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Peer coaching and its effect on teacher efficacy

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Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

by

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Masters of Arts in Education

Curriculum and Instruction

School of Education

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Signature Page

Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

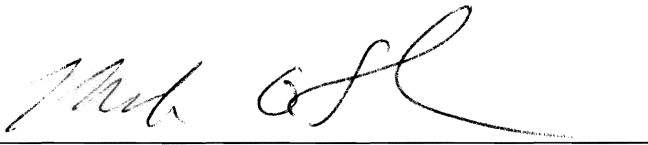
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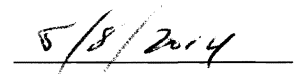
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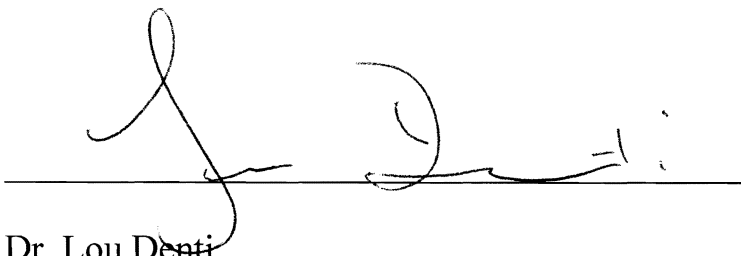
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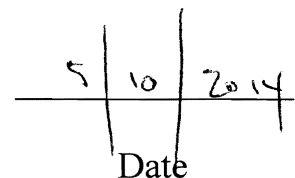
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Abstract

Research suggests when professional development includes instructional coaching, teachers become more confident in their ability to implement a new strategy. This action research project monitored teachers' beliefs in their professional selves, known as teacher efficacy, as a result of academic coaching using a peer coaching model. Teachers were surveyed, interviewed, and they kept notes, reflecting on their implementation of new Common Core instructional practices following initial professional development with peer coaching. Data was analyzed to determine if there was a change in sustained practice and teacher efficacy. The researcher found the use of peer coaching does have a positive effect on a small group of teachers' when implementing new Common Core instructional practices learned during initial professional development sessions.

Acknowledgements

I am honored to have participated in the MAE Program at CSU, Monterey Bay. My professors were dedicated to the path I was on since day one. A special word of thank you to Dr. Denti, Program Coordinator and Jene Harris, Support Specialist.

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To my colleagues, Hilda Esquivel, Olga Garcia, Laura Griffith, Tina Gutierrez, and Veronica Medina, thank you for friendship. I am grateful to you all.

Dedication

Peer coaching was a natural topic for me to investigate for my thesis. I have always said I am nothing without those that have inspired and mentored me over the last nineteen years of teaching. Thank you to my first coach, Nancy King and my current coaches, Betty Rosati and Jeanne Herrick. I am one lucky lady to have known women like you throughout my career.

To my children Matthew and Elizabeth, I hope I've inspired you to continue to learn in life, regardless of your age. May you never be too proud to think there is nothing else for you to learn. I love you more than the stars in the sky.

Daniel, my husband, I love you. You are a man of strength and determination. You don't give up. These qualities encouraged me, late at night or early in the morning when I didn't want to type anymore. "All of me, loves all of you".

To my parents, Russell and Sally Porter, I would not have been able to complete my Masters of Arts without you, literally and emotionally. You chose 43 years ago to be the cornerstones of my life. There are not enough ways to say thank you for your examples of faith – faith in God, faith in one another, and faith in me. I love you.

And finally, to my sister, Nicole Burke, I believe in you.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are designed to provide consistent grade-level expectations across the United States. The goal of the K-12 standards is to ensure students graduating from high school will be prepared for college and ultimately, be competitive in the global workforce (<http://www.corestandards.org>).

Prior to the Common Core State Standards and No Child Left Behind, educators often taught in isolation. Brown stated, “one cannot learn in a vacuum, and an expert in isolation has limited capacities” (Brown, 1997; Brown, Brasford, Ferrara, & Campione, 1983). English Language Arts, College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standard, Speaking and Listening 1.0 states, students will, “prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively” (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/L/>). As professionals it is time for us to model and participate in the practice of collaboration in order to plan learning opportunities that prepare students for college and/or careers.

The goal of this action research was to provide teachers with a collaborative and non-threatening peer instructional coaching model as they implemented new

instructional practices within the frameworks of Common Core English Language Arts standards.

Problem Statement

Since the introduction of high-stakes assessment and accountability, teaching has become increasingly complex and challenging. A growing interest in instructional coaching has emerged as traditional one-shot professional development has proven to be ineffective at improving teaching practices (Knight, 2009). As a school instructional coach, I work closely with teachers to implement district instructional initiatives and support them in implementing strategies learned in professional development. Most often, instructional coaches use demonstration lessons to model district initiatives. It is through my own experiences and observations, that I have noticed a problem with this form of instructional coaching, causing me to question if a classroom teacher is less apt to incorporate the skill or strategy into his or her own long-term instructional practice when only observing a lesson and not participating in the planning and lesson delivery?

While there is plenty of research about teacher professional development and academic coaching, there appears to be little research on the impact peer coaching has on teachers' self-efficacy as school districts move into Common Core

teaching. Therefore, there is a need to implement a peer-to-peer approach to embedded instructional practice in a more effective manner.

Purpose of Study

The focus of this study was to examine what affect this model of instructional coaching had on teacher self-confidence when attempting to implement the Common Core Standards and new instructional practices.

Researcher Background

I have taught elementary school for nineteen years. While most of my teaching has been in first and second grades, I have experience in all K-3 levels. For five years, I was a school-site Reading Specialist focused on the lowest performing first grade readers.

Throughout my teaching years, I have participated in and led a variety of professional learning communities, groups of teachers interested in observing and learning from one another. It is through collaboration that I have become a stronger teacher, focused on lesson delivery based on student academic needs. It is my suggestion that when teachers collaborate, student achievement increases.

Currently, I am a district Instructional Coach. In collaboration with classroom teachers, I support implementation of district Common Core teaching strategies. Because of this work, I have identified a need for peer-to-peer coaching.

Theoretical Model

It is through collaboration that humans learn. Based on Vygotsky's theory of the inherent social nature to learning (1978), teachers in collaboration capitalize on one another's experiences and abilities thus enhancing learning and student achievement.

According to Wenger and Lave's theory of social learning, members of a group naturally evolve when there is a common interest and a desire to gain knowledge related to a profession. Their theory, known as Communities of Practice, argues that all humans are in a number of communities of practice either at home, school, and/or work. Wenger writes,

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor...in a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2007).

For a community of practice to be successful, it needs to share a collection of ideas and commitments. It must also develop resources such as tools, documents, routines, vocabulary, and symbols that carry the community knowledge (Lave and Wenger, 1991). "It involves practice: ways of doing and

approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among members” (Smith, 2003).

Speck notes, adult learning is “not automatic and must be facilitated. Coaching, collaborations, and other kinds of follow-up support are needed to help adult learners transfer learning into daily practice so that it is sustained” (Speck, 1996).

In his Adult Learning Theory, Knowles’ (1980) favors a collaborative and guided learning model. This model leads to a creation of mutual goals, formulation of learning objectives based on needs, sequential activities designed to achieve these objectives, carrying out the design to meet objectives with selected methods, materials, and resources, and evaluation the quality of the learning experience for the learner that includes reassessing needs for continued learning.

The Social Cognitive Theory, based on the work of Miller and Dollard (1941) and expanded upon by Bandura (1962), suggests that individuals learn by observing others and making decisions whether to repeat or abandon the observed behavior. Also known as Observational Learning, Bandura stressed the important need for people to observe others. These models allow humans, especially children, to acquire new skills and reactions (Bandura, 1986).

Finally, it is through Guskey’s (1988) research that all the theories mentioned above tie together to create the bases for my research. Guskey’s

research suggests that when teachers participate in professional development, there is the potential for change in classroom practices. The change in classroom practices leads to change in students' learning. Change in students' learning ultimately leads to a change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs. My research investigated adding peer coaching to Guskey's theory to determine the influence it had when implementing new Common Core instructional practices.

These theories frame the basic understanding of cooperative interactions between individuals. Specifically, in regards to this research that emphasized peer coaching, learning from one another through demonstration, problem solving, and reflection optimize the theoretical underpinning of community of practice and social learning so important to enhanced understanding of a concept or implementation of a teaching strategy or pedagogical method.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated in this study are as follows:

- What impact will a peer instructional coaching model have on teachers' self-confidence with respect to implementation of Common Core instructional strategies?
- How do professional development experiences with subsequent academic coaching affect teachers' efficacy in the instructional practice?

Definition of Terms

Adult Learning Theory – the art and science of helping adults learn

Collaboration – working with others to do a task; where two or more people work together to realize shared goals and/or objectives

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) – cross-disciplinary literacy and mathematical expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to succeed

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – a collection of K-12 English Language Arts and Mathematics standards adopted by forty-five of the fifty states and the District of Columbia; sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the standards are designed to provide consistent grade-level expectations across the United States; the goal of the K-12 standards is to ensure students graduating from high school are prepared for college and ultimately, to be competitive in the global workforce

Community of Practice – a group of people who share a craft and/or profession; it is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that members learning from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally

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Instructional Coach – onsite professional developer who teaches educators how to use evidence-based teaching practices and to support them in learning and applying these practices in a variety of educational settings

Peer Coaching – peer coaching is a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices, expand, refine, and build new skills, share ideas, teach one another, conduct classroom research, and/or solve problems in the workplace

Professional Development – skills and knowledge attained for professional development; can be intensive and collaborative

Teacher-Efficacy – a judgment made by a teacher of his or her general capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning and the personal belief that students can learn under his or her instruction (Bandura, 1986; Ashton, 1984).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Professional development refers to ongoing learning opportunities available to teachers through their districts and/or schools. Effective professional development is often seen as vital to school success and teacher satisfaction. It has also been criticized for its cost, often vaguely determined goals, and the lack of data on resulting teacher and school improvement (Sawchuk, 2011). In order to meet the mandates of No Child Left Behind's call for "highly qualified" teachers and increased student achievement, both schools and districts often implement teacher professional development initiatives (Sunderman & Kim, 2005). District and school leadership often predict that teachers who are well trained will produce higher achieving students.

This literature review provides the research context for the questions forming the basis of this study, which are as follows:

- What impact will a peer instructional coaching model have on teachers' self-confidence with respect to implementation of Common Core instructional strategies?
- How do professional development experiences with subsequent academic coaching affect teachers' efficacy in the instructional practice?

The literature review will define and investigate findings pertaining to the following topics: traditional professional development, collaborative professional

development, and teacher efficacy. Finally, the need for peer coaching will be explored as it relates to the new Common Core Language Arts Standards and their impact on implementing new, rigorous teaching strategies.

Traditional Professional Development

For years, teachers participated in traditional professional development, workshop-style models in which trainers presented information and materials around a certain topic or strategy. For example, during the 1999-2000 school year, 95 percent of teacher participated in workshops compared to 42 percent who participated in a collaborative group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). The workshop may or may not have been of interest to teachers and was not necessarily tied to student performance data. Often it was criticized for its cost, vaguely defined goals, and for the lack of school improvement data, both teacher and student. Administrative expectations were that teachers would implement, often half-heartedly or begrudgingly and in isolation, the new learning into the classroom setting without feedback or follow-up (Flint, Zisook, Fisher, 2011).

Traditional Professional Development Findings

In a review published in 2007, the U.S. Department of Education concluded that workshop-style teacher professional development without follow-up support, had little impact on student achievement (Yoon, 2007). Yoon found 1,300 studies

claiming to address the positive effect of teacher professional development on student achievement. Of the 1,300, 132 focused on K-12 training in reading, mathematics, or science. Of the 132, only nine met the standards determined to be effective by the U.S. Department of Education. All nine focused on elementary school teachers and students. Of the nine, three studied teachers who participated in workshop-style models of professional development, between five and 14 hours in length, without follow-up support. Teachers reported, through student data, these models had little to no effect on student achievement. The other six studies followed teacher who participated in professional development, between 30 and 100 hours, with follow-up support. Student achievement in these teachers' classroom increased 21 percentage points during the school calendar year (Yoon, 2007).

Wei (2009) agreed with Yoon's findings, stating:

For teacher learning to truly matter, it needs to take place in a more active and coherent intellectual environment – one in which ideas can be exchanged and an explicit connection to the bigger picture of school improvement is made. This vision holds that professional development should be sustained, coherent, take place during the school day, become part of a teacher's professional responsibility, and focus on student results.

Dollittle, Sudeck, and Rattigan (2008) reported that while teachers had training in a variety of strategies and techniques, the clarity about what is best practice was lacking. Due to the absence of follow-up support and collaborative planning time, workshop-style training had little effect on student achievement (Doolittle, et al., 2008).

Collaborative Professional Development

Over the past 15 years and in response to No Child Left Behind mandates, professional development has changed from simply new knowledge and skills for teachers to a learning community model that strives to develop collaborative work cultures for teachers (Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008). At the core of collaborative professional development is the belief that teaching practice improves student learning.

Given what teachers must know about rigorous standards and diverse student populations, teaching is challenging and complex. In the past, teachers often worked in isolation despite the power of professional collaboration, especially those in low performing schools (Doolittle, Sudeck, Rattigan, 2008). Many researchers believe collaborative is the key to educational improvement (Ball and Cohen, 1999).

Collaborative professional development is defined by Snow-Gerono as an organized system where teachers engage in supportive dialogue with other

educators. Lessons are planned together, based on student need and data, in a reflective, collaborative setting (Snow-Gerono, 2005).

Collaborative Professional Development Findings

Snow-Gerono researched teachers at professional development schools (PDS). The purpose of the research, collected over the course of two years, was to determine how teachers felt about the role collaboration had on their teaching. Three long interviews and monthly field observations were conducted with participants. Most of the data collected was from interview transcripts, however field notes provided information as well. Snow-Gerono noted teachers, at the beginning of the research collection, spoke of the need for supportive learning communities where collaboration took place and honest, safe dialogue about teaching practices occurred. At the end of two years, PDS teachers reported a shift from traditional teaching isolation to safe environments where they felt safe to ask questions, collaboratively plan lessons, and seek the help from other educational resources at the school sites (Snow-Gerono, 2005).

Flint, Zisook, and Fisher collected similar collaboration data over a three-year period of time at professional development school (PDS) sites. Elementary school teachers were offered collaborative support and help in literacy instruction by a research university. On a weekly basis, a small group of teachers planned together, classroom practices were observed, students were interviewed, and

teacher debriefings occurred. The weekly interviews and debriefs were tape-recorded and transcribed. The study found a relationship between building positive teacher-to-teacher relationships and improved educational practices. The improved educational practices in-turn affected student achievement (Flint, Zisook, and Fisher, 2011).

Lewis and Perry would agree with Snow-Gerono and Flint, Zisook, and Fisher. Lewis and Perry (2008) conducted a 4-year study of Lesson Study, a systematic process that collaboratively engages small groups of teachers in examining their lesson practice with the goal of improvement in order to impact student achievement, in a California Bay Area K-8 school district. The number of participating teachers grew from 28 teachers in the first year to 63 teachers in the final year. Data collection occurred through teacher interviews, research observations, and videotaped lessons and collaborative meetings. Three types of Lesson Study participation were offered to participants but all focused on professional development through collaboration and peer coaching: Lesson Study groups during the school year, Lesson Study summer workshops, and a public research lesson format where an accomplished Lesson Study teacher modeled for a large group of observers. Student data was collected and analyzed at the beginning and end of each lesson, as well as year-to-year. Over a three-year period, student achievement increased from 26 scale points to 91 scale points. From the study

data, Lewis and Perry concluded, when teachers are supported by one another in collaboration, teaching improves. When teaching improves, student achievement is affected in a significant way (Lewis and Perry, 2012).

Adding Peer Coaching to Professional Development

Another important layer to consider regarding professional development is the addition of a peer coach. A peer coach is an onsite professional developer who supports educators in using evidence-based teaching practices and to support them in learning and applying these practices in a variety of educational settings, ultimately to improve student achievement (Knight, 2009). A peer coach may be a teacher on special assignment, working out of the classroom as an instructional coach.

Peer Coaching Findings

A landmark five-year study done by Robert N. Bush, indicates when professional development is followed with modeling, practicing, feedback, and non-evaluative coaching, the rate of transference into classroom practice increases to 95 percent compared to a 10 percent rate of practice transference (Knight, 2007) when there is no follow up to presented content or skills. Knight & Cornett came to a similar conclusion in 2009 when they study 51 teachers who attended a workshop-style professional development session. Randomly, teachers were assigned to two groups, one that received follow-up coaching and one that did not.

Researchers observed both groups and saw evidence of knowledge learned during the initial professional development 90 percent of the time in teachers that received follow-up coaching compared to 30 percent of the time in teachers that had no coaching.

Common Core State Standards

Traditional professional development must evolve into a collaborative teacher experience that includes peer coaching as a follow-up system if it is to prove effective within the rigorous new Common Core State Standards framework.

Common Core State Standards History

The Standards and Accountability Movement that began in the United States in the 1990s, let states to write grade-level academic standards describing what students were expected to know at the end of each school year. Assessments were designed to measure if students met the academic targets or not. The overall purpose was to raise academic achievement and strengthen accountability. In 2004, Achieve, Inc. found that employers and colleges demanded more of high school graduates than any other time in education history. Graduates were not leaving with skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college and eventually, in the global workforce. Led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 2009, a rigorous set of common core standards was developed (Common Core State Initiative, 2012).

Forty-five of the fifty United States and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core Standards. California adopted the standards on August 2, 2010 (California Department of Education).

Implications

“For success, change in instructional practice and focus must accompany implementation of the Common Core State Standards” (Idaho State Department of Education). As districts begin to implement the Common Core Standards, many have begun to offer professional development opportunities to its’ teachers. Locally, one local school district has focused on two-entry point Common Core English Language Arts Standards:

Reading:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text.

Writing:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or text using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Throughout the 2013-2014 school year, professional development has focused on teaching strategies that support these two Common Core Language Arts Standards. These strategies are Evidence-based Questioning through Close Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing.

Chapter Three: Methodology

According to Hendrick (2006), action research is the ideal research plan to help teachers assess and improve their own teaching practices. I included myself under the term “teacher” because while my current position is Instructional Coach, I am still, in practice, a teacher. The type of action research I used is practical classroom action research, because it is designed specifically for teachers who wish to improve their teaching by studying and applying research-based practices to the curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment issues they have targeted for improvement. Practical classroom action research provides teachers with rich sources of data to develop more effective ways to modify and enrich their own practice, thereby enhancing their students’ chances for success, and can be conducted by individual teachers or collaboratively by groups of teachers (Hendricks, 2006). Action research makes use of every kind of data source that can contribute relevant information to the problem being addressed, including both quantitative and qualitative data, and both forms of data are being used in this study.

This section will describe the methods used to gather and analyze data to answer the research questions:

- What impact will a peer instructional coaching model have on teachers' self-confidence with respect to implementation of Common Core instructional strategies?
- How do professional development experiences with subsequent academic coaching affect teachers' efficacy in the instructional practice?

Setting:

The study took place at a Central Coast Elementary School where I have been the instructional coach for the last three year. The following information describes the community and school populations:

- *Community*: "Central Coast City" is a mid-sized city and the largest municipality in the county. According to the U.S. Census (2010), the population is 150,441 and has a population density of 6, 479.8 people per square miles. The population consists roughly of 75.5% Hispanic, 15.7% White alone, 5.9% Asian alone, 1.2% two or more races, 0.9% African-American alone, 0.4% Native American alone, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander alone, and 0.1% other race alone. (U.S. Census, 2010). As of 2010, the median age of the population was 28.8 years old and 53.1% of households have children under the age of 18 living in them. The median household income is around \$44,387 (www.city-data.com - actual city name used). The town is flanked on east and west sides by mountains, and is

located in one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world, commonly referred to as the “Salad Bowl of the World” as the great majority of U.S.-grown lettuce is grown in the surrounding valley. A large majority of residents make their income in the agricultural field.

- *School:* The school in which the study is being conducted is one of twelve elementary schools in a K-6 school district. The surrounding neighborhood is described as socio-economically low with a very high rate of criminal activity. The school serves approximately 750 students in grades TK–4th grade; there are a variety of classrooms at each grade level with the largest being at the second grade level, which has nine classrooms. About 99.2% of students identify as Hispanic or Latino, 0.5% White not Hispanic, 0.1% African American not Hispanic, and 0.1% declined to report. In 2012-2013, 99.41% of students spoke Spanish as their primary home language, 0.44% spoke Mixteco, an indigenous dialect, and 0.15% spoke a language other than English. All registered students qualify for the state free-breakfast and lunch program. Parents are provided with three academic program options: English Only, Sheltered English Instruction (SEI), or Bilingual Transference. There are 28 classroom teachers, an instructional coach, a part-time program manager, and a full-time school principal. All but three

are Hispanic/Latino, two are European American, and the remainder Native American. Nineteen of the teachers are females and nine are males.

Participants:

As with classroom action research in general, often overall projects are based on a convenience sample consisting of all the students in a particular classroom. For the purpose of this project, the “students” consisted of teachers on staff at said elementary school. Ten participants were divided into two groups, the control group and focus group.

Control Group: A small sample of five teachers was selected to participate in the control group. The sample was determined informally, simply by asking for volunteers and commitment. The control group participated in the initial professional development but not in the peer coaching cycle.

- Four females and one male: Four Hispanic/Latino and one European American; years of teaching range from 6-29 years.

Focus Group: A small sample of five teachers was selected to participate in the focus group. Again, the sample was determined informally, simply by asking for volunteers and commitment. The focus group participated in the initial professional development and in the subsequent peer coaching cycle. The study included me, the school’s instructional coach.

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- “Focus Teacher 1” is a kindergarten teacher. She has been a teacher for 29 years and is a Bilingual Transference teacher, teaching a 59% Spanish/28% English/13% Transference model.
- “Focus Teacher 2” is a 1st grade teacher. She has been a teacher for 10 years and is in an English Only classroom.
- “Focus Teacher 3” is a 2nd grade teacher. She is in her sixth year of teaching and is currently placed in a Sheltered English Immersion classroom.
- “Focus Teacher 4” is a 4th grade teacher who has been a site instructional coach in the past. She has been a teacher for 12 years and is currently placed in a Sheltered English Immersion classroom.
- “Focus Teacher 5” is a 4th grade teacher who has participated in a variety of peer coaching activities in the past, including Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Induction. She has been a teacher for 20 years and is currently teaching a Sheltered English Immersion classroom.
- I am a female Native and European American with 16 years of teaching and three years of instructional coaching experience. My teaching experience has been in K-3 grades. I have a bachelor’s degree in Liberal Studies, a Multiple Subjects Credential, and a CLAD (Cross-Language Acquisition Development) certificate. I have spent 15 of my 19 years in education in some form of coaching role, either as a Beginning Teacher Support and

Assessment Induction Support Provider and Master Teacher for a local state university.

Intervention:

The intervention consisted of implementing a peer coaching instructional coaching model with a small group of elementary school teachers to observe the impact the intervention had on teachers' self-efficacy following initial professional development.

Implementation:

Teacher(s) and instructional coach participated in a coaching cycle that consisted of:

a) Pre-conference (30 minutes):

- Goals and needs defined – using the new Common Core instructional practices as a guide, teacher and instructional coach established a professional goal; what new instructional practice did the teacher want to “work” on/improve in?
- Lesson plan – teacher and instructional determined who will teach which part of the lesson (teacher or coach).

b) Co-teach lesson (1 hour):

- While teacher taught, coach observed and took notes consistent with professional goal determined during pre-conference.

- While instructional coach taught, teacher observed and took notes on how the professional goal was being “modeled” by instructional coach.

c) Post-conference (30 minutes):

- Teacher and instructional coach had a reflective and non-judgmental conversation on co-taught lesson.
- Teacher and instructional coach determined next steps for continued implementation of determined goal.

The entire cycle lasted no longer than one week, with periodic and noted follow-up. The total time for five co-teaching instructional coaching cycles took 5-weeks.

Data Collection:

Two types of data were used during this research:

Quantitative data

- Pre-Intervention Survey: A 9-item Likert-style Professional Development Survey, divided into two parts, Participant Satisfaction and Impact on Professional Practice, was designed to rate teachers’ responses to the posed statements using a sliding scale from 5 to 1 representing the extent to which they “agree” to “disagree” with the statement scale. Both groups, the focus and control, were given the Professional Development Survey.

- **Post-Intervention Survey:** One-half of the original 9-item Likert-style Professional Development Survey, the Impact on Professional Practice section, was given to the focus group, following the peer coaching intervention.

Qualitative data

- **Journal:** Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences in written form using a journal-entry style. The reflection was done at the end of each coaching cycle.
- **Exit Interview:** At the end of the 5-week data collection period, the participants were interviewed by the researcher. Questions were open-ended and asked participants to evaluate their belief in the peer coaching process, the intervention, and if it had a positive impact on the implementation of new instructional practices.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data: Quantitative data was analyzed and compared between two groups, control and focus.

- **Survey data:** Modeling traditional action research, survey data was analyzed using bar graphs (Hendricks, 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specifically responses for each close-ended item on the pre- and post-

Professional Development Survey was tabulated in a frequency table and bar graphed to facilitate analysis.

Qualitative data: Qualitative data consists of words and requires several steps to analyze.

- All journal reflections and interview question responses were collected from focus group participants. Each entry was read and analyzed, looking for patterns of language use across participants. Those patterns revealed similarities between their experiences and dominate themes in their reflections.

In conclusion, the purpose of my data collection was to determine two things: does subsequent peer coaching impact professional development's sustainability and what affect does peer coaching have on a teacher's self-confidence when implementing new instructional practices learned during professional development?

Chapter Four: Results

This study aimed to use a specific type of instructional coaching, peer coaching, to observe the impact it had on professional development aligned to new Common Core instructional practices. The following research questions guided my study:

- What impact will a peer instructional coaching model have on teachers' self-confidence with respect to implementation of Common Core instructional strategies?
- How do professional development experiences with subsequent academic coaching affect teachers' efficacy in the instructional practice?

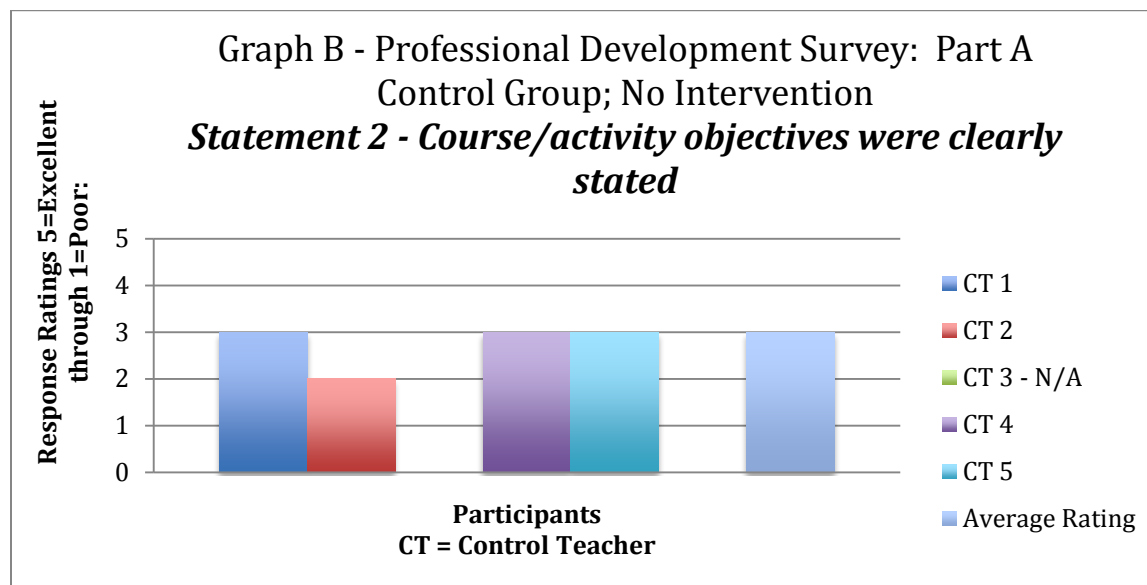
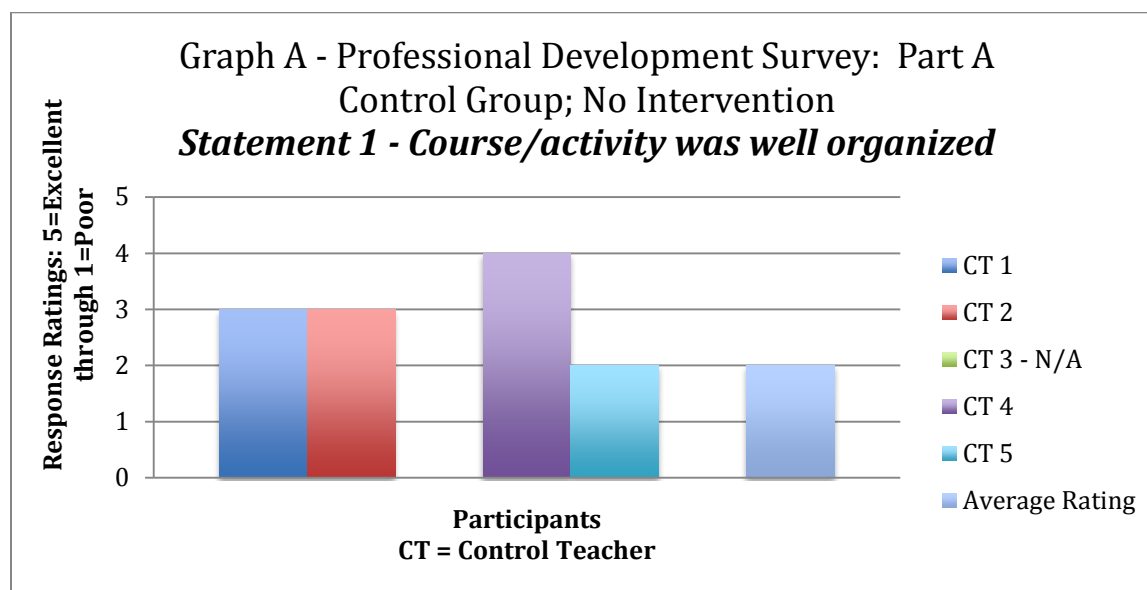
The results of this study indicated that teachers' self-confidence in implementing new instructional practices increased when professional development was followed with peer coaching. Also evident in the data, was a belief that new instructional practices, aligned to the Common Core standards, could successfully be implemented when peer coaching was provided to teachers.

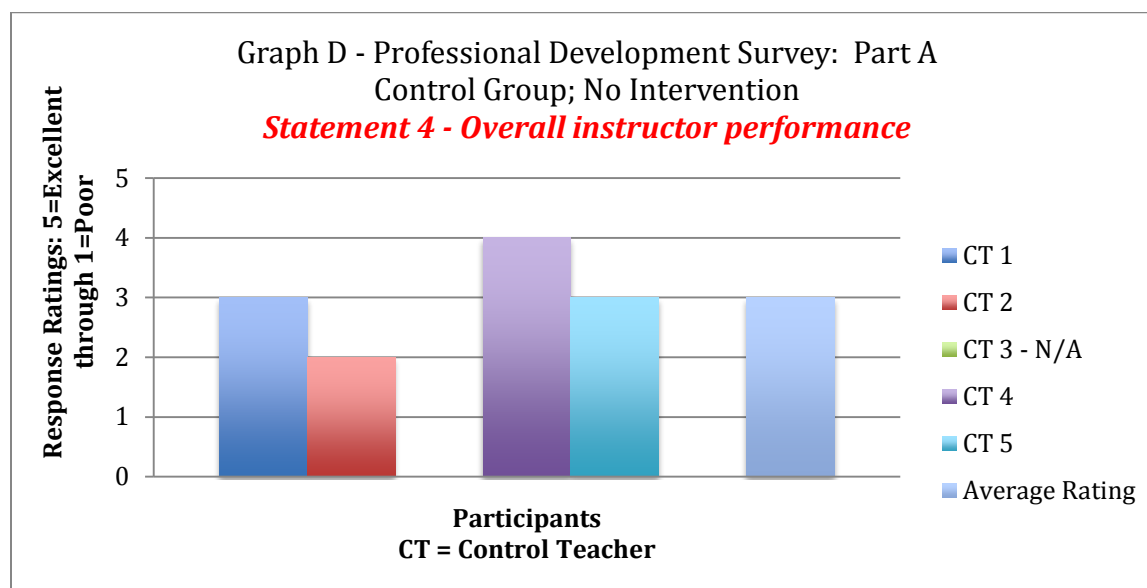
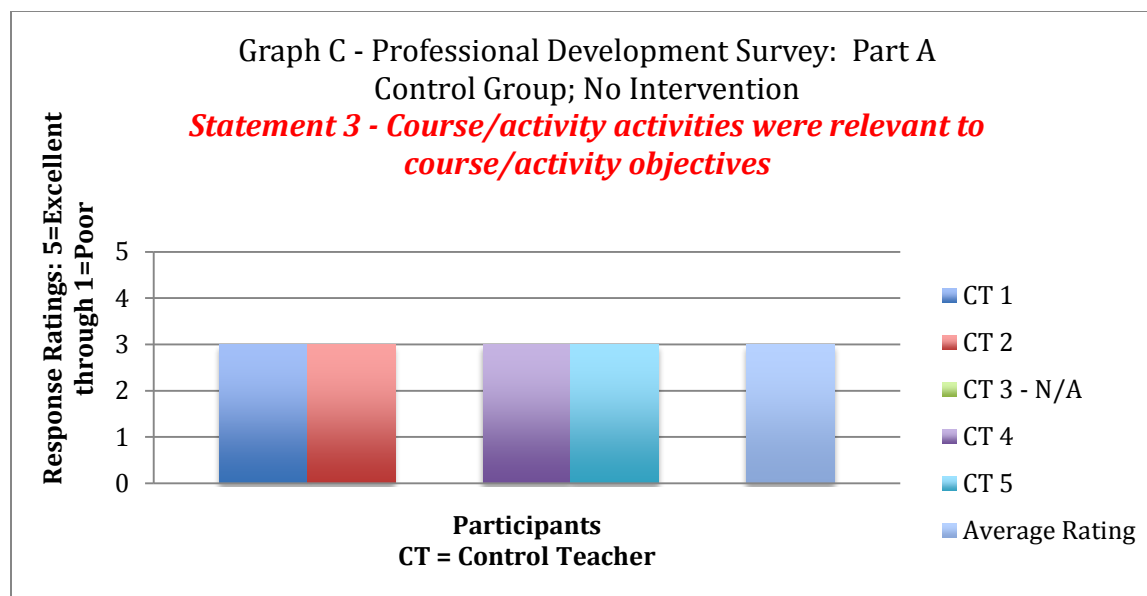
Professional Development: The Control Group

Five teachers were given the original Professional Development Survey and were not offered the subsequent intervention of peer coaching. On the first half of the survey, "Participant Satisfaction", four of five teachers gave an overall "Average (3)" rating of the session, which included organization, clear objectives, relevant activities related to the objectives, and overall instructor performance.

Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

One teacher marked “Excellent (5)” in all four areas of the participation satisfaction section. This particular teacher stated, “I love the presenter and have worked with her several times in the past. I suppose I am not very subjective when it comes to her professional development sessions”. Due to the declared bias, Control Teacher (CT) 3’s data was removed.

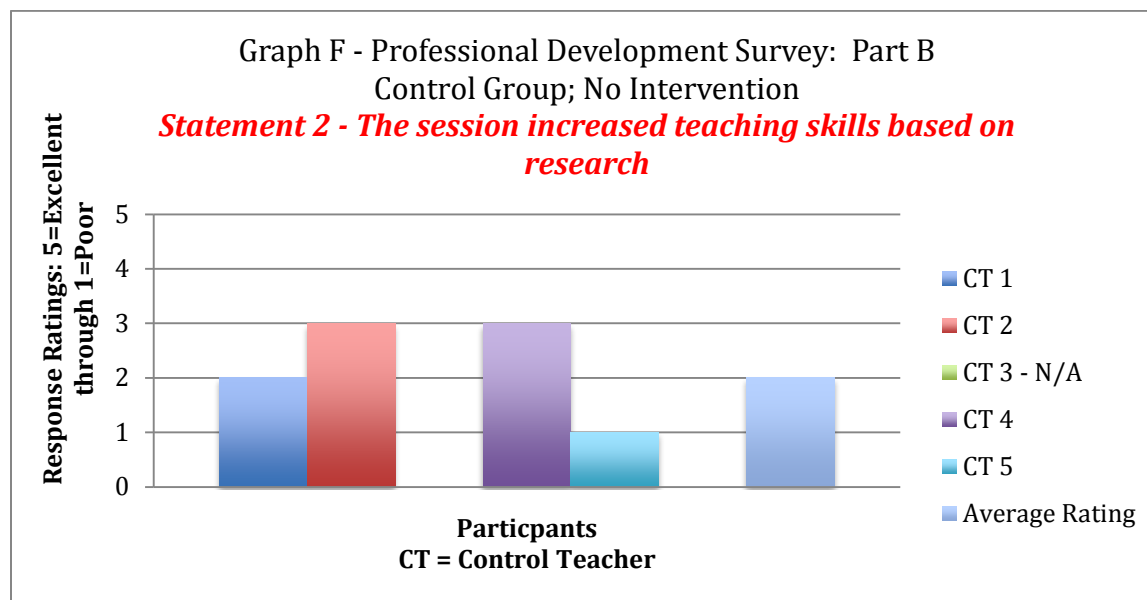
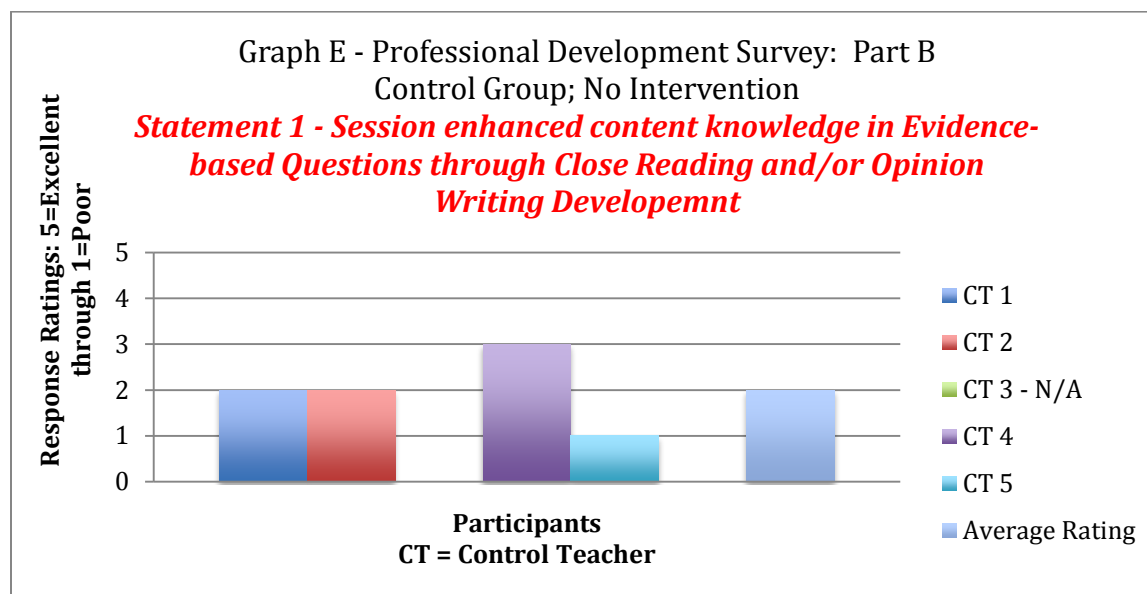




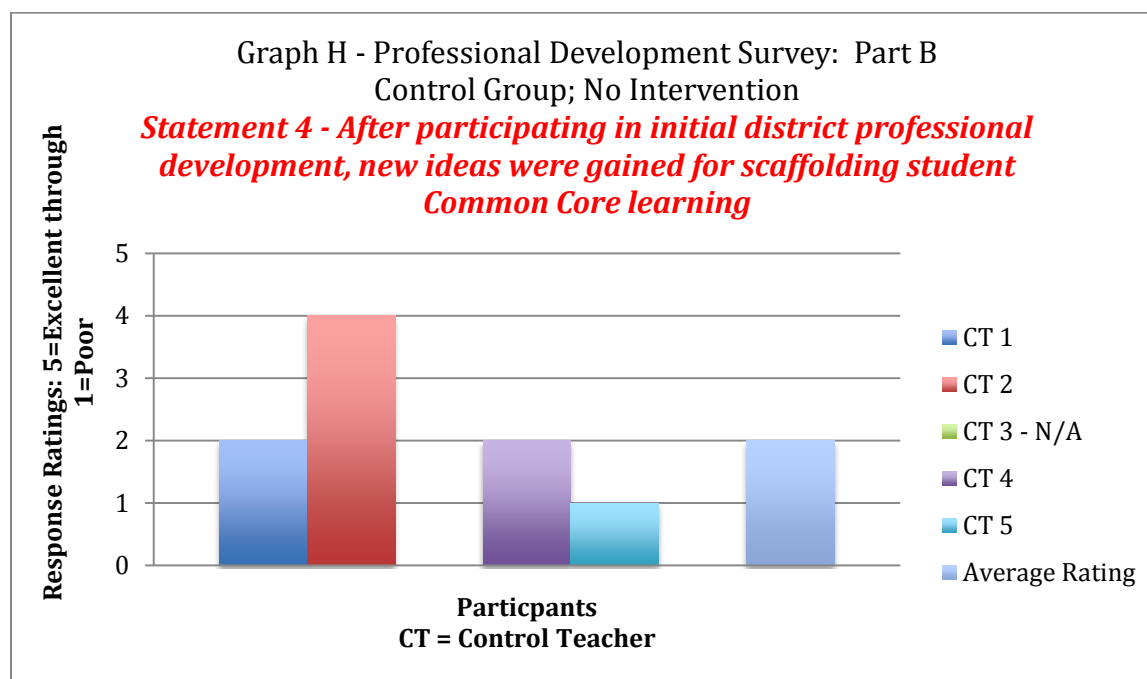
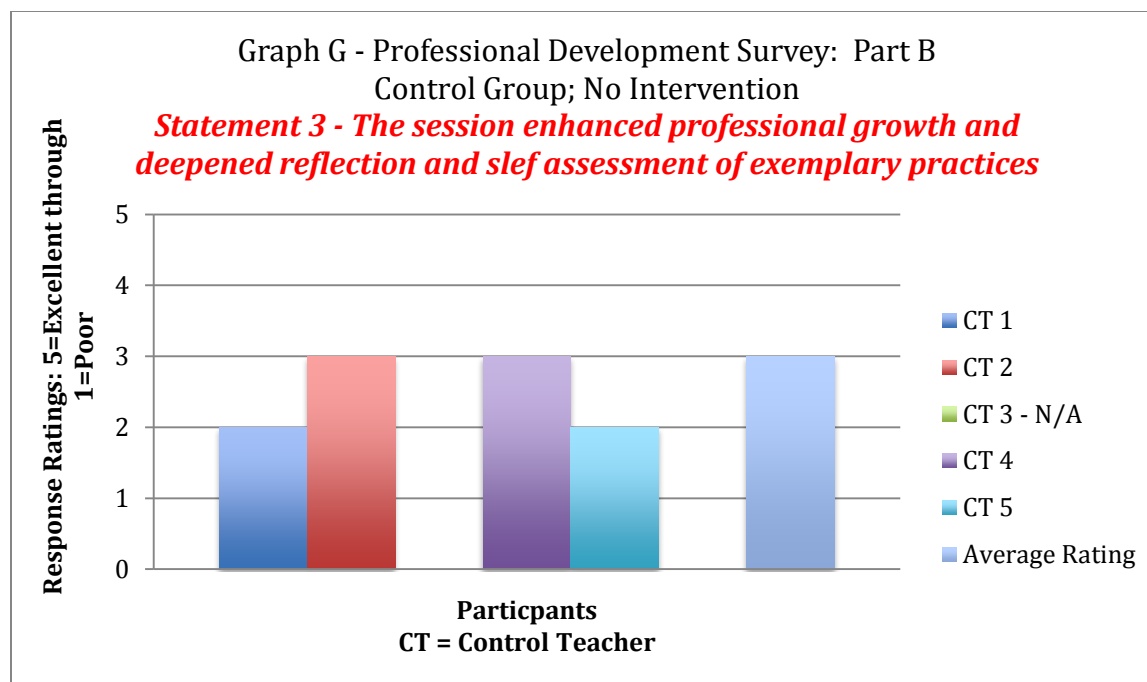
On the second half of the survey, “Impact on Professional Practice”, four teachers averaged a “No Opinion” rating with regards to the professional development having a positive impact on classroom practice. This rating included the teachers’ confidence in their ability to independently apply new Common Core instructional practice. One teacher averaged a “Disagree” rating in three out of

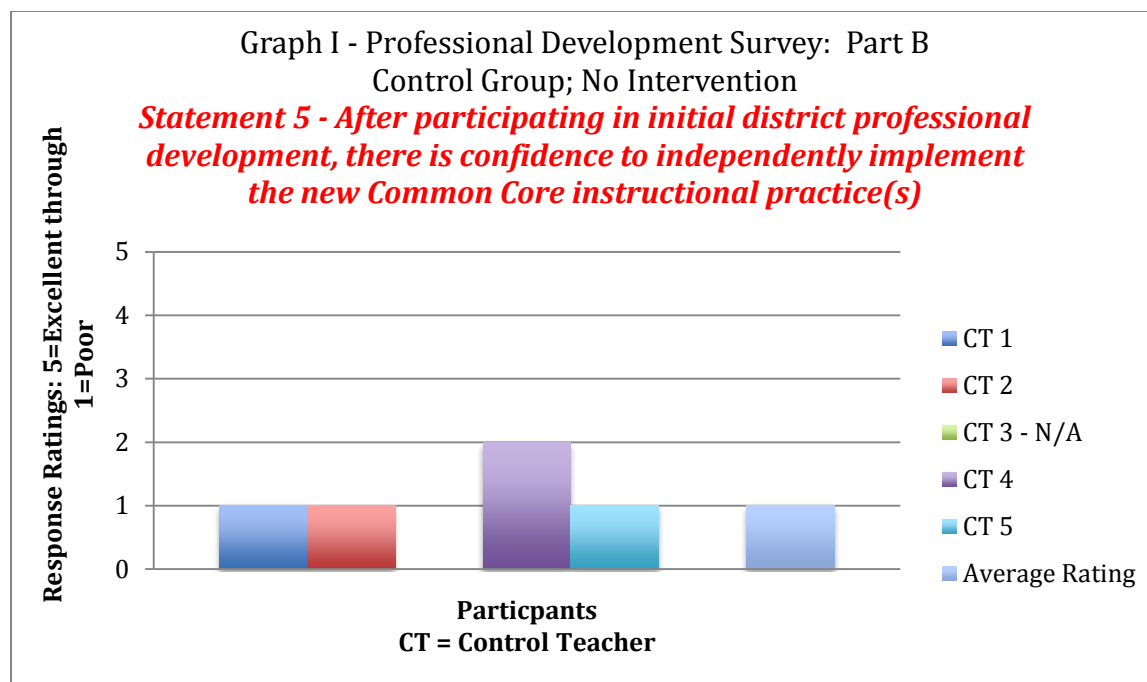
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five statements under “Impact on Professional Practice” including increased teaching skills based on research and new ideas gained to scaffold students in Common Core learning.



Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy



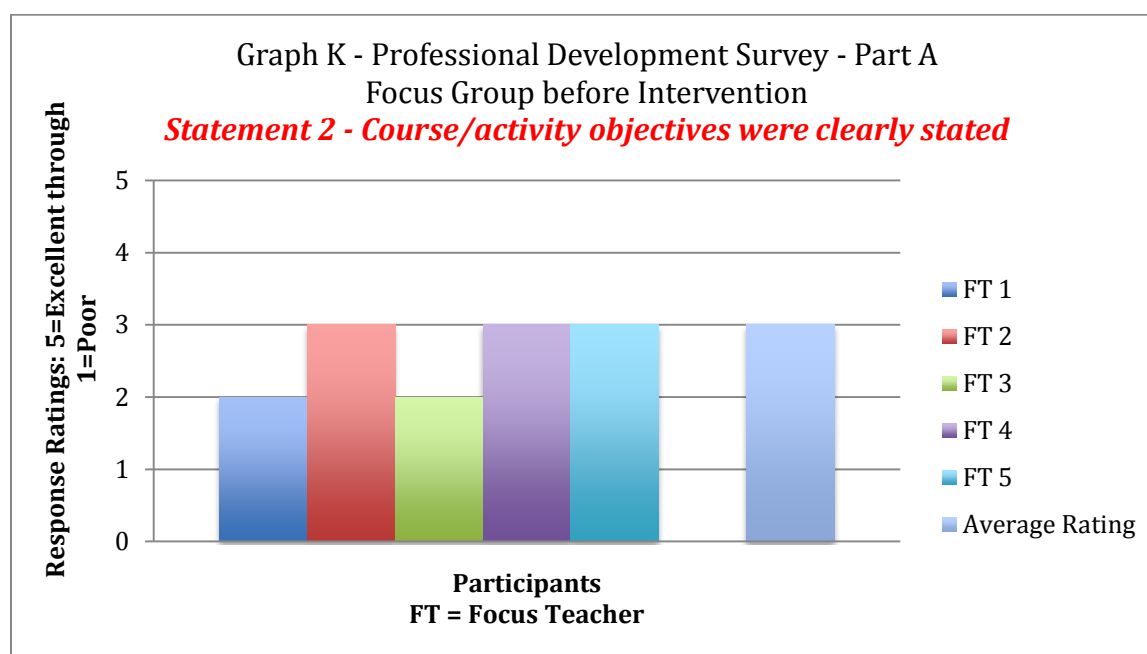
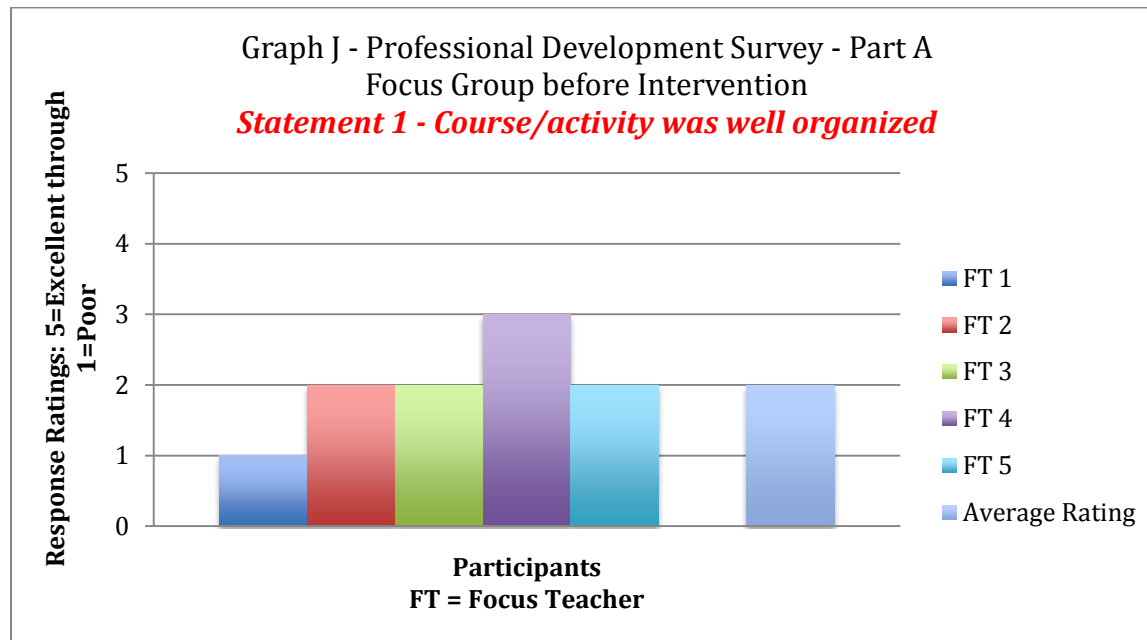


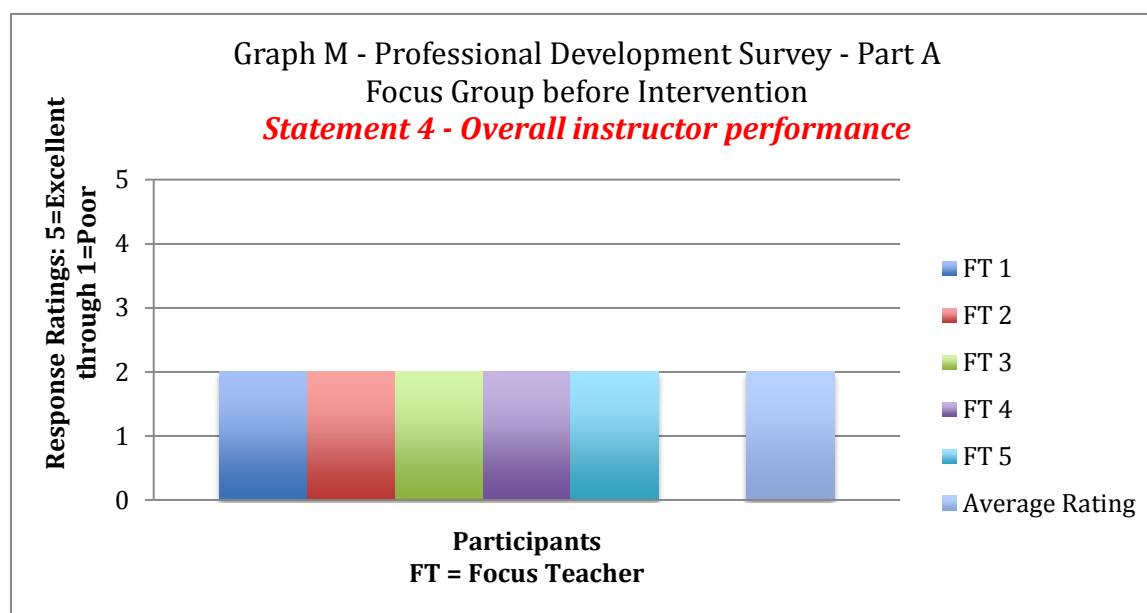
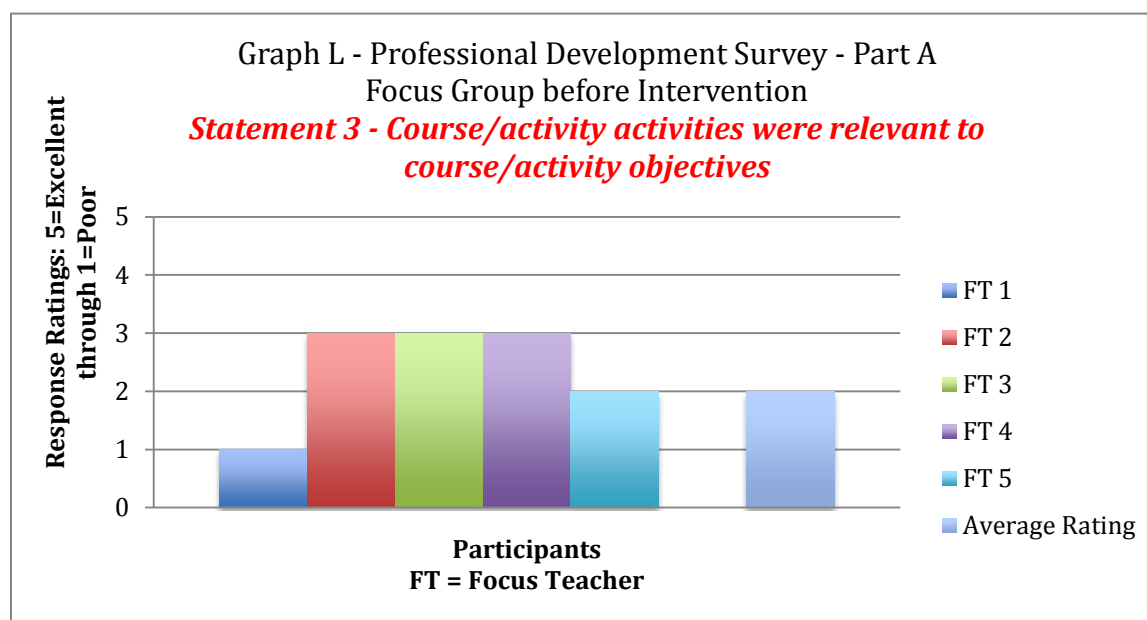
In summary, the overall data from the control group suggested the professional development session(s) had little to no impact on subsequent professional practice. It also suggests that, with the exception of one teacher, most control group teachers felt a moderate sense of satisfaction towards the professional development session(s).

Professional Development: The Focus Group

Like the teachers in the control group, the five focus teachers were given the initial Professional Development Survey. Similar to the control group findings, the survey results revealed the participants dissatisfaction in the professional development session. Also, initially, teachers did not believe the professional development would have an impact on their classroom instruction thus student

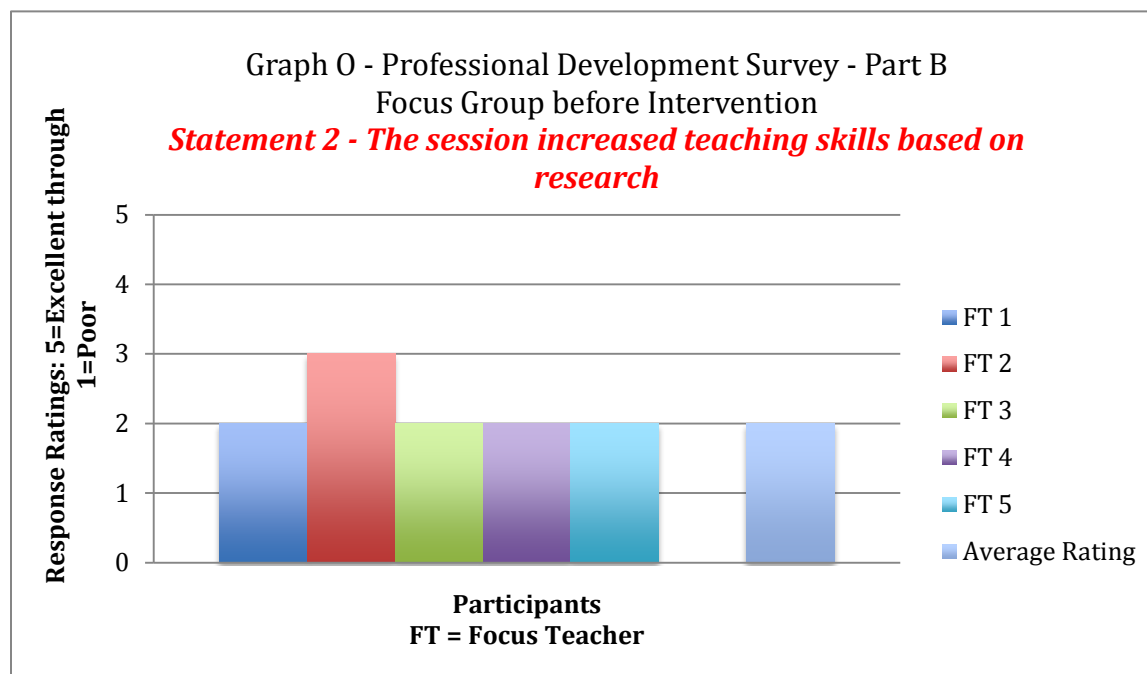
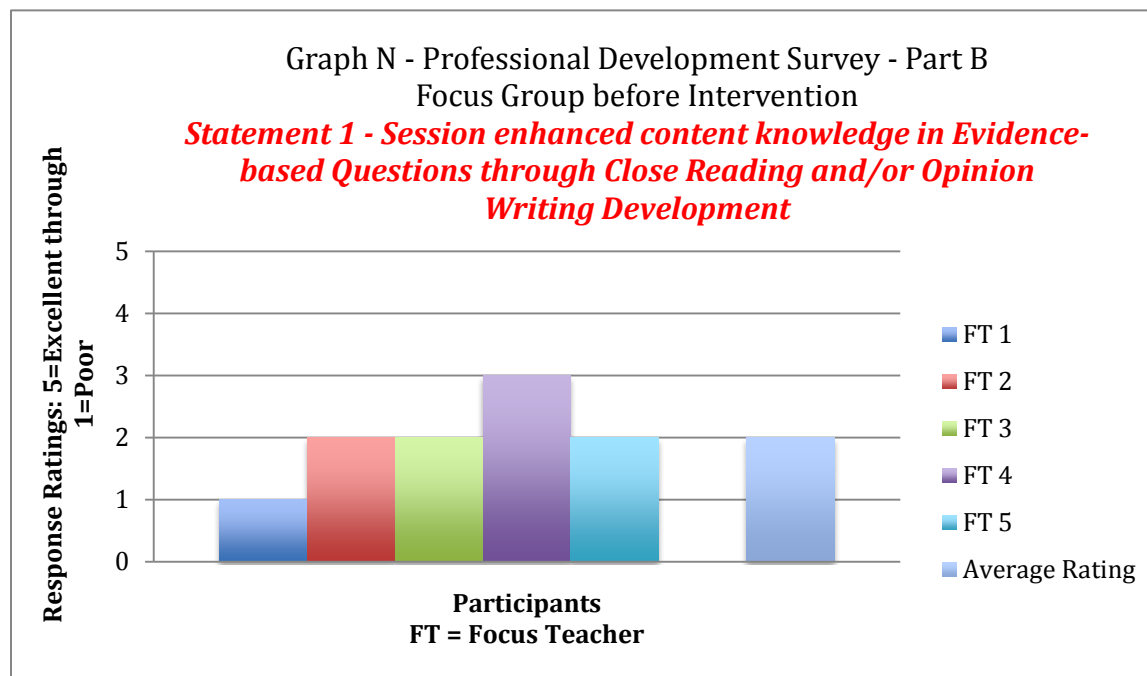
achievement. As one teacher stated during the final interview, “Just sitting and having someone talk at me during professional development isn’t going to make me a better teacher, one confident in implementing new ways of teaching to address a whole new set of standards”.

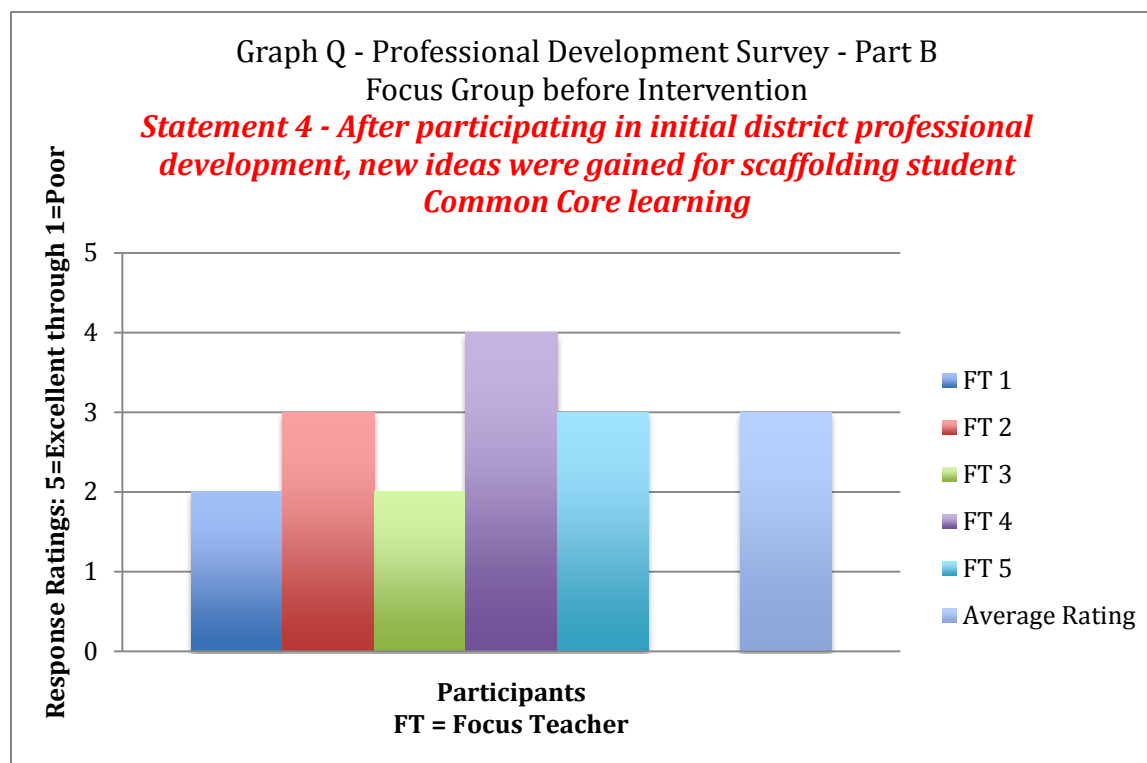
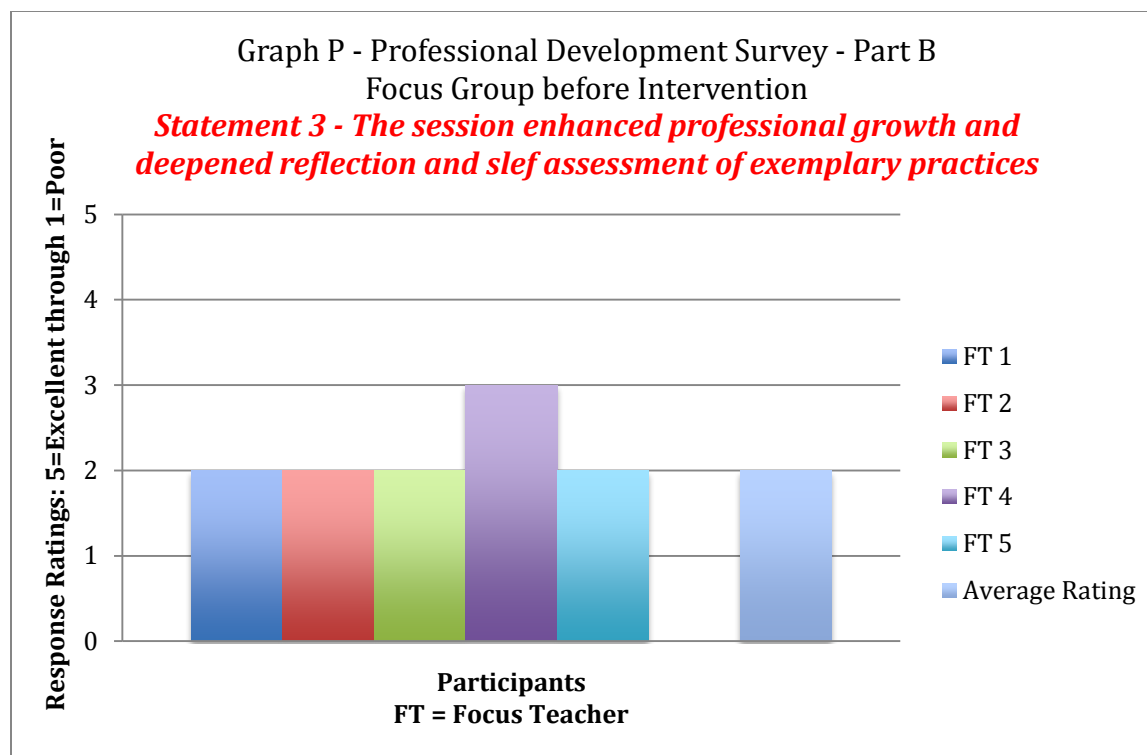


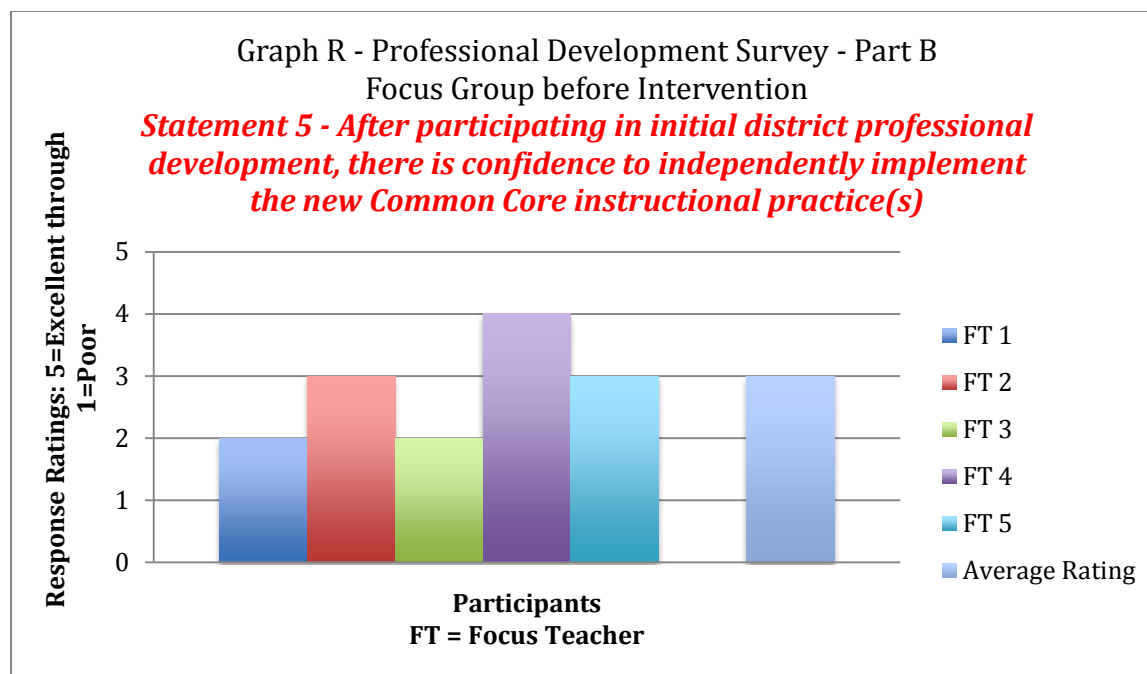


The data on the second half of the survey, “Impact on Professional Practice”, before the intervention of peer teaching, essentially revealed the same outcome as the data from the Control Group. In general, Focus Group teachers agreed, professional development sessions would not significantly impact their classroom

practice of teaching Common Core Standards nor did they leave the sessions with an increased self-efficacy to implement the new teaching practices.





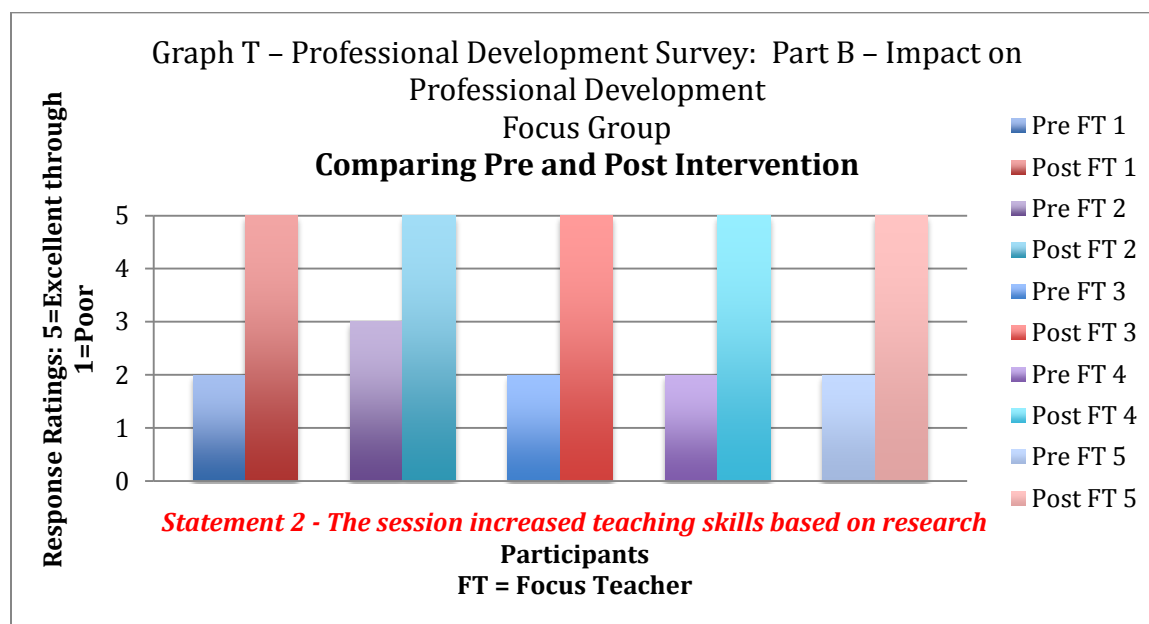
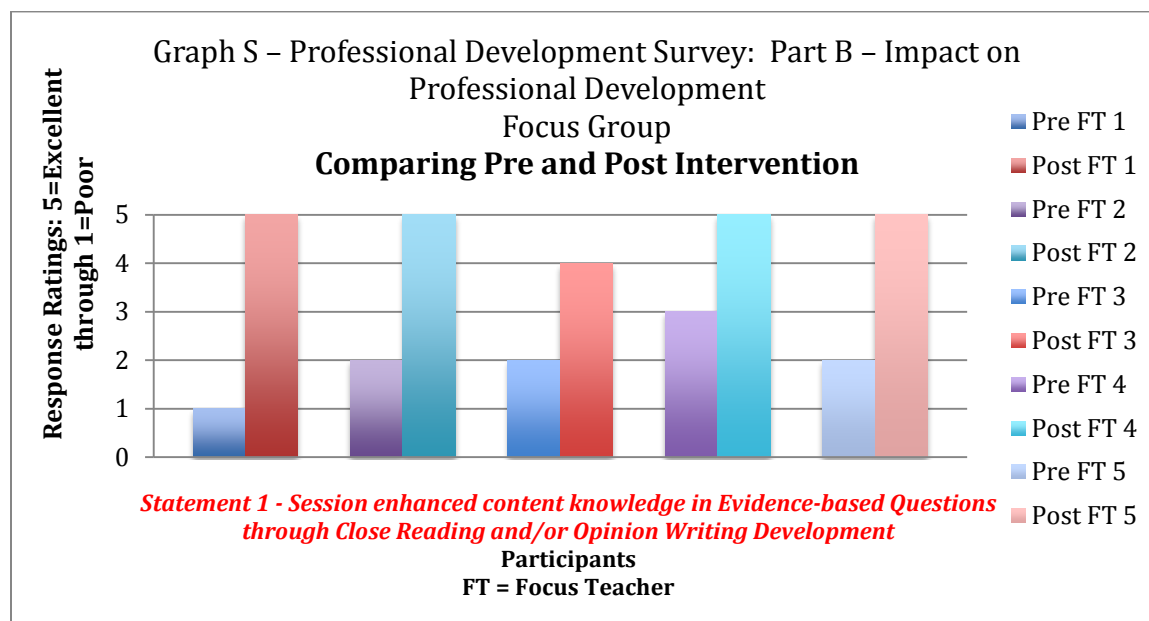


Professional Development, Post Peer Coaching: The Focus Group

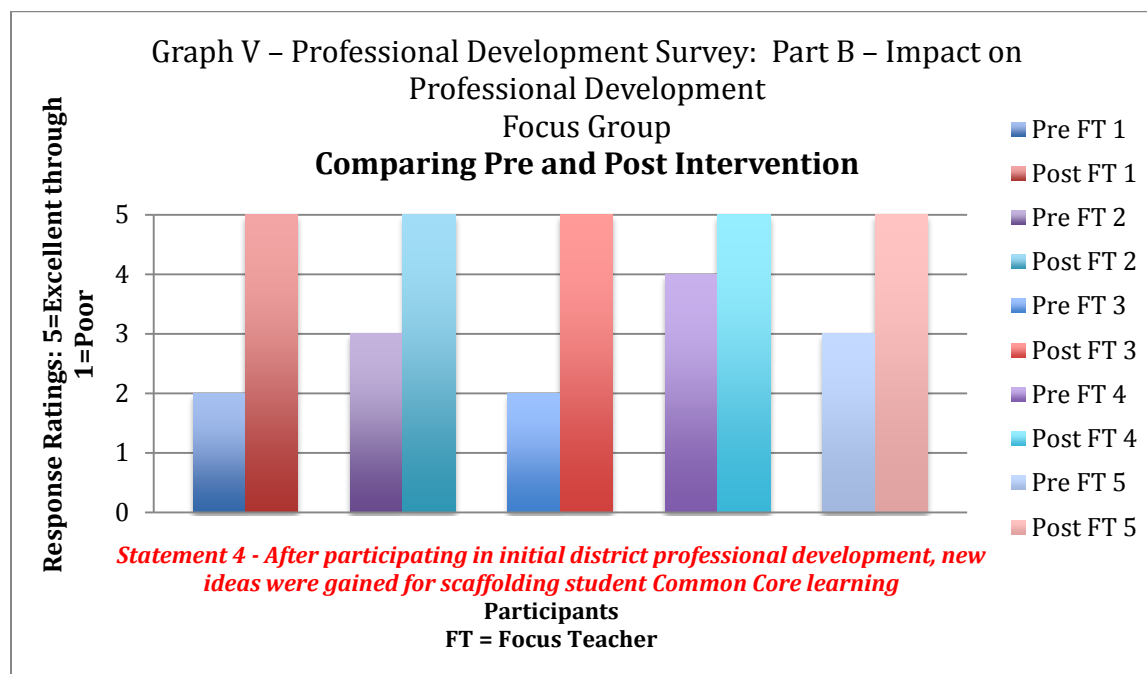
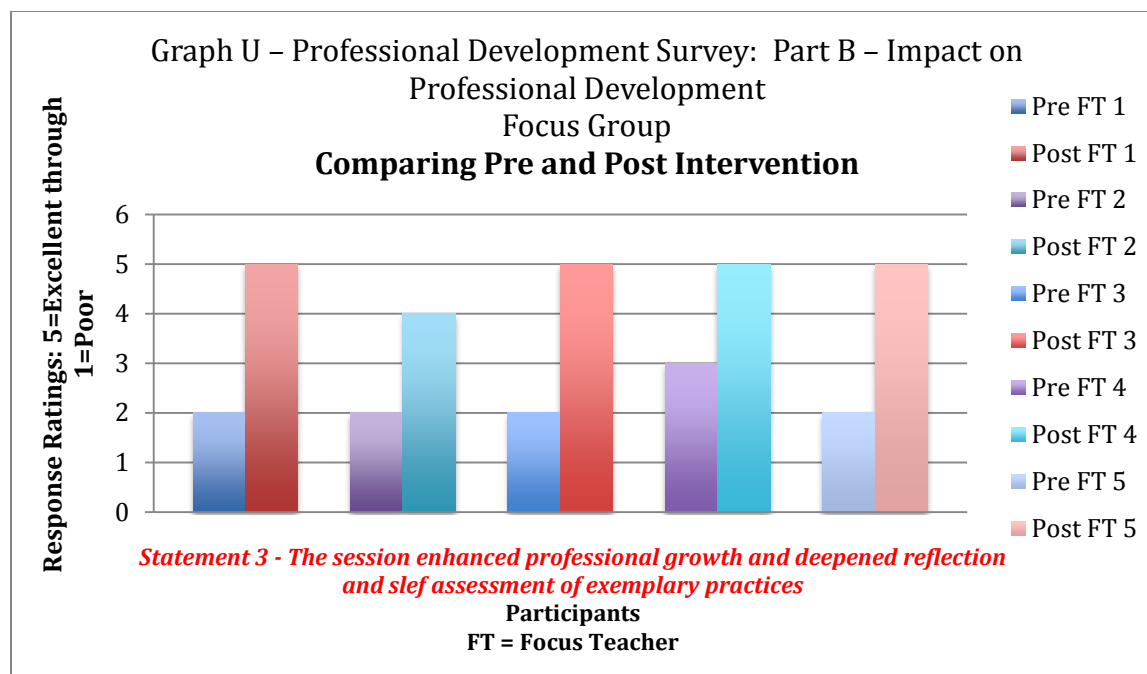
Based on post-intervention data, peer coaching had a significant effect on both professional development and teacher efficacy. All five focus group teachers agreed that after participating in initial district professional development AND subsequent peer coaching cycle, their content knowledge from the initial professional development increased and strengthened. They gained new ideas for scaffolding student Common Core learning and were more confident in their ability to independently implement the new Common Core instructional practices. Two out of five focus teachers rated their confidence level at the highest level while three out of five rated their confidence level just below the highest rating. Reflecting in a journal prompt, a focus teacher wrote, “I learned new strategies that can help students understand the concepts better. Also, I observed the instructional

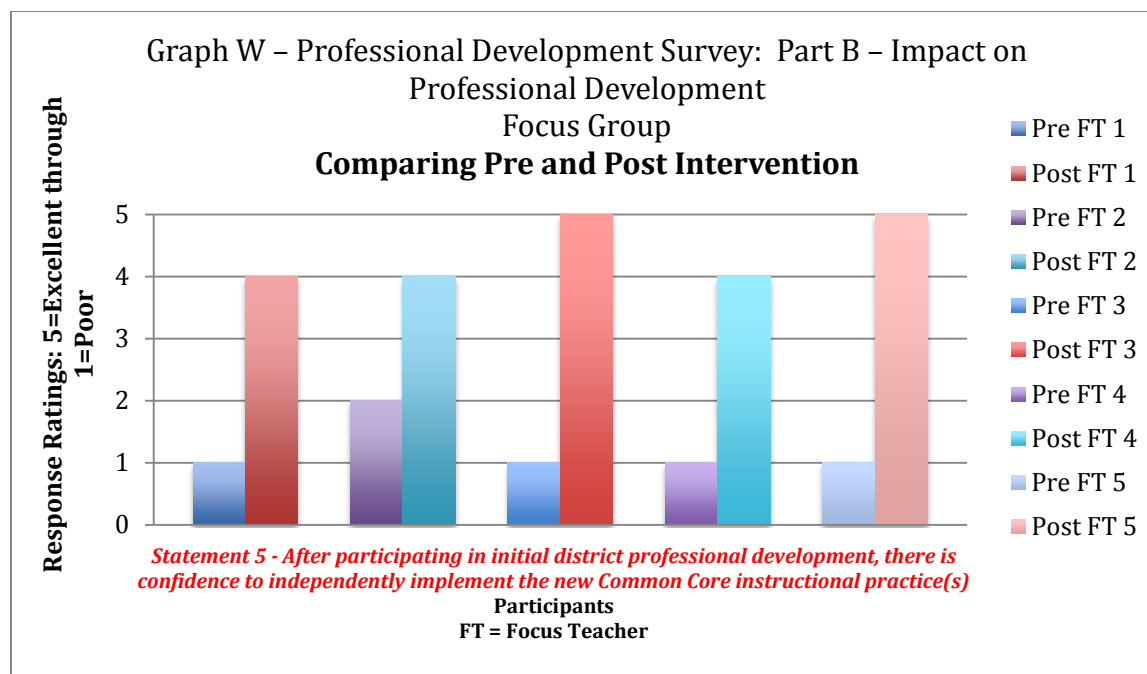
Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

coach model strategies from the professional development session that kept students engaged in the lesson. Now that I've observed and practiced the techniques with the instructional coach, I feel much more confident in trying them independently".



Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy





Two out of five focus group teachers reflected on classroom management techniques observed during the peer coaching cycle. Interestingly, this was an outcome not expected during the research since classroom management was not a direct session during the initial professional development. One teacher wrote, “aside from all the good teaching practices I have seen, I understand that I need to revisit all the good behavior rules I set-up in the beginning of the year. After all, good class management equals good learning!”

The findings of this action research thesis suggest that peer coaching has a significant impact on the effectiveness of professional development and on a teacher’s confidence in their ability to successfully implement new instructional practices that support student learning in the new Common Core Standards system.

Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

In the next chapter, I will discuss limitations, implications, and an action plan that emerged during this research study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This action research study focused on the impact peer instructional coaching had on teacher efficacy. In this chapter I will discuss the limitations, implications, and action plan for future use of a peer instructional coaching model.

My findings suggested that a peer instructional coaching model is a salient mode to extending the impact of a professional development session, both in the guidance of classroom instruction and the increase of efficacy within a group of teachers. As one teacher reflected, peer coaching was a non-threatening collaborative conversation between two colleagues which impacted both my teaching confidence and my faith that the professional development strategy would work with my students”. This statement alone answers both my research questions:

- What impact will a peer instructional coaching model have on teachers’ self-confidence with respect to implementation of Common Core instructional strategies?
- How do professional development experiences with subsequent academic coaching affect teachers’ efficacy in the instructional practice?

Limitations

Although efforts were made to minimize threats to internal validity, three main limitations emerged from this study. First was focus group size. Initially I

believed more teachers would volunteer to participate in the research, however, teachers reported high levels of stress in implementing new Common Core teaching as the factor that kept them from agreeing to take part in the study.

Interestingly, the five focus group teachers that participated all reported the stress associated with new instructional practices had lessened due to peer instructional coaching. Had the timing of the research been different and the data showing the stress relief associated with implementing the new standards been available, in my opinion, study participation would have increased.

The second study limitation was finding the time needed for pre and post conference sessions. Often, the time constraints on teachers made for quick, and at times, rushed planning and reflection sessions. If I were to repeat or extend the research, I would obtain a substitute teacher in order to release focus group teachers to participate in one-half hour pre and post sessions during the school day. This would allow teachers to fully participate in the sessions without the worry of time.

Finally, there were many distractors to the peer coaching cycle this school year a few of which included change in site leadership and a mid-school year shift from state standards to Common Core standards. I attempted to minimize these threats by focusing on teacher efficacy rather than student achievement.

Implications

The research suggests that when peer coaching is “added to staff development, approximately 95% of teachers implement the new skills in their classrooms” (Knight, 2007). Also, teachers with a strong sense of efficacy “tend to be more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students (Guskey, 1988). Certainly, research does not guarantee that all teachers will successfully implement new Common Core instructional practices but one cannot ignore the success it has found locally in my school district. These findings, added to my own research, carry the implication for the need of expanding the peer coaching model to more school sites in the district.

Another positive implication of the study was the impact the intervention had on my own professional development and practices as a school-site instructional coach. Not only did the teachers express confidence in implementing new instructional practices, I too felt supported in taking risks to extend my professional practice and honestly reflect with colleagues.

Action Plan

Peer coaching as a model of instructional coaching has had a significant impact on a small group of elementary school teachers with regards to self-efficacy when practicing new Common Core instructional practices/strategies learned in

traditional professional development. This action plan focuses on expanding this model of instructional coaching to all classroom teachers at the elementary school for the 2014-2015 school year. In my opinion, beginning the school year with this model of instructional coaching will increase the number of teachers willing to participate because stress levels will be lower and participants will be more apt to engage in the coaching process.

After teachers take part in beginning of the school year professional development, invitations will be sent to the teaching staff, offering peer coaching. At the first faculty meeting, peer coaching will be defined and those that participated in this research's focus group will share the positive effects it had on their own teacher efficacy as he or she implemented and practiced new Common Core instructional strategies/practices learned during the traditional professional development.

Ultimately, I hope to have the peer coaching model used school wide and perhaps later, district wide. Above all, I will use my experience in peer coaching to continue the teaching relationships I built during this research and to increase my own efficacy when implementing new Common Core strategies into my teaching.

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Appendix

Data Collection Instruments

Participant Name: _____

Participant Survey: Professional Development Survey

(portions based on Albert Bandera's *Teacher's Self-Efficacy Scale* and Anita Hoy's *The Teaching Confidence Scale*)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your honest opinions.

Your responses are confidential.

KEY:

Part A: 5 = Excellent through 1 = Poor

Part B: 5 = Agree through 1 = Disagree

A. Participant Satisfaction

	<u>Excellent</u>		<u>Average</u>		<u>Poor</u>
1. Course/activity was well organized.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Course/activity objectives were clearly stated.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Course/activity activities were relevant to course/activity objectives.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Overall instructor performance	5	4	3	2	1

B. Impact on Professional Practice

	<u>Agree</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>		<u>Disagree</u>
1. The session enhanced my content knowledge in Evidence-based Questions through Close Reading and/or Opinion Writing Development.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The session increased my teaching skills based on research.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The session enhanced my professional growth and deepened my reflection and self assessment of exemplary practices.	5	4	3	2	1
4. After participating in initial district Professional Development, I gained new ideas for scaffolding student Common Core learning.	5	4	3	2	1
5. After participating in initial district Professional Development, I am confident in my ability to independently implement the new Common Core instructional practice.	5	4	3	2	1

Thank you for your participation!

Participant Name: _____

Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

Participant (Post Peer Coaching Cycle) Survey: Professional Development Survey (portions based on Albert Bandura's *Teacher's Self-Efficacy Scale* and Anita Hoy's *The Teaching Confidence Scale*)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your honest opinions.

Your responses are confidential.

KEY:

5 = Agree through 1 = Disagree

Impact on Professional Practice after Peer Coaching Cycle

	<u>Agree</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>		<u>Disagree</u>
1. The cycle enhanced my content knowledge in Evidence-based Questions through Close Reading and/or Opinion Writing Development.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The cycle increased my teaching skills based on research.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The cycle enhanced my professional growth and deepened my reflection and self assessment of exemplary practices.	5	4	3	2	1
4. After participating in initial district Professional Development AND the peer coaching cycle, I gained new ideas for scaffolding student Common Core learning.	5	4	3	2	1
5. After participating in initial district Professional Development AND the peer coaching cycle, I am confident in my ability to independently implement the new Common Core instructional practice.	5	4	3	2	1

Other comments/concerns???

Thank you for your participation!

Participant Name: _____

Journal Prompts for Teacher Participants

Peer Coaching and its Effect on Teacher Efficacy

(based on Jim Knight's Instructional Coaching *Reflection Sheet; Feel, Think, Do Cycle*)

FEEL: How do I feel about what I've learned during this peer coaching cycle?

THINK: What are the most important ideas I've heard during the peer coaching cycle? What's my evaluation of these ideas?

DO: How can I use this new knowledge? What will I do differently in the future?

Thank you for your participation!

Date: _____

Time: _____

Participant Name: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interview Question and Protocol for Teacher Participants

(modeled after questions used by Avant, 2012)

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed regarding your professional development as a teacher and your work with an instructional coach. Your responses will be kept confidential.

The interview questions have been divided into three sections: background questions, core questions, and probing questions.

Background questions:

1. How many years have you been a teacher?
2. What grade do you teach?

Core questions:

3. What do you like the best about working with an instructional coach? Can you tell me a story about a successful time when you worked with the coach?
4. What do you like the least about working with an instructional coach?
5. Do you feel instructional coaching has increased or decreased your professional development?
6. Do you feel instructional coaching has increased or decreased your self-efficacy/self-confidence? How and in what ways?

Probing questions (use if needed):

7. You mentioned building trust. Tell me what the coach does to build trust with you?
8. You mentioned the coach is calm under particular circumstances. Describe a time when the coach showed self-control? What professional affect did it have on you as a teacher?
9. Tell me a time you remember the coach demonstrating self-confidence? What happened? What professional affect did it have on you as a teacher?

Thank you for your participation!