

This descriptive study was conducted in the context of a research-practice partnership with a school district. The findings are intended to help our partners use research and evidence to make decisions about their schools.

KNOWLEDGE TO SUPPORT EVIDENCE-BASED EARLY LANGUAGE AND LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

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PURPOSE

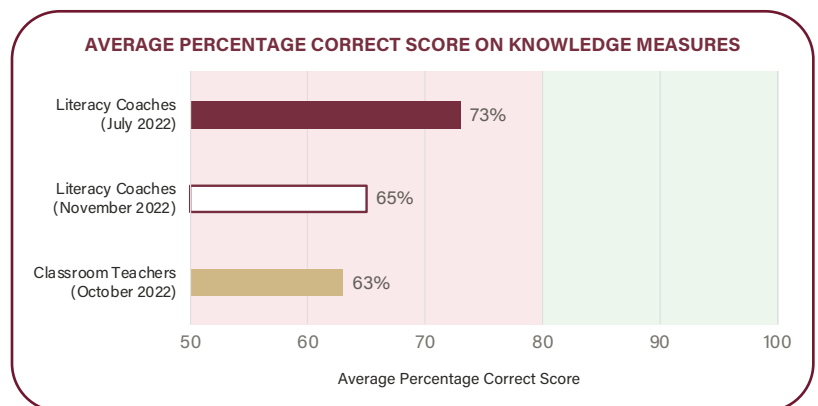
This study was conducted in partnership with school district leaders. Our partners wanted to better understand literacy coaches' and teachers' knowledge related to early reading and literacy instruction. Participants were from several public elementary and middle schools, where coaches were participating in ongoing, embedded professional development over a 6-month period, while also facilitating professional learning communities for teachers in their schools. We assessed literacy coaches' knowledge of effective coaching practices to support classroom instruction. To better understand the contexts in which they were coaching, we also assessed their teachers' knowledge of foundational reading skills and instructional practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What experiences and expertise do literacy coaches have related to evidence-based coaching practices to support classroom instruction?
2. What experiences and expertise do classroom teachers have related to evidence-based early language and literacy instruction?
3. Do literacy coaches benefit from ongoing, embedded professional learning to support the implementation of evidence-based early language and literacy practices in their schools?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

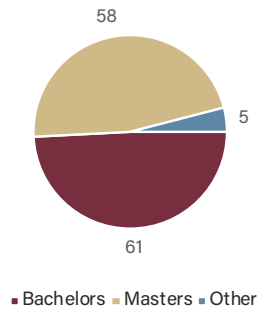
Nine literacy coaches participated in the embedded professional development. Although all coaches had received a reading endorsement, their educational backgrounds varied widely, with degrees in early education, elementary education, family and child sciences, public administration, and educational leadership. At the beginning of their professional development experience, their average percentage-correct score on a measure of evidence-based coaching practices was 65%; after completing the professional development, the average percentage-correct score was 73%. Importantly, the range of scores on the knowledge measure was wide after 6 months. The lowest percentage-correct score was 56%; the highest was 84%.



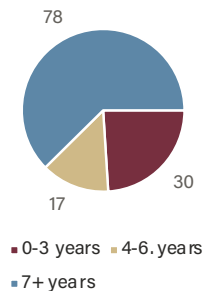
The teachers these coaches were supporting varied too. Of the 129 classroom teachers who responded to the knowledge survey, 55% were general education teachers in elementary schools and 61% reported that they have taught for seven or more years. Despite their collective years of experience, the average percentage-correct score on a measure of evidence-based instructional practices for teaching foundational skills was 63%. Like their coaches, teachers' knowledge ranged widely too. The lowest percentage-correct score was 20%; the highest was 93%. Importantly, only a few special education or middle school teachers participated.

PARTICIPATING TEACHERS (N = 129)

HIGHEST DEGREE ATTAINED

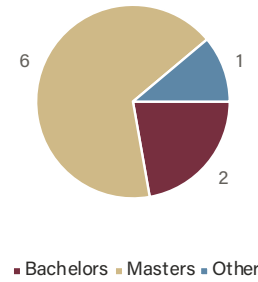


YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

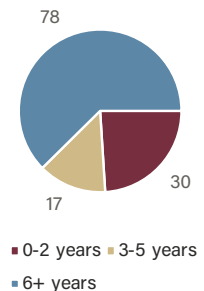


PARTICIPATING COACHES (N = 9)

HIGHEST DEGREE ATTAINED



YEARS OF COACHING EXPERIENCE



IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ Both literacy coaches and teachers varied widely in their experiences and knowledge related to evidence-based early reading and literacy instruction. The results suggest that many coaches were still learning how to provide effective coaching to teachers, and many of the teachers they were supporting were still learning how to provide evidence-based early reading and literacy instruction. These findings are aligned with previous research with teachers and coaches,¹ and help to clarify the challenges both experience while collaborating to improve students' reading and literacy achievement.
- ▶ Ongoing and job-embedded professional learning presents the opportunity to provide targeted support for both teachers and literacy coaches. Previous research has demonstrated that opportunities for ongoing professional learning are related to increases in both knowledge and implementation of evidence-based practices.² Investing in efforts to increase the number of knowledgeable teachers and literacy coaches in schools may increase the likelihood that effective literacy instruction that supports improved reading achievement is happening in classrooms.

References

1. Piasta, S. B., Connor, C. M., Fishman, B. J., & Morrison, F. J. (2009). Teachers' knowledge of literacy concepts, classroom practices, and student reading growth. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 13(3), 224-248.
2. Ehri, L. C., & Flugman, B. (2018). Mentoring teachers in systematic phonics instruction: Effectiveness of an intensive year-long program for kindergarten through 3rd grade teachers and their students. *Reading and Writing*, 31, 425-456.

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About FCRR

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