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2015

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Specialized Literacy Professionals as Literacy Leaders: Results of a National Survey

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Abstract

This large-scale national survey of specialized literacy professionals was designed to answer questions about responsibilities, including leadership, and about preparation for these roles. Questionnaires, completed by over 2,500 respondents, indicated that respondents had multiple responsibilities that included both instruction of struggling readers and support for teachers. Four distinct role-groups were identified: instructional/literacy coaches, reading/literacy specialists, reading teachers/interventionists, and supervisors. The findings indicated a need for more precise definitions of the roles of these professionals and for preparation programs to include experiences that address the tasks required. Themes discussed included: roles have changed and require more focus on leadership, specialists need to be nimble, and they require more in-depth preparation if they are to be able to handle the leadership demands of their positions.

Specialized Literacy Professionals as Literacy Leaders: Results of a National Survey

Over time, the role of reading specialists has evolved and continues to do so (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002; Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003; Briggs and Coulter, 1977; Dole, 2004; Kern, 2011; Stauffer, 1967). Some changes occurred because of shifts in Title 1, which provided funding for many reading specialists (Borman, Stringfield, & Slavin, 2001). In the early 2000s, Reading First, the programmatic arm of the No Child Left Behind Public Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001), generated the hiring of reading coaches to work with teachers to improve classroom literacy instruction. Reading specialists often found themselves in this newly defined position. Other changes have occurred because of Response to Intervention (RtI) with its focus on providing multi-tiered instruction (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). Reading specialists found themselves in the role of interventionists, working with struggling readers who needed supplemental or targeted instruction. More recently, reductions in federal, state, or local funding have eliminated positions or required shifts in responsibilities for many reading specialists or literacy coaches (Steinbacher-Reed & Powers, 2011/2012).

Given these changes, there is a need to learn more about how specialized literacy professionals (e.g., reading specialists, literacy coaches, instructional coaches, interventionists) actually function in schools, how prepared they are to assume their roles, and what skill sets are important to their success. Further, information about the role of these specialized literacy personnel as school leaders who influence school reform and improvement (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014) can provide ideas useful to those who function in such roles. The purpose of this study, then, is to inform those who prepare and employ specialized literacy professionals about how these professionals function in schools and the challenges they face. Such information can lead to improvements in specialized literacy personnel preparation programs and, in addition, assist

school districts in better understanding the role of such personnel and establishing school contexts necessary for these professionals to work effectively. Results may also provide insights into how specialized literacy professionals contribute to improving teacher practices and student learning.

In this article, we addressed the following research questions: (1) What are the current roles and responsibilities of specialized literacy professionals? (2) In what ways do specialized literacy professionals engage in leadership activities? (3) What do these specialized literacy professionals believe would have prepared them to function more effectively in their roles? First, we provide background information about the roles of specialized literacy professionals and then briefly discuss shared leadership as a theoretical framework for this study. Next, we describe the methods of the study and summarize the results. Last, we conclude with a discussion of findings and implications for specialized literacy professionals, those responsible for preparing or employing them, and for policymakers (e.g., professional organizations, states).

Background Information

In the late 1990s, the International Reading Association (IRA) established a commission to obtain empirical evidence that would assist in the development of a position statement on the role of the reading specialist in schools. Results of a survey distributed nationally and completed by 1,512 respondents identified four major functions of reading specialists: providing instruction, assessing student performance, serving as a resource, and handling administrative tasks (Bean, et al., 2002). Over 90% of the respondents indicated their primary task was that of instructing students, with more than 75% of their day spent in this role. Over 84% of the respondents indicated they served as a resource to teachers by providing materials, ideas, and support. Respondents identified how their role had changed as a result of trends in reading instruction.

For example, the national instructional shift from a pull-out to an in-class model of instruction resulted in teachers viewing reading specialists as both a resource and a school leader who could provide professional development on instructional issues. However, there was no mention of literacy coaches or coaching in this study (Bean, et al., 2002).

As indicated previously, a major initiative that had a dramatic impact on the role of the reading specialist was that of Reading First (NCLB, 2001). Schools that participated in the Reading First initiative were required to provide on-going, job-embedded professional development (PD) for their teachers. Most often, that PD was led by reading coaches, which 99% of the Reading First schools employed during the multiple years of Reading First (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Many states and professional organizations identified guidelines to assist schools in making decisions about hiring coaches, for example, hiring individuals who had a deep knowledge and understanding of "literacy processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction" (International Reading Association, 2004). According to Frost and Bean (2006), the "gold standard" for a literacy coach was that the individual possessed a reading specialist certificate, was an experienced classroom teacher, and had leadership and coaching skills.

In an analysis of the evaluations conducted in Reading First schools in 11 states, Bright and Hensley (2010) found reading coaches tended to be teachers with 11 to 19 years of experience who possessed graduate degrees and had advanced literacy training. However, the advanced degrees were not necessarily in the literacy area and the percentage of individuals possessing reading specialist or reading endorsement certificates ranged from as low as 16% in Arkansas to as high as 80% in Illinois. According to Carroll (2007), when reading specialists

were reassigned and asked to serve as reading coaches in their schools, many of these professionals learned how to function as coaches "on the job."

In other words, literacy coaching was implemented with limited empirical evidence about the qualifications coaches needed to perform effectively or how they should function in schools. As stated by Snow, Ippolito, and Schwartz (2006), ".... Like many good ideas in education, literacy coaching is being widely implemented based on its convergence with theory and the wisdom of practitioners, before rigorous evaluations have been carried out" (p. 36). Since that time, numerous studies provide evidence about the role of coaches in schools (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Grierson, 2011; Ippolito, 2010; Scott, Cortina, & Carlisle, 2012; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010) and the impact of coaching on teacher practices and student learning (Bean & Lillenstein, 2010; Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Matsumura, Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010; Powell, Diamond, & Koehler, 2011).

In 2010, IRA released its revised set of *Standards for Reading Professionals*, including reading specialists/literacy coaches. In these standards, reading specialist/literacy coach was used as an overarching title, and three possible roles, or combination of roles, were described: "serving as a teacher for students experiencing reading difficulties, as a reading or literacy coach, as a coordinator of reading and writing programs at the school or district level (p. 49). As stipulated in the IRA Standards for Reading Professionals document, all those enrolled in reading specialist programs are expected to develop leadership skills (including coaching) as a means of handling their dual responsibilities of teaching struggling readers and supporting the work of the classroom teachers. Coaching activities were embedded in the competencies for the reading specialist/literacy coach, describing three levels of responsibilities: candidates "can do, can

support (teachers), and can lead" (p. 68). Recently, Galloway and Lesaux (2014) synthesized

research about the roles assumed by reading specialists. They identified three key themes related

to the roles of these specialized literacy professionals: (1) specialists fill multiple roles and they

experience varying levels of comfort with these roles, (2) different stakeholders view these roles

differently, and (3) context influences how they carry out these roles. Galloway and Lesaux

concluded there was a need for a large-scale national study to provide the field with a deeper

understanding of how specialized literacy professionals currently spend their time in schools.

This article summarizes the results of such a national study.

Theoretical Perspective

No longer is leadership in schools interpreted as the domain or responsibility of one

individual (e.g., the principal); rather shared leadership, defined as "learning together, and

constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively," is being seen as essential

for promoting overall school improvement (Lambert, p. 5). Such leadership recognizes the

importance of building school capacity by encouraging classroom teachers and those with

specialized roles (e.g., reading specialist, literacy coach) to participate in improving the

organization. It calls for creating a culture of collaboration (Elmore, 2000; Camburn, Kimball, &

Lowenhaupt, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008), one in which those in positions of authority

establish conditions that support the leadership work of others in the school. As discussed by

Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) in their study of reform in Chicago

Public Schools, the leadership of the principal is essential for school success, but it is not

sufficient – teacher leadership and engagement in school change efforts are also important.

Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, and Rodriguez (2005) in their study of change in school literacy

learning, found that teachers who worked collaboratively to address instructional issues in

schools were identified as high implementers of the program. They also found that shared

leadership and job-embedded professional development were essential in creating a culture

which included a common vision of learning, literacy, and high expectations for students. Taylor

et al. (2005) also indicated that typically there was one strong teacher leader who led the change

effort in the school. Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003), found that leadership responsibility

was shared among several individuals in school reform efforts, and often one of the leaders was a

literacy specialist (e.g., a reading specialist, coach). Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010) also

found that although principal leadership was critical, peers also influenced teachers' practices by

talking with them, coaching, and providing specific advice about assessment and instruction.

With this movement towards shared leadership comes a need for developing teachers'

abilities to function as leaders and as members of a learning community. In a study of five

elementary schools involved in implementing Response to Intervention (Bean & Lillenstein,

2010), leadership was distributed among many of the personnel in the buildings; further, reading

specialists and coaches had key roles in leading and facilitating implementation efforts. Most

frequently, these specialized literacy professionals worked as a team to support teachers and help

them understand how to use student data and to provide differentiated instruction. Although the

leadership role of specialized literacy professionals tended to be an informal one, based on

influence rather than authority (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), these literacy professionals were

greatly involved in leadership activities. They helped teachers understand and use student data,

provided them with instructional ideas and job-embedded professional development, coached

them, and helped them improve their classroom instructional practices.

Research Design

The research design described below was developed to address the purpose of the study, specifically, to inform those who prepare and employ specialized literacy professionals about how these professionals function in schools and the challenges they face. In this section, we provide a context for the research design, describe the sampling selection and respondents, and discuss approaches for analyzing data.

Context

Several years ago, leaders of the Specialized Literacy Professionals Special Interest Group of IRA (SLP-SIG) invited the authors of this study to join a committee charged with obtaining information about the current roles of specialized literacy professionals, especially reading specialists and literacy coaches. These authors were involved in developing the research design, which included revising the survey used in a previous study (Bean et al., 2002). Development of the survey began with a review of the initial survey; however, changes were made to accommodate current emphases in the role of specialized literacy professionals (e.g., adding questions about the coaching role). The final survey elicited quantitative information from respondents about their roles and responsibilities; it also included several open-ended questions about quality of preparation, positive aspects of the role, major challenges, and factors that would enable professionals to be more successful in their roles. (In this paper, we focus on the quantitative questions and a single open-ended question on quality of preparation). Before distribution, a field test of the survey was conducted with 22 reading specialists/literacy coaches from different states. The final survey consisted of 46 items that were formatted and prepared for distribution via SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com). (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey). These researchers, supported by SLP-SIG, received approval from both the IRA

and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to distribute the survey using their websites and listserv capabilities.

Sample Selection

The IRA sent email messages to all members who had self-identified as reading specialists/literacy coaches, or who did not identify any job title, and also posted a notice about the survey on its website, Facebook page, and Twitter. Likewise, NCTE distributed an email to members and posted a notice on its website. The email messages encouraged receivers to forward the survey to colleagues who also served in such roles, indicating it was not necessary for respondents to be members of either organization. In other words, snowball sampling (Nardi, 2003), a convenience sampling technique in which research participants are asked to assist in the identification of other subjects, was used to increase size and variability (respondents representing various grade levels and role groups) of the sample, and obtain responses from specialized literacy professionals who were not members of either IRA or NCTE. The link to the SurveyMonkey website was kept open for 30 days.

Respondents

After eliminating ineligible respondents (i.e., principals, classroom teachers, or university faculty not serving as specialized literacy professionals), the final number of respondents was 2,531. All states were represented, as were the United States territories of American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands. The majority of respondents who answered questions about ethnicity and gender were Caucasian (90%) and female (97%). Of those responding, most held an undergraduate degree in elementary education (63%), a small percentage majored in secondary education (9%) or in special education (5%), and 22% indicated "other". Only 6% indicated they had taught less than one year or not at all; over 31%

had taught 11 years or more and 29% had worked as a classroom teacher for at least 6 to 10 years

before taking a position as a specialized literacy professional. The demographics for each of the

role-groups were similar to those of the group as a whole.

Almost all respondents worked in public schools (92%) in a full-time position (92%).

Most individuals in this study worked in one school (78%), with 12% working in two to four

schools, and 9% in five or more schools. Only 31% worked in schools with no other specialized

literacy professionals; 40% had one to two additional specialized literacy professional colleagues

and the remainder worked in schools with three or more specialized literacy professionals. As a

whole, 52% of the respondents served at the elementary level, 21% had positions at the

secondary level, and 6% worked at both levels. The other respondents worked in some

combination of grade levels (e.g., from K-grade 12, preschool only).

Data Analysis

Defining the role. To develop the survey options for the question "What is your job

title?" the researchers used the pilot survey, current state certification titles, and professional

literature (e.g., Bean, 2009; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012) that suggested multiple job titles

associated with literacy professionals. To be inclusive, respondents were able to choose from 11

different job titles to identify themselves, or to click the "other" box and write a specific job title.

To make sense of this large data set, a subset of authors (Ortlieb, Goatley, Bean, & Lane)

analyzed the data as a means of identifying role-groups that could then be used as a basis for

analyzing responses to other items on the survey. These authors coded for words or patterns

(Palmquist, Carley, & Dale, 1997) by analyzing and collapsing across all job titles, including the

"other" category. To substantiate the categorization system, responses to two survey questions

were analyzed: (1) Which of these best describes your primary responsibility? (2) How would

you describe your role? These analyses led to the identification of four role-groups:

instructional/literacy coaches (n = 774), reading teachers/interventionists (n = 707),

reading/literacy specialists (n = 898), and supervisors (n = 142). We then calculated chi-square

analyses for the responses to the two questions above. There were significant differences in the

distribution of responses among four role-groups in how they described their primary

responsibility [Chi-Square (9, $N = 2221$) = 1250, $p = <.0001$] and also in describing their role

[Chi-Square (9, $N = 2245$) = 761.2, $p = <.0001$], indicating that the individuals in these four

groups did differ in their perceptions of how they functioned in schools. Ten respondents did not

identify themselves by title; their responses were not included in any analysis by job titles,

although they are included in responses to other items on the survey. When respondents are

referred to as a whole, we refer to them as specialized literacy professionals to reflect (a) their

advanced preparation, and (b) the specialized nature of their responsibilities (e.g., working with

struggling readers, supporting teacher learning).

Quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis consisted of calculating frequency

distributions for responses to Likert-scale items; when appropriate, cross tabulations were

conducted to determine whether there were differences in how the various role-groups responded

to specific items. Percentages calculated for specific items were based on different totals, given

not all respondents answered all questions; these differences are noted in the tables in this article.

Qualitative analysis. In addition to the quantitative analysis of the closed-item

questions, we analyzed the results of one open-ended question, "What would have prepared you

to be successful in your role?" We used the NVivo software program (2010) to code data for

each of the four roles, capturing key words and phrases directly from the raw data. Next, we

looked at the patterns in the data to create pattern codes (e.g., need for more coaching

experiences, more strategies for working with struggling readers). Two authors then categorized responses of the groups as belonging to one of the six standards identified in the Standards for Preparing Reading Professionals (IRA, 2010). For example, if a respondent identified the need to know more about working with English Learners, that response was coded as the need to know more about diversity (IRA Standard 4). To establish interrater reliability, these two authors independently categorized the responses of 100 respondents to the question about preparation and found a greater than 90% agreement in their coding of responses.

Results

In this section, we present results for each of the three research questions.

What are the Current Roles and Responsibilities of Specialized Literacy Professionals?

We first discuss the responses to the question in which we asked respondents to describe their primary responsibility as a whole and then by role-group (see Table 1). Almost 46% of respondents indicated their primary responsibility was that of working with students who are experiencing difficulty with reading, followed by 28% of the respondents who indicated they had coaching responsibilities. Almost one quarter (23%) of the respondents had multiple and equal responsibilities while only a small percent (3%) identified themselves as serving as coordinators of the literacy program.

When analyzing responses to the question about primary responsibility across role-groups, there were major differences. Almost 70% of the coaches identified their primary responsibility as coaching; few of the coaches listed working with students as a major responsibility. Almost 73% of the reading teachers/interventionists, on the other hand, indicated their primary responsibility was working with students. Similar to the reading teachers/interventionists, about two-thirds (67%) of the reading/literacy specialists indicated they

worked with students but this was followed by multiple responsibilities (26%). Only 108

individuals identified as supervisors answered this question and almost half of those (44%)

responded they had multiple responsibilities while one-third (32%) had primarily coaching

responsibilities.

*****Insert Table 1 about here*****

Tasks. In Table 2, we illustrate the rankings of the five activities (of a possible 18) most

frequently performed for the group as a whole and also across the four role-groups. We assigned

a different weight to the possible responses [e.g., not at all (0), a little (1), somewhat (2), and

great deal (3)] to determine the ranking. The group as a whole ranked "instructing" as the task

on which they spent most of their time, but this was affected by the large numbers of reading

teachers/interventionists and reading/literacy specialists in the sample. An important similarity

among role-groups is that all of them ranked "supporting teachers" as one of their five major

tasks. But we also saw differences in the rankings of the role-groups. Like the other groups,

instructional/literacy coaches spent time supporting teachers with materials and resources, but

they were the only role-group that identified "coaching" as one of the five major tasks. Neither

coaches nor supervisors ranked assessing or instructing students as one of the top five, unlike

reading/literacy specialists and the reading teachers/interventionists who ranked both these tasks

in the top five. Supervisors' rankings were similar to coaches in that they worked with

leadership teams and facilitated teacher groups; they were the only group to identify the task

"conducting workshops," in their top five. The four tasks in which 80% or more of the

respondents spent little or no time were: grant writing, preparing or supporting the work of

paraprofessionals, working with communities of practice, and spending time with non-reading

related tasks, such as substituting for other teachers or handling administrative responsibilities.

In sum, the responses to the research question about the roles of the specialized literacy professional indicated that responsibilities of the specialized literacy professional varied, not only across role-groups, but also within the role-group itself. Moreover, regardless of role-group, most had multiple tasks and responsibilities. However, it also appears that those identified as coaches had responsibilities similar to those who identified themselves as supervisors, while the reading/literacy specialists' tasks were more similar to those of the reading teachers/interventionists. Regardless of role-group, almost all spent time supporting teachers.

*****Insert Table 2 about here*****

In What Ways Do Specialized Literacy Professionals Engage in Leadership Activities?

Leadership tasks. Respondents were asked to select one of five choices that best described their role in supporting teachers (See Table 3). Almost all (89%) who responded to this question spent some time supporting the work of teachers. About 25% of those who self-identified as a coach indicated working with teachers was their major responsibility; other coaches (19%) spent half of their time supporting teachers. The remaining respondents (45%), who did not identify themselves as coaches, viewed themselves as having either a major role in supporting teachers or working with teachers informally.

****Insert Table 3 here****

We also asked respondents to indicate the types of coaching and other leadership activities in which they engaged and the extent to which they emphasized those activities (e.g., from not at all to a great deal). As illustrated in Table 4, a lower percentage of reading/literacy specialists and reading teachers/interventionists than coaches and supervisors indicated they spent a "great deal of time" on these activities. For example, over 50% of coaches spent a great deal of time in five different coaching activities: conferring, observing, planning, conducting

workshops and modeling. This is similar to the responses of supervisors except that the supervisors spent a great deal of time facilitating professional learning communities rather than planning with teachers. On the other hand, reading teachers/interventionists and reading/literacy specialists performed various coaching activities, but fewer respondents (between 24% and 42%) identified these activities as ones on which they spent a great deal of time. All role-groups spent time conferring with teachers about identified problems and all but the supervisors highlighted time spent planning with teachers. All role-groups except reading/literacy specialists identified observing and providing feedback as activities on which they spent time. The only two role-groups that identified "serving on an RtI" team as a coaching activity on which they spent a great deal of time were reading teachers/interventionists and reading/literacy specialists. These data indicate that groups were providing similar sorts of support to teachers, although as evident in Table 4, more emphasis was placed on these activities by a greater percentage of coaches and supervisors than reading teachers/interventionists and reading/literacy specialists.

****Insert Table 4 about here****

Importance of school culture and collaboration. Because of the influence of school culture on specialized reading personnel's roles and responsibilities (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014), we asked several questions about both school climate and the existence of professional learning communities. About one third of the respondents indicated that, to a great extent, there was a common vision in their school, teachers enjoyed working with and helping each other, students showed respect for teachers, and principal leadership was evident. Many of these respondents (44%) also indicated their schools, to a great extent, had high expectations for students.

We then asked respondents to indicate whether their school exhibited features of professional learning communities, using characteristics identified by Vescio, Ross, and Adams

(2008). The most highly rated feature, coded as existing to a great extent, was the focus on student learning (60%), while the two lowest rated features were "teaching is made public" (24%) and "opportunities exist for reflective dialogue" (31%). Only 34% of respondents indicated that, to a great extent, there were shared values in the school or opportunities for collaboration existed (40%).

The importance of administrative leadership and support were seen as keys to the success of the specialized literacy professional; as one respondent stated, "the principal needs to be a leader of learning and have a vision which is used to focus and energize the school." Respondents saw collaboration among teachers as essential, with "planned collaboration time integrated into teachers' schedules…and time to collaborate with my coaching colleagues." A comment by one respondent summarizes the importance of the school culture: "a defined role with expectations for me and staff, a framework for collaboration (we have professional learning communities, but [they] do not function effectively); opportunities to continue to learn (attend workshops, meet with other coaches), better school climate-leadership, trust, common goals."

The importance of collaboration and coordination of reading instruction across various programs (e.g., classroom, special education, Title 1, RtI) is also reflected in the findings that only 7% of the respondents in this study indicated they were the students' sole reading teacher. Frequently, students with whom they worked also received reading instruction from classroom teachers, reading specialists, special educators, paraprofessionals, or volunteers.

What Preparation Have Specialized Literacy Professionals Received? What Do They Need to be Successful in Their Roles?

Most specialized literacy professionals had graduate or advanced preparation, but not necessarily reading-related: 75% of survey respondents held a Master's degree, with 55% of

those degrees being listed as Reading Education; 53% were certified as reading specialists.

Respondents were asked to identify all organizations in which they held memberships. Most

respondents (90%) indicated they belonged to at least one professional organization; 56% were

members of the International Reading Association (IRA), 30% belonged to their state reading

association, and 28% were active in the local reading association. Also, 20% of respondents

indicated they were members of the National Education Association, and 10% were members of

the National Council of Teachers of English. Respondents were also asked, in an open-ended

question, to indicate what preparation might have helped them be more successful in their roles.

Approximately 56% (n =1,407) of the survey respondents provided answers to this question;

many provided more than one response and all role-groups were represented. We categorized

the 1,626 responses into one of the six standards described in the *Standards for Preparing*

Reading Professionals – Revised (IRA, 2010) (see Table 5). Overwhelmingly, respondents from

all role-groups described a need for a wide variety of experiences that would enable them to

more effectively address their leadership role (Standard 6: Leadership and Lifelong Learning).

*****Insert Table 5 about here*****

We then conducted a more in-depth qualitative analysis of responses and found

respondents overall identified the need for more learning experiences related to working with

adults and leadership. Many respondents indicated they would have been better prepared if they

had: (a) earned an advanced degree in literacy education prior to starting the position; (b) been

involved in a supervised field experience while in that program; and, (c) coaching experiences in

school settings. As one respondent stated, "this position should require a master's degree in

reading….after obtaining the reading specialist training, it was much easier." In fact, between

11% (interventionists/reading teachers) to 33% (instructional/literacy coaches) of the

respondents in the role-groups indicated they were better prepared because of advanced work that included coaching. Several respondents expressed a desire for "more courses in coaching or more opportunities to hone my coaching skills." Some specialized literacy professionals suggested that a supervised experience with those serving as literacy coaches would be helpful in learning how to coach. As one respondent wrote, one must "shadow an effective reading coach to see how he/she goes about planning a day, meeting with teachers, facing challenges." Nearly 60% of respondents identified as instructional/literacy coaches and reading/literacy specialists called for a semester or year-long supervised school-based experience working with a master teacher serving in the role of a coach; a smaller percentage of reading teachers/interventionists (30%) and supervisors (5%) suggested supervised clinical coaching experience. Respondents also made other suggestions: "I would have liked to have been coached by a coach and have reflective time with other coaches;" "the internship our state provides would have been more beneficial at the beginning of the year than in February;" and as one professional called it, "on-the-job student teaching" with a coach. In sum, respondents called for more coaching experiences in certification programs, additional readings, and discussion about topics such as adult learning theory, coaching, and literacy leadership.

Respondents also valued ongoing, on-the-job professional development as a means of improving their leadership and coaching abilities. Specialized literacy professionals new to the position desired experiences that would increase their ability to work with teachers (e.g., "I need to learn how to move people to the next rung of their ladder, motivating and providing leadership to people who are stuck or content with the status quo"). Over 90% of respondents in the role of instructional/literacy coach and 65% of respondents identified as reading or literacy specialists stated they needed more coaching experiences during the first year in their positions while

smaller percentages of reading teachers/interventionists (26%) and supervisors (7%) saw this as a need. One respondent stated, "Any coaching training would have been helpful I learned to coach by contacting other coaches in the districts myself and arranging meetings and observations." Many respondents noted the importance of understanding adult learning theory and specific best practices for working with adult learners; or as one respondent stated, "I need more training on creating buy-in with teachers as well as coaching language." Finally, respondents indicated they often were the source of professional learning for others, but did not have sufficient opportunities to continue their own learning. The greatest need as identified by all respondents, regardless of role, was having a better sense of how to work with other adults to collaboratively improve instruction and student learning, that is, to function as leaders in their schools.

Discussion

This discussion focuses on five themes derived from the results of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. They address issues engendered by survey responses, and organized around the research questions about roles and responsibilities, leadership, and preparation of specialized literacy professionals. The five themes include changes in role, variability in role, leadership as a key aspect of the role, importance of being nimble, and need for additional preparation.

Changes Have Occurred in Roles, Responsibilities, and Titles

One of the major differences in the results of this study as compared to those reported in the 2002 survey is that of coaching or coaches. The addition of coaching to the role responsibilities of specialized literacy professionals is also seen in the questionnaires distributed by the U.S. Department of Education in its Schools and Staffing Questionnaires (USDE, 2004, 2007-2008; USDE, 2011-2012). In the 2004 questionnaire, only the term reading specialist was

used; in the 2007-2008 questionnaires, schools were asked whether they had reading specialists and/or reading coaches in their schools; in the 2011-2012 questionnaire, instructional coach was introduced as one of the possible choices. These later questionnaires included a definition that distinguished between the role of specialist and coach, (e.g., specialists worked with students and coaches worked with teachers). It appears as though titles describing various positions of specialized literacy professionals have been influenced by specific educational reforms. Response to Intervention, for example, generated a new title for reading specialists who serve as "interventionists." The emphasis on improving classroom literacy during Reading First led to the use of the title reading or literacy coach.

Another difference between the findings of the 2002 study and the current study was the number of respondents holding reading specialist certification: Approximately 90% of the respondents in 2002 held reading specialist certification as compared to 53% overall in the current study (Figure 1 displays comparisons of results of the 2002 and current study). Moreover, only 19% of the reading/literacy coaches in this study held specialist certification. Also, fewer respondents (56%) in the current study were members of IRA or NCTE, indicating the "snowball sampling" approach was successful in recruiting respondents who were not members of either association.

In the current study, we saw differences in the assessment responsibilities of coaches and supervisors as compared to reading teachers/interventionists and reading/literacy specialists. The coaches and supervisors ranked "analysis of data" as one of the five tasks on which they spent much of their time, but administering assessments was not in that list. Reading teachers/interventionists and reading/literacy specialists, on the other hand, ranked both the administration of assessment instruments and analyzing data in their list of tasks on which they

spent most of their time. The current emphasis on assessment, especially classroom and school level data, as essential for instructional decision-making and for accountability has appeared to influence the work of these specialized literacy professionals.

Over 84% of the respondents in the 2002 study had resource responsibilities that included supporting teachers in their instructional efforts (e.g., providing teachers with materials and ideas, especially for struggling readers). Likewise, in the current study, 89% indicated they had some responsibility for supporting teachers, requiring them to serve as leaders and work collaboratively with adults. It appears as though reading specialists have always had some responsibility for supporting teachers, but now such support seems to extend beyond "providing ideas and materials" to include helping teachers improve their classroom instruction and using data to inform instruction, not only in a single classroom but at a grade level or in a school.

Some similarities exist between the findings of the 2002 study and the present one. Again, there was little demographic diversity in respondents (e.g., primarily female). Moreover, there was not much of a difference in the percentage of respondents overall at the secondary level. However, in the current study, over a third (39%) of those in the coach role-group worked at the secondary level or with both elementary and secondary levels. In other words, more of the respondents at the secondary level had responsibilities for working with teachers to improve instruction rather than providing direct instruction to students.

Instruction was still an important responsibility for the specialized literacy professional. In the current study, over 75% of the respondents had some sort of instructional role and most of that work was with readers experiencing difficulties (98%); likewise, in the 2002 study, over 90% of the reading specialists indicated that they instructed on a daily basis.

Specialized Literacy Professionals Serve Many Different Roles

In the current study, specific titles did enable us to differentiate between and among roles more precisely with instructional/literacy coaches tending to have responsibilities for working with teachers, and reading teachers/interventionists being responsible for providing instruction to struggling readers. Also, supervisors tended to perform more like coaches. Those who self-identified as reading specialists were the most diverse in terms of role expectations, with responsibilities ranging from working primarily with students to working as coaches or even as coordinators (see Figure 2, for a summary of how these four role-groups differed, in general, and also in the emphases given to tasks and responsibilities). It appears as though some school districts that employ these specialized literacy professionals, by using specific titles, do make distinctions across roles. Nevertheless, these distinctions are not clear-cut and no single or simple definition fits any one of the sub-groups. As stated by Galloway and Lesaux (2014), reading specialists may assume many different roles (e.g., student-oriented, data-oriented, teacher-oriented, and managerial). One can imagine then the difficulty for these professionals, especially if ambiguity or divergent perceptions surround the expectations of the role by school leadership, teachers, or even the individual in the position.

Leadership Is an Integral Aspect of Any Specialized Literacy Professional Role

Many types of leadership activities were evident in this study requiring professionals to work effectively with other adults. Almost all respondents provided informal support (e.g., providing teachers with ideas and materials, assisting them with interpreting data, or making instructional decisions). Others had more formal leadership roles (e.g., coaching, developing curriculum). Moreover, two thirds of the respondents indicated they worked with other specialized literacy professionals in their schools, requiring them to work collaboratively with them as well as with teachers. Also, many of these specialized literacy professionals were not the sole literacy

instructor for students; therefore, they had to work collaboratively with classroom teachers to make decisions about how to plan and schedule instruction. In other words, respondents worked in situations that required shared leadership, participation in decision-making at the school and district level, and collaboration to achieve a common vision and goals.

Specialized Literacy Professionals Must Be Nimble

Schools, like other organizations, change over time; they are affected by internal (e.g., leadership, test scores, curricular or demographic) and external (state or federal requirements, societal) conditions. And like any organization, schools need to adapt to address these challenges. Adaptation requires those within the organization to be nimble, that is, be able to move quickly, but thoughtfully, in making decisions about changes to meet these challenges. Such adaptation may require new ways of thinking and doing. In recent years, specialized literacy professionals have been asked to adapt in many ways. The emphasis on the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, 2010) and the focus on improving adolescent literacy have required them to learn more about disciplinary literacy and how to work with content area teachers. Also, because more and more emphasis has been given to improving teacher quality, especially in providing classroom reading instruction for all students, many literacy professionals find themselves having responsibilities for assisting teachers, both informally and formally. In fact, teacher performance evaluation literature suggests coaches may be involved in assessing teacher behaviors and then providing appropriate professional learning experiences for improvement (Goe, Biggers, & Croft, 2012). Given these responsibilities, specialized literacy professionals need to be especially knowledgeable about how to work with school leadership to establish a climate and context conducive to change. At the same time, paradoxically, given the economic climate, many schools have eliminated coaching positions

(Bean, Dole, Nelson, Belcastro, & Zigmond, 2015). Often, reading specialists are then assigned

leadership tasks that require them to analyze data with teachers, model, co-teach, and lead

literacy reform efforts (Steinbacher-Reed & Powers (2011/2012).

Literacy Specialized Professionals May Not Be Prepared to Meet the Demands of Their

Diverse Roles

As mentioned above, fewer respondents held reading specialist certification in this study

as compared to the 2002 study and even fewer coaches held reading specialist certification

(19%). We suspect the findings in this study reflect a nationwide trend. In the 2004 results of

the School and Staffing Report (NCES), 81% or nine of ten respondents responsible for teaching

reading in the schools indicated they had state certification as reading specialists. (Information

about reading specialist certification in the more recent School and Staffing Questionnaires was

not available). Several factors may account for this decrease. First, reading specialist

certification may not be viewed as essential for those serving as coaches, especially instructional

coaches. Second, states or districts, rather than requiring a state reading specialist certification,

may be providing literacy-based professional development for specialized literacy professionals.

Although some minor distinctions between role-groups were offered in what they believed

would better prepare them for their role, across all role-groups, respondents indicated they

needed much more initial preparation for their leadership roles, including the following: working

with adult learners, understanding of organizational systems and school change, working with

the principal, and learning more about how to collaborate and coach more effectively. In other

words, although most respondents felt they were prepared to handle instructional and assessment

tasks, they did not feel prepared to serve as leaders or to work with adults. In several articles

investigating the presence of leadership experiences in reading specialist certification programs,

researchers found that about half of the participating universities included a leadership course in their programs (Quatroche & Wepner, 2008; Wepner & Quatroche, 2011). An important aspect of this study was the finding that respondents felt a need for ongoing mentoring, or for a network of colleagues who could meet and discuss issues as a means of helping each other address challenges in their schools.

<div align="center">**Implications**</div>

The findings of this study have implications for many different audiences: literacy professionals themselves, those who prepare and hire them, researchers interested in investigating aspects of the roles, organizations that define the roles and provide professional development and support for literacy professionals, and policymakers responsible for developing regulations that form the foundation for quality performance.

Defining the Role, Defining Leadership

Given the findings that specialized literacy professionals have many different titles and serve in various roles, there is a need for better definitions describing these roles. For example, a recent Schools and Staffing survey distributed by the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2007-2008) distinguished simply between those who worked with students and those who worked with teachers; our evidence indicates that such a distinction is not enough. Literacy professional organizations, such as IRA and NCTE, in developing their standards documents, may need to consider clearer distinctions between roles and use those distinctions in establishing necessary competencies or qualifications for each role.

At the same time, leadership skills of specialized literacy professionals may need to be more fully defined and described. In the current Standards for Reading Professionals (IRA, 2010), statements tend to be broad (e.g., "demonstrate foundational knowledge of adult learning

theories and related research about organizational change, professional development and school culture," Standard 6). The findings of this study indicated a need to unpack these statements in meaningful ways so that those preparing candidates have a clearer sense of what specific leadership activities should be included in a program.

Preparation of Specialized Literacy Professionals: A Continuum of Responsibility

Our findings about roles and responsibilities suggest that specialized literacy professionals need to be prepared to work with both teachers and students. We suggest that preparation programs consider the possibility of a developmental continuum in planning experiences for candidates in their programs. The continuum could include specific descriptions of initial, proficient, and advanced competencies, similar to the one described in Figure 3 for one of the IRA leadership standards, Working with Groups. Such continua would assist in course development, the sequencing of courses in a program, and in deciding which learning activities can serve as building blocks for more complex skills or knowledge.

Ongoing Professional Learning

This study provided strong evidence about the need for ongoing professional development for those serving as specialized literacy professionals, with respondents indicating the need for mentors and networks of colleagues to share challenges and successes. Such on-site, job-embedded professional learning can occur when specialized literacy professionals work in role-alike groups to discuss common issues or topics (e.g., how to use data more effectively to inform instruction, what data suggest about teaching or learning). Literacy leadership groups that include reading specialists, coaches, psychologists, etc., also provide an important source of professional learning, with each role-group learning from others. At the same time, novice

specialized literacy professionals, regardless of responsibilities, might be assigned a mentor to serve as a source of support and provide feedback.

Limitations

Obtaining a large sample that would best represent the broad array of specialized literacy professionals was a difficult task. However, the snowball sampling approach (Nardi, 2003), did appear to address the limitation of the 2002 survey, in which participants were all members of the IRA. We received over 2,500 responses, and 44% of them stated they were not members of IRA while 90% did not hold membership in NCTE. Moreover, we received responses from all states as well as from professionals outside the United States. However, we acknowledge that respondents voluntarily completed the survey and may differ from non-volunteers. Nevertheless, the large sample size and broad geographic distribution gives us confidence in the results. Moreover, the field test conducted with specialized literacy professionals prior to launching the survey was helpful in identifying questions that may have been confusing to respondents. However, we acknowledge the limitations of surveys as a measurement procedure, recognizing they may result in conflicting conceptions and beliefs which cause participants to respond in contradictory or inconsistent ways (Eichelberger, 1989).

Further Research

The results of this study raise important questions for researchers interested in studying the work of literacy professionals in more depth. First, what are the indicators of success or effectiveness for each role? Second, what qualifications, especially knowledge, skills, and dispositions, related to leadership, do professionals in these roles require for success and how do they differ for those functioning at different levels (e.g., secondary, elementary)? Third, what conditions are necessary in schools for these professionals to work effectively as leaders?

Finally, what activities or learning experiences in preparation programs best facilitate the development of leadership skills of those preparing to serve as specialized literacy professionals? Also, studies might be designed to provide for variations in how specialists function (e.g., intensity of involvement with teachers, model of coaching, school wide leadership efforts) and relate findings to measures of teacher performance or student learning.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the changes that have occurred in the role of specialized literacy professionals over the past 15 years as reported by the study participants. There are distinctions between the roles, especially between those of the reading specialist and literacy coach that call for changes in how these professionals are prepared and the qualifications they need to be effective in their positions. Results also indicate the importance of the leadership role for all specialized literacy professionals and are consistent with the current emphasis on shared leadership as an essential ingredient in school improvement. The results of this study indicate the roles of specialized literacy professionals are complex and require individuals serving in those roles have multiple skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Finally, results suggest the need for specialized literacy professionals to have more in-depth experiences focusing on leadership, not only in preparation programs, but also as an integral aspect of professional learning on the job.

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Table 1

Primary Responsibilities of Role-Groups

Primary Responsibility	Instructional/ Literacy Coach		Reading Teacher/ Interventionist		Reading/ Literacy Specialist		Supervisor	
	n	*%*	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	*%*
Coordinating literacy program	13	[2]	17	[3]	24	[3]	19	[18]
coaching	503	[70]	46	[8]	37	[5]	35	[32]
Teach struggling readers	45	[6]	439	[73]	533	[67]	6	[5]
Multiple Responsibilities	162	[22]	99	[16]	204	[26]	48	[44]
Total Respondents by Role-groups	723		601		798		108	

*Answered by 2,221 respondents

Table 2

Rankings of Time Spent on Top Five Tasks by Role-Groups

	Group as Whole	Instructional Coach/Literacy Coach	Reading Teacher/Interventionist	Reading/Literacy Specialist	Supervisor
Rank			Tasks		
1	Instruct Students	Support Teachers	Instruct Students	Instruct Students	Support Teachers
2	Analyze Data	Coach Teachers	Assess Students	Assess Students	Analyze Data
3	Support Teachers	Analyze Data	Analyze Data	Analyze Data	Leadership Activities
4	Assess Students	Leadership Activities	Support Teachers	Support Teachers	Facilitate Teacher Groups
5	Leadership Activities	Facilitate Teacher Groups	Administrative Tasks	Administrative Tasks	Conduct Workshops

Table 3

Coaching and Leadership Roles of Specialized Literacy Professionals

Coaching role	*n*	*%*
I have no responsibility for supporting the work of teachers.	255	[11.3]
I am a coach and I spend about 1/2 of my time supporting the work of teachers.	431	[19.1]
I am a coach and my major responsibility is supporting the work of teachers.	563	[25.0]
I am not identified as a coach, but I have a major role in supporting work of teachers.	276	[12.2]
I am not identified as a coach, but I work informally in supporting the work of teachers.	730	[32.4]
Total Respondents	2255	[100.3]

*Answered by 2,255 respondents

Table 4

Percentage of Respondents who Spent "A great deal" of Time on Specific Coaching and Leadership Activities

Instructional/ Literacy Coach	Reading Teacher/ Interventionist	Reading/Literacy Specialist	Supervisor
Conferring [57%]	Conferring [36.8%]	Serving on RtI team [42%]	Conducting Workshops [66%]
Observing [55%]	Serving on RtI Team [36.5%]	Conferring [36%]	Conferring [51%]
Planning [52%]	Planning with Teachers [26%]	Planning [30%]	Observing [55%]
Conducting Workshops [51%]	Modeling [25%]	Co-teaching [28%]	Modeling [53%]
Modeling [51%]	Observing [24%]	Serving as member of subject team [28%]	Facilitating Professional Learning Community [51%]

Table 5

Preparation that Would be Helpful to Respondents (Responses Categorized Using *Standards in Preparing Specialized Literacy Professionals*, IRA, 2010)

	Instructional Coach/Literacy Coach n = 486		Reading Teacher/ Interventionist n = 496		Reading/Literacy Specialist n = 343		Supervisor n = 82	
IRA *Standards*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
Standard 1 Knowledge	17	[3]	8	[3]	21	[3]	12	[10]
Standard 2 Curriculum & Instruction	25	[5]	50	[16]	67	[10]	8	[7]
Standard 3 Assessment	16	[3]	1	[<1]	52	[8]	9	[8]
Standard 4 Diversity	7	[1]	30	[10]	54	[8]	6	[5]
Standard 5 Literate Environment	4	[1]	8	[3]	15	[2]	2	[2]
Standard 6 Leadership	471	[87]	216	[69]	445	[68]	82	[69]
Total Responses	540		313		654		119	

*Total of 1,407 respondents
**Total of 1,626 responses

	2002 Study (n = 1, 517)	2014 Study (n = 2, 531)
Characteristics		
Certified as reading specialist	90%	53%
Members of IRA	All	56%
Source of Funding		
District	28%	42%
Federal	35%	40%
Level of Work		
Primary	81%	*
intermediate	52%	*
elementary	*	52%
middle school	16%	*
high school	8%	*
Middle/High School	*	21%
Roles and Responsibilities		
Work with struggling readers	90%	98%
Support Teachers	84%	89%
Assess students	99%	70%

*Not available in this survey

Figure 1. Comparison of 2002 and Current Study

Role-Group	Major Responsibilities	Minimal Responsibilities
Instructional/literacy coaches (n = 774)	Support teachers with materials and ideas, coach teachers, and provide feedback to them; work with school leadership teams, and facilitate teacher groups	Assess or instruct students, coordinate school reading programs, provide workshops, or supervise other professionals
Reading teachers/interventionists (n = 707)	Assess and instruct students; analyze data for instructional decision making	Support teachers, communicate with parents, administrative tasks
Reading/literacy specialists (n=898)	Instruct students, assess and analyzing data; support teachers, coordinate school reading programs, provide workshops, and develop curriculum ("jack-of-all trades")	Support needs of paraprofessionals and grant writing endeavors
Supervisors (n=142)	Coordinate school reading programs, curriculum development, support teachers with ideas and materials, lead workshops, coach teachers	Grant writing

Figure 2. Summary of Major and Minimal Responsibilities of Specialized Literacy Professionals

Element	Initial	Proficient	Advanced
Leadership: Working with Groups	Understanding of adult learning (effect on group work)	Understanding of professional development literature and its effect on teacher learning	Understanding of factors that influence group work
Options	Observe and assess effectiveness of group meetings (leadership, facilitation of participation); Lead study or book group and assess shared leadership, accomplishment of goals (reflect on your role)	Plan and conduct a professional development workshop for your colleagues (Obtain feedback and conduct a self-reflection); Meet with a grade level team, addressing a specific instructional skill/strategy (Obtain feedback and conduct a self-reflection)	Lead a student data meeting with teachers; Facilitate professional learning community meeting in your school; (Obtain feedback and conduct a self-reflection)

Figure 3. Example of a Continuum for Leadership: Working with Groups

Appendix: Survey

Role of the Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach

SCHOOL/POSITION DEMOGRAPHICS:

Job Title (drop down box) :

Titles would include: reading specialist; literacy coach; reading coach; reading facilitator; reading teacher; remedial reading teacher; interventionist; instructional support teacher; Title 1 teacher; other

State [drop down (dd)]:

Zip code ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

1. Is your position :
   ____Full time

   ____ Part time

   > (a) If part time, other responsibilities include (check all that apply) Teaching
   > (b) Administrative
   > (c) Other _____

   _____

2. Is there a written job description for your position?
____Yes

____No

3. Funding source for position (check all that apply)
   ____ school

   ____ district

   ____ State

   ____ Federal (e.g., Title 1)

____grant funded

____don't know

____Other (please indicate below)

4. At how many schools do you work as a reading specialist/literacy coach? (dd) 1; 2; 3-4; 5-6; more than 6

5. At what levels do you work? (check all that apply)
____preschool   ___Kindergarten   ____Primary (grades 1-3)   ____Intermediate (grades 4-5)
____middle school/junior high (grades 6-8)   ____high school (grades 9-12)

6. If you work with students, what is your general workload?   I don't work with students____   10 or less_____; 11-20____; 21-40____; 41-60___; more than 60____

7. If you have coaching responsibilities, with how many teachers do you interact over the course of the year?   I don't have coaching responsibilities____10 or less____; 11-20____; 21-30____; 31-40___; more than 40____.

ROLE AS READING SPECIALIST/LITERACY COACH

8. In your role as reading specialist/literacy coach, how would you rate each of the following responsibilities in terms of "emphasis" (the degree to which you spend time on these tasks)?

	no time (0%)	a little time (1-25%)	some time (26-60%)	great deal of time (more than 60%)
Instructing students	O	O	O	O
Assessing students	O	O	O	O
Supporting teachers with materials, ideas, etc.	O	O	O	O

Coaching teachers by modeling, observing and providing feedback	O	O	O	O
Curriculum development	O	O	O	O
Coordinating the school reading program (e.g., arranging scheduling, grouping, selecting materials)	O	O	O	O
Working with a designated leadership team at the school (principal, other specialized personnel, teacher leaders, etc.)	O	O	O	O
Facilitating teacher groups (e.g., grade level, department, data teams)	O	O	O	O
Working with the RtI team	O	O	O	O
Conducting workshops (PD) for teachers	O	O	O	O
Participating in community of practice activities (e.g., facilitating study groups, discussion of instructional practices)	O	O	O	O
Supporting or supervising paraprofessionals or volunteers	O	O	O	O
Analyzing data	O	O	O	O
Administrative tasks (paperwork, arranging materials, etc.)	O	O	O	O
Non-reading related tasks (subbing, class coverage, other duties)	O	O	O	O
Communicating with or providing outreach to parents	O	O	O	O
Grant writing	O	O	O	O
Your own professional development	O	O	O	O

Other Tasks: (please specify):_____

9. In your role as reading specialist/literacy coach, how would you rate each of the following responsibilities in terms of <u>importance</u> to your success as a reading specialist/literacy coach?

	no time (0%)	a little time (1-25%)	some time (26-60%)	great deal of time (more than 60%)
Instructing students	O	O	O	O
Assessing students	O	O	O	O
Supporting teachers with materials, ideas, etc.	O	O	O	O
Coaching teachers by modeling, observing and providing feedback	O	O	O	O
Curriculum development	O	O	O	O

Coordinating the school reading program (e.g., arranging scheduling, grouping, selecting materials)	O	O	O	O
Working with a designated leadership team at the school (principal, other specialized personnel, teacher leaders, etc.)	O	O	O	O
Facilitating teacher groups (e.g., grade level, department, data teams)	O	O	O	O
Working with the RtI team	O	O	O	O
Conducting workshops (PD) for teachers	O	O	O	O
Participating in community of practice activities (e.g., facilitating study groups, discussion of instructional practices)	O	O	O	O
Supporting or supervising paraprofessionals or volunteers	O	O	O	O
Analyzing data	O	O	O	O
Administrative tasks (paperwork, arranging materials, etc.)	O	O	O	O
Non-reading related tasks (subbing, class coverage, other duties)	O	O	O	O
Communicating with or providing outreach to parents	O	O	O	O
Grant writing	O	O	O	O
Your own professional development	O	O	O	O

Other Tasks: (Please specify)_____

10. Which of these titles best describes your primary responsibility? [dd]

___(a) Teacher of students who are experiencing difficulty with reading

___ (b) Literacy Coach (responsible for supporting instructional efforts of teachers)

___ (c) Coordinator or manager of reading program

___ (d) I have multiple and equal responsibilities: (please specify)

 Other:
_____

Instruction

11. Do you instruct students? [dd]
    ___ Yes ___ No (if you answer no, please skip to item 16)

12. Identify the model that best describes where you deliver instruction. [dd]
____all pullout ____all in-class ____combination of pull-out and in-class

13. To what extent do you plan instruction for the students you teach with the classroom teacher(s)? [dd]

___ never

___sometimes

___to a great extent

___always

14. Do the students whom you teach receive reading instruction from other personnel in the school and if so, from whom? (check all that apply) [dd] ___classroom teacher ____paraprofessional ____special educator ____volunteer ___ no, I am the students' sole reading instructor.

15. How would you describe the students you instruct? [dd] (check all that apply)

___students experiencing difficulties with reading

___students who are not experiencing difficulties with reading

Assessment

16. How involved are you in each of the following:

	Not at all Involved	Little involved	Somewhat involved	Very involved
Screening students	O	O	O	O

Progress monitoring	O	O	O	O
Diagnostic assessment	O	O	O	O
Analyzing data for instructional decision making	O	O	O	O
Analyzing data for whole school reform	O	O	O	O
Response to Intervention efforts	O	O	O	O
Analyzing data with teachers to plan instruction	O	0	O	O

Supporting Work of Teachers

17. If you are responsible for supporting the work of teachers in any way, how would you describe your role? (choose one) [dd]

___identified as a coach and my major responsibility is supporting the work of teachers

___identified as a coach and I spend about ½ of my time supporting the work of teachers

___not identified as a coach but I have a major role in supporting teachers and their instruction

___not identified as a coach but I work informally with classroom teachers to support their instructional efforts

___I have no responsibility for supporting the work of teachers. If you responded that you have no responsibility for supporting the work of teachers, please go to item 24 .

___other (please specify below).

_____

18. If you support teachers in your role, what types of preparation did you receive **before** you assumed the position?   (check all that apply)

___university or college preparation as reading specialist/coach

___online preparation as a literacy or instructional coach

___attended professional conferences

___Read professional books about coaching

___attended coaching workshops   describe_____

___none

Other:_____

19. What was the nature of the PD that you have received? (check all that apply)
___emphasis on process of coaching

___emphasis on content of instruction (vocabulary, comprehension, etc.)

___emphasis on building a professional learning community in school

___Other

20. Who makes decisions about the PD that you receive? (Check all that apply)
____the leadership of the school

____the leadership of the district

____I do

21. As an individual responsible for supporting the work of teachers, which of the following
best describes the nature of that work? [dd]
_____I work with teachers who ask me to work with them

_____I have responsibilities for working with all the teachers in the school, but
make choices about how and with whom I work

___   I have responsibility for working with all teachers in the school, and it is
expected that I will see or coach all teachers.

___Other: _____

22. As an individual supporting the work of teachers, please rate the emphasis you give to each of the following activities:

	Not at all	Little	Somewhat	Great deal
1.Modeling for teachers	O	O	O	O
2.Observing and providing feedback	O	O	O	O
3.Co-teaching	O	O	O	O
4.Planning with teachers	O	O	O	O
5.Using the observation cycle (pre-conference; observing; post-conference)	O	O	O	O
6.Conferring with teachers about identified problems (problem-solving)	O	O	O	O
7.Facilitating grade-level meetings	O	O	O	O
8.Facilitating subject area meetings	O	O	O	O
9.Serving as a member of grade level team	O	O	O	O
10.Serving as a member of a subject area team	O	O	O	O
11. Serving as member or facilitating the RtI team	O	O	O	O
12. Conducting workshops for teachers	O	O	O	O
13. Facilitating professional learning community in the school	O	O	O	O

23. Looking at the following activities, please rank from 1-5 (1 being most influential) those items you believe are most important for effecting teacher change.

1.Modeling for teachers
2.Observing and providing feedback
3.Co-teaching
4.Planning with teachers
5.Using the observation cycle (pre-conference; observing; post-conference)
6.Conferring with teachers about identified problems (problem-

solving)	
7.Facilitating grade-level meetings	
8.Facilitating subject area meetings	
9.Serving as a member of grade level team	
10.Serving as a member of a subject area team	
11. Serving as member or facilitating the RtI team	
12. Conducting workshops for teachers	Format question 23….rank 1 to 5….
13. Facilitating professional learning community in the school	

School Climate/Professional Development

24. Please answer the following questions about the climate in the school where you spend most of your time.

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	To a great extent
There is a common vision for improving the literacy learning of students.	O	O	O	O
are high expectations for students.	O	O	O	O
Teachers enjoy teaching in this school.	O	O	O	O
Teachers help each other by sharing ideas and materials.	O	O	O	O
The principal provides the leadership necessary to make the school a place of learning for both teachers and students.	O	O	O	O
Students have respect for the school and for the teachers in the school.	O	O	O	O

25. To what extent does the school in which I work exemplify characteristics of a professional learning community?

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	To a great

				extent
There are shared values and norms.				
There is a focus on student learning.				
There are opportunities for reflective dialogue among teachers.				
There are opportunities for collaboration among educators at the school.				
Teaching is made public.				

26. Who is responsible for evaluating your performance in the school? (Check all that apply) [dd]

___principal

___reading coordinator or supervisor

___district coordinator or supervisor

___Other: Please identify_____

27. Is some sort of performance rating system used for evaluating your work? Yes___
No____
If yes, how closely aligned to your job responsibilities is that performance rating system?

___not at all

___to some extent

___to a great extent

28. Please rate your perceptions about the following:

	Not Adequate	Somewhat Adequate	Adequate	Highly Adequate
How well prepared were you for the position you currently hold?	O	O	O	O
How adequate is the system for evaluating your performance? (Does it provide you with the feedback required to improve your performance?)	O	O	O	O

29. What sort of preparation would have been helpful to you in preparing you for your position? [comments box (cb)]

30. What are three major challenges you face in your position (please describe): [cb]

31.   What are the most positive aspects of your position, e.g., What do you enjoy most about your role? [cb]

32. What do you need to be successful in your role?

33. Additional comments: [cb]

   PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHICS: (This information is extremely important as it will enable us to obtain knowledge about the experiences and education of those who serve in these roles.)

34. Select the most accurate answers from the drop down menu
    Gender: [dd] ____female   ____male

    Ethnicity:[dd] ____African American   ____Asian American   ____Caucasian ____Hispanic   ____Other

    Highest Degree Held: [dd] ____Bachelor's ____Master's ____Doctorate ____

    Other: _____

    Certification/license: (select all that apply) [dd]____ classroom teacher ____reading specialist ___ reading teacher   ____ literacy coach____special education___ ELL teacher ____; reading supervisor____   other:_____

____Other certifications/licenses:

35. How many years have you served in your <u>current</u> role (including this year)? (use drop down box) 0-2; -3-5; 6-8; 9-12; 13-15; more than 15____

36. Before serving in a specialist/coach role, were you a classroom teacher, and for how long did you teach? Select from the following:[dd] ____ was never a classroom teacher____1-5 years; ____6-10 years; ____11-15 years: ____16-20 years; ___more than 20 years.

37. At what grade levels did you teach: pre-school____; kindergarten____; elementary_____; middle school____; high school____.

38. Undergraduate major and/or concentration: _(use dd box): elementary; secondary (provide academic discipline here – English, Math, social studies, Science, other); special education; reading/literacy;

39. Graduate major and/or concentration: use dd box: Reading Education; Language Arts;
    (use from #33 above)   _____

40. I belong to the following professional organizations (check all that apply):
___local reading council

____State Reading Association

___International Reading Association

___National Council of Teachers of English

___National Education Association

___American Federation of Teachers

___Other: Identify: _____

41. What professional development (PD) have you received since you became a reading
    specialist/coach? (check all that apply)
___university or college preparation

___online preparation

___attended professional conferences

___district workshops

___attended coaching workshops   describe the focus of the workshops:

___none

____other: please specify)_____

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up phone interview? [dd]___yes   ___no

 If yes, please indicate name and email address. _____

Would you be willing to have your principal respond to a short survey about the role of the reading specialist/coach in your school?   [dd] ___Yes   ___No

If yes, please ask the principal if you could provide us with his/her name and email address. Include below._____

Thank you for responding to this questionnaire. If you would like a summary of our results, please indicate and provide your name and email address.

Name_____

Email address: _____