one can, try to "pair" up coaches and clients in a way that they are most compatible. I was fortunate to have a coach that I really liked, respected and got along with, which was ideal and why my experience was so positive."
		"I think a coach has to be someone who is warm and open to others. Relationships that require the amount of depth necessary for coaching cannot be forced they have to be developed over time."
Experienced coaches	2	"Executive coaching does require more seasoned/practiced coach and action plan follow up."
		"I think having (name omitted), master coach, as part of the first session would help. ISAL members would then have a better understanding of coaching right from the start."

Face-to-Face meetings	3	"I realized early on that face-to-face coaching was much better for me than phone conversations. I would have taken better advantage of the coaching opportunities if I knew that I could see my coach face-to-face." "A lot of my coaching sessions were over the phone. It might have helped to have several more sessions in person." "Whenever possible, face-to-face meetings are more beneficial."
Proximity	5	"Someone more local to me." "Possibly make the coaches more regional." "If possible, it would be nice to have coaches geographically closer together." "Attempt to pair coach with coachee in like districts and in a similar region." "As much as possible, try to match coaches and participants who live/close in relatively close proximity (within one hour drive)."
Structure	5	"Maybe a requirement that the cohort member show evidence of their own coaching within their building- an end product that would show that they are implementing coaching within their district." "Build in time during the sessions to meet with your coach. I think it would be important to have the connection between the coach and the ISAL member connection be established right away." "Pre session totally related to coaching." "We scheduled several "Group" coaching session where our coach and 3 coaches meet. We found this to be very valuable." "Utilize the triads, to not only get coached, but to witness and practice the skills"
Not applicable	10	

Finally, the survey provided insights to the researcher about the coaching model as it was used during the ISAL program to support the coachees in both their personal

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and district growth plans. Since the focus of this evaluation was to generate knowledge on the lived experiences of the ISAL participants, the forced-choice questions related to coaching were more informative to the researcher about how to focus the interview phase of the study, and were not intended to be disaggregated and reported out in this section of the survey findings.

Participant Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to describe the lived experiences of coaches and coachees during the ISAL experience. Participants in the interview phase were identified by the researcher based on the sequential order based on the respondents' ranking of the effectiveness of the coaching as being either the most significant or least significant part of the ISAL experience (Brinkman, 2013; Merriam, 2002).

As interviews were conducted, the two extremes were sought out first, then working towards the middle respondents. This continued until the researcher determined the point of data saturation had been reached from the interviews (Vogt et. al., 2012). A total of 18 interviews were recorded and transcribed out of a pool of 29 possible participants. Out of the 18 interviews conducted, 9 interviewees were coachees, 5 interviewees were coaches, and 4 interviewees were both a coach and coachee. A list of participant names, using pseudonyms, and demographic information on the interview participants used for this study can be found in Appendix D.

The interviews resulted in a total of 452 discrete statements related to the questions asked by the researcher. Those discrete statements were grouped according to the two research questions: (a) How the clients and coaches *valued* the coaching model? (N=247) and (b) What did the clients or coaches *learn* from the coaching model (N=205).

During the process of analyzing these discrete ideas, the researcher identified five themes based on the ISAL leadership lenses. These themes included: (a) vision for learning; (b) coherence; (c) relationships/culture; (d) change - technical and adaptive; and (e) capacity building.

The Vision for Learning theme relates to the importance of both individual and collective core values related to leadership, purpose, mission, and a vision for learning. The Coherence theme involves the alignment of core values and leadership purpose. The Relationship/Culture theme involves the key components of adaptive leadership and shared decision making combined with building a culture of trust. The Change – Technical and Adaptive theme relates to the change process with a focus on the difference between 1st order or technical change and 2nd order or adaptive change. Finally, the Capacity Building theme involves applying the leadership for learning principles throughout the system, including at the classroom level. These themes are the framework used to discuss the interview results in the next two sections.

Table 6

ISAL Themes Across Value and Learning Research Questions

	Value	Learning	Total	%
Vision for Learning	12	4	16	4
Coherence	54	23	77	17
Relationships/Culture	116	114	230	51
Change: Technical/Adaptive	64	59	123	27
Capacity Building	1	5	6	1
	N = 247	N = 205	N= 452	100

Table 6 illustrates that across both the "learning-focused" questions and the "value-focused" questions, the majority of the responses fell under the Relationships/Culture theme, accounting for just over half of the discrete ideas that were analyzed. The other significant area that was drawn out from the interview data was the Change: Technical/Adaptive theme. These two themes accounted for nearly 80% of the discrete ideas shared in the interviews and will be discussed as to how they relate to the value-focused and learning focused interview questions. While the majority of the findings will include discussion of the themes of Relationships/Culture and Change: Technical/Adaptive, discussion of the Coherence theme is included to the extent that it adds value to the findings.

Section Two: Value of the Coaching Model

Cumulative Responses Across Themes

This section describes the extent to which superintendents who participated in the ISAL program found value in the coaching model that was used. Across the five "value-focused" questions that were asked during the interviews, the Relationships/Culture theme accounted for nearly half of the discrete ideas that were analyzed. The majority of the other half of the responses fell under the Coherence and Change themes, with a minimal number of ideas under the Vision and Capacity themes. Table 7 provides details on how the participant responses were distributed across the themes.

Table 7

Interview Responses to Value Questions Across Themes

Question	Theme	Frequency
To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value in the coaching model?	Vision for Learning	3
	Coherence	24
	Relationships/Culture	43
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	35
	Capacity Building	0
How did the coaching model support superintendents participating in the ISAL program?	Vision for Learning	6
	Coherence	5
	Relationships/Culture	16
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	15
	Capacity Building	0
To what extent were ISAL superintendents committed to coaching process, including the frequency of meetings and the attentiveness necessary to be present regularly for coaching?	Vision for Learning	1
	Coherence	7
	Relationships/Culture	11
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	1
	Capacity Building	0
What were the factors that either positively or negatively impacted the motivation of ISAL superintendents to engage their coaches?	Vision for Learning	0
	Coherence	17
	Relationships/Culture	34
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	10
	Capacity Building	0
Why do you still coach?	Vision for Learning	2
	Coherence	1
	Relationships/Culture	12
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	3
	Capacity Building	1
Combined across all *value* questions:	Vision for Learning	12
	Coherence	54
	Relationships/Culture	116
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	64
	Capacity Building	1
		N = 247

Superintendents' Value of the Coaching Model

This question served as a straightforward means of targeting the interviewees'

responses towards the concept of the value the coaching model either did or did not

provide. As was observed in Table 7, dominant themes for this question were

Relationship/Culture, Change: Technical & Adaptive, and Coherence.

The Relationship/Culture (R/C) lens involves the key components of adaptive

leadership and shared decision making combined with building a culture of trust. R/C

subthemes included support, relationships, empowerment, and openness. Both

empowerment and support are demonstrated in the following quotes:

> Stacie McGraw: *The superintendency is a solitary position. Who do you talk to*
>
> *when you need to let your hair down? It is a limited pool.   You wear the*
>
> *bullseye. It's a new kind of approach (coaching) rather than a mentoring*
>
> *approach, consulting, etc.*
>
> Timothy DePaul: *It's about relationships. It's about somebody taking time*
>
> *through their action and behavior of coaching to say, "I care and I am here to*
>
> *listen. I want you to get to the next level and be all that you can be as great*
>
> *leader."*

The need for support as a superintendent can be observed in the way Stacie

discusses the isolated nature of being a superintendent. Timothy's response illustrates the

role of relationships. In order to build the relationships, trust needs to be established in

order to attain a higher degree of openness.

> Ryan Patrick: *It's an opportunity to talk about things in a way that you don't have*
>
> *to worry about the kind of a response to give.*

Nick Maier: *Someone that they can trust and discuss things with. They know it isn't going to go anywhere else and hopefully it will help them work through the issue and develop a plan of attack that they feel they can do.*

Openness was a category that described both the coachee being open to changes within themselves, as well as openness towards others through listening and questioning. Identification of "blind spots" was a common discrete idea that was shared when discussing the value of coaching.

Alex Michael: *When you go through the coaching aspect and when people truly engage, what they begin to identify are blind spots. One of the candidates was really focused on a problem that they were trying to solve with their building principal and he wasn't getting what it (the problem) was and she felt that he didn't know and needed to fill this gap. By the time we got done with the conversation, what she finally realized was it wasn't that he (principal) didn't get it, but he didn't care. It was important to her, but it wasn't meaningful to him.*

Kaylee Tarris: *I walked away thinking, What would I pay to always have this kind of experience? How much is it worth? It made me get past roadblocks or bumps in the road that often I didn't even know I had created myself.*

As the trust is developed and the coachee became more open, opportunities for empowering not only the superintendent, but also their administrative team also became available. This was reported as having a more powerful impact on district and builing level leadership.

Linda Kay: *"One thing that I thought that I needed to do was to let go of some power and control (to empower building principal)."*

Nick Maier: *"It helped them to be more open with their board and honest with them…and having that same relationship with their administrators and principals. This superintendent has real definite ideas on where they want to their district go and is a real driver and to see them reevaluate and adjust accordingly and include their administrators and teachers more in the process. That demonstrated the value in what that person saw as the value of the coaching also. And that person is now also a coach."*

In addition to the R/C theme, superintendents responded to the value of the ISAL coaching model in both the Change: Technical & Adaptive (CTA), and Coherence themes. The CTA theme had two strong sub themes: learning orientation and transformation. The learning orientation and transformation subthemes were characterized by concepts such as alternative perspectives, action planning, critical conversations, reflection and transformation.

Laverne Bustle: *I could bounce something off of and to get a different perspective from. Something maybe I wouldn't have thought about or maybe I was too close to trying to deal with.*

Alex Michael (as a coachee): *On the district growth piece where my plan began and ended was different in large part because of the critical coaching conversations I had (with my coach) in between. It was an evolutionary process.*

Alex Michael (as a coach): *The coaching conversation challenged her to really look inside herself as to whether or not she had sought a solution of the problem by first understanding the problem.*

Kalyee Tarris: *No doubt that I've had the best learning experience since finishing my doctorate in 2003. It's one of those good to great experiences. Things are good for me, I was doing well. I felt like I was making impact on the people I worked with in the children and community I served, but I came out of ISAL going, Wow! Now I am 10 times better. Now I can be even more impactful on kids and teaching because it just helped me think differently.*

The final theme for how superintendents found value in the ISAL coaching model was Coherence. This theme was described as bringing coherence not only to the entire ISAL experience, but also an internal coherence for superintendents by enabling them to become more focused themselves.

Alex Michael: *It (coaching) is the critical underpinning of the other components. I think the accountability that comes from the dialog of the coaching session establishes a degree of belief and purpose in the other things that you are doing.*

Ryan Patrick: *Causes people to crystalize their ideas and to get a definitive path to what they wanted to accomplish at that time.*

To summarize, the value of the coaching model as experienced by participating superintendents was expressed through the impact on the Relationship/Culture, Change: Technical & Adaptive, and Coherence themes. Specifically, the value came from supporting superintendents in a generally isolated role, empowering them and their district level leadership teams, enabling them to be more open to alternative ways of problem-solving, identifying blind-spots, providing opportunities for learning and transformation, and creating a more cohesive approach to themselves and their districts.

Coaching Model as a Support for Superintendents

In order to further investigate the value of the ISAL coaching model, the researcher asked interviewees for specific examples of how the coaching model supported superintendents as instructional leaders. The responses included the Relationships/Culture (R/C) theme impacted through empowering leadership development in the district, the Change – Technical & Adaptive (CTA) theme with a learning orientation through self-reflection, and the Coherence theme that connected back to the districts.

> Wayne Baird: *One of the participants that I coached would actually turn our coaching sessions around and use those in his school district. He did a tremendous job of using those same strategies back in his personal plan.*

> Kevin Hayes: *We were working on some culture climate strategies in the district, so we brought the coaching model back to the district. I actually now work with Ned Ryerson and Andie and we finished our first teacher cohort of coaches and we are moving to a level 2, which is coaching teams. We actually took that framework and adopted it within the district. So basically I took what we were working on individually and then transferred back to what we were working on in the district. So it has been really successful.*

> Laverne Bustle: *So I think it made me look at more what I was expecting of my principals, and then how to mentor that more. It gave me venues or methods or strategies to work with him (the principal)….How to make him a better instructional leader.*

Katie McDonald: *I think it was important for me to kind of talk through my ideas with a coach. As you know coaches are not going to tell you what to do they will just sit and walk-through and ask you questions about the problem, so I think that was valuable to me and It also allowed me to have valuable reflection time that I needed.*

Kevin Hayes: *It would give you a context and a way to think through what you had learned over the weekend sessions but also give you the framework that you could then transfer back to your own school district.*

The important commonality of these responses is the connection from the coaching experienced through ISAL back to the superintendents' districts. This bridge between ISAL coaching and other district administrators enhances the leadership capacity that ultimately increases student achievement (Haslma & Turnbull, 2011; Chandler, Roebuck, Swan, & Brock, 2011).

Superintendents Commitment to the Coaching Processes

The R/C and Coherence themes were predominant in the responses related to superintendents' level of commitment to the coaching model. Within the R/C theme, the superintendents' level of "openness" to coaching was a large factor. This included being: (a) open to the process, (b) whether the coach or the coachee initiated the sessions, and (c) how vulnerable the coachee was willing to be.

Kevin Hayes: *I was a little disappointed that he (coachee) didn't have the same commitment as I did. If I had left it up to him to use me, it would have been less frequent and he would not have gotten as much out of it as he should have.*

Dana Ambrose: *ISAL 2 there was more of a directive to the participants that it was their job to reach out to the coach and make those contacts. In ISAL 2 there was more structure but fewer contacts than ISAL 1.*

Lynda Kay: *It was one of those out of sight- out of mind things – I did it because of the relationship with the coach.*

Laverne Bustle: *If you ask a lot of questions…, it might look like you don't know what you're doing. It's kind of hard to ask questions because they (staff and board members) think you don't know what you're doing. So it was a struggle to ask those questions and to feel comfortable asking those questions I guess.*

The level of commitment was also shared in the Coherence theme through a number of statements that discussed the demands of the job, as negatively impacting the coaching model, while some responses indicated the superintendents who made an effort to be "fully present" during the sessions were better able to deal with the demanding job.

Katie McDonald: *If I were in ISAL right now, I would say my commitment to coaching would be a 10. Because I would make the time to do it and I wouldn't have any other distractions, just the normal distractions.*

Kaylee Tarris: *I was completely attentive when I was in the coaching situation. I think that's the gift of how the coaching model works. It forces you to be attentive and fully present.*

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Closely related to the superintendents' level of commitment to the coaching process, there were several factors that interviewees stated as having either a positive or negative impact on their motivation to initiate a coaching session. Within the CTA theme, the learning orientation was often noted as having a negative impact with the specific reason being an uncertainty of the use of the coaching model. Other negative impacts were found in the Cohesive theme in the challenges of balancing the demands of the superintendents' jobs and making time to be fully present for the coaching sessions. Finally, the R/C theme was present through the superintendents expressing concerns over the interpersonal skills needed to coach, specifically whether the sessions were face-to-face vs. over the phone, and their own ability to be open and vulnerable during the sessions.

> Stacie McGraw: *I just think that it is still new, still a foreign territory. As busy as we are-if we are given the choice, the last thing that you get down to is coaching.*
> Kaylee Tarris: *Well, even though the day-to-day things were still powerful, I did set aside time for it. (However) It was not something I was good at following through with because of all the other demands of the day.*
> Kerri Hank: *Over the phone you maybe still hear… the dogs bark or you sneeze-you almost feel, especially in the superintendent arena, like you are interrupting somebody with a phone call versus if you are with someone - you are right there and you blocked out that time and you both have made that commitment for that call.*

Edna May: *If you had a coach that you couldn't trust or see eye to eye or had different philosophies, then I don't see how it would work. It has to be someone that you understand and feel the same way.*

Kaylee Tarris: *At the same point I was wishing we were doing face-to-face. I was actually kind of craving and desiring, 'Can we just get together and do this face-to-face?' I understand logically, and I saw that it doesn't have to be face-to-face to be effective, and I admit that it worked for me, but I was still getting used to that. I was still wanting a face-to-face interaction.*

Timothy DePaul: *I would say that probably you would be need to be comfortable revealing oneself and that's a bit of a challenge….difficult for superintendents to say, 'Ok, I need some help in this area.' 'This isn't going how I thought it would,' or 'I need some help with this.' They feel like they have to be all things for all people.*

Positive factors that led to superintendents initiating a coaching session were observed in the R/C theme through the expression of: (a) openness, (b) trust, (c) interpersonal skills during face-to-face sessions, and (d) the positive relationships that existed. Additionally, in the CTA theme a strong learning orientation in that coaching is different than mentoring and the Coherence theme in the need for participants to be fully present.

Alex Michael: *It is in the realization that coaching is different than mentoring.   If you don't experience the "Ah ha" moment. (then) you really don't get it. Once you experience that, then you get it. Then you understand why you need it…why it matters.*

Nick Maier: *It was not a situation that I was looking for answers, but more how I am thinking and how this might be perceived.*

Alex Michael: *(If) the candidate…was vastly different in temperament and interest than I was, and she worked in a district vastly different than anything I had ever dealt with, (then) I could genuinely listen to her with a great deal of curiosity about the problems and the things she was dealing with because it was so different than mine.*

The level of familiarity between a coach and coachee had an impact on the way the coaching relationship developed, but there was still a need to read the non-verbal messages during face-to-face coaching sessions.

Tom Shackley: *Number one I knew my coach. It's not like we were friends or anything, But we had both been in personnel in the region and we had known each other and known about each other for years. We had a familiarity and a comfort level with each other. Geographically we are about 25 minutes away, so he would come here or I would go there. We did have a couple of phone times just because we are both busy or whatever, but most of our work was together. That helped. I got to tell you that helped.*

Kerri Hank: *I actually appreciated the face to face coaching opportunities much more than a telephone based coaching. I just found that helpful ~ we did use the same protocol and interestingly enough there was just something about to face to face that I found more powerful.*

Laverne Bustle: *I need that face-to-face time. I need to read body language. I think it's easier to for me to ask questions than over the phone. And not be distracted. I requested it and he was fine with that so mine were face-to-face.*

The level of trust was a pervasive factor across a number of the interviews and was consistently linked to the willingness of the coachee to be open and even vulnerable during the sessions.

Nick Maier: *They knew that it was a private conversation between them and myself and it was never going to go anywhere.*

In summary, the extent ISAL superintendents were committed to coaching process depended on several factors including: (a) the coachee's level of openness and initiating the sessions, (b) how the demands on their time were managed, and (c) their willingness to be fully present and vulnerable during the coaching sessions. Factors that either negatively or positively impacted coachees from initiating a coaching session included: (a) an uncertainty of the use of the coaching model, (b) balancing the demands of the job, (c) being fully present during a coaching session, (d) the existence of a positive and supportive relationship between the coach and coachee, and (e) whether sessions were conducted face-to-face or over the telephone.

Why Superintendents Continue to Coach

The final question that was examined in order to discover the extent to which superintendents valued the ISAL coach model was actually not a question generated by the researcher, but rather an interviewee early on in the process. During Alex Michael's interview he suggested the researcher ask the other coaches, "Why do you still coach?"

This turned out to be an insightful question that led to several insights about the R/C theme through the ability to help create adaptive cultures, high performing teams, and supporting superintendents. The CTA theme provided a focus on student achievement and the Vision for Learning theme provided examples for the superintendents' purpose moving forward.

> Nick Maier: *We all got in this business for one reason, at least it is why I got into the business, and that is to help kids learn. That is what this whole program was designed to do. It was designed to help move superintendents and to help their districts move forward. This is one of the most important things to do to help support superintendents and to help them move forward a little bit further and to extend their growth and their thinking in terms of student achievement.*
>
> Ryan Patrick: *I can provide that service to an educational leader that allows them to dream and work in a way that ultimately impacts the programs and the opportunities to kids in their districts. I enjoy that and I certainly enjoy if I am able to help someone work through an issue and come to a point where they feel they have a workable solution to whatever issue they were trying to resolve.*
>
> Stacie McGraw: *It is a passion-I think that anything that we can do to build our capacity to reach out. I think it is a sign of any true professional.*
>
> Dana Ambrose: *It became one of the top two professional development things that I have ever been through. It feels right to continue to give back as superintendents.   There is personal satisfaction in helping out people.   I have had an organizational benefit and a personal benefit. I believe in it.*

Summary of the Value Provided by the ISAL Coaching Model

In summary, superintendents participating in the ISAL coaching model found value of the coaching model through their perceived impact on the Relationship/Culture, Change: Technical & Adaptive, and Coherence ISAL Leadership Lenses or themes. Specifically, the value came from supporting superintendents in a generally isolated role, empowering superintendents and their district level leadership teams, enabling them to be more open to alternative ways of problem-solving, identifying blind-spots, providing opportunities for learning and transformation, and creating a more cohesive approach to themselves and their districts.

The commitment of superintendents to coaching process depended on several factors including: (a) the coachee's level of openness and initiating the sessions, (b) how the demands on their time were managed, and (c) their willingness to be fully present and vulnerable during the coaching sessions. Factors that either negatively or positively impacted coachees from initiating a coaching session included: (a) an uncertainty of the use of the coaching model, (b) balancing the demands of the job, (c) being fully present during a coaching session, (d) the existence of a positive and supportive relationship between the coach and coachee, and (e) whether sessions were conducted face-to-face or over the telephone.

Section Three: Learning as a Result of Coaching Experiences

Cumulative Responses Across Themes

This section describes the learning superintendents experienced as a result of their experiences with the ISAL coaching model. Across the five "learning-focused" questions that were asked during the interviews, the Relationships/Culture theme accounted for just over half of the discrete ideas that were analyzed. The majority of the other half of the

responses fell under the Coherence and Change themes, with a minimal number of ideas

under the Vision and Capacity themes. Table 8 provides details on how the participant

responses were distributed across the themes.

Table 8

Interview Responses to Learning Questions Across Themes

Question	Theme	Frequency
What did ISAL superintendents learn as a result of their coaching experiences?	Vision for Learning	1
	Coherence	9
	Relationships/Culture	54
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	24
	Capacity Building	0
How did the coaching model impact the superintendents' professional growth?	Vision for Learning	2
	Coherence	4
	Relationships/Culture	10
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	15
	Capacity Building	1
How did ISAL superintendents use what they learned from the coaching approach?	Vision for Learning	1
	Coherence	5
	Relationships/Culture	44
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	8
	Capacity Building	0
What, if any, limitations were there for the coaching model?	Vision for Learning	0
	Coherence	5
	Relationships/Culture	4
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	10
	Capacity Building	0
Is there anything else you have learned or would like to add that was not asked already?	Vision for Learning	0
	Coherence	0
	Relationships/Culture	2
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	2
	Capacity Building	4
Combined across all *learning* questions:	Vision for Learning	4
	Coherence	23
	Relationships/Culture	114
	Change: Technical/Adaptive	59
	Capacity Building	5
		N=205

Superintendents' Learning as a Result of Coaching

Examples of the learning experienced by superintendents as a result of the ISAL coaching model predominantly fell under two themes, the Relationship/Culture (R/C) theme and the Change: Technical/Adaptive (CTA) theme. For the R/C theme, there was a strong emphasis on the superintendents learning to be more open through increased listening and questioning skills. More specifically, listening and questioning with curiosity was cited often as a new skill learned. This involves a different type of listening and questioning than might be used in a traditional mentoring session. This level of listening and questioning was also associated with empowering others in their leadership roles.

> Ryan Patrick: *Three things (learned)-being present, being curious, and listening*
>
> *deeply so you can reflect back what you are hearing and also ask those deep*
>
> *questions that gets your clients to think in a way that pulls together for them.*
>
> Kaylee Tarris: *Often I wouldn't even know I was stuck on something, but as I*
>
> *would go through the coaching experience, it would really help me get*
>
> *past some of the roadblocks whether it was from the Board of Education, or the*
>
> *community, or something I created like roadblocks of insecurity or something like*
>
> *that.*
>
> Stacie McGraw: *To learn to ask very good questions of the appropriate nature so*
>
> *we are working to empower and build capacity. (Not mentoring) It was heavily*
>
> *emphasized, you encourage, you endorse, you acknowledge, you support, and you*
>
> *run alongside them until they are comfortable to go on their own and let go of the*
>
> *bicycle.*

Alex Michael: *Some people believe that the more similar we are-then the more effectively I can coach you. I believe the less similar we are-the more effectively I can coach.*

Alex Michael: *If someone is talking to you about something you are very familiar with, (then) you can get away with listening to pieces and parts of the conversation and…mentally jump to conclusions because you already have experienced it…. Whereas if you (the coachee) are bringing an issue or a challenge that is foreign to me, I have to listen to understand so I am just adherently going to listen more intuitively than I would have.*

Lynda Kay: *There is a difference between a questioning style that is more reflective which is more the coaching vs. in how I converse with the principal now. Sometimes I will say to him-do you want the answer or do you just want me to be a sounding board?*

The CTA theme was also strong in describing what superintendents learned and was characterized by their ability to reflect, received critical feedback, and to participate in self-discovery.

Katie McDonald: *You know friends are always going to be compassionate to you and support you, you can cry on their shoulder and all that, but I think that I found with coaching is that it's very value neutral…You can say what you want to say, you just feel like you're reflecting, and somebody's reflecting back to you.*

Laverne Bustle: *We all need some kind of coaching support to work through problems. I think we need to hear it out loud and talk it through, so we don't miss any detail… I think it's easier just to talk things through. Sometimes I think you*

just need to hear it said. So for me, I think it's OK to talk through things with

someone. And it just makes a better decision making process I think.

Kaylee Tarris: *It was powerful for me. I was fortunate that not only did I have a*

coach that I was able to work with, but I also volunteered to do a practice

coaching session at ISAL with an expert coach in front of the class....That was

truly a career and life changing experience.

Impact of Coaching on Superintendents' Professional Growth

The coaching model also provided a unique impact the type of professional learning compared to what they had traditionally experienced. Superintendents' responses indicated strong changes in the CTA theme through a continuous improvement model that resulted in deeper learning.

Nick Maier: *For those of us in the planning we had an idea that the coach was*

almost a mentor whereas the coaching model that we were trained on and that I

think it is the most outstanding, I have a hard time putting in to words because it

is a unique model. The model is one in which you help the person discover the

answer to where they need to go through questioning and observation and helping

them uncover insights.

Katie McDonald: *I think any part of professional development is reflection, and*

really making you think of continuous improvement,…innovation, and new ideas.

Kaylee Tarris: *It really taught me that, I know I have more than to learn, but that*

taught me how to access that. I think you get to the superintendency when you

finish your doctoral program and then you're like, 'Now what?, 'How can I

grow?' You can go to workshops and things but they seem like things to do or subjects to learn. Coaching tells me how I could grow as a professional in my thinking, in how I approach decisions, and how I interact with people. I felt through coaching that my brain was growing. That my heart was growing. I was thinking in deeper, more impactful ways than I had in a long time. I was missing it. I was at a point in my career when I was missing the learning curve. The growth curve. More often than not I would go to a workshop and walk out early thinking, 'OK, OK, I got it I got it I got it. Now what?' Coaching really gave me the growth experiences that I was wanting and needing. If I feel stagnant again, I know coaching is something that will help me grow. For me personally that is the best professional development.

Superintendents' Use of New Learning

It was important to the ISAL design team from the beginning that the ISAL experienced be linked back to the superintendents school districts and ultimately the students. The coaching model facilitated this process primarily through the R/C theme by empowering administrators and teachers in their school district, increasing shared leadership by helping Boards of Education to grow, and building capacity and self-efficacy in others.

Stacie McGraw: *A leadership shift and how that connected to principals and the same thing with the principals and the teacher leaders passing it down….The same thing can happen between the teachers getting their training and applying it to their classrooms. Hopefully, and I did see it in some districts that I worked*

with, you saw it break down and permeate and become an integral part of the culture of the school district.

Nick Maier: *Some of the things that the board has learned, and I have learned, through this ISAL experience, although this has been a difficult past year, the board has remained strong and really committed to what their purpose and their roles are as the board of education.*

Katie McDonald: *We have consultants that work with my teachers in my district and they are coaches right now. You know they deliver the instruction and they worked with the teacher. The teachers could come up with their own lessons and now they're in the classrooms coaching, and they're not telling the teachers that they are right or wrong, they are having the teachers reflect on their own and make their own decisions.*

Kaylee Tarris: *I've used it with two of my principals. I ask questions, then let them answer, to help them grow. And that was powerful for them and for me. I tend to be a problem solver. Like maybe you could do this or maybe you could try that, and I would brainstorm out loud. It was to the coaching model that I realized while I thought it was brainstorming out loud, they saw it as their boss giving them suggestions and they would be hesitant to go against something there boss sees as good.*

Limitations of the Coaching Model

Limitations of the coaching model were identified by superintendents and provide important insights for the design team in their ability to further strengthen the overall program. More of the limitations fall under the CTA theme, as opposed to the R/C

theme, which differs from the other questions and responses. Limitations under the CTA theme included: (a) interpersonal skills, such as the issue of face-to-face sessions vs. telephone sessions; (b) resisting the urge to mentor, instead of coach; and (c) the lack of understanding of the coaching model. The R/C theme was also present through the limitations in the compatibility of coaches/coachees and demands on time.

> Alex Michael: *If you are on the phone, you have to trust that whoever you are coaching (and the coach) has put everything else down to engage in this conversation.*

> Dana Ambrose: *It's still on my end just learning some skills on the phone it is a little different than the face to face. I think they are both really good. I enjoy the face to face as long as you are able to get that environment that is conducive to coaching.*

> Laverne Bustle: *How do you train both sides to be coached as best as they can and to coach. You know the coaching part of it. They give you the questions you can ask and different things. But I think you need as much practice as you can. I have to do it to learn it. So it's what can you do to make that experience best for both sides? I know it's expensive. But what else can we do to make sure if we're investing in our superintendents, that they're getting this? We have to have more training, more in-depth training on both sides.*

> Stacie McGraw: *Sometimes you (the coach) just wanted to reach across that phone and say, "Do this!" and you really couldn't do that. Sometimes it just needs that.   I had to slap my hands all the time because it is supposed to be the "ah ha" moment for them (the coachee). Learning to ask the probing the*

questions, which I think was the hardest things, and still something I worked to

hone my skills.

Wayne Baird: *Another one is personalities. Personality conflict. Personality*

conflicts between the coach and the person being coached…I think that needs to

have some attention. The coach (assignment) can't be a random thing, and needs

to be really thought out. I think the… type of district are involved with, you know

whether it be urban suburban or rural, size, size of the district matters. There are

just various things you got to keep in context when you line people up and I think

need to be matched, rather than just be something that's at random.

Alex Michael: *(If) I have a dog directly in the fight, I need to resist the urge to*

solve the problem and provide the answer…is hard at times.

Summary of Learning Provided by the Coaching Model

Superintendents learning as a result of the ISAL coaching model predominantly

fell under two themes, the Relationship/Culture (R/C) theme and the Change:

Technical/Adaptive (CTA) theme. There was a strong emphasis on the superintendents

learning to be more open through increased listening and questioning skills. The

coaching model also provided a unique impact the type of professional learning

compared to what they had traditionally experienced. Superintendents used what they

learned through the ISAL coaching model by empowering administrators and teachers in

their school district, increasing shared leadership, and building capacity and self-efficacy

in others. Limitations of the coaching model were identified by superintendents. The

limitations of the coaching model as it was implemented included: (a) interpersonal

skills, such as the issue of face-to-face sessions vs. telephone sessions; (b) resisting the

urge to mentor, instead of coach; and (c) the lack of understanding of the coaching

model. These limitations, combined with the other findings will serve as a basis for the

recommendations provided in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 provides an overview of this utilization-focused program evaluation, as well as the findings and recommendations. The findings are designed to be provided as a report to the design team for the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL). The chapter is organized into three sections. Section one provides and overview of the actual study. Section two provides the findings from surveys and interviews that were conducted. Section three provides recommendations for the enhancement of the ISAL coaching model and section four provides a summary and conclusion.

Summary of the Study

This utilization-focused program evaluation describes the impact of a coaching model on the professional learning of superintendents who participated in ISAL. This program evaluation is a knowledge-focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative evaluation of the ISAL cohort program. Specifically, the study sought to address two research questions: (a) To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value the coaching model? and (b) What did ISAL cohort superintendents learn as a result of their coaching experiences?

The ISAL program was created in part to address the changing role of a 21st century superintendent. Over the past 70 years the role of the public school

superintendent has broadened from that of simply maintaining an institution, to the more complex role of serving as a change agent within an system that effectively deals with not only the educational, but also the social and professional needs of dynamic learning organizations (Fullan, 2001; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

If school districts are to achieve the goal of educating each child to his or her fullest potential, then the instructional leadership focus for superintendents must be to create large-scale change in school systems so that they function as high-reliability organizations and the actions of all members are aligned with a consistent instructional focus (Marzano & Waters, 2009). To accomplish this, executive coaching is used to develop the adaptive leadership practices that are essential for superintendents to accurately diagnose the school system and effectively address adaptive challenges (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). The ISAL cohort program is centered around the concept of developing superintendents who are adaptive leaders.

This program evaluation provides insights on the theories that comprise the ISAL approach to executive coaching in Illinois among superintendents. Specifically, this evaluation generates knowledge, or lessons-learned, on a theory of change used by ISAL designers and facilitators: that superintendents need to be adaptive leaders who focus on capacity building throughout their respective organizations (Heifetz, et al., 2009). The results are intended to inform general practice for the ISAL development team as they move forward.

Discussion of Findings

The findings were focused on two research questions: (a) To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value the in coaching model? and (b) What did ISAL

cohort superintendents learn as a result of their coaching experiences? These two questions were viewed as having a "value-focus" and a "learning-focus" respectively, and the interview responses were grouped accordingly.

The data collected was organized around the five themes identified by the ISAL program. These themes included: (a) vision for learning; (b) coherence; (c) relationships/culture; (d) change - technical and adaptive; and (e) capacity building. The ISAL coaching model was originally developed as a means of linking all of the program components together, including these themes of ISAL. Although adjustments to the coaching model were made between ISAL I and ISAL II, it continued to serve as a bridge for participants across their 360 degree evaluations, the personal and district growth plans, and the quarterly thematic sessions.

The Vision for Learning theme relates to the importance of both individual and collective core values related to leadership, purpose, mission, and a vision for learning. The Coherence theme involves the alignment of core values and leadership purpose. The Relationship/Culture theme involves the key components of adaptive leadership and shared decision making combined with building a culture of trust. The Change – Technical and Adaptive theme relates to the change process with a focus on the difference between 1st order or technical change and 2nd order or adaptive change. Finally, the Capacity Building theme involves applying the leadership for learning principles throughout the system, including at the classroom level. In this evaluation, across both the "learning-focused" questions and the "value-focused" questions, the vast majority of the responses fell under the Relationships/Culture theme, accounting for just over half of the discrete ideas that were analyzed.

The value of the coaching model as experienced by participating superintendents was expressed through the impact on the Relationship/Culture, Change: Technical & Adaptive, and Coherence themes. Specifically, the value of the coaching model was derived from supporting superintendents in what is generally an isolated leadership role. Through the coaching model, superintendents reported feeling more empowered themselves, as well as distributing leadership through their district-level teams. This supported superintendents to be more open to alternative ways of problem-solving, identifying blind-spots, providing opportunities for learning and transformation. Ultimately, this created a more cohesive approach to adaptive challenges that needed to be addressed both within themselves and their respective school districts (Heifetz et al., 2009; Wilmore, 2008).

The important commonality of these responses was the connection from the coaching experienced through ISAL back to the superintendents' districts. This bridge between ISAL coaching and other district administrators enhances the leadership capacity that ultimately increases student achievement (Haslma & Turnbull, 2011; Chandler, Roebuck, Swan, & Brock, 2011).

The learning experienced by superintendents as a result of the ISAL coaching model predominantly fell under two themes, the Relationship/Culture (R/C) theme and the Change: Technical/Adaptive (CTA) theme. There was a strong emphasis on the superintendents learning to be more open through increased listening and questioning skills.

The impact of superintendents' listening and questioning skills is critical to their ability to make adaptive, as opposed to technical, changes. The ISAL program not only provided direct instruction on listening and questioning skills through the quarterly thematic sessions, but also provided opportunities for participants to practice and model these skills throughout the executive coaching sessions. Listening and questioning with curiosity was cited often as a new skill learned. This involves a different type of listening and questioning than might be used in a traditional mentoring session. This level of listening and questioning was also associated with empowering others in their leadership roles, which supports superintendents in their ability to build relationships with various stakeholders, including those who have traditionally been marginalized (Theoharris, 2007; Wilmore, 2008).

The coaching model also provided a unique impact on the type of professional learning compared to what superintendents had traditionally experienced. Superintendents reported that they used what was learned through the ISAL coaching model by: (a) empowering administrators and teachers in their school district, (b) increasing shared leadership, and (c) building capacity and self-efficacy in others. Limitations of the coaching model were identified by superintendents through: (a) the issue of face-to-face sessions vs. telephone sessions; (b) resisting the urge to mentor, instead of coach; (c) lack of understanding of the coaching model; and (d) demands on time (Chandler, et al., 2011).

Finally, according to the ISAL design team, an original consideration for the ISAL program was that it was designed for superintendents who were already

predisposed for self-actualization. While this concept was not specifically addressed through the questions in this study, it does provide an important consideration and potential explanation to why some superintendents placed a higher value on the coaching model than others. The level of a superintendent's pre-disposition for self-actualization may very well be a critical link in the superintendent's ability to be truly open to a coaching model, as opposed to a mentoring model. This idea is addressed as a thread of commonality throughout the recommendations provided below.

Recommendations

As an outcome of this utilization-focused program evaluation, the evaluator provides the ISAL design team with the following four recommendations for future enhancements for the program. These recommendations are provided based on the evaluator's review of relevant literature, analysis of the survey and interview responses of ISAL participants, and his own lived experiences as a superintendent and participation in both coaching and mentoring models.

Provide a Greater Understanding of Coaching

Currently the ISAL program does provide information sessions to interested superintendents through venues such as the IASA annual conference. The content in those sessions provides a good overview and should be continued. However, a more detailed information session that could be required for all potential participants to attend before being accepted into ISAL. The benefit of this would be an increase in the participants' understanding of what the coaching model looks and feels like, as well as how it differs from mentoring. This would potential assist with some participants self-

selecting as to their own readiness for a learning experienced that is focused on self-actualization.

Once an ISAL participant is in the program and engaged in the coaching process, regular check-in points would provide a tighter feedback loop on the effectiveness of the coaching model. By implementing formative assessment throughout the coaching experience, both the coach and coachee would have the opportunity to reflect on the process and make midcourse adjustments, as opposed to waiting for a summative evaluation at the end of the experience.

Provide Purposeful Pairing of Coaches and Coachees

Due to the importance of the coachee/coach relationship being based on the trust and openness that is required to facilitate a transformational coaching experience, additional consideration should be given when pairing coachees and coaches. The considerations should be based on the following factors: (a) prior relationships; (b) geographic proximity, (c) availability of video conferencing technology; (d) the level of experience of the coach; and (e) the coachee's disposition to the coaching process.

These considerations are based on insights provided by the coaches and coachees in this study. Prior relationships are worth considering because although having a prior relationship can accelerate the development of a strong coachee/coach relationship, it can also inhibit the coach's ability to listen with curiosity to the coach during sessions.

Geographic proximity is important for the face-to-face coaching sessions, which were clearly preferred by coaches and coachees alike. This factor however can be mitigated if the coach is highly skilled at coaching via telephone and the coachee has a strong desire for transformational coaching. On a related note, if both the coach and

coachee have easy access to high quality video conferencing technology, then the challenges created by geography can also be mitigated.

Finally, the coaches experience level and coachee's disposition to the transformational coaching process need to be considered when pairing coaches and coachees. Coaching cannot be all things to all people. Each potential coachee arrives with a unique personality and set of life experiences. Ideally, coaches with significant experience and skills would be paired with coachees who do not have a strong predisposition to the coaching experience. The justification for looking at the coachee's disposition for the coaching process is that by definition a coachee need to be the recipient of coaching who values and actively seeks coaching when they want to learn, grow, continuously develop, and achieve desired results. Coachees need to have this mindset in order to be successful (International Association of Coaching, 2010). A disposition assessment would enable ISAL leadership to better pair coaches with coachees based on any challenges to the coaching process that may be presented in the disposition assessment. A sample of this type of information is provided by Bloom as a formative tool to be clear on the needs when establishing coaching relationship (2005, p. 124-33).

Purposeful and Explicit Use of Blended Coaching

If the goal of the ISAL coaching model is to provide primarily transformational coaching, then coaches and clients need to identify when other types of coaching are being used. Types of coaching such as, instructional coaching, facilitative coaching, consultative coaching, have a role in the ISAL coaching model, but need to be used

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sparingly if the overall goal is self-actualization through transformational coaching (Bloom, 2005).

If the use of a given coaching model (i.e. instructional versus consultative) was clearly identified by the coach and coachee, then both would be better equipped to monitor the type of coaching being used across coaching sessions. While there will be times when each type of coaching model would be appropriate, the self-actualization will require a majority of the time to be spent on transformational coaching, as opposed to instructional coaching which is more similar to mentoring.

Networked Improvement Communities as Professional Development Beyond the Program

The concept of a network improvement committee (NIC) was referenced throughout the comments about the overall impact of the ISAL program. A NIC is defined as an intentionally formed social organization, sharing common interests and with norms for affiliation, that arranges human and technical resources for the purpose of improvement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011). A NIC that is formed as an outgrowth of the ISAL program has the potential to bridge not only the professional development beyond the two year program, but it can facilitate a team coaching concept for superintendents would embrace the coaching concept and would like to integrate is with a professional community of learners.

To implement an organized NIC component, a core group of leaders would be needed because sustained improvement efforts are not self-organizing. The leaders of the ISAL cohort have the potential to fulfill this role after the official ISAL cohort program has ended. This leadership structure could provide an integrating hub that seeks

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partnerships and a governance structure. It is for these reasons that the concept of NIC is integral to understanding the professional development outcomes ISAL has for superintendents.

Summary and Conclusion

This utilization-focused program evaluation describes the impact of a coaching model on the professional learning of superintendents who participated in the ISAL program. This program evaluation was a knowledge-focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative evaluation of the ISAL cohort program. Specifically, the study sought to address two research questions: (a) To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value the coaching model? and (b) What did ISAL superintendents learn as a result of their coaching experiences?

The study describes the lived experiences of the superintendents who participated in the ISAL program and provides four recommendations based on survey and interview information provided by the participants. The results provide evidence that superintendents of varying degrees of professional experience benefitted from their participation in the ISAL coaching model in both the value they placed on the program and the learning that resulted from their ISAL coaching experience.

Two considerations for further study are also provided. The first consideration is to conduct future evaluations to expand the analysis of the five ISAL leadership lenses as they applied through the coaching model. A second consideration for further study is to more closely examine the differences in the experience of ISAL participants when viewed through various demographic aspects including gender, race, level of experience as a superintendent, and type of district.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear (Enter name here),

I am a superintendent in Illinois and a graduate student in the College of Education at Illinois State University under the direction of Dr. Dianne Gardner Renn. I am writing to ask for your assistance with my dissertation research. I am conducting a program evaluation of IASA School of Advanced Leadership cohort (ISAL). The purpose of this research is to describe the impact a coaching model has on the professional learning for superintendents in Illinois. As a participant in ISAL, your insights about your experiences will be a valuable component of this program evaluation.

The program evaluation will be an improvement-oriented, formative evaluation of ISAL I and is being conducted in consultation with the current IASA leadership members who were instrumental in developing the ISAL program. As a formative evaluation, the benefit of this study will be to identify ways the IASA can improve upon and enhance the ISAL, as opposed to rendering a definitive judgment about the program's effectiveness.

I am requesting your participation in an electronic survey and, based on your responses, a possible face-to-face or telephone interview. Your participation in this research is voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks or discomfort to you as a participant. If you choose not to participate, then there is no penalty or loss of benefits. If you do choose to participate, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

To the extent it will be used in any published product or shared with other individuals, your confidentiality and anonymity is assured. By completing the survey provided on the link below, you provide consent for your responses to be compiled with others. Your name and contact information are requested for follow-up purposes by the researcher only. Pseudonyms will be used in place of any names in the final report, if they are used at all.

The data you provide will be limited to this research, as authorized by Illinois State University, however the results may also be presented in additional formats such as journal articles and/or reports to the Illinois Association of School Administrators. If you should have any concerns, you have the right to express them to me at (630) 330-2199 or tbarno2@ilstu.edu. You may also express concerns with my dissertation chair, Dr. Dianne Gardner Renn at the ISU Department of Education, or the ISU Institutional Review Board.

As a current superintendent myself, I certainly understand the demands on your time. I truly appreciate your consideration to participate in this program evaluation. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. After that, your only other potential involvement will be a voluntary interview lasting no longer than 60 minutes. I ask that you complete the survey

within the next two weeks (by INSERT DATE). To access the survey, please use the following link (INSERT LINK).

Thank you in advance for your consideration and of this request, as well as for your leadership within IASA and your service to the students of Illinois public schools!

Sincerely,

Tim Arnold
Superintendent, CCSD #66
Doctoral Student, Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61761

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Contact Information

    Name:
    School District:
    Address:
    Address 2:
    City/Town:
    State:
    ZIP:

2. Preferred method for follow-up (if needed)

    Email Address:
    Phone Number:

3. Number of years as a superintendent in your current district:

4. Total number of years as a superintendent:

5. Size of your district when you participated in ISAL

    Over 7,500 students
    5,001 - 7,500 students
    2,501 - 5,000 students
    1,001 - 2,500 students
    Less than 1,000 students

6. Type of district when you participated in ISAL

    K-12 Unit District
    High School District
    K-8 Elementary School District

7. Description of your district when you participated in ISAL

 Rural
 Suburban
 Urban

8. Overall, how satisfied were you with the ISAL I cohort program?

 Extremely satisfied
 Very satisfied
 Moderately satisfied
 Slightly satisfied
 Not at all satisfied

9. To what extent did your leadership skills improved as a result of the ISAL cohort I program?

 Significantly improved
 Very improved
 Moderately improved
 Slightly improved
 Not at all improved

10. How beneficial did you find the quarterly weekend sessions that resulted from the ISAL I cohort program?

 Extremely beneficial
 Very beneficial
 Moderately beneficial
 Slightly beneficial
 Not at all beneficial

11. How beneficial did you find the professional networking opportunities that resulted from the ISAL I cohort program?

 Extremely beneficial
 Very beneficial
 Moderately beneficial
 Slightly beneficial
 Not at all beneficial

12. How beneficial did you find the coaching that was offered through the ISAL I cohort program?

       Extremely beneficial
       Very beneficial
       Moderately beneficial
       Slightly beneficial
       Not at all beneficial

13. Rank the following ISAL components based on their impact on improvements to your performance as an educational leader.

       Quarterly weekend sessions
       Professional Networking
       Coaching
       All equally important

14. How many times did you either meet with or conference with your coach during the two year ISAL program?

       13 or more times
       9-12 times
       5-8 times
       0-4 times

15. How often did you conference with your coach via telephone during the twoyear ISAL program?

       13 or more times
       9-12 times
       5-8 times
       0-4 times

16. With respect to the coaching sessions (either face-to-face or telephone), indicate who typically initiated the sessions:

       I typically initiated the coaching sessions
       My coach typically initiated the coaching sessions
       We both initiated the coaching sessions about the same number of times

17. How satisfied were you with your coach's performance or interactions with you in the following areas?

> Confidentiality
> Establishing trust
> Responsiveness to your needs
> Listening skills
> Availability
> Reliability
> Understanding of your demanding schedule
> Selection of appropriate resources

> (Answer Choices: Extremely satisfied, Very satisfied, Moderately satisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Moderately dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied, or Extremely dissatisfied)

18. To what extent do you believe you took advantage of the coaching services offered by ISAL?

> To a great extent
> To a moderate extent
> To a minimal extent

19. What, if any, barriers prohibited you from taking full advantage of the coaching offered by ISAL?

> Lack of time to make it a priority
> My own comfort with the coaching model
> Hectic pace of my role as a superintendent
> Availability of coach
> Confidentiality of coach
> I cannot identify any barriers
> Other (please specify)

20. What suggestions do you have that would improve the coaching aspect of ISAL?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ISAL COACHEES

1. To what extent did you value the coaching model provided by ISAL?

2. In what ways did the coaching model support your development as an instructional leader?

3. To what extent were you committed to using or participating in the coaching process, (i.e. frequency of meetings or the attentiveness necessary to be present regularly for coaching)?

4. What factors either positively or negatively impacted your motivation to reach out to with your coach?

5. What did you learn as a result of your experience with a coaching model?

6. How did the coaching model impact your own professional development?

7. In what ways, if any, have you used what you learned from the coaching approach?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ISAL COACHES

1. How many different ISAL participants did you work with in your capacity as an ISAL coach?

2. Of the various components of the ISAL program (i.e. quarterly thematic sessions, networking through collaborative inquiry sessions, reflection, creation of individual and district growth plans, and coaching), to what extent do you believe the coaching model provided value to the ISAL participants with whom you worked?

   a. What evidence/examples do you have of such value?

3. In what ways did the coaching model support the ISAL participant's development as an instructional leader?

   a. What evidence/examples can you share?

4. To what extent were the ISAL participants committed to using or participating in the coaching process, (i.e. frequency of meetings or the attentiveness necessary to be present regularly for coaching)?

5. What factors either positively or negatively impacted the ISAL participant's motivation to reach out to you as their coach?

6. What did you learn as a result of your experience as a coach in the ISAL program?

7. What were the limitations of the coaching model as it was used in the ISAL program?

8. In what ways did the coaching model impact the professional development of the

    ISAL participants?

    a. What evidence/examples can you share?

9. To the best of your knowledge, in what ways, if any, have the ISAL participants that

    you coached used what they gained from the coaching approach?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Superintendent's Name* *pseudonym	Role	Gender	Superintendent Experience	District Enrollment	District Type	Location
Dana Ambrose	Coach	Male	7-10 years	< 1,000	9-12	Rural
Wayne Baird	Coach	Male	Retired	-	-	-
Laverne Bustle	Both	Female	7-10 years	> 7,500	K-12	Rural
Timothy DePaul	Both	Male	4-6 years	1,001 - 2,500	K-12	Rural
Kerri Hank	Client	Female	7-10 years	1,001 - 2,500	K-8	Rural
Kevin Hayes	Both	Male	7-10 years	< 1,000	K-12	Rural
Lynda Kay	Client	Female	7-10 years	1,001 - 2,500	9-12	Suburban
Nick Maier	Coach	Male	Retired	-	-	-
Edna May	Client	Female	4-6 years	2,501 - 5,000	K-8	Suburban
Katie McDonald	Client	Female	7-10 years	1,001 - 2,500	K-8	Suburban
Stacie McGraw	Coach	Female	Retired	-	-	-
Alex Michaels	Both	Male	7-10 years	< 1,000	K-12	Rural
James Paschal	Client	Male	7-10 years	< 1,000	K-8	Suburban
Ryan Patrick	Coach	Male	Retired	-	-	-
Tiffany Reding	Client	Female	4-6 years	< 1,000	K-12	Rural
Tom Shackley	Client	Male	4-6 years	2,501 - 5,000	K-8	Suburban
Edwin Snider	Client	Male	4-6 years	1,001 - 2,500	9-12	Rural
Kaylee Tarris	Client	Female	7-10 years	< 1,000	K-8	Suburban

APPENDIX F

THEMES FOR VALUE

Theme	Category	Open Code	N
Vision for Learning	Leadership purpose	Affirming	3
		Decision-making	2
		District Improvement	4
		Intentional	1
Coherence	Balancing	Balance	1
	Coherence	Being present	4
	Impactful	Demanding job	17
		Prioritizing	4
		Self-management	1
		Alignment	1
		Connected all activities	4
		Core of ISAL	1
		Focus: District	1
		Focus: Self	4
		Ties everything together	1
		Improvement	1
		Beneficial	2
		Important	1
		Loved it	1
		Meaningful	1
		Valuable	7
		Worthwhile	1

Change: Technical	Critical	Accountable	1
& Adaptive	conversations	Action Planning	10
	Interpersonal skills	Alternate Perspectives	4
	Learning oriented	Application of learning	1
	Transforming	Applied learning	1
		Breakthroughs	1
		Critical Conversations	3
		Feedback	5
		Growth	1
		Personalized learning	2
		Problem-solving	4
		Reciprocity	3
		Reflecting	7
		Risk taking	1
		Uncertainty of purpose of coaching	9
		Awareness	1
		Catalyst for Change	1
		Good to Great	1
		New Level	2
		Self-discovery	2

Relationships & Culture	Adaptive culture	Capable learner	1
	Empowering	Empowering	2
	High performing teams	Empowerment of others	9
		Leadership development	1
	Openness	Principal leadership	1
	Relationship	Support	13
	Supporting	Instructional capacity	1
	Trust	Face-to-face	7
		Nonverbals	2
		Physical proximity	1
		Proximity	2
		Telephone	1
		Blind spots	6
		Comfort zone	1
		Commitment	5
		Listening	5
		Listening with curiosity	1
		Openness	2
		Questioning	1
		Requirement	4
		Self-directed	9
		Self-discovery	1
		Self-management	1
		Straight Talk	3
		Understanding	2
		Collaborative	1
		Commonalities	1
		Compatibility	1
		Decorum	1
		Enjoyable	2
		Friendship	1
		Networking	2
		Relationship	12
		Accessible	5
		Confidentiality	8
		Trust	6
		Vulnerability	3
Capacity Building	Continuous learning	Affirming	3
		Decision-making	2
		District Improvement	4
		Intentional	1

APPENDIX G

THEMES FOR LEARNING

Theme	Category	Open Code	N
Vision for Learning	Leadership purpose	Decision-making	3
		Reflective decision-making	1
		Serve students indirectly	2
Coherence	Balancing	Balance	3
	Coherence	Being present	8
	Impactful	Demanding job	5
		Level 3 Presence	1
		Board interactions	1
		Board commitment	1
		Board purpose	1
		Tied everything together	1
		Requirement	1
		Valuable	1
		Lack of commitment	1
Capacity Building	Continuous learning	Coach/client follow up post ISAL	1
		Coaching post ISAL	2
		Learning beyond ISAL	1
		Professional development after ISAL	1
		Professional drive	1

Change: Technical & Adaptive	Critical conversations Interpersonal skills Learning oriented Transforming	Value as a thought partner	1
		Body language	1
		Communication skills	1
		Face-to-face	2
		Nonverbals	5
		Proximity	2
		Action Planning	4
		Challenging for both	1
		Client becomes coach	1
		Coach assist with new learning and growth plans	1
		Coach not having all ISAL knowledge	1
		Continuous improvement	1
		Continuous, life-long learning	1
		Curious listening and questioning	1
		Curiosity	1
		Deeper growth	1
		Feedback	1
		Focus on students	1
		Focused communication	1
		Follow through	1
		Growth plan	1
		Innovative ideas	1
		Learning experience for Coach	1
		Modeling	1
		Multi-level learning	1
		Mutual benefit	1
		Processing	1
		Questioning	1
		Reflect back	1
		Reflection	8
		Reflective Coaching	1
		Resisting mentoring	1
		Rich exploration	1
		Seek to understand staff	1
		Self-discovery	1
		Sounding board	1
		Tool to support learning	1
		Uncertainty of coaching skills	4
		Uncertainty of purpose of coaching	1
		Unique model	1
		Unique professional development	1
		Life-changing	1

Table Continues

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Relationships & Culture	Adaptive culture Empowering High performing teams Openness Relationship Supporting Trust	Coaching for teachers and students	1
		Impact on student achievement	1
		Interactions with administrative team	1
		Problem-solving	3
		Support for teachers	1
		Allow for self-discovery	1
		Empowerment of others	4
		Goal attainment	1
		Mentoring instead of coaching	1
		Not Mentoring	3
		Resisting mentoring	1
		Self-efficacy	4
		Shared leadership	1
		Support	1
		Team coaching	1
		Validate	1
		Board of Education growth	1
		Building capacity	3
		Coaching for teachers	1
		Coaching in district	2
		Coaching leadership team	4
		Coaching principals	1
		Collaborative	1
		Increased training for capacity building	1
		Leadership capacity	1
		Principal empowerment	2
		Principal evaluation	
		Questioning with leadership team	1
		Self-efficacy for principals	1
		Shared leadership	2
		Supporting administrators	1
		Teachers coaching students	1
		Team coaching	2
		Training for principals on coaching	1
		Blind spots	8
		Deep listening	1
		Deep Questioning	1
		Difficult conversations	1
		Identify biases	1
		Level 3 listening	1
		Listen better to less familiar topics	1
		Listen with curiosity	3
		Listening	4

Listening with curiosity	2
Listening with empathy	2
Needs assessment with teachers	1
Nonjudgmental	1
Open to change	1
Openness	1
Questioning	6
Questioning in District	1
Questioning techniques	2
Reflective Questioning	2
Straight Talk	1
Value Neutral	1
Vulnerability	2
Collegial	1
Commonalities	1
Compatibility	1
Relationship	6
Relationship continues beyond coaching	1
Client focus	1
Critical friend	1
Demanding job	1
Giving back	5
Helpful	1
Helping others	1
Networking	2
Safe environment	1
Modeling vulnerability	1
Risk taking	2
Trust	1
Vulnerability	4

APPENDIX H

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ISAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

Summary of the ISAL Program Evaluation

A utilization-focused program evaluation was conducted to describe the impact of a coaching model on the professional learning of superintendents who participated in the IASA School for Advanced Leadership (ISAL) cohorts I and II. This program evaluation was a knowledge-focused, or lessons learned-oriented, formative evaluation of the ISAL program. Specifically, the evaluation sought to address two questions from the ISAL design team:

1) To what extent did the ISAL cohort superintendents find value the coaching model?

2) What did ISAL superintendents learn as a result of their coaching experiences?

Methodology and Data Collection

An online survey was distributed to all ISAL I and II participants. A total of 29 out of the 44 ISAL I and II participants completed the survey, giving it a response rate of 66%. Follow up interviews were conducted based on the responses of the 29 survey

participants. A total of 18 interviews were conducted and of those, 9 were ISAL coachees, 5 were ISAL coaches, and 4 were both an ISAL coach and coachee.

The data collected from the interviews was organized around the five themes identified by the ISAL program. These themes included: (a) vision for learning, (b) coherence, (c) relationships/culture, (d) change: technical and adaptive, and (e) capacity building. Across both the "learning-focused" questions and the "value-focused" questions, the vast majority of the responses fell under the Relationships/Culture theme, accounting for just over half of the discrete ideas that were analyzed.

Strengths of ISAL Cohort I and II

This program evaluation resulted in evidence that overall, ISAL participants viewed the program as being very beneficial to their professional development in their roles as a superintendent. Specific strengths of the program included:

- Superintendents learned to value the reflective, questioning, and listening skills associated with transformational leadership.

- Value from the coaching model was derived from supporting superintendents in what is generally an isolated leadership role.

- Superintendents reported feeling more empowered, as well as empowering their own district-level leadership teams.

- Superintendents improved their problem-solving skills by identifying blind-spots, being more open to alternatives, and providing new opportunities for learning and transformation.

- There was evidence of informal networking that continued after the formal ISAL cohort had ended.

- Ultimately, superintendents achieved a more cohesive approach to addressing adaptive challenges both within themselves and their respective school districts.

Recommendations

These recommendations are provided based on the researcher's review of relevant literature, analysis of the surveys and interview responses of ISAL participants, and his own experiences as a superintendent and participation in both coaching and mentoring models.

- Provide coachees/clients with a greater understanding of the coaching model prior to being accepted into the ISAL program.

- Provide purposeful pairing of coaches and coachees/clients that is based on the predisposition of the coachee/client and experience level of the coach.

- Coaches need to be purposeful in their use of blended coaching and the use of different types of coaching needs to be explicit with coachees/clients.

- Conduct additional research on the concept of a network improvement community and its ability to impact professional development of ISAL participants beyond the two-year program.