

# **SUSTAINABILITY OF KENTUCKY'S LITERACY COACHING INITIATIVES:**

**A Follow-Up Study of the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project and Striving Readers**

By

Diana Porter, Eastern Kentucky University

Patricia J. Kannapel, Research Consultant

Cindy Parker, Kentucky Department of Education

Beverly D. Moore, Research Consultant

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## **ABSTRACT**

In response to the dismal performance of adolescents on state and national reading assessments, Kentucky undertook two initiatives from 2005 to 2010 which prepared 73 literacy coaches to address the complex reading skills demanded of grade 4-12 students: the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (ALCP) and the Striving Readers (SR) program. When researching these programs' sustainability, triangulated data from surveys and interviews of program participants, teachers, and administrators suggested that with intensive training, ongoing support, and networking, these literacy coaching models could be joined with other existing structures to effectively build capacity and provide valuable insight for future statewide adolescent initiatives.

### **PURPOSE, RATIONALE, AND GOALS OF STUDY**

With the establishment of the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD) in 1998, the Kentucky General Assembly launched a long-term commitment to improving literacy across the state (Bates, Breslow, & Hupert, 2009). Based at the University of Kentucky, CCLD is a collaborative of Kentucky's eight public universities and the National Center for Family Literacy. CCLD's mission is to promote literacy and address the diverse needs of all learners through professional development and research.<sup>1</sup>

Kentucky's literacy efforts began to focus more strongly on adolescent literacy in 2005 in response to national and state-level data showing that, while reading performance for young children had been improving, those gains did not carry over into adolescence. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for instance, the percentage of fourth graders scoring at or above proficient in reading increased from 28 to 32 from 1998 to 2007, compared to

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<sup>1</sup> See CCLD's website for more information: <http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org/about>

a decline for eighth-graders from 30 percent to 29 percent. Similarly, 12<sup>th</sup> graders scoring at or above proficient declined from 38 percent to 34 percent from 1998 to 2005

(<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>).

Two initiatives were undertaken in to address the literacy needs of adolescents: the state-funded Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (ALCP) and the federally-funded Striving Readers (SR) program. In 2005, ALCP was launched by state legislation that called for creating a statewide network of literacy coaches to work full-time with teachers of grades 4-12 in all content areas to infuse literacy throughout the curriculum. In 2006, the Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium of 23 rural middle and high schools was awarded a federal Striving Readers grant to provide content literacy training to teachers of grades 6-12 and to provide reading coaches for struggling readers (Bates, Breslow, & Hupert, 2009). CCLD played a key role in each of these initiatives; it worked in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to design and implement ALCP, and it served as the evaluator of Kentucky's Striving Readers grant.

Literacy coaching was the centerpiece of ALCP and a key component of the Striving Readers program. From 2005 to 2010, ALCP prepared three cadres of literacy coaches to work directly with content area teachers to help them integrate literacy instruction into their curriculum (Kannapel, Moore, & Hibshman, 2011). From 2006 to 2011, schools participating in the Striving Readers project employed a literacy coach who was responsible for both implementing a targeted intervention program with struggling readers and coaching content teachers (Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, & Rintamaa, 2011). Over the course of six years, ALCP prepared 44 literacy coaches and Striving Readers prepared 29 literacy coaches for a total of 73

coaches serving various districts and schools across Kentucky. Numerous state and federal budget cuts brought an end to each of these initiatives.

The research reported here sought to learn the whereabouts and current job responsibilities of the 73 educators who were trained as literacy coaches. The goal was to determine whether the considerable investment by the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the U. S. Department of Education in preparing literacy coaches led to sustained literacy coaching programs and/or long-term improvements in meeting the needs of adolescent literacy learners in districts and schools served by ALCP and Striving Readers coaches. The report begins with a discussion of the theory and research behind literacy coaching, followed by a description of the two literacy coaching programs, a description of research methods, and a discussion of major findings and implications.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Kentucky's literacy coaching models developed at a time when literacy coaching was emerging across the nation as a strategy for improving adolescent literacy learning—in response to the dismal performance of adolescents on state and national assessments as discussed above. National literacy initiatives to address the problem included the Carnegie Corporation's Advancing Adolescent Literacy Initiative launched in 2003, the \$200 million federal Striving Readers Program launched in 2004, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) *Content Area Literacy Guide* published in 2007 (Carnegie Corporation, 2010; Henriquez, 2005; Jacobs, 2008).

Literacy coaching as a strategy to improve adolescent literacy represents a merger of two lines of thinking. The first relates to the nature of the problem itself; the second has to do with

how to help teachers address the problem. Regarding the adolescent literacy problem, researchers and literacy experts assert that as students enter upper elementary grades and move through middle and high school, the skills they need to read and write move beyond basic decoding and recognizing high-frequency sight words to negotiating content-specific vocabulary and more complex text features in order to fully comprehend the meaning of the text, use the concepts, and construct knowledge.

When students reach middle and high school, each academic discipline has its own set of characteristic literacy practices. Texts are significantly longer and more complex, present greater conceptual challenges and obstacles to reading fluency, contain more detailed graphic representations, and demand a much greater ability to synthesize information (Carnegie Corporation, 2010; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Jacobs, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Experts agree that the kind of literacy instruction adolescents need to tackle these challenges should be delivered within the context of each academic subject (Jacobs, 2008). The question, then, becomes how to help teachers work with their students on content-specific literacy needs when the great majority of middle and high school teachers, particularly in science, mathematics, and social studies, have had little or no preparation to provide such instruction—and many resist the idea that they should do so (Carnegie Corporation, 2010; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Jacobs, 2008; NCTE, 2006; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Experts and professional organizations have recommended literacy coaching as a strategy to help content teachers change their practices to better address adolescent literacy needs (NCTE, 2006; Heller and Greenleaf, 2007). Literacy coaching is viewed as a promising approach because research has found that to be effective, professional development must be sustained, ongoing, intensive, and supported by modeling, coaching, and collective problem-solving

(Borman & Feger, 2006; International Reading Association, 2006; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Neufeld & Donaldson, 2012; Poglinco et al, 2003). The primary role of the literacy coach is to work directly with teachers to help them more effectively teach or integrate literacy into their classrooms. The ultimate goal is improved student achievement, but the immediate focus is the learning of teachers (IRA, 2006; Toll, 2005, 2006, 2007).

While research has not established definitive links between literacy coaching and student achievement, several studies have documented that literacy coaches can influence classroom and school-level literacy practices (Hough et al, 2008; Kannapel et al, 2008; Marsh et al, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Some studies, as well, have shown small but promising links between literacy coaching and student achievement gains (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011; Marsh et al, 2008). At the same time, simply implementing literacy coaching will not improve teaching and learning unless key features are incorporated into the program. Factors that have been shown to contribute to the effectiveness of literacy coaching include professional development and ongoing support for literacy coaches; selecting knowledgeable, skilled teachers to serve as coaches; and support from district leaders, principals, and teachers (Brown et al., 2007; Kannapel, 2007, 2008; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Marsh et al, 2008; Neufeld & Donaldson, 2012; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Pallangyo et al 2012; Poglinco et al, 2003; Smith, 2007; Taylor et al, 2007; The Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2005).

### **KENTUCKY’S LITERACY COACHING PROGRAMS**

The International Reading Association (2007) differentiates among three types of reading specialists: (1) the reading intervention teacher who works directly with struggling readers; (2) the reading/literacy coach who provides professional development to teachers to help them

implement effective literacy strategies in their classrooms; and, (3) the reading supervisor/coordinator who coordinates the school reading program, possibly assuming some roles of the literacy coach but working toward more school-level, systemic change. The ALCP literacy coaching model was consistent with definition (2) above in that literacy coaches were to work directly with teachers to help them integrate literacy into instruction. Many ALCP coaches also served as literacy coordinators in their schools, which is consistent with definition (3) (Kannapel, Moore, & Hibpshman, 2011). The Striving Readers model, on the other hand, was consistent with definitions (1) and (2) in that coaches spent a half-day working directly with struggling readers and the other half coaching content teachers on implementing literacy into their instruction (Cantrell et al, 2011). Each of these models and their implementation is described briefly below.

### **The Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (ALCP)**

CCLD and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) worked collaboratively to develop ALCP. The General Assembly allocated funding for the ALCP training program and materials, including a mini-grant to each literacy coach for school-based needs. Districts or schools who wished to participate were required to fund the position of literacy coach.

For the first three years of the program, ALCP provided a two-year training and support program for literacy coaches held at regional university sites and led by university faculty with expertise in literacy and experience working with classroom teachers. These first two cadres of literacy coaches attended eight-day summer institutes at the regional sites for two consecutive summers, supplemented by monthly professional development or networking sessions during the

subsequent school years. Principals were invited to attend some sessions but awareness and training for school administrators was not central to the project.

Due to state budget reductions, ALCP was revamped in its final year to offer a primarily online program for up to 12 coaches—these could be coaches who had participated in the two-year program or coaches who had not participated in ALCP previously. These coaches participated in two, one-day professional development sessions, two shorter face-to-face meetings in conjunction with professional conferences, and a five-month online course. Participants in all ALCP cadres earned graduate credit for participation in the program. While participants had initially been promised a literacy coaching endorsement upon completing ALCP, this program component did not materialize.

ALCP was funded initially to prepare up to 20 literacy coaches at each of eight university sites in each two-year cadre, with new cadres being initiated each year for four consecutive years. Had the program been filled to capacity and fully funded throughout the four-year period, ALCP might have prepared over 500 literacy coaches. However, participation in ALCP was much less than anticipated, in large part because of the requirement that districts fund the literacy coach position. This factor, combined with state budget cuts, resulted in only 44 coaches completing the ALCP training program. These coaches served 56 schools in 29 of Kentucky's 176 school districts.

### **Striving Readers**

Kentucky's Striving Readers project consisted of two major components: (1) targeted intervention with struggling readers using the Learning Strategies Curriculum (LSC) developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning; and (2) whole-school literacy intervention using the Adolescent Literacy Model (ALM) developed by the Louisville-based

Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Each school participating in the grant employed a literacy coach who was responsible for both teaching the targeted intervention to struggling readers *and* coaching content teachers in implementing the whole-school intervention (Cantrell et al, 2011). The Striving Readers program prepared a total of 29 coaches who served 23 schools in seven school districts.

From 2006-2010, Striving Readers literacy coaches received intensive training and support in both the reading intervention program and the whole-school intervention model. Coaches received 4.5 to 7.5 days of professional development on the reading intervention program, participated in summer coaching institutes and monthly face-to-face meetings, and received 48 to 72 hours of on-site support from a mentor coach each year of the grant. Over the course of four years, they were provided 37 days of training in the school-wide intervention and up to 246 hours of on-site support by a mentor coach (Cantrell et al, 2009, 2010; Overturf & Bronger, n.d.).

Striving Readers coaches had the opportunity to participate in a literacy leadership certification program through the University of Louisville (UL), which was paid by the grant. Coaches who took advantage of this opportunity received an M.Ed. in reading, earning a Kentucky Reading and Writing Endorsement as part of their teacher certification. The UL Master's program in reading traditionally required participants to complete 12 courses, each of which included a hallmark assessment—job-embedded tasks in which candidates demonstrated mastery of the International Reading Association's Standards for Reading Professionals (2007) and Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches (IRA, 2006). The UL Master's program was adapted so that Striving Readers coaches earned the endorsement through the training program facilitated by CTL (described in the previous paragraph), but they were required to complete the hallmark assessments for UL (three per year for each year of the grant)

(Cantrell et al, 2009, 2010; Overturf & Bronger, n.d.).

Striving Readers coaches' work with teachers was further supported by professional development provided directly to content teachers and school administrators. Content teachers in all Striving Readers schools received five days of professional development in summer 2006 as the grant was launched, as well as follow-up sessions throughout the grant period—altogether totaling at least 11 days over the course of the grant. School administrators were invited to participate in the school-wide model training with their faculties and in monthly on-site mentor meetings. They also received professional development in literacy leadership to support both the targeted intervention and the school-wide model. (Cantrell et al, 2011). In 2010-2011, a limited number of the originally funded schools were given a year extension, but at the end of that year, budget restrictions prompted all funding to expire.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Rationale for the Study**

As the preceding section makes clear, substantial time and resources have been invested in Kentucky's two adolescent literacy coaching programs, toward the long-term goal of improving the achievement of students in grades 4-12 not only in reading and language arts, but in all subject areas. Literacy coaching, by definition, develops the capacity of content-area teachers to address student literacy needs through job-embedded professional development (Deshler, Palincsar, Biancarosa, & Nair, 2007; Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; IRA, 2006; Toll, 2005, 2006, 2007; NCTE, 2006). As such, one might expect that teacher capacity developed by literacy coaches would have a lasting impact on teacher knowledge and practice, even if the literacy coach was no longer working with a specific teacher or at a specific school.

The research reported here considered two aspects of the sustainability of literacy coaching. First, information was solicited from ALCP and Striving Readers participants on the extent to which they continue to use their knowledge and skills to improve teaching and learning beyond their own classrooms, either as coaches or in some other capacity. Second, the researchers asked about the lasting impact of literacy coaches' work on the schools and educators with whom they worked. It is hoped that this research will shed light on the question of whether literacy coaches have, indeed, developed capacity within their schools, districts, and the state for improving adolescent literacy.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed:

1. What roles are former ALCP and Striving Readers participants currently playing in their schools, districts, and the state relative to developing the capacity of content teachers to improve adolescent literacy?
  - a. For what length of time did ALCP and Striving Readers participants serve as literacy coaches?
  - b. For those who have continued coaching:
    - i. What factors have enabled them to do so?
    - ii. How have their roles evolved over time?
  - c. For those who are no longer coaching?
    - i. Why are they no longer coaching?
    - ii. In what ways, if any, do they continue to use the knowledge and skills they gained from ALCP or Striving Readers? In what ways does their use of these knowledge and skills contribute to improved adolescent literacy teaching and learning beyond their own classrooms?
2. What has been the lasting impact of literacy coaches on teaching and learning in the schools/districts where they work(ed)?
3. What lessons does the experience of these coaches suggest for future state efforts to improve adolescent literacy teaching and learning?

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Survey**

In late February 2012, an email survey was sent to all ALCP and Striving Readers coaches who had completed their respective training programs. The survey asked about current job titles and responsibilities; whether they were still coaching and if not, why not; whether they continued to use the knowledge and skills they gained from the literacy coach programs; and whether they currently played any literacy leadership roles (a copy of the email survey is provided in Appendix A). Reminder emails with attached surveys were sent for two subsequent weeks to those who had not responded to the initial survey. After these three email queries, the research team made phone calls and conducted Internet searches in an attempt to locate former literacy coaches who had not responded to emails or those for whom emails were returned as undeliverable. These efforts produced information on 67 of the 73 participants, constituting 92 percent of all ALCP and Striving Reader participants.

### **Participant Interviews**

During April and May 2012, a four-member research team (the authors of this report) conducted phone interviews with a sample of former ALCP and Striving Readers participants representing a range of scenarios, including participants who continue to serve as literacy coaches, serve in other instructional support positions, advanced in their careers, or returned to the classroom. During these interviews, researchers obtained names and contact information of district administrators, principals and teachers to interview about their literacy coach's influence and about factors influencing decisions about the coaching position and role.

### **Administrator and Teacher Interviews**

A sample of district administrators, principals, and teachers representing the range of scenarios described above were interviewed by phone to gather data on the impact of the literacy

coach and factors influencing the literacy coach’s impact. (Phone interview protocols are provided in Appendix B.)

Table 1 provides an overview of the number and types of interviews conducted.

**Table 1: Phone Interviews**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
Current literacy coaches	6
Former coaches who now serve as instructional/curriculum coaches	5
Former coaches who advanced in careers	7
Former coaches who returned to the classroom	7
<b>Total ALCP/Striving Readers Participants interviewed</b>	<b>25</b>
Administrators in districts/schools that retained literacy coach position	4
Administrators in districts/schools that eliminated literacy coach position	3
<b>Total administrators interviewed</b>	<b>7</b>
Teachers in schools that retained literacy coach position	1
Teachers in schools that eliminated literacy coach position	2
<b>Total teachers interviewed</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>35</b>

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data from surveys and interviews were categorized according to the major research questions. Interview data were analyzed by the two lead researchers on the project, who independently identified patterns and compiled preliminary findings for each research question. The two researchers discussed findings and reached consensus on a set of major findings and lessons learned. A draft of this report containing findings and implications was reviewed by the research team as well as by a former literacy coach now serving as a content specialist for KDE. Findings, implications, and recommendations were revised based on these reviews.

### **Study Limitations**

The budget for this study was insufficient to support a thorough examination of the long-term impact of literacy coaches. Therefore, the above methods were developed to ensure initial contact with as many participants as possible through email surveys. More in-depth data were

then gathered through a sample of participants. All of the data, however, is self-report data and should be considered as such. While the data were triangulated by interviewing coaches in various settings and including a few administrators and teachers, the study was not able to incorporate actual school visits, study of documentary evidence, or classroom observations to substantiate the self-report data.

Another possible limitation is that two members of the research team who conducted phone interviews were involved in development and implementation of ALCP and the Striving Readers literacy coaching programs. Controls for bias were built into the study by using a common interview protocol and procedures for recording and reporting responses. In addition, the interview questions did not ask respondents to make judgments about the particular aspects of ALCP and Striving Readers for which these research team members were responsible. Even so, the fact that respondents knew the researchers may have led them to be less forthcoming than they would have been if a researcher external to the project had conducted the interviews.

Finally, the percentages of ALCP and Striving Readers coaches who responded to the survey were comparable, and the findings based on the surveys represent both those populations. However, the majority of coach interviews and all of the administrator and teacher interviews were in schools served by ALCP participants. Therefore, the detailed findings about literacy instruction and coaching roles came predominantly from experiences with ALCP.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

### **Status of ALCP and Striving Readers Participants**

#### **Current Roles**

Table 2 shows survey results regarding the current status of educators who served as ALCP and Striving Readers literacy coaches.

**Table 2: 2012 Status of ALCP and Striving Readers Participants**

		ALCP		Striving Readers		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Total who completed the coaching program	44	100%	29	100%	73	100%
2	Total for whom 2012 status could be determined	41	93%	26	90%	67	92%
<b>3</b>	<b>Still coaching in some capacity</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27%</b>
4	Literacy coach 50% plus	11	27%	2	8%	13	19%
5	Broader instructional support role (such as instructional coach/facilitator)	4	10%	1	4%	5	7%
<b>6</b>	<b>Advanced professionally</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21%</b>
7	Kentucky Department of Education employee	2	5%	2	8%	4	6%
8	District administrator	2	5%	1	4%	3	4%
9	School administrator	6	15%	1	4%	7	10%
<b>10</b>	<b>No longer coaching</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>52%</b>
11	Classroom teacher	9	22%	19	73%	28	42%
12	Inactive (i.e., retired, on leave, resigned, fired)	7	17%	0	0%	7	10%

[Percentages shown in Rows 3-12 in Table 2 are based on the total number of participants for whom the researchers were able to determine current status (i.e., 67 total participants, 41 ALCP, 26 Striving Readers)—not on total number of participants.]

Table 2 shows that the researchers were able to discern the current status of 67 of the 73 participants who served as ALCP or Striving Readers coaches. Of this number, over half are no longer serving as literacy or instructional coaches. The largest percentage of participants (42%) has returned to the classroom. These figures differ between the two projects, however—with a larger percentage of ALCP than Striving Readers participants continuing to coach in some capacity (37% vs. 12%). In fact, nearly equal numbers of ALCP participants were still coaching (15) or back in the classroom (16).

Across the two coaching programs, 14 participants had advanced professionally to positions at KDE or in district or school administration. A somewhat higher percentage of ALCP than Striving Readers participants (24% vs. 15%) reported this kind of career advancement. One possible explanation for this difference is that holding a full-time coaching

position (ALCP) may be perceived as providing more administrative leadership experience than coaching half-time and teaching half-time (SR). Another contributing factor may be related to data shown in row 12 of Table 2, which shows that a larger percentage of ALCP coaches have retired. It may be that the full-time coaching position offered by ALCP attracted more experienced, veteran teachers than did the half-time Striving Readers position. In fact, the first-year evaluation of ALCP reported that nearly 60 percent of Cadre 1 coaches had more than 10 years teaching experience (Kannapel, 2007) while a Striving Readers report stated that the majority of coaches had 6-10 years of experience (Overturf & Bronger, n.d.). Similar data on later cadres of ALCP coaches is not available, but it may be that as a group, ALCP coaches were more experienced and better qualified to advance than was the case for Striving Readers coaches.

#### **Length of Tenure as Literacy Coach**

Based on survey results, the average length of time served as literacy coach for both ALCP and Striving Readers participants was three years. Striving Readers coaches generally served as coaches throughout the four years of the grant, although some were hired later in the grant so their tenure was shorter. The fact that the average length of time as coach for ALCP participants was also three years when their training program lasted only two years indicates that ALCP coaches were more likely to continue serving as literacy coaches without external support than were Striving Reader coaches.

#### **Profile of Participants Who Continue to Serve as Coaches**

As shown in Table 2 above, 18 ALCP and Striving Readers coaches continued to serve as coaches in some capacity. Of this number, 15 participated in ALCP and three in the Striving Readers program. About three-fourths of these 18 coaches reported on email surveys that they continued to devote at least 50 percent of their time to literacy coaching. The remaining five

coaches reported that they played a broader instructional support role, such as serving as instructional coach or curriculum specialist. Below we consider factors that enabled these participants to continue in their coaching roles, as well as how their roles evolved over time.

**Factors facilitating sustainability of literacy coaching program.** The finding shared above—that more ALCP than Striving Readers participants continued to coach after the programs ended—may be attributed to the fact that the Striving Readers program provided funding for the literacy coach position; so when the grant ended, districts and schools did not continue to fund the position. For ALCP, by contrast, districts/schools had to fund the literacy coach position and hence, may have been more committed to the literacy coaching approach from the outset. This finding suggests that literacy coaching may be more sustainable if districts and/or schools make a financial commitment to the program.

Another important factor in sustaining literacy coaching is administrative support, as revealed in interviews with 16 people in schools that continued to support literacy or instructional coaches. When asked why or how their school or district was able to retain the position of literacy coach when so many other schools had not done so, the most common response (from 10 of 16 people interviewed) was that the district or school administration was supportive of literacy coaching and ensured that funding for the position was retained. The following comments illustrate this viewpoint:

*It was a commitment on the part of the district to continue [literacy coaching]. We have saved the position through many massive budget cuts. We think it's important... it has been an asset. [The literacy coach] works with all teachers... Having her involved has been an asset to high school teachers, not just language arts teachers, but all teachers. She is just an asset to the district. She is just good at what she does. [District administrator]*

*The superintendent and administrators have been creative in funding. They see the need and want to support it [Literacy coach, SR]*

*I am the only coach in the district still coaching and teaching intervention. Districts don't always realize what an asset a coach is, the skill set they offer. Our principal would have a coach every period and an intervention teacher full-time [if possible]. He sees the value it brings to the school. [Literacy coach, SR]*

Two respondents attributed the sustainability of literacy coaching to its effectiveness:

*[Our literacy coach] has had a significant impact and we see his influence as being instrumental in the success we have seen, especially in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. With [the literacy coach] on board, we are able to identify students early. He collaborates with faculty and promotes sound teaching strategies. We have maintained a literacy coach through creative scheduling. [High school principal]*

*At our schools, reading and writing scores have come up. We were the only school in the region that met NCLB. Since they have been monitoring reading programs and placing students correctly with RTI [Response to Intervention], they have seen success and opted to keep the [literacy coaches]. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

One coach reported that s/he continued serving as coach because the school had not yet improved its reading scores to the desired level; hence, a continued emphasis on literacy:

*I think they saw a need, and our school was actually low on the testing in spring, our scores were low. I was one of the strategies they had to help our scores because students' reading was low. They saw the importance of it. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

**Evolution of literacy coach role.** Nearly all participants who continued coaching reported that their roles and responsibilities had evolved in some manner since they began the work. The most common change, mentioned by nine respondents, was that responsibilities of the coach had expanded, often beyond literacy to include such activities as managing assessment or Response to Intervention (RTI) programs and/or performing more administrative tasks. This expansion of duties was attributed by two respondents to budget cuts that resulted in fewer administrators to perform key tasks—which now fell to the coach. Others explained that the district was small so everyone had to wear many hats; that teachers needed support in all areas, not just literacy; or that the school was more focused on preparing students to perform well on key assessments (hence expanding the coach's duties to include test preparation activities):

*When I started, I was working with teachers and classrooms. Now it's more administrative.... Our district had cuts and decided to keep coaches, but we lost two assistant principals. Their tasks had to be taken by someone, so now more of my time is spent on administration—on a teacher's salary. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

*[The literacy coach]'s role has become more diverse and widespread. He co-teaches strategies, assists with MAP/EXPLORE testing and data analysis; coordinates COMPASS testing with the seniors. His intervention is now on the front and the back end.... There was a need for intervention with seniors to prepare for the ACT. [High school principal]*

Two coaches reported that everyone in the school had grown more comfortable with the literacy coaching role. Consequently, teachers were more likely to approach the coach for help and/or that the coach was working with a larger number of teachers than in the past:

*I started out scared to death [and] a lot of teachers were resistant. Now the school embraces [literacy coaching] with open arms. People seek me out; they see me as an asset. With experience comes comfort.... Learning and internalizing the strategies; finding out what I was good at and improving on what I wasn't good at. It makes it much easier when you're embraced. [Literacy coach, SR]*

A teacher in a school served by a literacy coach reported focusing less on writing and more on content literacy due to changes in state standards and assessment (i.e., moving away from portfolios to implementing Common Core).

*Yes, definitely [the literacy coach role has evolved], because of portfolios, we don't have those any more. At first, they were a big part of her job; now, it has evolved more on reading across content areas, not just English, but in math and science. Now she is also doing more with our testing data and how that translates into what we are doing well, where we are, and what we can improve. That's how it has evolved over the six years I've been here. [Middle school teacher]*

One respondent reported that the district had increased the number of coaches because of a district focus on improved literacy and numeracy for all students:

*Originally, there was a literacy consultant that oversaw four high schools in \_\_\_\_\_ County. This was changed to having an instructional coach in each building that serves only that building. The district's vision for literacy/numeracy for ALL students made this possible. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

## Profile of Participants Who No Longer Serve as Coaches

As shown in Table 2 above, about 73 percent of Striving Readers coaches no longer serve as coaches, compared to about 40 percent of ALCP coaches. All of the Striving Readers participants who no longer coach reported that they have returned to the classroom, while ALCP participants were almost evenly divided among those who had returned to the classroom (22%) and those who had retired (17%). Below we consider factors that resulted in these participants leaving their coaching roles as well as the extent to which they have continued to use the knowledge and skills gained as literacy coaches.

**Factors contributing to participants leaving literacy coaching.** Table 3 below summarizes data from the email survey and phone interviews regarding why ALCP and Striving Readers participants left their coaching positions.

**Table 3: Reasons for No Longer Serving as Literacy Coach**

	ALCP		Striving Readers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total responding to the question</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Reason given for no longer coaching</b>						
Position eliminated due to budget cuts/grant ending	8	32%	13	62%	21	46%
Career advancement/promotion	9	36%	3	14%	12	26%
Retired	6	24%	0	0%	6	13%
Wanted to return to classroom teaching	1	4%	3	14%	4	9%
Moved to another school/district	1	4%	1	5%	2	4%
Principal not supportive of literacy coaching	0	0%	1	5%	1	2%

As shown in Table 3, the largest percentage of former coaches—nearly half—reported that they were no longer coaching because budget cuts or the end of grant funding resulted in elimination of the literacy coach position. This scenario was more common for Striving Readers

coaches (62%) than ALCP coaches (32%). A slightly higher percentage of ALCP coaches left the coaching position because of career advancement than because their position was eliminated.

Interview data also showed that schools with ALCP coaches were more likely to retain a coaching position (or some variation) than were those with Striving Readers coaches. Three former Striving Readers coaches who were interviewed reported that their positions were eliminated when the grant ended. One former Striving Readers coach commented:

*It is all about money. [The school district] wanted to keep a coach but couldn't due to funding. [A neighboring district] doesn't have money to continue on either.*

Another possible contributing factor is that Striving Readers coaches continued to serve as half-time reading intervention teachers throughout the grant period while ALCP coaches were not teaching but were serving full time as support personnel. Consequently, it may have seemed more logical to return Striving Readers coaches from half-time to full-time teaching positions once the grant ended.

Among 11 former ALCP coaches who were interviewed, five reported that the position was eliminated, three said the position continued after they left, and two reported that the position transitioned into something else (RTI or district coach). The principal in a school that could no longer support an ALCP literacy coach remarked:

*Since I've been principal, we've lost 17 teachers... I had to shuffle a lot of people. We've had a lot of people retire, and we didn't replace them. Now I have three non-tenured staff members, and they are all wonderful, young, vibrant teachers who are all leaving because of our budget cuts. Our school was overstaffed, but it has been overstaffed for 20 years, so now we are starting to get cut for it. So the literacy coach had to become a classroom teacher again.*

The largest percentage of ALCP coaches (36%) left coaching for other career opportunities. This compares with only 14 percent of Striving Readers coaches who advanced professionally. A larger percentage of ALCP participants (24%) than Striving Readers

participants (0%) reported retiring (which may indicate that ALCP attracted older, more experienced participants). A small percentage of participants (4% for ALCP, 14% for SR) left coaching because they wanted to return to the classroom.

One coach noted that the school administration was not fully supportive of literacy coaching, gradually cutting the amount of time she was able to devote to coaching and not communicating to teachers that they must work with the literacy coach:

*The first year it was like, “Okay, we’ve got a literacy coach here, so she can come in and model strategies,” and everyone was fired up. The next year, I had a two-hour class [of students]; the next year, I had half a day. People didn’t want me half a day if they couldn’t have me all day, they wouldn’t bother.... you should be able to do it full time. But unless an administrator says “You must let her come in...” [teachers don’t make it a priority].*

Another former coach as well as the principal of the school served by this coach shared an interesting view: that the literacy coaching program ended because it had accomplished what it set out to do. The former literacy coach explained:

*[The literacy coaching program] ended two years ago because... we thought we had accomplished what we set out to do, to focus on content area reading, getting kids to be better readers, teaching those strategies to all our teachers, and then from those teachers to students. We’d done that over three years and trained all our staff... We felt we had run the course on that (literacy focus). So, then I did research on freshmen. We saw the need to focus on the transition from our junior to our senior high school. So we created a position to work on that transition and to kind of lead the freshmen team with a freshman program that we didn’t have previously. So, that was the transition from literacy coach to the position I have today.*

The principal at this school suggested that literacy coach programs should be structured so that coaches work for a limited period of time so as not to lose their effectiveness:

*I think it is difficult to have a school-wide focus for more than a few years, because you lose the effectiveness. Even if you do have turnover, it is something that is a school-wide focus for a few years and you have to move to something else because people stop hearing you. We did [literacy coaching] for three years; you continue to talk about the same things for three years. But then you have to let off the gas pedal a little bit and move to something else, just because people stop hearing you; you continue to talk about the*

*same things. Maybe in a few years, you visit it again as you see the need for it. It would be something difficult to sustain because of other needs.*

**Use of coaching knowledge/skills.** Virtually all participants who have advanced professionally report that they continue to use the knowledge and skills gained from their time as ALCP or Striving Readers coaches in their current roles. Four former coaches who now work at the Kentucky Department of Education are serving in literacy leadership roles in the context of supporting implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Those who became district or school administrators reported using their knowledge and skills to provide instructional support to teachers and/or to make judgments about teacher effectiveness as part of teacher observations. Specific ways in which participants who have advanced professionally continue to support improved adolescent literacy learning include:

- Helping teachers with the content literacy aspects of the Common Core State Standards;
- Ensuring appropriate literacy strategies are incorporated into Comprehensive School Improvement Plans;
- Assisting teachers in developing unit plans;
- Sharing literacy coaching resources and strategies with curriculum and reading specialists, who then share with teachers; and,
- Using knowledge and skills gained as a literacy coach to evaluate and improve teacher effectiveness as part of classroom observations.

Three former coaches who now serve as administrators or KDE officials made these comments about their current use of the knowledge and skills gained as literacy coaches:

*One [way I use what I learned as a coach] is just working directly with teachers. Having the literacy coach book... The Literacy Coach Survival Guide... It includes how to deal with difficult teachers, how to run meetings, how to get teachers to try things and follow up. I still use that for reference from time to time. [Former coach now district administrator]*

*I still assist with instruction when I get a chance, offer up strategies, I do pull from resources and materials from conferences; I still have all that stuff on my hard drive. Occasionally, I'll get teachers who want to do stuff, and I am happy to help.... Yeah, like I said, freshman teachers and other faculty, modeling, trying mentor teachers, even newer teachers, by pulling out some of the strategies and things. Especially, for new teachers, new teachers don't have the resources and stuff in their filing cabinets to use with kids. I do a lot of that frequently. [Former coach now freshman principal]*

*I use highly effective teaching and learning strategies and one-on-one teacher training in my work with KDE. I've worked to share the thinking about literacy plans so that individuals no longer see the development and implementation of this plan as belonging to the Language Arts teacher but instead see it as belonging to the whole school. I was introduced to literacy plans and designed a plan for my school when I was involved in ALCP preparation. [Former coach now KDE official]*

Of 22 current classroom teachers who responded to the question about whether they continued to use what they learned in coaching programs, 13 (59% of the 22) reported that they used their knowledge/skills in their own classrooms as illustrated by these remarks:

*Yes. I incorporate literacy skills into all of my humanities lessons. We use various reading strategies, such as jigsaw, and apply research skills.*

*I use [what I learned as coach] in my leadership role with the team, but also in my classroom—the Fundamentals of Sentence Writing strategy, for example; [also] academic dialogue, admit/exit slips, fluency strategies, questioning stems... I use content literacy in some way every day. It allows for differentiation for each student.*

Nine of the 22 current classroom teachers who responded to the question of how they use what they learned as a coach reported using their knowledge and skills beyond their own classrooms. Specific activities reported were:

- Sharing resources and strategies informally with other teachers (6 respondents);
- Leading or presenting professional development on literacy (4 respondents);
- Coordinating family literacy nights (2 respondents); and,

- Serving on the school literacy leadership team, leading school improvement initiatives, serving as writing program review coordinator, and providing leadership in rolling out the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (1 respondent each).

Below are comments shared by former literacy coaches who are now classroom teachers regarding the ways in which they use their coaching knowledge and skills to provide literacy leadership in their schools or districts:

*At the school, I still work on the school literacy plan, and I am chairperson of the literacy committee and chair of the language arts department. In the committee and in the department, I help make plans, help with lessons, etc. I lead trainings with our staff to help all teachers with literacy, helping with reading and writing in classrooms. I have still done PD district-wide as well. Definitely, I use the strategies in my own classroom, which I learned as literacy coach. With other teachers, I worked on a lot of curriculum, and I draw on all the information I learned and gained during that time to help other teachers and my own students out. [Former coach, ALCP]*

*I have used what I learned tremendously—the material learned through the intervention as well as the coaching piece. I was asked to join a committee to help coach teachers through a new process of professional learning. For example, I helped a behavior committee work through issues of working with resistant teachers. [Former coach, Striving Readers]*

### **Summary of Continued Use of Literacy Coach Knowledge and Skills**

When the data from current and former coaches are considered together, 41 (61%) of ALCP and Striving Readers participants continue to play some role in literacy leadership at the state, district, or school level. This number includes 18 participants who continue to serve as either literacy or instructional coaches, 14 participants who have advanced professionally, and nine classroom teachers who play varying kinds of literacy leadership roles. These data suggest a long-term impact of the literacy coaching programs even when those trained as coaches no longer serve in an official coaching role. At the same time, with so few coaches trained in the

first place—and only 41 continuing to play literacy leadership roles—the impact of Kentucky’s literacy coaching programs has been limited in scope.

### Most Useful Aspects of Literacy Coach Training Programs

In order to understand in specific terms how ALCP and Striving Readers influenced participants in their subsequent leadership roles, both current and former coaches were asked during phone interviews what aspects of their literacy coach preparation programs had proven most useful to them over the years. Table 4 shows responses given by more than one person.

**Table 4: Most Useful Aspects of Literacy Coach Training**

	ALCP		Striving Readers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total responding to the question	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>
Responses						
<b>Literacy strategies, resources, knowledge acquired</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Networking with other coaches and ALCP/SR trainers</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Knowledge of how to work with teachers/adult learners</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Program structure/the training itself</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21%</b>

Table 4 shows that the most common response, given by more than half of both ALCP and Striving Readers participants, related to the knowledge about content literacy as well as the resources and strategies they had acquired for addressing adolescent literacy needs:

*The lessons that were provided to us, the books that we got have been useful. I can use them as a resource and just the different strategies that we learned through the class and being able to talk with other teachers about things they were doing that helped students. Basically, the resources that we got were most beneficial to me. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

*I think it’s understanding how much literacy plays a role in understanding all the content areas. If you can’t take a passage and take something from it, it is difficult to keep students engaged. Then it goes to discipline problems; they act out. Also, providing strategies for trying different levels of support, scaffolding, things teachers can do to help students cuts across all content areas. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

*Being cognizant of the literacy strategies and domains [such as] vocabulary, fluency, academic dialogue; using reading, writing, speaking, listening each day. [Literacy coach, SR]*

Participants in both programs also appreciated the opportunity to network with other coaches, as well as with trainers/mentors from the programs.

*I think it was the opportunity to meet with a consistent group of fellow literacy coaches who had the experience they had and [the university presenter] with her experiences. The opportunity to talk about what worked and what didn't, just to have that network...It is nice to have time to sit down and discuss things and hear ideas for other places. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

A higher percentage of ALCP than Striving Readers participants cited the knowledge of how to work with adult learners as valuable—possibly because the ALCP model was focused exclusively on coaching teachers, while Striving Readers coaches worked with students half-time and teachers half-time. Said one ALCP coach:

*I have used the preparation in meeting the needs of adult learners and job-embedded PD. I assist with implementation rather than acting as a hands-off consultant. I've worked on best practices that I learned in my ALCP preparation with teachers who are willing to change practices. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

A higher percentage of Striving Readers than ALCP participants identified the coaching program structure itself as being useful. They mentioned, in particular, the monthly professional development sessions and on-site assistance from a mentor coach:

*The monthly trainings at the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning... I had no background in adolescent literacy prior to this experience. So having monthly meetings, a mentor coach to guide at the school level on implementation—the overall structure of the Striving Readers program made it successful. [Literacy coach, SR]*

### **Impact of Literacy Coaches**

During phone interviews, ALCP and Striving Readers participants as well as administrators and teachers who had worked with coaches were asked about the impact of

literacy coaches. Responses to this question fell into two major categories: (1) building capacity; and (2) impact on students. Each category of responses is discussed below.

### **Building Capacity**

Of the 35 people who responded to the question about the impact of literacy coaches, 22 spoke of how the literacy coach had helped build capacity of individual teachers, schools, and/or districts.

**Building capacity of individual teachers.** Eighteen respondents noted the impact of literacy coaches on content teachers' awareness and integration of literacy instruction into their teaching. Respondents mentioned specifically that teachers are integrating literacy more (8 respondents) and/or are more intentional in doing so (2 respondents), are more aware of the need to address literacy (7 respondents), and that classroom instruction has improved in general (5 respondents). The following comments illustrate respondents' views on how literacy coaches helped build the capacity of individual teachers:

*I think our teachers are more aware that we have to provide our kids with strategies. I have seen that develop over the years, so it is starting to be more embedded into their teaching rather than being an extra activity that they think about. [Former ALCP coach, now instructional coach]*

*For the teachers who bought in, they continue to use the strategies as best practice. We see evidence of it. It has had a long term effect—teachers are still accountable for use of the strategies with their administrators... The [Striving Readers] grant impacted every department in the school. The math teacher used picture books; the [special education] teacher met with me every week. Teachers use the word wall, vocabulary strategies. Teachers still use their binders. It has had a long-term impact on student learning. [Former SR coach, back in classroom]*

*[Before working with the literacy coach] I was a worksheet, calculator kind of math teacher, and then with the involvement with literacy coach, we write poetry, we do a lot of journaling, writing prompts, a lot of different kind of projects. I've kind of opened my eyes to more than just the number crunching of math. I have a project going on right now where the kids chose their research project, which is something that the literacy coach and my work at the University of Kentucky had taught me, too, where kids are choosing a research question and building a project based on linear functions. I have a group that is*

*actually creating a drama. They are going to act it out with scripts and dialogue. I don't think I would have been open to that until I had spent time with the literacy coach. [Math teacher in school that discontinued literacy coaching]*

**Building capacity at the school level.** Eight people spoke of how the literacy coach helped develop the capacity of the school to address student literacy needs. For instance, three people commented that there was a greater awareness across the school of student literacy needs. Another three remarked that for the first time there was someone to go to for instructional support. One person each remarked that the school had more literacy resources and knowledge, that there was a common language around literacy, that the school was more focused on the improvement plan, and that the school was well-prepared for the content literacy focus of the Common Core State Standards. The following remarks speak to the school-wide impact of literacy coaches:

*The work [of the literacy coach] opened the eyes of many teachers who had not previously seen the connections between, for instance, literacy and science or literacy and math. The school now sees that reading needs to be taught in every class! Through my modeling, several teachers have reworked lesson plans and included new materials for teaching [Former ALCP coach, back in classroom]*

*[The literacy coach program] created a common language within the area of literacy that is still evident among our teachers. Even when we are doing our own trainings or faculty meetings when we are talking about curriculum issues, that undercurrent of literacy has stayed. [Administrator in school that discontinued coaching program]*

**Building capacity at the district level.** When asked if the work of the literacy coach had an impact beyond the school, several respondents noted a district-wide influence of the literacy coach program. Former or current coaches from three different districts mentioned that their districts had hired coaches for a larger number of schools as a result of the literacy coach's success. One respondent reported that the high school literacy coach had expanded his/her work to the middle school. Another said that after seeing the success of the literacy coach, the district had begun to invest in developing teacher leaders. One respondent noted that there was now

more sharing of resources across schools. The following comments illustrate respondents' views on how literacy coaches helped build district capacity to address student literacy needs:

*I think [the literacy coach program] impacted the district; they saw the work we were doing, the positive impact at the high school, so the junior high got on board, and I went over there and did some PDs with the junior high. One of the assistant principals was a really good teacher before that, and he worked with me. We did literacy training through the [regional professional development] cooperative, but all that started because of what we did at the high school. [Former ALCP coach, now school-based administrator]*

*While we were in the Striving Readers grant, the district implemented curriculum coaches; they saw a benefit of classroom teachers coming out of the classroom and helping other teachers. [Former SR coach, now back in classroom]*

*It set the precedent. The high school did not have any person involved with curriculum other than the principal, who has many other duties. It allowed someone to be directly involved in instruction, first as a literacy coach, and then that transformed to curriculum specialist. So we had someone to help teachers. The high school set the precedent. If not for literacy coaching, we wouldn't have the other now.... We have them district-wide now, with someone still carrying the flag pole with that background, making sure all those curriculum specialists do what is needed to implement the (strategies) in the schools. [Former ALCP coach, now district administrator]*

## **Impact on Students**

Nine people commented on the impact of the literacy coach on students. Comments included that test scores had improved at the school under the literacy coach or that scores dropped when the literacy coach position was eliminated (5 respondents); that the literacy coach's attention to test data and tracking students had helped meet individual student needs (3 respondents); that students were using literacy strategies (1 respondent) and had benefited in general (1 respondent). The following comments echo these themes:

*We have seen a rise in test scores and at the high school in the PLAN and ACT scores, especially kids in the intervention program. With the whole-school model, we targeted comprehension last year, and it's reflected in the scores now. Seeing it in the numbers makes a difference, although you try not to be test-driven. Teachers see reading in their content areas as their responsibility. [Former SR coach, back in classroom]*

*We have seen our ACT scores increase each year. With ACT, it's as much about literacy as any content area probably except maybe for math. We just got our junior scores for*

*ACT—this is the 5<sup>th</sup> year—we have moved that score up each year. I have to believe that part of reason for that is the amount of time and money we have put forth in promoting literacy across the curriculum. [Administrator in school that discontinued literacy coach program]*

### **Would impact have occurred without a literacy coach?**

Evaluations of the ALCP initiative in prior years noted that literacy coaches' work often supported state priorities, typically related to helping teachers prepare students for state testing; e.g., supporting teachers' efforts to prepare students for on-demand and portfolio writing tasks (Kannapel, Moore, Coe, & Hibpshman, 2008; Kannapel & Moore, 2009). Because all schools in the state were under pressure to improve test scores or respond to other state literacy initiatives, it is possible that some of the work literacy coaches performed may have been done with or without literacy coaches. For this reason, we asked current and former literacy coaches, administrators, and teachers to reflect on whether the impact described above would have occurred if their schools had not had a literacy coach.

In response to this question, there was nearly universal agreement that the progress made by the school or district would not have been as significant or would have been slower or more focused on compliance in the absence of a literacy coach. Specific comments included:

- Test scores would not have improved, or would not have improved as much or as quickly (5 respondents), as illustrated by these comments:

*I don't think we would have seen the gains because we weren't coordinated nor had someone to pull things together. Teachers are strapped with assessments, etc. It would have just been another burden on them. [Current literacy coach, ALCP]*

*I don't think without having the role in place, we would have had the increase of scores... Teachers are so pressed for time... Their planning time is filled in with other things. It's hard to focus on what we [teachers] need to do to make a change. All of our teachers look at data. But I was able to sit and think about it without interruptions and able to go in classrooms and work with teachers. Even when you [as a teacher] go to trainings and*

*want to try it, it's hard to put it in place. But if you see someone do it, it is easier.*  
[Classroom teacher, former ALCP coach]

- Improvement efforts would not have been as systematic, intentional, research-based, and/or data-based (4 respondents), as illustrated by these comments:

*In my absence, the vision would still be there, and the expectations would still be high. However, every individual cannot take the time to thoroughly explore current literature and deeply analyze test data. The research-based decisions would be minimized. Teachers are too busy managing the classroom.* [Instructional coach, former ALCP coach]

*I don't think that we would be as far as we are because there is more intentional planning for reading and writing in the content areas. We are going to build in a class next year that is literacy in the content areas, so every teacher will focus on what literacy means for their classrooms. Before, for me, literacy would have been reading charts and graphs, but I think there is more to it now in terms of being able to critically read, to take a prompt and write it for the real world. And so I think the literacy coach has helped the staff do more than just plain reading and writing.* [Teacher in school served by literacy coach]

- The literacy coach kept everyone focused on literacy (3 respondents), as described by an administrator and teacher in schools served by literacy coaches;

*We had no focus [before the literacy coach]. It provided a focus and resource of knowledge. When the literacy coach was in the position, it created such a professional dialogue about effective instruction in general. He became the resource, the go-to person for teachers across the building.* [High school principal in school served by literacy coach]

*I think it would have been difficult because it is such a cohesive thing. In education, there is always going to be new stuff—there should be—but [the literacy coach] serves as a center point for that. It's her personality and her job: What's our center here? What's our focus? Her role is keeping a focus, and she serves as a resource; that's important... It would be much more difficult without the literacy coach position.* [Teacher in school served by literacy coach]

- Teachers need ongoing professional development, follow-up, and support to continue integrating literacy routinely and effectively (3 respondents), as illustrated by these comments:

*[The impact] wouldn't have happened. I've been in this school for 21 years, and I hadn't seen any integration of literacy. Even when the teachers attended in-service and learned something they should be doing, they would only do it when a supervisor was outside their door or in their classroom, and then when they weren't being watched, they went right back to their old ways. Through the coaching model, we were finally building a reading program.*  
[Classroom teacher, former ALCP coach]

*Very little [impact would have occurred without the literacy coach]. With so many pressures and demands of performing well, it's easy to push it aside as priority. This program gave them a focused plan with a resource [the coach] to be on-site and model, to support teachers. The grant provided funding for resources, which are still being used.*  
[Classroom teacher, former SR coach]

Two respondents said they did not know if the impact would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach, and one said the improvement would have occurred regardless of whether there was a literacy coach.

### **Literacy Coaching as a Mechanism for Improving Adolescent Literacy**

A final question posed during phone interviews was to ask ALCP and Striving Readers participants—as well as administrators and teachers who worked with coaches—to reflect on Kentucky's literacy coaching programs in general, and more specifically, on the whole notion of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving adolescent literacy learning. Responses focused on two issues: (1) improving adolescent literacy requires direct support to teachers; and (2) for literacy coaching to succeed, certain supports and structures must be in place.

#### **Direct Support for Teachers**

Respondents observed that a critical and important step to improving adolescent literacy is changing teacher attitudes, practice, and capacity. They were universally supportive of literacy coaching as a way to bring about this change, based on their experience-based belief that teachers are so busy responding to daily pressures that it is difficult for them to focus on, internalize, and implement new knowledge without ongoing, on-site support. It was also noted

that a larger number of students can be influenced when a literacy coach works directly with teachers than when coaches work as interventionists with small numbers of students. The following comments illustrate these points:

*I think it's very beneficial because most high school teachers have no idea what to do to help students read better. It was very beneficial to them... By me coming in, I could model how they could help a student read a textbook, when they had no idea how to do that.* [Classroom teacher, former ALCP coach]

*Your biggest impact is going to be working with teachers. You affect more... If I go into a classroom and work with one teacher a day, I would see maybe 100 students in a day, but if I work with teachers on a strategy and model it for them in a meeting, then they go out and work with 600 students in a day.* [Literacy coach, ALCP]

*I think literacy coaches should focus on teachers, as the goal is to build capacity. If the coach becomes the teacher of students, then no capacity is built in the building.* [Former ALCP coach]

While there was general agreement that literacy coaches need to work directly with teachers, 12 respondents expressed the view that coaches should also work directly with students who need more assistance than the classroom teacher can provide:

*I see it two ways—the [Striving Readers] literacy coach had two roles [student intervention and the school-wide model]. The intervention class had a clearer impact on students with direct strategy instruction. It improved their confidence, which carried over to their other classes. As a coach to teachers, it was an avenue where teachers had non-threatening support and extra hands to research and find materials, which increased student engagement.* [Classroom teacher, former SR coach]

*We feel that a combination of work with teachers and students is important and [the literacy coach] has moved to working with both. When he assists teachers, that is excellent for the students who are reading at level, but there are still those students who need more. Sometimes it's simply a lack of motivation and for others, they truly need individual assistance.* [Principal in school served by ALCP coach]

## **Supports for Literacy Coaches**

Seven respondents noted that there must be district and school-level administrative support for the literacy coach to be effective. One respondent suggested that if the state offers a

literacy coach program, it should work to educate administrators on the value of literacy coaching. Coaches and former coaches shared these thoughts:

*I think if a literacy coach is going to be beneficial, you really have to have the backing of the administration, getting help and getting it established and getting into teachers' classrooms because they are not open to people coming in because they think you might critique what they are doing. So without the administration backing, only your friends let you come in, so that's all you can get. [Classroom teacher, former ALCP coach]*

*Once the administration is on board, then the teachers are on board. I think it has to begin as a school-wide effort, and then the literacy coach can look at groups or even individuals who need intervention. [Literacy coach, ALCP]*

Six respondents commented that literacy coaches need training and a support network so that they are not working in isolation:

*I think there was a great deal of training on the front end... The training on the front end to prepare [the literacy coach] to walk in and to provide leadership and guidance to teachers who had been teaching a long time and had a lot of experience in literacy, they thought, to be effective from day one. The follow-up trainings as we went through the project and networking, just the number of schools that were participating that allowed our coach to collaborate with other literacy coaches in other schools and share rather than be in a bubble... The training on the front end, continued training and the great collaboration with other schools is pretty important. [Principal in school served by literacy coach]*

*I think that literacy coaches need very specific training and a chance every other week to network and share ideas. When our cadre struggled, we felt comfortable discussing it and possibly taking an idea from someone else that we had not thought of and switching it up a bit. [Principal in school served by literacy coach]*

### **Reflections on Kentucky's Literacy Coaching Initiatives**

In addition to asking participants to reflect on literacy coaching as an improvement tool, they were asked to reflect on Kentucky's particular literacy coaching programs and how the state might have implemented a more sustainable model. Responses fell into three categories: (1) The state must support the literacy coaching program; (2) literacy coaches need a support structure;

and, (3) the need for literacy coaching is even more critical under the current state initiatives (e.g., Common Core State Standards, writing program reviews).

### **State Support for Literacy Coaching**

The most common category of response among the 33 people who addressed this set of questions was that the state must value literacy coaching, make it a statewide priority, and provide sufficient funding to support the program (mentioned by 18 people). Five respondents mentioned specifically that the state should fund the literacy coach position. One respondent remarked that literacy coaching should not depend on obtaining a competitive grant. The following comments illustrate the viewpoint regarding the need for additional funding:

*The elephant in the room is funding. The grand plan was statewide. I was hoping to be in the [ALCP western Kentucky] cadre. Instead, I had to go to [an eastern part of the state]... It didn't happen in far western Kentucky due to lack of the state funding and the willingness of legislature to promote it and make the commitment... As the years rolled on, they never saw the need and never provided funding. Had they funded it, there would be more school districts that have literacy coaches now.* [District administrator, former ALCP coach]

*I think what [Kentucky] did was great; it was a good idea. But funding is so tight right now; it's just holding on to the regular positions in our core content. Unless there are requirements or funding, it is difficult [to implement] because principals will look at cutting those positions on the fringe before they cut a math or science teacher. So without state mandates or without funding or requirements that each district have a literacy coach that works between a number of schools, I just don't think that schools on their own are going to go hire that position and allocate that money.* [School administrator, former ALCP coach]

*With budget cuts, the majority of schools weren't able to sustain a coach position at the school level. There are so many other demands they need to cover. It's not that the schools devalue the positions; they just need to choose where they think they can make the biggest improvements.* [Classroom teacher, former SR coach]

Two respondents, however, were unsure whether the state should fully fund the position of literacy coach because districts and schools would not then make a commitment to the literacy coach position:

*I think having some incentives out there funding-wise for schools [but] not funding the position. We had some flesh in the game because we had to provide funding for the position. It never works well with the free money deal where they give you the money and who knows what you do with it? We funded the position, we got the training, we got the resources, the network of literacy coaches around the state.... I think it was a good model, but when funding ended with that, you are looking at having to pump more money into something while at the same time cutting other areas. [High school principal]*

*Funding is an obvious issue. Perhaps a grant could pay half the [literacy coach] salary to get it started, but then the school would also own some financial responsibility. [Former literacy coach]*

### **Support Structure for Coaches**

As noted earlier in this report, respondents believe coaches need a support structure if they are to be effective. Supports cited included training programs like ALCP and Striving Readers, networking opportunities, ongoing professional development, and support at the district and school level. Two respondents expressed frustration that the literacy coach certificate endorsement originally planned as part of ALCP had not materialized.

### **Literacy Coaching to Support Current State Initiatives**

Two respondents identified new state initiatives that could be implemented more effectively with the help of literacy coaches: writing program reviews and the Common Core State Standards. One middle school principal commented that there is an even greater need for literacy coaches under the new standards:

*With middle school, I don't want to take anything from teachers because they don't know how to teach reading... This is the time we need it more because of the emphasis on the literacy standards.*

One teacher who had worked with a literacy coach suggested that district offices should be restructured to make greater use of content-specific instructional leaders rather than having so many administrators:

*When I look at the hierarchy that's created out of central office, when you have your superintendent, your assistant superintendent, and so on and so forth—I think that the way that central office is made up is incorrect. I think you need to start bringing in people who are knowledgeable in one content area. Instead of an instructional supervisor for elementary, I think you need an instructional supervisor for mathematics, for science, for language arts. Perhaps if the State Department looked at some certification so you had supervision and a subject area also. Those people could work out of central office more.*

## **IMPLICATIONS**

As noted in the introduction to this report, over the last decade content area teachers have come under increasing pressure to address the content-specific literacy needs of adolescent students, initially in response to low reading scores for adolescents on state and national tests. The pressure has increased with adoption of the Common Core State Standards, which emphasize literacy across content areas. Findings from this study, as well as from prior evaluations of ALCP and Striving Readers (Cantrell et al, 2009, 2010, 2011; Kannapel, 2007; Kannapel et al, 2008; Kannapel & Moore, 2009; Pallangyo et al, 2012) support the view that content teachers cannot be expected to know how to incorporate literacy on their own—they need professional development and ongoing support from specialists on adolescent and content literacy.

Results of this study of Kentucky's literacy coaches suggest that literacy coaching is a useful mechanism for developing the capacity of individual teachers, schools, and districts to address adolescent literacy needs. To be effective, however, literacy coaches need intensive training, ongoing support, networking with other coaches, and support from their districts and schools to ensure that they reach all teachers.

At the same time, evidence from the two literacy programs makes clear that offering literacy coaching/support programs to volunteer districts or to those that are able to secure

competitive grants does not make for a statewide adolescent literacy initiative. Only 73 literacy coaches were prepared through the two programs combined. These coaches served 79 of Kentucky's 1,233 public schools in 34 of Kentucky's 176 school districts. When funding ended or was reduced, many of these schools and districts discontinued their literacy coaching programs.

In spite of the limited scope of these literacy coaching initiatives, they provide directions for the future. Many former coaches continued to play literacy leadership roles, some at the state level—which suggests that the investment in literacy coaching continues to reap benefits, although on a relatively limited scale. In addition, ALCP and the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL, which developed the Striving Readers literacy coaching model) developed highly-regarded literacy coach training programs that might be utilized in current and future education improvement initiatives.

Given the content literacy focus of the Common Core Standards, now would seem to be the time to build on the work of ALCP and Striving Readers to develop a statewide content literacy support program so that capacity can be built across the state—not just in the few schools that opt to participate. In the next section, we offer recommendations on how the Kentucky Department of Education in collaboration with CCLD might build on prior efforts and existing structures to institute a robust, statewide content literacy support program that will impact all schools and districts across the Commonwealth.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Kentucky's literacy coaching initiatives emerged in response to the adolescent literacy problem identified through state and national assessments. ALCP and Striving Readers were voluntary efforts in which districts and schools participated if they were aware of the

opportunity, understood the urgency of the adolescent literacy problem, and made adolescent literacy a priority. Under the Common Core State Standards adopted by Kentucky and 44 additional states, however, content literacy must become a priority for *all* schools and districts. The Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts include grade-specific standards “tuned to the literacy requirements of the particular discipline(s).”<sup>2</sup> Common Core ELA standards for middle and high school include standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Adoption of these standards means that educators across the Commonwealth are now very much aware that teachers of all content areas must ensure that students are able to read and write proficiently in their specific disciplines. The time has never been better for the Kentucky Department of Education, with and through CCLD, to build on the structures and lessons learned from ALCP, Striving Readers, and other literacy initiatives to develop a robust state initiative focused on content literacy.

A number of existing structures might be leveraged to develop a statewide content literacy support structure that provides layers of support from the state all the way down to individual schools. Three programs or structures, in particular, might be used for this purpose: (1) Kentucky ELA Teacher Leadership Networks, developed to roll out the Common Core State Standards; (2) ALCP and Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL) literacy coaching models<sup>3</sup>; and (3) the Teacher as Leader endorsement recently approved by Kentucky’s Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB).

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<sup>2</sup> Kentucky Core Academic Standards – English Language Arts, p. 20:  
[http://www.education.ky.gov/users/otl/POS/KentuckyCommonCore\\_ELA.pdf](http://www.education.ky.gov/users/otl/POS/KentuckyCommonCore_ELA.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> As discussed earlier in this report, CTL designed the literacy coaching model for Striving Readers, and also provided training and support to literacy coaches.

Kentucky has developed a system of Leadership Networks to build the capacity of leadership teams in each of the state's school districts to provide professional development anchored in the Common Core State Standards. The networks for rolling out the ELA standards are made up of three ELA teacher leaders from each school district who currently meet with other district teams in eight regional cadres (organized around the state's eight regional education cooperatives) four times during the school year with 1-2 meetings in the summer to receive professional development from a team of KDE content specialists, education cooperative consultants, and higher education faculty.<sup>4</sup> Each network focuses on developing participant's understanding and leadership skills needed to implement the ELA standards within the context of highly effective teaching and learning practices,<sup>5</sup> with an emphasis on assessment literacy. Teacher leaders also get online, phone, and email support as well as school visits as needed from the ELA specialists.

When the Leadership Networks began, they were meeting eight times a year, but the number of meetings has been gradually reduced. Currently, teacher leaders who attend the training sessions do not necessarily have authority to serve as expert leaders to their peers nor release time to do so. The Kentucky Leadership Network could be used more intentionally to promote the creation of a district-level ELA content literacy specialist position. Teacher leaders prepared through the networks could then prepare school-level content-literacy specialists to support content area teachers in their schools to integrate literacy into their instruction.

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<sup>4</sup> Information derived from

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/School+Improvement/Instructional+Support+Network/Leadership+Networks+-+Deliverables.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Kentucky's highly effective teaching and learning characteristics may be found at

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Highly+Effective+Teaching+and+Learning/HETL+Common+Characteristics.htm>

Kentucky's two models for developing literacy coaches (ALCP and CTL) could be adapted to prepare these district-level content specialists. A "hybrid" model might be developed in collaboration with Kentucky colleges and universities that have been approved to offer Kentucky's new Teacher as Leader endorsement. This endorsement was developed by a Master's Degree Redesign Committee created by EPSB in 2005 to refashion the way institutions prepare experienced educators and school leaders. Universities wishing to offer the teacher leader endorsement were required to collaborate with school districts and with Arts and Sciences faculty to develop the programs, and to support job-embedded professional development experiences (EPSB, n.d.; "Graduate programs in education redesigned," 2011).

While content specialists might become certified through these university programs, EPSB might also consider alternate pathways through which content specialists could obtain the teacher leader endorsement, using the literacy leadership certification program offered through Striving Readers as a model. For instance, a content specialist training and support program modeled on the ALCP and CTL models might collaborate with a university (as Striving Readers did with the University of Louisville) to develop a series of job-embedded assignments that would lead to the teacher as leader endorsement.

As Kentucky works to develop a statewide support structure for content literacy, the pool of literacy coaches trained through ALCP and Striving Readers might be tapped to serve as consultants, presenters, and/or facilitators—thus ensuring that the past investment in these programs reaps double dividends (i.e., the training programs themselves as well as the literacy coaches prepared through the programs).

While coordinating the above initiatives toward supporting content literacy might sound daunting, Kentucky has already established an organization that is uniquely situated to

coordinate this effort: CCLD. CCLD was established by the Kentucky General Assembly to provide professional development on literacy instruction (Bates, Breslow, & Hupert, 2009), and it does so as a collaborative of Kentucky's eight public universities. Over the years, CCLD has designed, implemented, and coordinated numerous literacy initiatives by bringing together higher education faculty, KDE staff, and literacy experts. Staff at CCLD also has experience and expertise conducting program evaluation of literacy initiatives. This expertise could be utilized to provide formative and summative feedback on the effectiveness of the statewide content literacy initiative.

In short, Kentucky over the last decade has established numerous structures and programs supporting literacy that could be brought together to create a cohesive, statewide content literacy initiative—with CCLD serving as the facilitator of the work. Clearly, this sort of initiative would require funding and other support at both the state and district level. But such a program would make clear that the state is serious about content literacy—and would be implemented at a time when schools and districts are highly motivated to participate because of the need for support in implementing the Common Core Standards. The time may be right for taking this message to the General Assembly and other potential funders in order to continue moving the state forward in its multi-year effort to improve literacy learning for all students. A high school principal in a school served by a literacy coach shared these concluding thoughts: *[The literacy coaching program] is just positive; it was really a game changer for us.* A statewide content literacy program supported by adequate funding and a multi-layered support system could be just the game-changer Kentucky needs.

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## APPENDIX A: LITERACY COACH EMAIL SURVEY

### THE SUSTAINABILITY OF KENTUCKY'S LITERACY COACHING INITIATIVES CCLD Small Research Grant Program

**Email Survey of Literacy Coaches: February 28, 2012**

You are receiving this email because you once served as a literacy coach through the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers program. Through a research grant from the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD), we are conducting a small follow-up study to find out how your literacy coach experience influenced you and your school/district, and how (if at all) you continue to use the knowledge and skills gained through literacy coaching. Research team members involved with research on these literacy coaching models include director Diana Porter of Eastern Kentucky University, research consultant Patty Kannapel, and Cindy Parker of the Kentucky Department of Education.

Your responses to the email survey will be kept confidential; they will be combined with responses of others to produce a report that shares general findings about the sustainability of Kentucky's literacy coaching initiatives. We may also contact you later for a more in-depth phone interview. For questions about the research, contact Diana Porter at [diana.porter@eku.edu](mailto:diana.porter@eku.edu) or Patty Kannapel at [pkannapel@bellsouth.net](mailto:pkannapel@bellsouth.net)

Please complete the short, open-ended survey below and respond only to me (Patty Kannapel). You may type responses directly into the email and hit "Reply," or download the Word document that is attached, type responses there, and send to me as an attachment.

1. **What is your current role/job title?**
  
2. **Do your current job responsibilities include literacy coaching?**  
**If YES (answer a, b, c, d)**  
**If NO (answer e, f, g)**
  - a. **Approximately what percentage of your time do you spend in literacy coaching activities?**
  
  - b. **How many schools do you serve as literacy coach?**
  
  - c. **What funding source does your district/school use to fund your position? (e.g., Title I funds, SBDM funds, etc.)**

- d. Which, if any, strategies, etc. learned in your literacy program (i.e., ALCP or Striving Readers) do you continue to use?**
  - e. How long did you serve as literacy coach?**
  - f. Why are you no longer serving as literacy coach?**
  - g. Are you using what you learned in your literacy coaching program (i.e., ALCP or Striving Readers) in your current role? If yes, briefly explain.**
- 3. Have you assumed any leadership roles in your district, school, or beyond as a result of your participation in ALCP or Striving Readers?**
- If yes, briefly describe.**
- 4. Additional comments:**

Thank you for your participation!

## APPENDIX B: PHONE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

### THE SUSTAINABILITY OF KENTUCKY'S LITERACY COACHING INITIATIVE CCLD Small Research Grant Program

#### Interview Protocol: Current Literacy Coaches:

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?  
[if so, turn on recorder]

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

#### **Background**

1. **Briefly describe your involvement with ALCP or Striving Readers** (*i.e., when participated in the training program, which cadre*)
2. **Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities**
  - a. **How many schools do you currently serve?**

#### **Implementation and Impact of Literacy Coaches:**

3. **How did/has your role as literacy coach evolved over time?**
  - a. **Why did the role evolve in this manner?** [*probes: funding cuts, administrative support or lack thereof, changing district/state policies, etc.*]
4. **What aspects of your preparation as literacy coach has proven most useful to you over the years?**

5. **Many literacy coaches who participated in the initial program are no longer serving as literacy coaches. How do you account for the stability of the literacy coaching role in your school/district?** [*probes: district/principal support, innovative school/district, faculty support, coach's own skills, evolving school needs*]
6. **In what ways has your work as literacy coach had an impact on this school?**
  - a. **In what ways has your work as literacy coach had an impact beyond the school** (e.g., on the district? State? Participant's own professional goals)?
  - b. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [*NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach*]

### **Final Thoughts**

7. **What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?*]
8. **What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
9. **Do you have any further comments?**
10. **We would like to do some follow-up interviews with administrators and teachers about how literacy coaching has impacted their school and/or professional practice. Who would you recommend at your school?** (*get contact info*)

***Thank you for your time!***

## Interview Protocol: Former LCs who have returned to the classroom:

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?

*[if so, turn on recorder]*

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

### **Background**

1. **Briefly describe your involvement with ALCP or Striving Readers** (*i.e., when participated in the training program, which cadre*)
2. **Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities**
3. **When did your literacy coaching role end, and why?**

### **Long-Term Impact:**

4. **Do you currently play any sort of literacy leadership role in your school, district, the state?**

**If so:**

- a. **How did you come to take on this role?**
  - b. **Describe the role.**
5. **[If not answered in #4 above—or in addition to response from #4 above] Have you continued to use the knowledge and skills you gained as a literacy coach? If so, how? If not, why not?**
  6. **What aspects of your preparation and experience as literacy coach have proven most useful to you over the years?**

- 7. In what ways, if at all, did your work as literacy coach have an impact on this school?**
- a. **In what ways, if at all, did your work as literacy coach have an impact beyond the school** (*e.g., on the district? State? Participant's own professional goals*)?
  - b. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [*NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach*]

**Final Thoughts**

- 8. What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?*]
- 9. What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
- 10. Do you have any further comments?**
- 11. We would like to do some follow-up interviews with administrators and teachers about how literacy coaching has impacted their school and/or professional practice. Who would you recommend at your school?** (*get contact info*)

*Thank you for your time!*

## Interview Protocol: Former LCs who have advanced in the profession:

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?  
[if so, turn on recorder]

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

### **Background**

- 1. Briefly describe your involvement with ALCP or Striving Readers (i.e., when participated in the training program, which cadre)**
- 2. Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities**
- 3. When did your literacy coaching role end, and why?**
  - a. [If the coach left to take another position] **Was someone hired to serve as literacy coach after you left? If so, who? Do you know if the literacy coach position is still in place at the school?**

### **Long-Term Impact:**

- 4. Do you play any sort of literacy leadership role in your current position?**

**If so:**

- a. **How did you come to take on this role?**
  - b. **Describe the role.**
- 5. [If not answered in #4 above—or in addition to response from #4 above] Have you continued to use the knowledge and skills you gained as a literacy coach? If so, how? If not, why not?**

6. **What aspects of your preparation and experience as literacy coach have proven most useful to you over the years?**
7. **In what ways, if at all, did your work as literacy coach have an impact on the school where you worked initially?**
  - a. **In what ways, if at all, did your work as literacy coach have an impact beyond the school (e.g., on the district? State? Participant's own professional goals)?**
  - b. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach]

### **Final Thoughts**

8. **What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?*]
9. **What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
10. **Do you have any further comments?**
11. **We would like to do some follow-up interviews with administrators and teachers about how literacy coaching has impacted their school and/or professional practice. Who would you recommend at your school?** (*get contact info*)

*Thank you for your time!*

## **Interview Protocol: Administrators In Schools that have sustained Literacy Coaching:**

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?

*[if so, turn on recorder]*

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

### **Background**

- 1. Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities.**
- 2. Briefly describe your school's/district's involvement with ALCP or Striving Readers over the years.**

### **Implementation and Impact of Literacy Coaches:**

- 3. Many literacy coaches who participated in the initial program are no longer serving as literacy coaches. How do you account for the stability of the literacy coaching role in your school/district?**
- 4. How has the role of literacy coach evolved over time in your school/district?**
  - a. **Why did the role evolve in this manner?** [*probes: funding cuts, administrative support or lack thereof, changing district/state policies, etc.*]
- 5. In what ways has the literacy coach's work had an impact on this school?**
  - a. **In what ways has the literacy coach's work had an impact beyond the school** (*e.g., on the district? State?*)?
  - b. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [*NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach*]

### **Final Thoughts**

6. **What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?]*
7. **What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
8. **Do you have any further comments?**
9. **We would like to do some follow-up interviews with administrators and teachers about how literacy coaching has impacted their school and/or professional practice. Who would you recommend at your school?** (*get contact info*)

*Thank you for your time!*

## **Interview Protocol: Administrators in schools/districts that no longer use LCs**

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?

*[if so, turn on recorder]*

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

### **Background**

- 1. Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities.**
- 2. Briefly describe your school's/district's involvement with ALCP or Striving Readers over the years.**
- 3. When did your school/district discontinue the literacy coaching program, and why?**

### **Long-Term Impact:**

- 4. Do teacher(s) in your school/district who participated in the literacy coaching program currently play any sort of literacy leadership role in the school, district, the state?**

*If so:*

- a. What role, and how did they come to take on this role?**

*If not:*

- b. Have those former coaches continued to use the knowledge and skills they gained as literacy coaches? If so, how? If not, why not?**

### **Implementation and Impact of Literacy Coaches:**

- 5. In what ways, if at all, did the literacy coach's work have a lasting impact on this school/district or beyond?**

- a. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [*NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach*]

**Final Thoughts**

6. **What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?*]
7. **What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
8. **Do you have any further comments?**

*Thank you for your time!*

## **Interview Protocol: Teachers In Schools that have sustained Literacy Coaching:**

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?

*[if so, turn on recorder]*

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

### **Background**

**1. Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities.**

### **Implementation and Impact of Literacy Coaches:**

**2. Are you currently working with your school's literacy coach?**

- a. **If so, describe the nature of your work with the coach** [*probe as needed on time spent with coach, what teacher does with coach such as planning, modeling, etc.*]?
- b. **If not, why not? Describe your work with the coach in the past.**

**3. How has the role of literacy coach evolved over time in your school?**

- a. **Why did the role evolve in this manner?** [*probe as needed on change in teacher/student needs, funding cuts, administrative support or lack thereof, changing school/district/state policies, etc.*]

**4. In what ways has the literacy coach's work had an impact on your classroom** [*leave open-ended at first, then probe as needed on changes in instructional practices, planning, materials used, student/teacher morale, etc.*]?

**5. In what ways has the literacy coach's work had an impact on this school** [*leave open-ended at first, then probe as needed on increased awareness of need to integrate literacy, changes in schoolwide literacy planning, schoolwide implementation of content literacy, improved morale in the building, etc.*?]

- a. **In what ways has the literacy coach's work had an impact beyond the school (e.g., on the district? State?)?**
- b. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach]

### **Final Thoughts**

6. **What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?*]
7. **What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
8. **Do you have any further comments?**

*Thank you for your time!*

## **Interview Protocol: Teachers in schools/districts that no longer use LCs**

**Participant Code:**

**Date:**

**Researcher:**

**Introduction:** You are being interviewed as part of a follow-up study on literacy coaches who participated in either the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project or the Striving Readers grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out what sort of lasting impact, if any, these programs have had on participants and on the districts, schools, and teachers they served.

What we discuss is confidential; we will not use the names of individuals, schools, or districts in our reports. We will combine your responses with those of others to report overall findings.

If you are comfortable with it, we would like to record your responses as a back-up. I am the only person who will listen to the tape, and I will erase it after I have transcribed the interview.

Are you comfortable being taped?

*[if so, turn on recorder]*

Do you have any questions about the research before we begin?

### **Background**

- 1. Describe your current position: title, job responsibilities.**
- 2. Briefly describe your school's/district's involvement with ALCP or Striving Readers over the years.**
- 3. When did your school/district discontinue the literacy coaching program, and why?**

### **Implementation and Impact of Literacy Coaches:**

- 4. What was the nature of your involvement with the literacy coach before the position was discontinued?**
- 5. Have you changed anything about your professional practice based on your work with the literacy coach? (*probes: Changes in planning, use of materials or resources, approaches to instruction, integration of literacy strategies*)**
  - a. Would you have made these changes in the absence of a literacy coach (*for instance, in response to state or school accountability pressures*)?**
- 6. Did the work of the literacy coach have a lasting impact on other teachers in the school? On the school as a whole? Why or why not?**

- a. **How much of this impact do you think would have occurred in the absence of a literacy coach?** [*NOTE: For instance, schools might have to respond to state/district/school literacy mandates with or without a literacy coach*]

**Final Thoughts**

7. **What reflections do you have on the use of literacy coaching as a mechanism for improving student literacy learning?** [*probes: Is this an effective way to reach all teachers/students? Should literacy coaches focus on teachers or devote some time to direct work with students? Are there other approaches that might be more effective in directly impacting students?*]
8. **What are your thoughts on how Kentucky might have more effectively implemented a literacy coaching program that would be more widespread and sustainable?**
9. **Do you have any further comments?**

*Thank you for your time!*