# Literacy Coaches: Practice in Search of Research

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# Some Assumptions I have. . .

- You are working in school- or district-level teams
- You are already motivated to institute some changes and to plan professional development
- Some of you are (or work with) school- or district-level Literacy Coaches

## And Some Things You Should Know about Me

- I DON'T think that reading programs come in boxes
- I DO think of Coaching within the federal reform initiatives
  - School-level (not classroom-level) efforts
  - Large numbers of struggling teachers and even larger numbers of struggling readers
  - New curriculum materials
- I DO think that Coaches can take federal dollars and help schools use them for teachers and children

# Literacy Coach Tasks

| School-Level | Classroom-Level |
| --- | --- |
| Make schedules | Make schedules |
| Design and manage school-level assessment plan | Use data to form and reform flexible groups |
| Summarize and share assessment data | Consider and reconsider how curriculum resources can best be used |
| Conduct and contract professional development | Design plans for instruction: whole-group, needs-based, and intervention |
| Guide curriculum selection | Observe, provide feedback, model |

# From Staff Development to Student Learning (Guskey & Sparks, 1996)
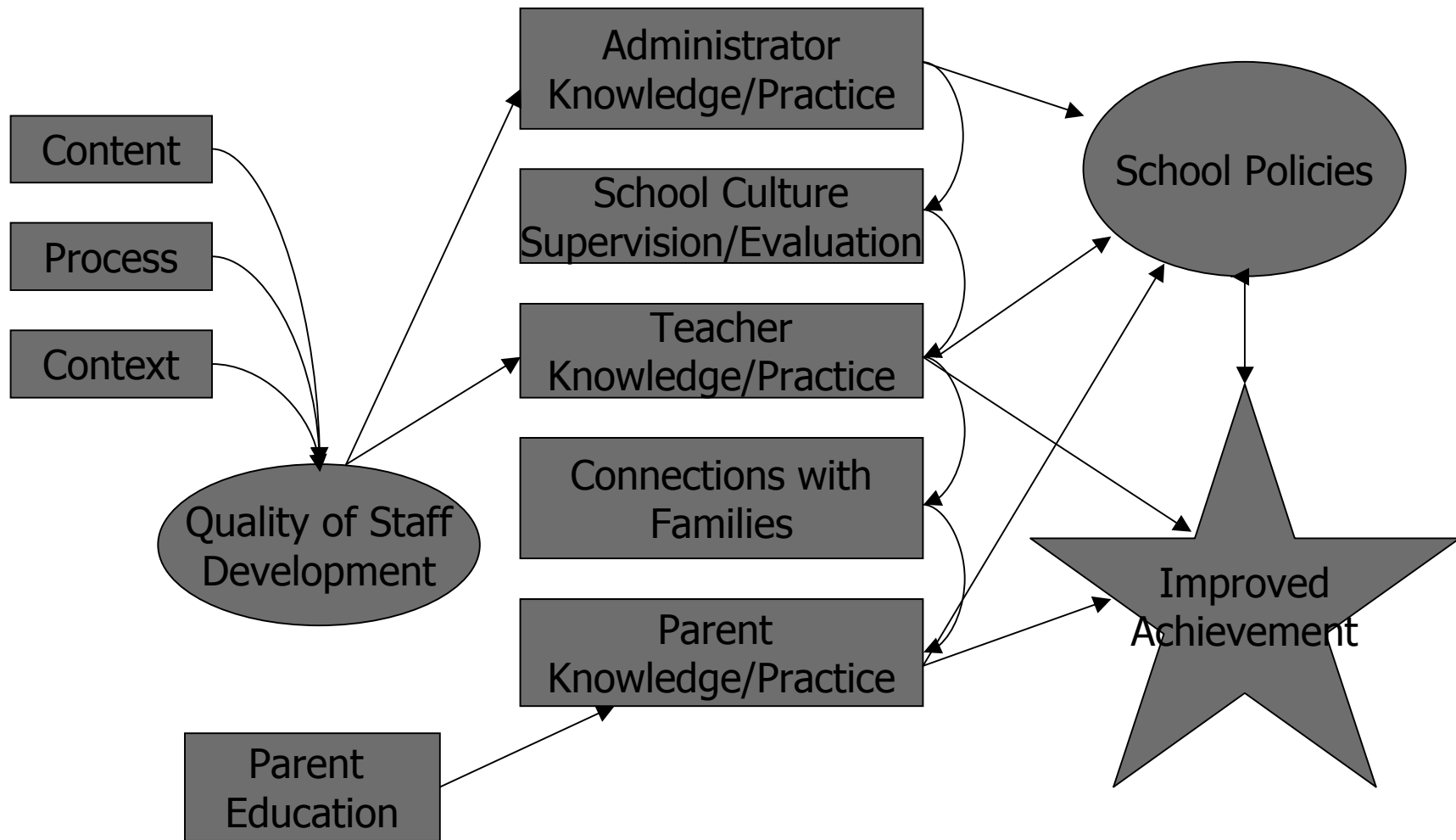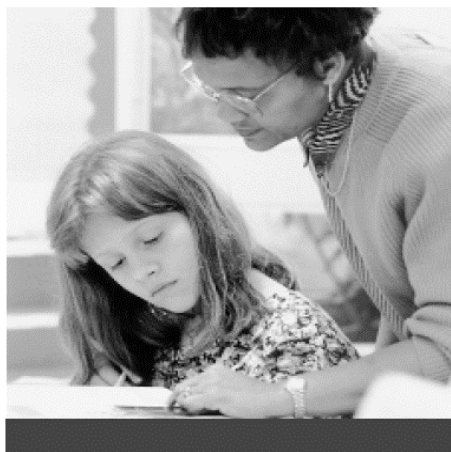
**Excellent** READING TEACHERS

A Position Statement of the International Reading Association

**Teaching** ALL CHILDREN to Read: The ROLES of the Reading Specialist

A Position Statement of the International Reading Association

The Role and Qualifications of the **Reading Coach** in the United States

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A POSITION STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

# IRA's Reading Coach

Strong knowledge base

Excellent presenter

Experienced curriculum collaborator

Experienced with In-class coaching

Experienced teacher
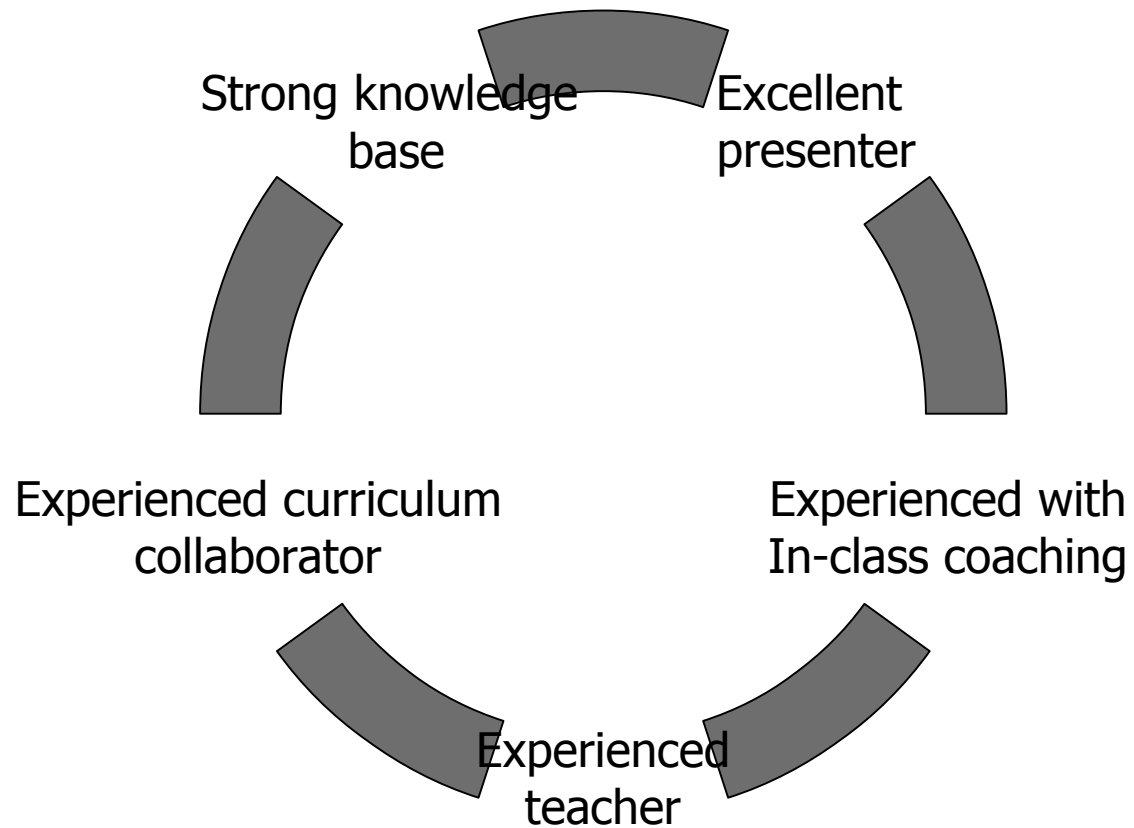
# What Research Could Inform Literacy Coaches?

- The literature of
  - professional/staff development
  - reading development
  - school/teacher effectiveness
  - school change
- But there is NO research (yet) specifically related to the effects of Literacy Coaches on teachers or on student achievement

# Our Literacy Coach
# (Walpole & McKenn 2004)

Learner

Teacher

Manager

Literacy
Coach

Researcher

Planner

Curriculum
Expert
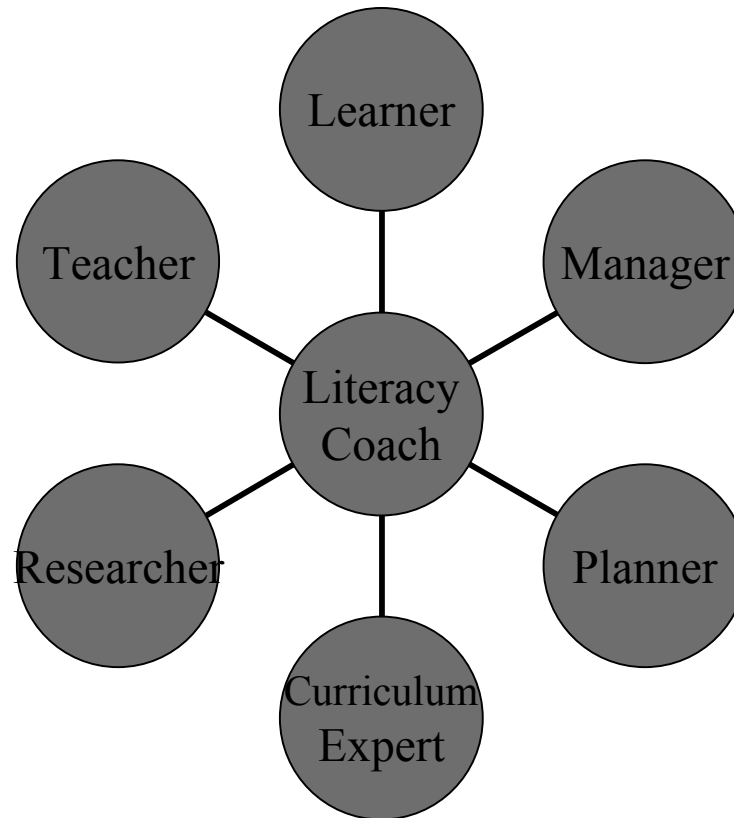
# Why the Difference?

Literacy Coaches provide site-level service

- Teachers have different needs based on their own level of professional expertise

- Teachers have different needs based on the types of readers and writers they serve

- School-level policies constrain the work of teachers at all levels

# Where can you start as a coach?

1. Make a "big-picture" plan
2. Decide how and when you will measure progress
3. Consider the tools your teachers have for teaching
4. Think about time
5. Plan to differentiate in your support for teachers

# Make a specific plan
# (Guskey, 1997)

1. Choose a student learning goal to provide focus.

2. Consider both classroom-level changes and school-level changes related to that goal.

3. Identify "small," measurable steps toward the goal.

4. Plan professional development, using the coach *in the classroom,* that differentiates for teachers based on their needs.

# Decide how and when to monitor progress (Simmons, et al., 2000)

- Screen and monitor progress outside of the curriculum
- Monitor progress inside the curriculum
- Identify outcome measures that make sense to the stakeholders

# Consider your curriculum materials (Kame'enui, et al., 2000)

Given knowledge of reading development and assessment data, you can evaluate the match of your curriculum materials to the needs of the children in your school

# Create time for teaching and learning (Walpole & McKenna, 2004)

- Protect time for literacy in each grade level

- Consider an instructional diet for how that time is best used

- Consider the match between the instructional diet and the curriculum materials that teachers have

# Create time for collaborative work (Morris, Chrispeels, & Burke, 2003)

- Change the school schedule so that all teachers at a grade level can work with the coach *during the school day*
  - Block the specials
  - Hire regular substitutes
  - Pay for after school hours

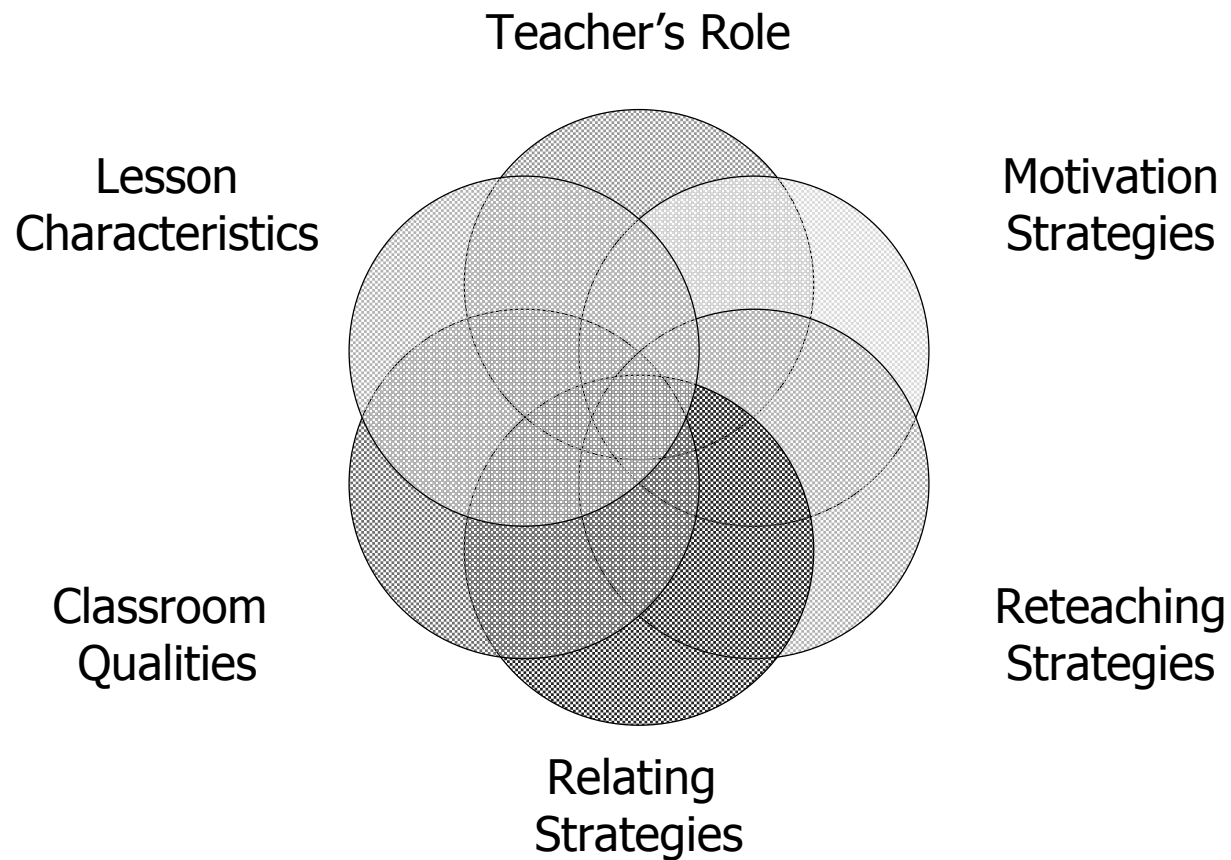# Create mechanisms  for differentiated support (Showers & Joyce, 1996)
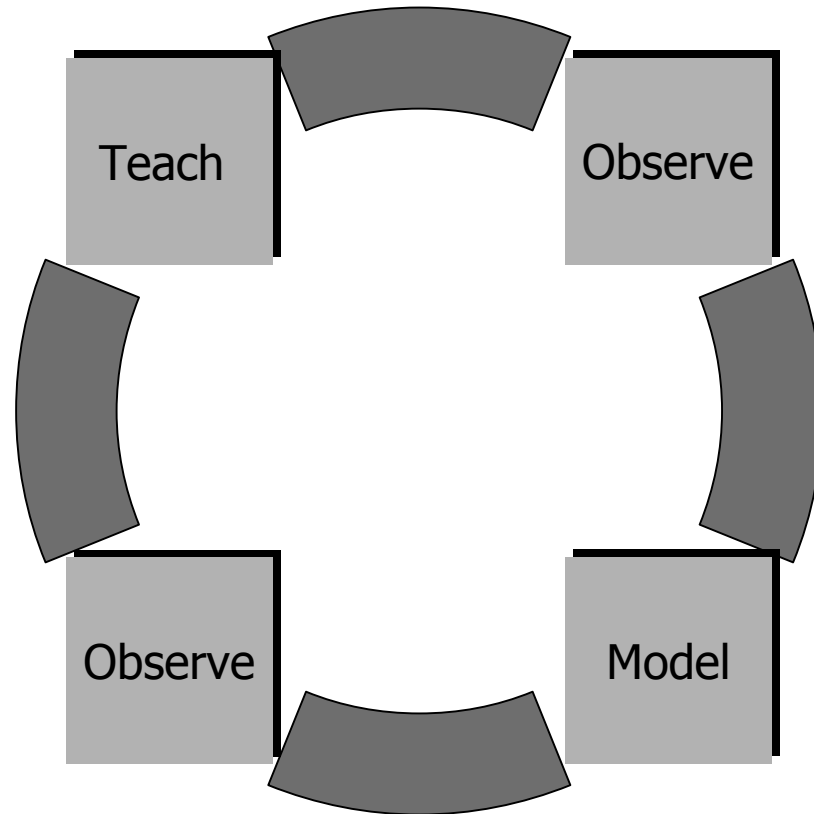
# Development of Expertise
# (Block, Oakar, & Hurt, 2002)

| | |
|---|---|
| Novice teachers | Set and follow "rules" |
| Advanced beginners | Sometimes bend their "rules" |
| Competent teachers | Set priorities, strategies, and choose methods |
| Proficient teachers | Add expert intuition |
| Expert teachers | Add automatic, flexible, responsive adaptation |

# Grade-Level Differences at Expert Level (Block, Oakar, & Hurt, 2002)



Teacher's Role

Lesson Characteristics

Motivation Strategies

Classroom Qualities

Reteaching Strategies

Relating Strategies

# And the most important thing

I'm glad you're here.

How can I help you?

# There is Much to Learn . . .

- What specific models are Literacy Coaches using in schools?

- To what extent do Literacy Coaches improve the knowledge of teachers?

- To what extent do Literacy Coaches influence teacher practice?

- To what extent is the work of Literacy Coaches related to increased student achievement in literacy?

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