ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A CASE STUDY OF ONLINE PEER COACHING OF
                            CONSULTANT COMMUNICATION SKILL
                            DEVELOPMENT

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The purpose of the this study was to explore how peer coaches support the development of collaborative communication skills in an online format for consultants in training (CITs). The program examined was Instructional Consultation which pairs a consultant with a teacher to work collaboratively to resolve the teacher's concern regarding a student. The focus is on improving instruction and modifying environmental variables. The study was approached using case study methodology. Research questions were: (a) how do online peer coaches support the development of collaborative communication skills in CITs and (b) what skills were selected most frequently by the CITs as focus skills?

Transcripts of the email exchanges between the coaches and CITs which include self-reflection by the CIT and structured feedback from the coach are the data used. Results show that the coaches use targeted feedback, examples, practical suggestions, Visual images, and modeling collaborative language to support the development of CIT skills. Not all of the CITs consistently identified a focus skill (a skill they request feedback on from the coach).

Collaborative communication skills were selected more frequently in the early stages of the process while more content related concerns were selected toward the end of the process. The findings provide a better understanding of how collaborative communication skills are supported in an online format and provide direction for future research.

A CASE STUDY OF ONLINE PEER COACHING OF CONSULTANT
COMMUNICATION SKILL DEVELOPMENT

By

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DEDICATION

As I reach the end of this long and fascinating journey, I want to thank the individuals who have supported me and provided expert advice. This support has been unconditional and ongoing. I dedicate this final product to them.

First, my sincere thanks to Sylvia Rosenfield for her belief in my abilities when I doubted them myself, and for sharing her wisdom, knowledge, energy, never ending encouragement, and prodding me when necessary. She is that rarity, a critical friend. She has impacted my professional life in too many ways to list and has made me a better professional. Her familiarity with the IC process as well as the intricacies of communication methods provided invaluable support and guidance.

Special thanks go to my family – my lovely and talented daughter Sharyn, her husband Mark, and my two amazing grandsons, Eddie and Sam, have been understanding and supportive throughout. They bring joy to my life. To my dad, Edward Loud, who taught me to finish what I started and was always there for me. And most of all to my mother, Mildred Loud, who never stopped believing that I could complete this project. She inspired me constantly with her belief in me and the model she set and provided support in every way possible. I dedicate this especially to her.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Consultation in school settings is recognized as an effective way to deliver high quality educational and mental health services, and has generally resulted in improved outcomes for clients (Busse, Kratochwill, & Elliott, 1995; Erchul & Sheridan, 2008; Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006; Lewis & Newcomer, 2002; Reddy, Barboza-Whitehead, Files, & Rubel, 2000; Rosenfield, Silva, & Gravois, 2008; Sheridan, Welch & Orme, 1996). Although many service providers report practicing consultation (Hughes, 1994; Reschly, 2000), a problem exists in the lack of training opportunities and opportunities to practice learned skills with feedback (Anton-Lahart & Rosenfield, 2004; Gravois, Rosenfield, & Vail, 1999; Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Ysseldyke et al., (2006) emphasize the importance of expanded opportunities for training and practice to support the development of competencies such as consultation. Rosenfield (2002) identifies improved training of consultants as an area of need in improving the effective implementation of consultation processes. In the continuing effort to narrow the gap between the increased demand for school psychologists' use of consultation and the daily demands for assessment related activities, expanded opportunities for training and practice in the skills of consultation emerges as a large issue. This study will address the effectiveness of one approach to providing this training.

The Need for Consultation Services

School psychology is a profession currently facing a dilemma of retaining previous practices (assessment) or updating practice to reach more students (consultation with teachers and other staff). Traditionally, school psychologists have been viewed as psychometrists and gatekeepers for access to special education services. At the same time, many practitioners advocate a broader role including the use of consultation as an integral component of service provided (Reschly, 2008; Ysseldyke, Burns, & Rosenfield, 2009).

With increased emphasis on access for all students to general education and the incorporation of early intervention services (IDEIA, 2004) and in an effort to provide services to students who do not meet the entry criteria for special education services (Zins & Erchul, 2002), consultation with general educators by school psychologists offers a way to solve the problem of enabling individual practitioners to reach more students. By providing early intervention services through consultation and preventing the need for costly and sometimes ineffective services and placements, the teacher's skills are strengthened and all students benefit (Rosenfield, 1987; Zins & Erchul, 2002). This is especially important given the growing shortage of school psychologists, budget cuts, and the effort to maximize the reach of the services provided by the school psychologist.

As suggested by Tilly (2002), problem solving models that are used within the consultation process offer a promising approach to improving student achievement in the general education setting. Problem solving models reduce special education referrals (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006), and, because of reliance on data based decisions, have the potential to result in interventions that are more closely targeted to student needs

(Telzrow, McNamara, & Hollinger, 2000). Many consultation models are based on a problem solving approach, including Instructional Consultation (IC) (Rosenfield, 2008), which is the model examined in this case study.

School Based Consultation Defined

Scholten (2003) finds that the term "consultation" is often defined in different ways by different practitioners. To eliminate confusion, a working definition of school based consultation is needed. As an indirect service delivery model, consultation is based on the work of Caplan (1970) in the field of mental health consultation. In the 1940's,working in mental health clinics in Israel, he approached the problem of providing services to large groups of adolescents by strengthening the capacity of the care-givers to enable them to work more effectively with clients (Caplan, 1970). Despite the fact that this model was not originally designed for implementation in schools, the model was adopted by school-based professionals, and the core components form the foundation for the practice of school based consultation. These components include the development of a nonhierarchical, voluntary relationship which focuses on a work related problem, with the desired result of strengthening the consultee's skills in resolving similar problems in the future (Erchul & Martens, 1997). Although a variety of consultation models exist, such as mental health (Caplan, 1970), behavioral (Sheridan, 1997), and instructional (Rosenfield, 1987), the focus of the current study is consultee-centered consultation (Hylander, 2004). In this model, a collaborative approach is used to address a work related problem. Consultee-centered consultation focuses primarily on building the skills of the consultee (usually a teacher) rather than directly on client (student, in the case of school based models) outcomes (Lambert, 2004).

Current Use of School Based Consultation

Although the use of consultation by school psychologists has been widely proposed (e.g., Ysseldyke et al., 2006), and positive outcomes have been identified as a result of the use of consultation (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006; Sheridan et al., 1996), professionals have been slow to follow these practice guidelines. School psychologists indicate that they would prefer to spend more time engaged in consultation activities but cite a lack of training and supervision in the process (Costenbader , Swartz & Petrix, 1992). In reality, there is evidence that school psychologists still spend the majority of their time engaged in assessment related activities. Reschly (2000) found that while school psychologists surveyed reported devoting 17% of their time to consultative activities, 50-55% of their time was spent in assessment related activities. Reasons for this discrepancy are partially related to the lack of training opportunities (Reschly, 2000).

Training in Consultation

Training opportunities continue to be limited. Graduate programs appear to be increasing the number of courses offered in consultation, although the courses offered tend to introduce a variety of consultation models, often at the expense of skill training (Anton-Lahart & Rosenfield, 2004). Preservice opportunities for skill development and practice continue to be limited. Opportunities for acquiring consultation skills after graduation have been even more limited. Unfortunately, professional development and coaching of consultants at the professional level has garnered little attention in the research literature. However, a few studies have examined the use of email to provide coaching (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Pavey-Scherer, 2008; Vail, 2004).

Instructional Consultation (IC)

One model that has addressed training at both the preservice and inservice levels is IC. IC, a consultee-centered model, uses a problem solving approach in working with teachers to alter the framework in which student needs are viewed and expand teacher skills in resolving concerns, particularly around student achievement (Knotek, Rosenfield, Gravois & Babinski, 2003; Rosenfield, 1987; Rosenfield, 2008). The core components of IC are: (a) the development of the collaborative relationship between the consultant and the consultee, enhanced by the use of effective communication skills; (b) the use of a problem solving model which includes the stages of entry and contracting, problem identification, intervention design, intervention implementation, and intervention evaluation/termination; and (c) the effective use of data collection to inform decision making and the development of targeted interventions which address the consultee's academic and behavioral concerns (Rosenfield, 1987; Rosenfield, 2008). Advantages of the IC approach include reduced referrals to special education, particularly of minorities (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006), increased goal attainment (LaFleur & Rosenfield, 2005 cited in Rosenfield, Silva, & Gravois, 2008), and improvement of the teacher's perception of being able to deal with similar concerns in the future (Knotek et al., 2003).

Skill competencies identified by teachers as most valuable in a consultant include exchanging information, listening, and interpersonal communication skills (Hasbrouck, Parker, & Tindal, 1999), empathy, congruence, and positive regard for the consultee (Horton & Brown, 1990), and the use of open ended verbal cues (Henning-Stout & Conoley, 1987). Skills fall into the category of process or content but there is limited

research on how the consultant in training (CIT) learns to apply specific skills (Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996).

Collaborative Communication Skills Defined

A critical set of skills is collaborative communication skills, those specific skills that when used effectively, support the establishment of a collaborative working relationship and insure that the CIT and the consultee understand one another. Instead of using a series of direct questions that establishes one member of the consultation dyad as the expert, collaborative communication skills bring out not only factual information but also feelings, extended verbal responses, and problems pertinent to understanding the consultee's concern. They also encourage the development of a relationship of equals rather than one of an expert and a passive participant (Rosenfield, 1987).

Collaborative communication skills include paraphrasing (restating the content of what the consultee says in one's own words to check for understanding), perception checking (verifying one's perception of the meaning of and the feeling behind statements made by the consultee), summarizing (pulling together information which has been discussed to establish a basis to support next steps), requesting clarification (eliminating multiple interpretations and support precision and clarity), and asking relevant questions (focused questions designed to elicit specific information to clarify the problem under consideration).

Further, how communication skills are used in the problem solving process is critical to outcomes. For example, research has shown that how a problem is framed can directly affect the solutions which are developed (Tombari & Bergan, 1978). In order to

develop effective solutions to school based problems, the effective use of communication skills is crucial.

Training in IC

Research on professional development draws largely on the literature on effective models for effective professional development for teachers. Although early training opportunities consisted primarily of large group presentations with little follow up, this approach was soon determined to be ineffective in changing teacher behaviors. Research determines that school based training which addresses narrowing the gap between actual and desired performance through didactic presentations, skill modeling, skill practice with feedback, and coaching for skill application is most effective (Joyce & Showers, 1980). This sequence has resulted in a dramatic improvement with 80-90% of the participants integrating new skills into their practice compared with 10% from the traditional large group presentations alone (Knight, 2007; Showers & Joyce, 1996). To facilitate the transfer and application of skills, the training approach is therefore a crucial supporting factor (Showers & Joyce, 1996; Vail, 2004). Building on what is known about effective professional development training, the developers of IC sequenced the training to follow the model of developing awareness and understanding, acquisition of skills, skill practice with feedback, and coaching for skill application (Rosenfield, 2002). This supports the CIT in moving from novice to competent to proficient (Rosenfield, 2002).

A significant component of the training sequence is the use of coaching to support skill application and integration. There is limited research on this component and the research that has been completed examines the coaching component through the lenses of the participants (Pavey-Scherer, 2008; Vail, 2004). In this way, the reality is

reconstructed from the perception of participants rather than emanating from the actual content of the coaching sessions and the actual words of the participants.

Importance of Communication Skills

Communication skills are a critical component of consultation process, as described earlier. Developing appropriate communication skills is a priority in training new consultants. Based on the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky (1978), Knotek, Rosenfield, Gravois, and Babinski (2003) suggest that the development of higher order learning is at least partially the result of language mediated activities and is facilitated by supportive consultants.

From the beginning, even in the contracting stage, communication skills should be addressed. The contracting stage is the first opportunity for the CITs to begin applying collaborative communication skills. Some CITs realize, when completing their reflection, that during the contracting stage, they were primarily offering information and did not use many of the collaborative communication skills. The contracting stage is the portion of the problem solving process where the CIT provides information on the structure of the process, the time commitment is discussed, and the responsibilities of each participant are defined. The teacher's consent to participate is also obtained during this time. A common suggestion from the coaches is for the CIT to begin by asking the teacher what she knows about the IC process, which sets the stage for clarifying her perceptions and filling in the gaps.

Coaching focused on developing the smooth use of collaborative communication skills supports the CIT in internalizing the consultative approach to problem solving. Maintaining the focus on how these skills assist in moving the process along and how

they support the involvement of the teacher in the process are additional benefits of coaching.

Use of technology in Consultation Training

In the current age of technology, it is notable that there is not a larger body of research on the use of online communication for professional training. A few studies have examined providing support to novice teachers through pairing them with a school psychologist or experienced teacher. Although these are studies utilizing small samples, participants indicate that generally they feel supported by the availability of this resource (Kruger, Cohen, Marca, & Matthews, 1996; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Kruger et al., 2001).

In the IC training sequence, coaching has always been an important component. Initially provided in a face to face format, the expansion of the IC model into school systems in many states has created a situation where in new schools adopting the IC model, there might be no one with the training and experience required to provide effective coaching. In response to this need, the online coaching process was developed in 2001 by the Laboratory for IC (IC) Teams at the University of Maryland (Vail, 2004). In this format, the CIT meets with the referring teacher, audiotapes the session, and after reviewing and reflecting on the tape, sends the tape and reflection to the online coach. The online coach then reviews the audiotape and provides feedback on each session via email in a structured format. Specific feedback is also provided on a skill identified by the CIT as a focus skill, i.e, a skill on which the CIT would like specific feedback.

Although there is limited research on the IC training process, existing studies have documented that the CITs feel supported by the availability of the online coach

(Vail, 2004). Although the CITs' self ratings of their expertise in the application of

collaborative communication skills are higher than the ratings of the online coaches, this

component has not been studied (Pavey-Scherer, 2008).

Purpose of Study

Improving training in consultation skills, with opportunities for practice with

feedback and coaching for skill application, represents an important step in restructuring

how school psychologists allocate their time (Rosenfield, 2002). Research on best

practices in professional training has identified a sequence of didactic presentation to

build the framework, including demonstration of skills, opportunities for skill practice

with feedback, and coaching to support skill application (Joyce & Showers, 1980).   IC

training involves didactic presentations that build the conceptual base for learning while

skill practice and modeling enable the professionals to see the skill demonstrated and

then begin to practice the skill. Coaching provides the support for application of the

skills learned in real life situations and for refining one's understanding of situations in

which particular skills are more appropriate. Self reflection and identification of areas of

need is a part of the coaching process.

In addition, the CIT identifies a focus skill after each session with the teacher.

This is an area where the CIT requests specific review and feedback from the online

coach. As part of the structure of the online coaching process, selection of a focus skill

provides insight into the CIT's self evaluation of their strengths and needs.

In conducting this study, there are several factors that support the use of

qualitative methods, particularly the case study approach. The nature of the research

questions, the availability of actual real life data, and the limited research in this area

support the use of a case study approach not only to describe current practice but also to provide direction for future research. Existing research, although limited, has examined the process of peer online coaching through the lens of the participants and the coaches and has centered on their self identified satisfaction with the process as well as the level of support provided (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Pavey-Scherer, 2009; Vail, 2004). Participants generally expressed satisfaction with the online format, citing the availability of ongoing support and skill improvement among the benefits (Pavey-Scherer, 2008; Vail, 2004).

Although these insights do provide information on the perceived value of the online coaching process, they do not allow examination of the actual transcripts of the interactions between the coach and the CIT in context. Approached from a constructivist worldview, the value of working from the actual words of the participants is clear. Communication is a complex human interaction through which reality is constructed and agreements about what constitutes the working concept of reality are generated (Jones, Torres, & Ariminio, 2006). These concepts are not adequately reflected in numerical form but a qualitative approach preserves the richness and depth of the data. Further, since collaborative communication skills are a critical pillar of the IC problem solving process, it makes sense to work from original data to learn how these skills are developed using an asynchronous communication process.

The purpose of this study is to examine the content of the email communication between the online peer coaches and CIT. The particular focus of the research is to identify how coaches facilitate the improvement of the communication skill component of the IC consultation process. This study will examine the content of online coaching

sessions between 33 dyads of coaches and CITs over the years 2005-2008, specifically around the coaching of collaborative communication skills. As a crucial component of the development of consultants, how this set of skills progresses and grows is an important area of the training process and will illuminate current practice as well as provide direction for future research. Using a case study approach, how the online coaches support the development of CITs' collaborative communication skills will be examined. The research questions are:

What skills are selected most frequently as focus skills by the CITs? Specifically, how often are communication skills selected as the focus and in what form?

How do online peer coaches support the development of collaborative communication skills in CITs conducting an IC case?

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of online peer coaching of communication skills for CITs in the IC model of consultee-centered. By examining the actual content of the dialogue between the online peer coach and the CIT, a richer picture of the dynamics of the training process will emerge. This will inform future research and contribute to the professional literature by increasing the knowledge base on the components of training consultants. The use of specific communication skills distinguishes collaborative consultation from other approaches, so focusing on this aspect of the training will assist in providing additional opportunities for practicing professionals to develop this important skill set.

Definition of Terms

To insure that terms used consistently in this study are clear, the following definitions are provided:

Consultant in training (CIT): This is an individual professional who has participated in a multi day training utilizing didactic presentations, skill demonstration and modeling, and skill practice through role playing settings. The next training component is to apply new skills by working through an actual consultation case and receive online coaching from a professional peer trained and experienced in the process.

Coach: A professional who has completed the IC training sequence including receiving coaching and is now providing online coaching.

IC Case: A voluntary interaction between a professional trained in the IC process where a case manager (consultant) and a teacher who has a concern about a student (consultee) work through a stage based problem solving process to resolve the problem.

Focus skill: A skill selected by the CIT on which they would like specific feedback from the coach.

Collaborative Communication Skills: Skills which support communication between two professionals which acknowledge the expertise and contribution of both members of the dyad. These are further defined in chapter 2:

Paraphrasing: restating the content of the consultee's statements as a check for understanding.

Asking relevant questions: using focused questions to clarify specific components of the problem under consideration.

Requesting clarification: establishes clarity so that multiple meanings are eliminated.

Perception checking: checking the meaning and feeling behind statements made by the consultee.

Summarizing: pulls together information discussed to establish baseline.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

As the field of school psychology struggles to alter its practice model from a focus on assessment to more engagement in prevention, consultation, early intervention activities, and utilizing evidence based practices, access to updated training and practice opportunities is critical. In a recent study (Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008), 86 school psychologists practicing in an urban school system were surveyed to determine the activities they engage in most frequently and those they would prefer to receive training in; 41% rated consultation in the top four activities in which they would prefer to receive training.. Consultation was rated as the most valued single practice. On a 4 point rating scale, consultation/collaboration received a mean rating of 3.12 (on a 4 point scale) for frequency of current use. This was exceeded only by intellectual assessment. In importance, consultation/collaboration received a mean rating of 3.56 which was the highest of the three domains rated. In perceived competence, the mean rating for consultation/collaboration was exceeded only by intellectual assessment. There is a practice gap between practices that are valued and what school psychologists actually do and feel competent in practice. Despite caution regarding interpretation given the self report nature of the data collection method, these results are consistent with previous data (Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2002; Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

Training mental health professionals in the skills of consultation has been marked by problems over the years (Gravois, Rosenfield, & Vail, 1999; Rosenfield, 2002). The problems are identified at both the preservice and inservice levels. Although this study will focus on inservice training, a short review of preservice training issues will be

presented first. In the rest of the chapter, consultation in schools will be discussed

followed by a description of IC and a discussion of training

Preservice Training in Consultation

The critical skills in consultation have been identified by various authors. Some

authors (e.g., Conoley & Conoley, 1992; Ertmer et al., 2003; Idol & West, 1987;

Rosenfield, 2004, 2008) identify process and communication skills as the critical

components that make consultation effective. Hasbrouck, et al., (1999) report that the

consultation skills the majority of teachers rate as most valuable include exchanging

information, listening, and interpersonal communication. Horton & Brown (1990) find

that consultant variables which served to facilitate effective consultation included

empathy, congruence, and positive regard. Using open-ended verbal cues is also

identified as an important consultant variable (Henning-Stout & Conoley, 1987). These

are skills that require practice and application with feedback incorporated in one's actual

professional environment to reach the highest level of competence (Kruger, et al., 1996;

Rosenfield, 2002). Without opportunities to refine and integrate new skills into existing

skill sets, competence cannot be achieved.

How well these skills have been incorporated into training at the preservice level

is questionable. Preservice training in consultation has been examined in several ways.

Hellkamp, Zins, Ferguson, and Hodge (1998) surveyed faculty of APA approved

graduate programs across the areas of school psychology, counseling psychology, clinical

psychology, and industrial/organizational psychology; the faculty provided evidence for

limited training in consultation for psychology practitioners. The 186 faculty members

responding reported that most spent relatively little time in activities related to

consultation and fewer than three fourths of the group indicated receiving formal training in consultation. Of the sample group, 57.2% of the clinical/counseling respondents judged their program to be inadequate in providing consultation training, while only 15% of the school psychology respondents rated their program as inadequate. Hellkamp et al. (1998) concluded that the graduate training at that time was better for school psychologists than for clinical/counseling students, but limited for all programs.

A study by Anton-Lahart and Rosenfield (2004) examines the coursework and opportunities to obtain supervised practice in the consultation training of school psychologists. They found that although there is an increase in the number of training programs offering a separate course in consultation, most courses introduced a variety of consultation models (e.g., behavioral, mental health), which interferes with allowing time to address any model in depth; few provided supervised practice to develop, refine, and apply skills. Anton-Lahart and Rosenfield (2004) found that the majority of pre service training programs focused more on theory and conceptual understanding of the different approaches than on developing and practicing the process and communication skills needed to be an effective consultant.

The issues of large preservice class size as well as the tendency of instructors to address multiple models of consultation in the courses offered interferes with both the quantity and quality of supervision provided for consultation process skills. Although most training programs that offer a course in consultation require students to take cases for skill application, the definition of a case may be interpreted in a variety of ways, such as observing cases, conducting problem identification interviews with other students in the class, or analyzing consultation situations presented by the instructor (Anton-Lahart

& Rosenfield, 2004). Best practice dictates that to develop competence, ongoing feedback and evaluation must occur as well as the provision of information on strengths and needs to develop the structure to support student improvement (Cramer & Rosenfield, 2003; Rosenfield, 2008).

Preservice program models. However, some programs demonstrate that consultation skills can be taught in more depth. Duncan (2004) describes a process used in California where second year graduate students in school psychology at Humboldt State University practice consultee-centered, that is, consultation focused on building the skills of the consultee. A didactic seminar is offered that addresses theories and methods of consultation as well as the problem solving process. Each student enrolled in this seminar practices consultee-centered consultation with a consultee who agrees to participate in a problem solving, consultative relationship. Within the seminar, students discuss their experiences, present cases, and keep weekly logs of their experiences (Duncan, 2004). The consultation logs are detailed, but carry the disadvantage of being written through the lens of the student recorder; this practice has been described as of limited usefulness without the supervisor observing or listening to a recording of the session, particularly in the early stages of training, since the supervisor does not have the option of developing objective assessments of the conduct of the sessions (Goodyear & Bernard, 1998).

Another program that addresses training in consultation skills is described by Rosenfield, Levinsohn-Klyap, and Cramer (2010). In the training sequence for consultation described (a two semester course sequence at the University of Maryland), a set of core competencies is identified, including assessment, self awareness, professional

ethics, and process skills. Levels of skill development, including awareness, competence, and expertise, are the guiding framework for moving students through the process from developing an overview of the consultation process to acquiring and practicing the skills which make the consultation process effective to applying and integrating the skills into their professional practice. Each stage builds on the previous one and all are crucial to developing effective consultants. At each stage, competent supervision facilitates development as skills are practiced in actual school settings. The supervision process relies on audiotapes of consultation sessions and process notes by the student, which provide records of what was actually said and also helps the student develop self-reflection skills (Rosenfield et al., 2010).

Consultation in Schools

Although consultation in schools has been advocated as an effective way to support the broad based practice of school psychology (Sheridan et al., 1996; Ysseldyke et al., 2006), adoption of this model of service delivery has been slow, despite evidence that it results in improved services and a decrease in inappropriate referrals to special education, particularly for minorities (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). School psychologists continue to spend the majority of their time in assessment related activities (Reschly, 2000). A recent study indicated that school psychologists in an urban school district rated consultation as one of their most valued practices but felt more competent in assessment activities. Consultation was rated as the fourth most needed area for professional development (Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008).

The IC Model

A consultee-centered model that has developed a process for inservice training of school personnel is IC (Rosenfield, 2008). The model is embedded in IC Teams (IC Teams; Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996; Rosenfield, et al., 2008).   In this section, the IC model will be described.

Critical assumptions. The IC model, developed by Rosenfield in the 1980s, is based on a set of critical assumptions, specifically that: (a) all students are capable of learning; (b) the right instructional match is a prerequisite for learning; (c) it is more productive to address concerns when they are initially identified; and (d) the most effective arena for intervention is the general education classroom where the interaction between student skills, instruction, and curricular tasks and expectations can be modified in a number of ways to facilitate progress (Rosenfield, 1987, 1995; 2008). Decisions are data based and focus on not only addressing the consultee's concerns, but also strengthening the consultee's ability to address similar concerns in the future (Rosenfield, 1995; 2008).

This approach logically leads to addressing modifiable environmental variables and monitoring progress through data collection and evaluation. The consultant who works in partnership with the consultee can be a school psychologist, a teacher, or other school staff member. Focusing on modifiable instructional and environmental variables preserves the student's access to the general education curriculum and interpersonal relationships with their same age and grade level peers (Rosenfield, 2008).

Relationship Between Consultant and Consultee. In the consultee-centered consultation framework of IC, the relationship between the CIT and consultee is

identified as a central component of the process (Benn, Jones & Rosenfield, 2008; Henning-Stout, 1994; Rosenfield, 2008). The unique nature of the consultation relationship distinguishes IC from other forms of consultation in which a more expert model is used and the expertise of the consultee does not play a central role (Lambert, 2004; Rosenfield, 1995). Recognition that both the consultant and the consultee are professional equals and experts in their respective fields is a distinguishing feature of the collaborative relationship (Hylander, 2004; Rosenfield, 1987).

The assumption that the problem of concern can be solved by focusing on modifiable instructional and classroom variables rather than attributing the source to factors within the child or outside the school represents a change in framework and assumptions that can be challenging to develop and nurture (Rosenfield, 1987). To facilitate a setting where the teacher feels comfortable enough to acknowledge sources of the problem over which they have control, it is essential for the consultant to have a command of supportive and collaborative communication skills to support the risk taking on the part of the teacher that is needed (Rosenfield, 1987).

Mastery of the stages of the IC process and how they build on one another also contributes to building of the relationship as it facilitates moving smoothly through the problem solving stages while extending and respecting the contributions of the consultee (Rosenfield, 1987). Focusing on building the consultee's skills in problem solving to deal with similar problems in the future is another goal (Rosenfield, 1987). Presenting the consultation relationship as a partnership of equals through the use of collaborative language, phrasing of comments, and the selective use of questions supports the establishment and development of the collaborative relationship needed to support the

consultation process (Benn, et al., 2008). Developing the collaborative problem solving relationship offers numerous benefits including maximizing resources, increased skill development, an increase in the consultee's ownership of the problem, and an improved skill set to work with similar problems in the future (Rosenfield, et al., 2008).

According to Rosenfield (2008), the IC model rests on the assumption that when instruction and student entry skills are appropriately matched, student success increases, behavioral difficulties are reduced, and referrals to special education become less necessary. The assumption is built on Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), that is, the difference between what an individual achieves independently and what the same individual can achieve with support from someone else. By scaffolding new knowledge on prior knowledge, a strong foundation develops to support progress and new learning. The goal is to begin where the consultee (teacher) currently functions and build problem-solving skills through collaborative consultation. In turn, teachers develop the ability to support the students, beginning at their current level of skill development, in building desired academic skills to enable them to successfully meet curricular expectations (Rosenfield, et al., 2008).

Critical components. In implementing the IC process, three components are addressed: problem solving stages, communication, and instructional and behavioral assessment and intervention. Rosenfield (2002, 2008) identifies the crucial components of IC as: (a) working through the stages of the problem solving process, (b) developing and refining the skills of data based decision making, (c) developing skills needed to work effectively with academic concerns, (d) developing and integrating the language needed to move the process along in a collaborative way, and (e) refining the ability to

develop working relationships. The problem solving process includes following the stages of: contracting, problem identification, intervention design, intervention implementation, and intervention evaluation. Collaborative communication skills are utilized to facilitate moving through the stages and assessments are conducted for the purpose of supporting improved instruction with a better match between student skills and expectations (Rosenfield, 1995; 2008).

Definitions of collaborative communication skills. Collaborative communication skills support building the collaborative relationship and trust between the professional who are consulting. The effective use of communication skills helps structure how individuals perceive the world and developing a common language of collaboration serves as a support to the creation of a shared reality (Rosenfield, 2004). Collaborative communication skills also support examining what data support or refute assumptions (Rosenfield, 2004). Collaborative communication skills that are the focus of the model include:

- Paraphrasing, is when the consultant restates the content of the consultee's statements as a check for understanding. An example would be a statement such as "In other words, he seems to work more effectively in math than in reading." The teacher can then restate her information which can reveal that the consultant's perception is incorrect an an opportunity for clarification is created.

- Perception checking involves checking of the meaning and the feeling behind statements made by the consultee. An example would be "It must be frustrating to have tried so many strategies and he is still having

problems." This gives the teacher the opportunity to expand on her feelings and can result in a clearer understanding of her message.

- Summarizing pulls together information which has been discussed by the consultant and consultee to establish a baseline so that next steps can be planned. A consultant might say "So we have discussed how he responds to direct instruction and we have data showing that the response has been mixed."

- Requesting clarification assists in eliminating multiple interpretations and establishes a clear structure so that both professionals are defining terms in the same way. "Can you help me understand what you mean by keeping after him?' would be request for more information so that both the teacher and the consultant are clear about terms which are vague or terms which can have multiple meanings.

- Asking relevant questions involves using focused questions to clarify specific components of the problem under consideration. Although the use of questions in consultation is limited, it is sometimes necessary to clarify information on the intensity of the problem, how often it occurs, and what the desired performance is. An example would be a questions such as "Does he have problems with all addition or only addition with regrouping?"

- Summarizing pulls together information discussed to establish a baseline and provide a starting point for further discussion.

These skills are a critical component of the IC process and support the use of an effective problem solving process (Rosenfield, 1987).

IC Teams. The vehicle for implementing the IC process in schools is the IC Team, which supports the IC model of service delivery. The participants on these interdisciplinary teams include an administrator and other members from a variety of disciplines (regular education, special education, pupil services, and other staff), each of whom has participated in ongoing training in the IC process described in the previous paragraphs (Rosenfield, 1995; 2008). In schools implementing the IC problem solving process, the IC team serves as the implementation vehicle and the point of entry for teacher access to problem solving. When a teacher requests assistance, a trained team member is assigned as a case manager (consultant) whose role is to work collaboratively with the teacher through the problem solving stages. The team is managed by a trained facilitator who guides the team in implementing the service delivery model. In this role, the facilitator conducts ongoing team training and coaches team members in the skills of consultation case management. Referring teachers are each assigned a trained case manager to work through the problem solving process with them.

Effectiveness of IC and IC Teams

Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the IC Team model. Gravois and Rosenfield (2006), in a quasi-experimental study, examined the effect of IC Teams as a deterrent to the disproportional representation of minority students in special education. They describe the three prevalent hypotheses offered as the basis for the disproportional representation of minorities in special education. These include: (a) the effect of cultural variables relative to teacher perceptions, (b) the existence of bias in assessing minority

students, and (c) problems with meeting the continuing need for more appropriate and effective pre referral interventions. Their study examined referral and placement patterns in 13 schools implementing the IC model over a two-year period compared with 9 schools that were not implementing the IC model (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006).

Examining the data using the risk index approach indicates that after two years of implementing the IC model, students in the implementation schools were at lower risk of being placed in special education than students in comparison schools. Using the odds ratio approach (comparing the risk of a minority student being placed in special education with the risk of a non minority student being placed in special education), data indicated that during the implementation of the IC team model, the chances of a minority student being placed in special education were reduced by almost half compared to the comparison schools (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Finally, using a composition index approach (examining the proportion of students receiving special education with the proportion of students referred for evaluation) revealed that during the two years of implementation of the IC model, minority students represented 26% of special education evaluations while they comprised 39% of the school population (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Implementation of the systematic problem solving approach that is the critical component of IC resulted not only in fewer placements of minority students in special education but has also led to fewer referrals and evaluations for special education (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006).

Evidence of the effectiveness of the IC process within the IC Teams model is found in the fact that teacher's practice is changed not only by the specific interventions developed and implemented in relation to the student of concern, but also by the

opportunity to reflect on their own practice and develop new professional relationships. Teachers are able to reframe their view of concerns from a within the student source to an examination of the effect of instructional practices and other modifiable classroom variables (Kaiser, Rosenfield, & Gravois, 2009; Knotek et al., 2003; Rosenfield, 2008). Changes in special education referrals, improvement of inclusive practices for students with disabilities, and attainment of established goals also offer evidence of the effectiveness of the IC process (Gravois, et al., 1999).

Inservice Training in Consultation

Professional development. It is widely recognized that development as a professional does not end at the preservice level. Development progresses through fairly predictable stages of novice, beginner, competent, and expert (Alexander, 1997; Harvey & Struzziero, 2008). But it is also true that development in a new areas brings the professional back to the novice level. Initially, the novice focuses on acquiring knowledge and associating it with existing schemas (Rumelhart & Norman, 1976). Restructuring existing frameworks helps them to be better "hosts" for new information (Rumelhart & Norman, 1976). Finally, fine tuning occurs through practice and new learning becomes smoothly incorporated into existing structures (Rumelhart & Norman, 1976). As reflected in the Showers and Joyce (1996) model, skill mastery and skill application are not interchangeable components. Skill mastery is a training issue which can be evaluated through demonstration while skill application (transfer of training) involves a wider range of skills, including the ability to determine appropriate settings for skills to be used and reflecting on the problem to be solved.

Inservice training.   Given the limited preservice training and practice opportunities in the consultation domain at the preservice level, the creation of inservice opportunities becomes even more important. Currently, however, there are few opportunities for practicing professionals to engage in supervision or training on the core consultation skills. Several factors have contributed to this. Although the National Association of School Psychologists and state professional organizations have designated the need for a broader based practice role, including consultation, for school psychologists (Ysseldyke et al, 2006), the narrow interpretation of the requirement for identification of students in need of special education services, shortages of school psychology practitioners, and a strong belief by many educators in a narrow role for school psychologists have interfered with making this a reality (Wizda, 2004). In changing practice, staff mobility and changing system demands can interfere (Wizda, 2004).

School psychologists themselves have been slow to embrace an expanded role, either because of an unwillingness to change practice while continuing their traditional roles and responsibilities, that is an unwillingness to relinquish the familiar role of the psychologist as the assessment expert (Wizda, 2004), or lack of training in expanded services. Consultation was designated as a practice the participants valued and wanted training in, but they indicated greater feelings of competence in the area of traditional assessment (Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008). A supportive factor in role change is the availability of supervision and support for new practice models, including coaching to provide opportunities to reflect on new skills and to fit new skills into the framework of

existing skills. Peer coaching has been one model of inservice training in consultation that has received some attention.

Peer Coaching as an Inservice Training Strategy for Consultation Skills

In this section, peer coaching as a general inservice technique will be described. Next, examples of coaching in inservice consultation training will be presented.

Peer coaching. Peer coaching has attracted much attention in the professional literature as a way to support skill practice and integration for teachers. The professional development (PD) literature indicates that in order for professional development training to lead to lasting change, the large group sessions that have characterized traditional PD must be supplemented with support for developing and practicing new skills with feedback; this allows new skills to be integrated into the repertoire of existing skills (Guskey, 2002; 2009; Leggett & Hoyle, 1987). Both Fullan (2009) and Leggett and Hoyle (1987) observe that in addition to exposure to new ideas and practices, teachers need to have opportunities to practice the skills, integrate them into their own practice, and observe others implementing the practices. The difficulty in obtaining feedback while practicing newly learned skills is well documented (Gravois, Knotek, & Babinski, 2002; Kruger et al, 2001; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). At the same time, it is recognized that to support the transfer of training, this feedback is crucial (Gravois et al., 2002; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Rosenfield, 2002; Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Peer coaching was first examined by Joyce and Showers (1980) over 25 years ago as a viable way to support novice teachers in implementing effective teaching strategies in their classrooms. Research at that time showed that only about 10% of teachers who participated in traditional, large group professional development training

actually implemented what they had learned (Showers & Joyce, 1996). This low transfer rate interfered with the goal of insuring that research based teaching methods were being implemented in classrooms to improve student achievement. Showers and Joyce (1996) also found that providing subsequent weekly peer coaching sessions for teachers following exposure to new methods led to a significant increase in skill implementation in the classroom. Professional development approaches which incorporate characteristics of coaching have been found to be related to positive and enduring change in teacher practices (Bean, Swann, & Knaub, 2003; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

When theoretical underpinnings and demonstration of skills were combined with practice opportunities, feedback, and coaching, dramatic improvement was seen with 80% to 90% of the adult learners integrating new skills into their daily practice (Knight, 2007; Showers, 1990; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Subsequent research (Knight, 2007; 2009) showed that teachers were four times more likely to implement strategies they learned in partnership with another teacher than strategies learned through large group staff development sessions. Peer coaching teams reacted positively to the collaborative nature of the partnership and wanted to continue (Showers & Joyce, 1996; Slater & Simmons, 2001; Sparks & Bruder, 1987).

Showers and Joyce eliminate verbal feedback as a component of peer coaching since they believed that when teachers gave feedback to one another, it interfered with the collaborative nature of the process; the peer coaches indicated that when they tried to give feedback, it invariably took on an evaluative flavor (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Showers and Joyce felt that learning to provide appropriate and helpful technical

feedback required additional training and time (Showers & Joyce, 1996). It also appears that the Showers and Joyce model differs in focus from models of consultee-centered consultation in that it focuses more heavily on improving student (client) outcomes than on building consultee (teacher) skills, using a work related concern as the vehicle for practice.

    Peer Coaching for Consultation Skill Development. Showers and Joyce (1996) advocate a four component model of training which includes developing a complete understanding of the theoretical basis of the intervention, observing the skills in live or taped format, practicing new skills within the training setting, and participation in peer coaching for support during initial implementation. The sequence developed by Showers and Joyce, described above, has been replicated to train new Instructional Consultation (IC) consultants and encompasses the aspects common to most models of coaching. It is characterized by: (a) a focus on professional practice, (b) is job embedded, (c) is intense and continuous (d) is grounded in the partnership between the consultant and the consultee, (e) is non-evaluative, (f) maintains respect for the parameters of confidentiality, and (g) is facilitated through appropriate communication (Knight, 2009; Rosenfield, 1987). Peer coaching encompasses the characteristics of being non evaluative, is based on observation followed by feedback, and supports the goal of improving instructional techniques (Ackland, 1991). It differs from evaluation in that it fosters the creation of a safe environment for individuals to practice new skills, and it focuses on improving skills (Ackland, 1991).

Training in IC

Training in the IC model presents the dual challenges of developing the conceptual framework on which the model is based as well as the specific skills needed to implement the process effectively. Content knowledge and process skills require practice and feedback to become fully developed. The importance of establishing new frameworks through discussion and dialogue requires effective communication skills, which are developed through the training process (Rosenfield, 2002; 2008).

The training process for IC involves a set of stages to move the trainee through the stages of awareness to competent to expert. This sequence is similar to the one described by Joyce and Showers (1980). For skill acquisition, role plays, simulations, and the use of audio and videotapes are used to model the desired skills and to assess the skill acquisition process (Rosenfield, 2002). For skill practice, cases are conducted in school settings, and audio or videotaping are used to allow for feedback from a supervisor (Rosenfield, 2002). For the final stage of advanced application of skills, ongoing professional development, and supervision and training of others are key techniques which allow for further refinement of skills, integration with one's existing skill set, and application of skills to real life settings (Rosenfield, 2002). The Showers and Joyce approach and the IC training sequence are summarized in Appendix A.

Role of Peer Coaching in IC Training. Coaching occupies a critical role in the inservice training of IC case managers, as the way for a professional competent in a particular set of skills to support another professional who is practicing and applying those skills (Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996). In addition to supporting the practicing of skills, coaching also focuses on application of skills and developing an understanding of

when the use of a particular skill is appropriate. Within the IC training sequence, coaching has three components – the preconference, data collection, and the coaching conference (Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996). The preconference stage provides an opportunity for the case manager and the coach to examine the next step of the problem solving process and the skills needed to accomplish the goal. By engaging in this process, the case manager is able to select a focus skill area in which they would like feedback and to review with the coach the specific components of the skill as well as the case manager's comfort level in utilizing the skill. In the data collection stage, the case manager audiotapes the problem solving session with the teacher so that it can be reviewed with the coach to assess the focus skill selected in the pre conference. Although videotaping and live observation are sometimes conducted, audiotaping is the primary method used. In the coaching conference, the case manager and the coach review the tape of the session and feedback is provided on the case manager's use of the focus skill.

Importance of Reflection. Self-reflection by the CIT serves the purpose of supporting the CIT in actively "working toward equilibrium in the relationship" and also in striking " a balance between establishing their own expertise…and recognizing the teacher's expertise in pedagogy and the classroom" (Garcia, 2004, p. 362). Requiring the CIT to reflect on each session with the teacher keeps the focus on evaluating their own behaviors in relation to the responses of the consultee (Garcia, 2004).

Reflection also helps the CIT develop approaches to assist the teacher to begin thinking in ways which include expanded alternatives in problem solving. This helps the consultant (teacher) move beyond narrow definitions of problems and consider alternative approaches (Garcia, 2004). In order to help a teacher widen their frame of

reference, the CIT must be aware of their own frame of thinking so that common ground

can be reached. Writing the reflection as the CITs do enables them to not only recognize

errors, but also enjoy successes (Garcia, 2004).

Using Distance Learning to Support Training

The use of distance learning as a support will be discussed next to provide a

framework for the online delivery of peer coaching. As technology permeates the

professional world, additional studies document how this valuable resource can be used

effectively. Babinski, Jones, and DeWert (2001) examine the use of an online support

community for novice teachers. Although the study sample is small, (12 first year

teachers, 4 experienced teachers, and 8 university faculty), the qualitative findings

indicate that over a period of 6 months, from January to June, the participants felt that the

experience fostered a sense of community, which enabled beginning teachers to

understand that others had faced similar challenges and also allowed for engaging in a

problem solving process. The online group assisted the teacher in reframing their

concerns, developing an action plan, and discussing the success of the plan (Babinski et

al., 2001). An identified limitation of the study is that not all participants were familiar

with the consultative process and some of the faculty tended to adopt a more supervisory

and expert role (Babinski et al., 2001)

Although not a training model, Kruger and Struzziero (1997) initially examined

the use of email support to school psychologists who were engaging in consultation with

teachers as a way to provide social support and lessen feelings of being isolated. The use

of a computer mediated model instead of a face to face framework has the potential to

overcome the problems of scheduling, long meetings, and travel time (Kruger &

Struzziero, 1997). The increased speed of electronic communication has eliminated previous problems with slow delivery of telephone and mail messages. By making asynchronous communication possible and efficient, it is possible for individuals to communicate effectively with minimal disruption to their schedules (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997).

Of the four school psychologists who participated in the Kruger and Struzziero (1997) pilot study, all were novices in using email communication. Pre and post questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data on the participants' expectations and reactions to the project. Analysis of the specific messages was also conducted to determine how each message increased knowledge, feelings of competence, and improvement in the ability to assist another psychologist (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997).

Over a period of 15 weeks, the four school psychologists exchanged 65 emails with a mean length of 8.2 sentences. The school psychologists had high expectations for the project and data collected indicated that their expectations were exceeded, with 73.8% of the messages exchanged perceived as improving knowledge of consultation and 75.2% described as improving knowledge of how to assist other consultants. Positive aspects described by the participants included the opportunity to reflect on case content while composing messages, access to past messages for reference, the convenience of scheduling, and the ability to provide and receive rapid feedback (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). Drawbacks related primarily to technical aspects, (e.g., inconsistent availability of the email server and difficulty installing needed software), but the short length of the project was also identified as a negative aspect (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). Although

not identified by the researchers as a limitation, the influence of the participants' high level of expectations may have influenced their perception of the effectiveness.

Suggestions for future changes included simplification of the software, more examples of data collection, and focusing on one concern at a time (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). Recommendations generated from the post data collection include focusing on the skills needed to generate email messages that support the consultant's feelings of competence and identifying the specific components of messages that foster feelings of competence in the recipient (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). In addition to recommending simplifying the technical aspects of the network, Kruger and Struzziero suggest that the small size of the sample calls for additional investigation of the usefulness of email communication in fostering consultant development.

In a later study, Kruger et al., (2001) explored the use of email communication between four school psychologist/teacher dyads in increasing teachers' knowledge of working with students and reducing their feelings of isolation. In examining client centered outcomes, the authors assessed the relationship between the content of the email messages and the perceived outcomes of increased knowledge and decreased feelings of isolation, and the extent to which the perceptions of these factors by the school psychologists and the teacher's perceptions differed. This was felt to be important in evaluating the kinds of messages that teachers found to be the most helpful (Kruger et al., 2001).

Analysis of data found that teachers and psychologists perceived that the email consultation both reduced the teacher's feelings of isolation and improved their knowledge of working with students. Both groups felt that the email messages reduced

the teacher's feelings of isolation more than it improved their knowledge of working with students (Kruger et al., 2001). This is consistent with an earlier study of school psychologists where social support was rated higher than increasing feelings of competency (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). This study is notable because it examines the outcomes for consultees while most previous studies have focused on client outcomes (Sheridan, et al., 1996). A benefit was also identified in the use asynchronous communication offered by email that eliminates the logistical difficulties encountered when trying to schedule meeting times (Kruger et al., 2001). Limitations of these studies include the small sample size and the filtering of the data examined through the lens of the participants.

Online Peer Coaching for IC

In an effort to overcome the problem of the difficulty in providing coaching to professionals learning the IC process in locations where there were no individuals experienced enough to provide coaching, an online coaching model was piloted in 2001 by the Laboratory for IC Teams at the University of Maryland-Online peer coaching became a critical component of the online model of IC training as the model expanded geographically (Vail, 2004). The peer-coaching component of the IC training sequence provides online coaching to newly trained CITs conducting their first case by a skilled case manager who has received coaching either face to face or on line. With the use of email, the coach can be in any location and still have access to the CIT.

Coaching manuals (Laboratory for IC Teams Coaching Manual for Participant Consultants, 2007; Laboratory for IC Teams Manual for Online Coaches, 2007) were developed by the Laboratory for Instructional Teams at the University of Maryland to

support the process. Within the manuals, coaching is described as a complex process designed to lead to improved skills by providing "weekly, structured feedback" (Laboratory for IC Teams Manual for Online Coaches, 2007, p.3). The goal is identified as increasing and refining skills in the "effective application and use of the IC process" (Laboratory for IC Teams Coaching Manual for Participant Consultants, 2007, p. 3).

In a study directly related to training IC case managers through the online coaching process, Vail (2004) found that consultant trainees perceived skill improvement after participation in online coaching. In examining the use of this model, it was found that the use of email allows for personalized feedback specific to the individual's needs (Vail, 2004). Participants in the pilot study describe online coaching as improving their skills and also leading to confidence levels which encouraged them to take additional cases in the future (Vail, 2004). The ability to provide timely feedback and to eliminate the need to find consistent times for face to face meetings appears to be positive aspects of this method of coaching for skill application (Gravois et al., 2002; Vail, 2004). The asynchronous nature of email communication also creates the opportunity for professionals to reflect on the content and experience, which adds a richer quality to the experience (Gravois et al., 2002).

Training in Communication Skills

Given the importance of communication skills, supporting the development of these skills in training CITs is a priority. Communication is a multi faceted area which encompasses the actual words used, how they are delivered, and what follow up is provided. Little has been written about effective training of communication skills and little is known about the training of communication skills within the set of consultation

skills. In a previous research study, Pavey-Scherer (2008) found that while CITs perceive their communication skills to be well developed after receiving online coaching, that perception is not shared by the coaches. She raised questions about how the coaches provided feedback on communication skills within an asynchronous model and what commonalities exist between the various coaches' approaches to doing this.

It was assumed by Pavey-Scherer (2008) that the coaches were more skilled in the use and application of communication skills than the novice case managers and therefore would recognize more subtle areas of need than a less skilled individual. Yet, how the coaches provided the feedback and the coachees' responses to this feedback have not been examined. Pavey-Scherer (2008) recommended research to study the specific procedures used by the coaches to develop and strengthen the communication skills of the CIT's. The proposed study is designed to examine the process used by coaches to enhance the collaborative communication skills of novice CIT's in one of the most critical areas of the IC process.

Use of Communication Skills

Framing the problem. One example of the importance of communication skills is in its use in the problem identification stage. In any problem solving interaction between two professionals, the language used to frame the problem determines, in part, the kind of problem identified (Rosenfield, 2008). This is consistent with the research of Tombari and Bergan (1978) who examined the effect of the specific words used to frame problems on the outcomes achieved. They found that the type of consultant cue provided to a group of 60 beginning teachers (all were completing their student teaching) had a strong influence on how the teachers perceived the students' problem behaviors. When

behavioral and medical model cues were used, each led to a problem definition and expectancy consistent with that approach.   It is common practice to begin a problem solving consultation with a search for a problem within the student (a deficit) rather than examining variables within the learning environment that can be modified to increase academic success (Rosenfield, 2008). With the goal of providing appropriate and effective instruction in the general education classroom, the setting where the problem has been first identified, it is important to frame the concern in terms that lead to the development of interventions based on modifying variables in the classroom structure, practices, and expectations, rather than "fixing" a perceived deficit within the student (Rosenfield, 2008). Correspondence bias, that is, the tendency to attribute the source of the problem to a person instead of variables in the situation, is reduced by the use of effective communication and framing skills (Crothers, Hughes, & Morine, 2008).

Influence of Professional Role. In examining the use of language to develop new understanding and to conceptualize problems in new way, Knotek (2004) discusses that in collaborative teams, collaborative problem solving can be limited by one's "allegiance to his or her personal and professional knowledge" (p. 350). Rather than reframing the problem in objective, data based terms, students who are seen as problems often have their skills underestimated and the extent of their problems overstated. Knotek (2004) suggests that the participants negotiate and agree upon vocabulary to be used by the participants so that meanings are clear and unambiguous.

Building a collaborative relationship. Qualitative evaluation of the verbal interactions between experienced and novice IC consultants reveals subtle differences in wording and the timing of feedback comments that afforded the more experienced

consultants an advantage in establishing and developing the consultative relationship (Benn, et al., 2008). In a study of the verbal behavior of competent and less competent consultants, fairly equivalent questioning strategies were used by both. When the results were examined qualitatively, however, they found differences in the nature of the questions with more collaborative and response generating questions used by the competent consultants rather than the closed questions used by the less competent consultants (Benn et al., 2008).

Timing was also a difference between the two groups, with the competent consultants taking more time to clearly identify the focus of concern, while the less competent consultants tended to move on to assessment before clarifying the area of concern. Eliminating discrepancies between the meaning and content that the consultant intends to convey from what is actually said is facilitated by effective communication skills (Benn et al., 2008). The use of effective communication allows the consultant and consultee to construct descriptions of both the problem and proposed solutions and the careful selection of words and skills used can move the process ahead or create resistance (Rosenfield, 2008). Framing the problem in observable and measurable terms empowers the teacher to address it effectively within the classroom and to document progress effectively (Rosenfield, 2008). Effective collaborative communication skills also facilitate the development of the relationship between the consultant and consultee (Rosenfield, 1987).

Research on Online Coaching

Although research on coaching within an online model is sparse, the research literature on training and supervision documents that online coaching improves both

skills and the knowledge base as well as facilitates the transfer of skills to practical

settings in appropriate ways (Gravois et al., 2002; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Kruger et

al, 2001; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Zins & Murphy, 1996). Online coaching can also

address the dilemma of changing professional roles and a lack of availability of

supervision (Kruger & Struzziero, 1997). By providing the opportunity for professionals

to reflect on their work, there is support for the development of thoughtful and effective

practitioners (Schon, 1987). Providing an opportunity for teachers and other

professionals to learn from each other despite geographical and scheduling barriers is an

excellent use of technology.

Summary of Research

Although the use of peer coaching to support professional development,

specifically the application of skills, has been documented to be effective (Joyce &

Showers, 1980; Showers & Joyce, 1996), there is limited research on conducting this in

an online format. The existing research on the use of online support shows that

participants feel supported and feel that their skills improve as a result of this experience

(Kruger et al., 1996; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Kruger et al., 2001; Pavey-Scherer,

2008).

Although a broader role including consultation is proposed for school

psychologists (Ysseldyke et al., 2006) and practicing school psychologists report

spending an increasing percentage of their time engaged in consultation (Stoiber &

Vanderwood, 2008), training opportunities at both the preservice and inservice level

remain limited (Anton-Lahart & Rosenfield, 2004). One model of consultation that has

demonstrated effectiveness is IC where a problem solving process is used to resolve

teacher concerns (Rosenfield, 1987). IC training follows the Joyce and Showers (1980) model of didactic presentation to build awareness, skill practice, and coaching for skill application.

Recent studies examining the IC online peer coaching component (Pavey-Scherer, 2008; Vail, 2004) found that participants felt supported, but rated their collaborative communication skills as more developed than the coaches rated them. Further research was suggested on the coaching of collaborative communication skills (Pavey-Scherer, 2008). As part of examining how peer coaches support the development of collaborative communication skills, one dimension is how the CITs identify skills on which they request specific feedback from the coach (focus skill). This skill identification is part of the self reflection completed by each CIT as part of the training process.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the content of email exchanges between online coaches and consultants in training (CITs) as they complete their first IC coaching case. Emails were analyzed to identify common themes and techniques used by the coaches. In particular, portions of the exchanges that address communication in the process of consultation, rather than content issues are the focus of the study. This section provides a description of the sample population of online coaches and CITs, a description of the IC coaching procedures, a description of the data, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods.

As a participant in the process of coaching from a CIT to an online coach, to a coaching coordinator providing support to coaches, I believe that the value of examining the actual real life communications between the coaches and CIT's fits with my worldview and interests. Linking with the literature on the use of online communications (Kruger et al, 1996; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Kruger et al, 2001) and the generally positive perceptions of the process of online coaching (Pavey-Scherer, 2008; Vail, 2004), as well as the literature on appropriate delivery of professional development (Joyce & Showers, 1980) the use of a case study approach gains further support. A final support for this approach is the preservation of the richness of the actual words used in communicating which is compromised when converted to quantitative or summarized data. Since coaching of communication skills involves modeling of desired behaviors, preserving the actual content of the coaching sessions is important. In working through the problem solving process at the heart of IC, a constructivist framework is endemic

(Rosenfield, 2004). Hylander (2004) suggests that in the investigation of a consultee-centered consultation model (such as IC), qualitative methods are appropriate since problems are jointly defined between the consultant and consultee and a goal of the process is to support conceptual change in the consultee

Participants

The participants in this study are 33 pairs of coaches and coachees, specifically case managers who received site based training followed by online coaching during the 2005 – 2006 (N=9), 2006-2007 (N=14), and 2007-2008 (N=10) school years. The identity of the participants is protected (identified only by number), and the information about the professional role of the coaches and CITs, when provided, was of the most general nature, e.g., professional role, years of experience. Participants were from multiple states and school systems.

Of a potential 69 sets of coaching emails from the years studied, these specific dyads were selected because all had completed their cases; completed is defined as submitting an audiotape and reflection form for each of the five stages of the problem solving process. These are contracting, problem identification, intervention design, intervention implementation, and intervention evaluation. Although five audiotapes is the minimum requirement, some CITs complete more than five. By completing their cases, each dyad generated a collection of rich data which meets the criterion of cases which are "…most likely to provide in-depth coverage and insight into the phenomenon under investigation" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 67). They provide appropriate data sets to define the bounded system of study and provide the opportunity to analyze the unique process of using technology to support professionals within an existing structure (Jones et al., 2006).

All data were collected prior to analysis.

Although this is technically a convenience sample, which can carry the limitations of less credibility and limited information (Patton, 2002), these limitations are identified initially and mitigating factors are identified. The data were readily available through the Laboratory for IC Teams at the University of Maryland, and the richness of the data was the primary criterion for case selection. These sets of communications represent typical exchanges and provide a window on the online coaching process through the actual words of the participants in their original context. The uniqueness of the IC training sequence represents best practices in professional training and offers a look at a real life process. Selecting cases which were completed guarantees a range of material for analysis which exceeds that which would be provided by cases where termination occurred early in the process. Jones et al. (2006) suggests that sampling in a purposeful way to utilize "information-rich cases that hold the greatest potential for generating insight about the phenomenon of interest" is a hallmark of qualitative research because of their ability to "illuminate understanding" (p. 66).

Sample size is addressed by Patton (2002) in his statement that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244). Jones (2006) indicates that there are also influences on sample size from the selections of the methodology and the nature of the research questions posed. The selection of 33 dyads spans three years of online coaching and provides the means to investigate the research question of how the online coaching of communication skills is conducted. The sample represents three years of training in different settings (urban, suburban) with participants bringing a variety of experiences and past training, and representing different roles within the educational community. All

participants had given consent to use their coaching case for research purposes. Further, all participants had received the same level of training in the IC process and all were actively engaged in a professional position within the educational community.

     Coaches. The coaches were school psychologists (6), counselors (1), teachers (14), administrators (1), and graduate students (2); 9 did not identify their professional role. Years of educational experience of the coaches in the sample ranged from 0 to 14. For those coaches who offered this information (75% of the total number of cases), 48% of the coaches had teaching experience.

All coaches had participated in the University of Maryland IC Teams training process, which included a four-day training (either on site of an IC Team school-based project or at the University of Maryland) that utilizes both didactic presentations of material, opportunities for skill practice with feedback, and opportunities for practical application of skills learned. The next aspect of training is for the participants to receive coaching with feedback as they conduct their first IC practice case on site with a teacher to support skill application. All of the coaches had received coaching either in a face to face model or through the online process; after completing training, they had experience as the facilitator of an IC team in a school, either as a current role or in the past. In this role, the individual facilitates the multidisciplinary IC team in implementing the problem solving team procedures, following the initial team training. They also provide ongoing professional development and training as well as coaching to IC team members.

After the CITs complete their initial case, the coach evaluates their mastery of the case management and communication skills used, and also provides a recommendation for their potential as a future coach. This assessment is based on their understanding of

the problem solving process, their use of collaborative communication skills, and their overall potential as a coach. Based on this recommendation and the CIT's interest in serving as a coach, they are assigned a CIT to coach online. During their initial coaching case, they have access to an online coaching coordinator to assist with questions and problems. Coaches are assigned to CITs so that no coach worked in the same school system as the CIT being coached, to maintain the on-line structure.

CITs. CITs had all participated in the initial training sequence and were ready to apply the skills learned in an actual consultation setting. They represent 11 school systems, across a range of urban and suburban districts, in the process of implementing the IC process. The CIT's professional roles, for those who offered this information, included teacher (11), school psychologist (3), or social worker (2). Seventeen (51%) of the CITs did not identify their professional role or years of experience. Providing this information was not required, but was a choice made by the participants. The CITs in this study were all engaging in the coaching process voluntarily, as an opportunity to practice skills learned in training, and also, for some, as an opportunity to earn college course credit. All continued fulfilling their regular professional duties while participating in this process. Demographic information provided by the CITs and the coaches is summarized in Appendix B.

Coaching Procedures

Although no formal training in the skills of coaching and providing feedback is provided for online coaches, a procedural manual is provided and a coaching coordinator is assigned to track progress and provide support for the online coaches. The coaching coordinator does not communicate directly with the CIT's but is a resource to provide

support to coaches, track case progress and provide reminders when progress slows, and serve as a liaison between the online coaches and the IC Lab at the University of Maryland. A manual for participants is also provided.

Coaching manual. The manual describes procedures for conducting the coaching and developing the online coaching relationship, including those for: (a) scheduling communication, (b) prompting, (c) reminders, (d) sharing experiences, (e) encouragement, and (f) dealing with technical problems; the manual also provides a framework for giving feedback to insure consistency across cases. Informed consent to participate in research is addressed and forms are provided for the coach and the referring teacher to provide consent to participate and for the materials to be used for research. (See Appendix F for copies of consent forms). Coaches' responsibilities are described, along with a suggested time frame for case completion and a list of frequently selected focus areas for feedback.

Participant manual. A similar manual is provided for the case managers who receive coaching. This manual includes: (a) an overview of the coaching process, (b) requirements for case completion, (c) suggestions for identifying a teacher, (d) dealing with incomplete cases, (e) frequently asked questions, (f) a suggested time frame for case completion, and (g) a description of the reflection process including the purpose, directions for completing the reflection form, and a format for the reflection to insure consistency.

Coaching process. The coaching process requires audiotaping of the meetings between the CIT and referring teacher, and completion of a reflection by the CIT after reviewing the tape. This allows the CITs the opportunity to evaluate their own skills and

serves as a learning tool for improved practice. The audiotape, CIT reflection form, and a copy of the Student Documentation Form (SDF) are mailed to the online coach, who, after reviewing the materials, provides structured feedback by email. The SDF is the standard form that is used to keep track of case progress, record data, identify goals, and provide a description of the intervention.

Email communications. Data on which the current study is based consists of transcripts of the email communications between the online coaches and the CITs. There is no direct contact between the coach and the referring teacher. These email communications provide the CITs' reflection on each meeting with the referring teacher and their review and reflection on the audiotape of the sessions; the feedback provided by the coach is based on review of the reflection and the audiotape, and review of the SDF record of case progress. All the email communications between coaches and CITs are saved in a single document with identifying data removed. The documents are stored in a locked file at the University of Maryland Lab for IC Teams.

Data Collection Forms

Case manager reflection. The case manager reflection form is provided in the participants' online coaching manual that all participants received at the beginning of the coaching process. The structure of the form (see Appendix D) includes sections to record: (a) the stage of the problem solving process addressed in the session, (b) the collaborative communication skills used in the current session and the communication skills the case manager plans to use in the next session, (c) the aspect of the instructional assessment addressed in the current session and the aspect which will be addressed in the next session, (d) questions the case manager has, plans for the next session, and (e) the

selection of a focus skill for the next session. The focus skill is the specific skill the case managers want feedback on from their online coach. A list of frequently selected focus skills is provided in both the participant and the coaches' manual, although a case manager can select other focus skills according to individual needs.

      Coach feedback form. A form for coach feedback is also provided in the coaches' manual (See Appendix E) and includes the areas of: (a) focus skill for the session, (b) appropriateness of content, (c) quality of working relationship with the referring teacher, (d) accuracy and appropriateness of the SDF, (e) appropriateness of the instructional assessment, and (f) the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the session. The goal of the feedback is to stimulate the case managers to reflect on their own practice and utilize feedback to improve skills. Both of these forms are included in the email communication between coach and CIT.

IC Case sequence

      A typical training sequence will be described next to provide the context for understanding the cases which are the subject of the communication between the coaches and CIT's. Although many of the participants attended the summer institute at the University of Maryland, some participated in a similar on site training at their school locations. All the training was conducted in the same format and by the same presenters. This initial training builds a knowledge base focusing on changing the framework within which student concerns are considered from a focus on areas where the school and teacher have little control, e.g., within student variables, outside the school variables, to a focus on altering instructional and environmental variables where the school and teacher have considerable control. This altered framework serves to build confidence in the

teacher in terms of her ability to make positive changes in the classroom and also strengthens her ability to deal with similar concerns in the future. The process is driven by accurate knowledge of the problem solving process stages and also by the use of collaborative communication skills to support the collaborative relationship and build the teacher's confidence in viewing students within a different framework and in addressing similar problems in the future. At the end of the multi-day training, the online coaching process is described to the prospective CITs, prior to their participation in the actual process.

      Initial case contact. Following this training experience, the participants are assigned an online coach. The coach will work with them as they conduct their first actual case, where they will practice applying the skills they have learned in the large group training. Coaches are assigned so that they do not work in the same setting as the CIT to eliminate opportunities for face to face discussion which could alter the nature of the online coaching. The contact information is also emailed to the coach so that the CIT and the coach can make initial contact. A format for the initial email is suggested in the online coaches manual and is described in Appendix A. Although many coaches use this exact format and alter the words to fit their specific situation, some use a more narrative approach and relate the required information in their own words. The importance of the suggested format is to be sure all coaches conduct the initial set up in a standard way and that all needed information is conveyed to the CIT. The important aspect is that the CIT receive suggestions about the selection of a teacher to work with (the initial case is solicited in within one's school setting while subsequent cases come via teacher referrals), suggestions on insuring that accurate audiotaping occurs, scheduling regular

meetings with the teacher and developing a feedback schedule with the coach, and an invitation to engage in a dialogue with the coach via questions and observations to enrich the experience. The coach typically requests that the CIT respond to insure that the start up message was received and that all information is understood. For the CITs, this is their first opportunity to actually apply the consultation skills they have been learning in a real life setting.

Case Selection. CITs are encouraged to work on a reading concern if possible, which serves a dual purpose. First, one of the components of the IC problem solving process highlights modifying and supporting targeted instruction to support student progress. This is accomplished through data collection and evaluation to provide information needed to complete this. Although the process can be applied to any academic area, the training focuses on the area of reading because of the prevalence of concerns in this area and the multifaceted nature of the reading process. Conducting the initial case addressing reading provides an opportunity to practice these skills. Second, although teachers often express concerns about behavior, the IC process seeks to refocus concern on the academic correlates of behavior and how addressing these often resolves the behavioral concern without direct intervention.

In the initial email contact, both participants (coach and CIT) often share their background (current role and educational experiences), years in education, other experiences, and their interest in the IC process. Some do not include this information but those that do have an opportunity to begin to get to "know" their partner.

Once the CIT has identified a specific teacher to work with and secured an initial meeting, the process begins. A suggested time frame for completion is offered in both

the participants' and coaches' manuals to remind the participants of the fallacy of "endless time" to complete the process. The CIT supports the teacher in moving through the stages of the problem solving process through knowledge of the stages of the process and also through the use of collaborative communication skills. The responsibilities of the coach and CIT for each stage of the process are summarized in Table C.1, Appendix C.

Contracting. In the first session with the teacher, the CIT completes the contracting stage of the process where the components are identified and explained. These include: (a) an overview of the process, (b) the time commitment involved, (c) a discussion of the shared nature of the process, (d) confidentiality, (e) data collection, (f) audiotaping, (g) sources of outside help, (h) decision making, and (i) parent contact. Any questions the teacher has are answered, a formal agreement to participate is obtained, and consent forms are signed. After the CIT reviews the audiotape of this session, they complete the reflection on the consultation form (Appendix D) and mail, via priority mail, the tape, consent forms, and SDF to the online coach. The reflection form can be emailed or sent in hard copy. When the coach receives the materials, they review them and provide feedback via email, addressing (a) the focus skill selected, (b) appropriateness of content, (c) quality of the working relationship, (d) appropriateness of the SDF, (e) instructional assessment, and (f) the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the session. Ideally, the feedback is provided in collaborative language to model the desired response for the CIT. If the CIT has any questions or additional concerns, these are addressed via email with the coach. In this stage of the problem solving process, CITs often comment that they "did most of the talking" in a self critical way. In fact, this is a

stage where there is the most factual information being offered and this is often reflected by the coach. However, it is never too soon to begin working in the desired collaborative way so some coaches suggest beginning by eliciting what the teacher already knows about the process, validating the accurate information, and beginning to build a collaborative relationship in this way.

Problem identification. The next stage to be addressed is problem identification, where the CIT and the teacher engage in a process to narrow down the initial concern. For example, from an initial concern of poor reading skills, the narrowing down might result in a concern of a need to develop a larger sight vocabulary or more efficient word recognition skills. It is in this stage that the importance of collaborative communication skills is most critical. CITs are often reminded that the more time spent clearly identifying in observable and measurable terms what the concern is, the more likely that the intervention developed will be effective. This is a difficult hurdle for many CITs and demands a coaches' best collaborative approach and modeling of skills combined with skillful and well timed questions to clarify. Problem identification can occupy 80 to 90% of the total time spent conducting the problem solving process. If this has not been clarified in the initial contracting stage, it may be necessary to revisit this dynamic in a later meeting. Using collaborative communication skills to move through the problem identification stage (PID) insures that the CIT and the teacher will be moving together and the teachers concerns will be reflected in how they proceed. An environment will also be created where the teacher will be comfortable in sharing ideas, asking questions, and participating as a recognized expert in the problem solving process. Data are gathered through an instructional assessment (IA) which is a form of curriculum based assessment

(CBA) where the student is evaluated using curricular materials that are used in the classroom to determine what skills are well developed and which skills need to be developed or strengthened to enable the student to meet the curricular expectation for his grade.

Intervention design. Following the PID stage, data gathered through the instructional assessment process are used to develop an intervention that is monitored through regular and ongoing data collection. All decisions are made based on data and determining what to collect and how to collect it constitutes an important part of the process. The intervention is developed collaboratively by the teacher and the CIT and is designed to improve the student's skill set to support progress toward the long and short term goals. A description of the intervention is recorded on the Student Documentation Form so that it can be replicated in the future and assessed for treatment integrity.

Intervention implementation and evaluation. The intervention is implemented and its effectiveness is evaluated by regular collection and review of data to document progress from the baseline established. If improvement is noted, the intervention continues. If not, it is re examined and adjusted to meet the needs of the student as determined by the data.

Closure. Once effectiveness is established and evaluated, the case is closed. The CIT and the teacher discuss the case progress, the procedures they used, and how the intervention was developed. This provides a summary for the teacher to support using the problem solving process again. The intervention may continue however, and sometimes, teachers will use an intervention with additional students who exhibit similar needs.

Audiotapes, reflections, and the SDF are submitted to the online coach for the formal stages of contracting, problem identification, intervention design, intervention implementation, and intervention evaluation. Feedback is provided for each session and there may also be email communication around other issues, e.g., disruptions in scheduling, students moving, teachers transferring or resigning, and emergencies.

Data Analysis

The data used in the study were archival. They represent actual experiences as they occurred, not as reconstructed through the lens of the participants, but as a record of the actual experiences of the CITs as they moved through their first IC case. Although there were suggested time frames for completion, a case might have extended beyond that because of unavoidable delays, such as a teacher or CIT out on sick leave for a period of time, student transfer, or CIT took a different job.

All the email exchanges between the online coach and the CIT were saved in a single document with all identifying data removed. In addition to the actual discussion between the coach and the CIT, the CIT's reflection on each problem solving stage and the coaches' feedback were included. Copies of each transcript were printed out and served as the data analyzed in this study.

Case study method. Case study methodology was used to analyze the data. This method is distinguished from other forms of qualitative research through its focus on a bounded system, one that contains material that can provide new and significant learning and understanding of a process or program (Yin, 2009). Identification of the bounded system essentially creates a boundary around what will be studied (Merriam, 1998). Miles and Huberman (1994) represent this visually as a circle with a heart in the center

where the circle defines the edge of the case and the heart represents the focus of the case

study.   In this case study, the online coaching process is the circle and the coaching of

communication skills is the heart. The case study approach is versatile and adaptable in

providing an in depth understanding of phenomena not full captured by quantitative

approaches.

Understanding from the perspectives of the participants rather than the

perspective of the researcher provides an insider's perspective on the topic of study

(Jones et al., 2006; Merriam, 1998). As an inductive approach, the case study utilizes

strategies to build concepts that explain the data rather than searching for data to explain

a pre existing theory (Merriam, 1998). Chenail (1995) states that "Qualitative research is

the practice of asking simple questions and getting complex answers." (p.7). According

to Stake (1995), "We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first

obligation is to understand this one case" (p. 4).

A combination of descriptive and qualitative methods were used to

analyze the data, as described in Table 1. Using the methods described by Stake (1995),

categorical aggregation and constant comparison methods were used to analyze the data

by assembling individual instances into what eventually became a theme. This assembly

is preceded by direct interpretation of individual instances. Both methods rely on the

discovery of patterns and themes. As a case study, the goal is to understand how peer

coaches support the development and application of collaborative communication skills

in an online format. Although the focus is on understanding in depth the intricacies of the

online coaching of communication skills within the bounded system of online coaching,

there may be implications for developing research questions for other online coaching

approaches.

Table 1. Data and Method Used to Answer Research Questions

Research questions	Data used to answer question	Method of data analysis
How do the online peer coaches support the CITs' application of collaborative communication skills?	Email exchanges between the online coach and the CIT CIT reflection Coach feedback	Constant comparison to identify themes Categorical aggregation
What skills are selected by the CIT's as focus skills?	Email exchanges between coaches and CIT's Case manager reflection form Coach feedback form	Summary of skills identified as focus skills Identification of emerging themes through constant comparison

Using both the case manager's reflection and the feedback from the online coach

provides converging lines of inquiry which strengthen the analysis (Creswell, 2007; Yin,

2009). Constant comparisons of data were conducted both across participants as well as

within data categories generated by individual participants in terms of time, incidents,

and categories (Creswell, 2007; Jones et al, 2006). By examining the data, an

understanding is gained of how the individual CIT's experience the process of selecting

focus skills and how they reflect on the feedback provided by the coaches on their use of

communication skills.

Trustworthiness

Particularly in qualitative research, how well the researcher can document confidence in the findings is a crucial component (Jones et al, 2006). This component is addressed in several ways in this study.

Researcher- as- instrument. Miles and Huberman (1994) address the concept of "researcher-as-instrument" (p.38) and identify characteristics that comprise this. As part of the evaluation of trustworthiness, the researcher who gathers and analyzes the data is a critical part of the process. One of these characteristics is a familiarity with both the setting and the phenomenon which is being studied.

I am quite familiar with the IC process and received training in the components at a multiday training approximately 15 years ago and completed a one semester course in consultation methods. I have since served as a CIT, a school based facilitator, an online coach, and an online coaching coordinator. In the latter role, I was the online coordinator for the cases in the current study, but did not serve as a coach for any of the CITs in this sample. In the role of coordinator, I was responsible for providing support for the coaches, which consisted primarily of monitoring progress as they coached their cases, and serving as the link between the coaches and the Lab for IC at the University of Maryland.

From the beginning of the online coaching process, it was possible that the data would be used for research purposes, since the participants were invited to grant permission for the data to be used in that way. This study evolved as an opportunity to examine the data in a different way, using the actual words of the coaches and CITs and giving voice to the individual components of the process. Since I am no longer actively

involved in the online coaching process, my "interpretive lens" (Jones, 2002, p. 464) is not clouded by role conflict.

Research advisor. Throughout the process of this study, my committee chair who is the developer of the IC process, served as my research advisor (Jones et al, 2006) and assisted me in thinking through the research questions, provided insights, reviewed drafts of this paper, and raised questions along the way.

Peer reviewers. As an additional path to ensuring trustworthiness, three peer reviewers reviewed 14 of the 33 transcripts to check the identification of the themes developed. All three reviewers are extremely skilled in use of the IC process and all have worked with the process for at least 10 years. One reviewer developed the online coaching component as her dissertation project, one currently serves as the online coaching coordinator, and all three serve as IC trainers.

Transcripts were assigned randomly to each of the reviewers who analyzed them for consistency with the themes I had identified. Because of the random assignment of transcripts and the fact that not all themes were seen in all transcripts, some of the reviews found minimal evidence. In the themes that were identified and documented, there was agreement with my findings and in some cases, the same quotes were extracted from the transcript as evidence of the theme.

Adequacy of data.

Data were archival and comprised of contributions from both the CITs and the online coaches. The communications had all identifying information removed and were saved in a single document so transcribing, which could lead to errors, was not needed. Using the transcripts kept the data in context so that the contribution of each individual

communication to the whole of the process was easily seen. Immersion in the data was true from the start of the study and I have attempted to provide a "rich, thick" description (Creswell, 2007, p. 209) in the results. I have attempted as much as possible to preserve the context of the communications to add to the completeness of the analysis.

Ethical considerations. To preserve confidentiality of the participants, individual cases are identified only by number. All participants had granted permission for their communications to be used for research purposes. IRB permission was obtained from the University of Maryland.

Informed consent. Before actual coaching begins, each CIT and referring teacher signs and submits a consent form releasing the audiotapes, email communications, and the SDF to the Lab for IC Teams for both training and research purposes. This is signed before the online coach can review any of the material. There is also a separate section of the consent form where the CIT's and coaches can indicate if they wish to be contacted before their case material is used for research purposes. University of Maryland Institutional Review Board approval has been obtained for the use of these materials for research purposes. Copies of these forms are provided in Appendix F.

Chapter 4

Results

In this section, the online coaching of communication skills will be described ~~in~~ ~~depth~~ through examination of themes and categories that emerge from the data. These components will serve as a framework for future research and as the basis for a more complete understanding of the process of coaching communication skills in an online format. A description of the process by which the themes were developed will be followed by a discussion of the use of collaborative communication skills. Findings related to the research questions and recurring themes will be presented, with examples taken from the data.

Theme Development

In analyzing the archival data on which this study rests, I first read through all the transcripts to develop a sense of the landscape. The next step was to review the transcripts again in more detail and begin coding and writing memos. Coding is defined by Miles and Huberman, 1994) as reviewing "…a set of fieldnotes…and to dissect them meaningfully while keeping the relations between the parts intact"~~,~~ (p. 56). Codes were assigned to chunks of data, with the specific codes emerging from the data. While coding, memos were written to record insights, interpretations, and reflections that occurred. Memos are defined as "…the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding" (Glaser, 1978, pp. 83-84). Memos were dated and linked to transcript location (Miles & Huberman, 1994). They assisted in refining codes and developing categories and themes, identifying relationships, and

developing a clearer understanding of the processes and parameters of online coaching. Codes developed as ideas occurred and served to preserve interpretations and links. Questions and insight that occurred both when data were being evaluated and also at other times were captured as well.

The research questions guided the analysis. For the first question, the CIT reflection forms were reviewed and a chart developed recording the focus skill identified by each stage of the problem solving process. After the initial chart was developed, a professional colleague reviewed the reflection forms and identified the same skills with 100% agreement. Focus skills were recorded using the exact words of the CITs. After the chart was finalized, recurring skills identified were color coded to facilitate the identification of patterns.

For the second research question, codes and memos were reviewed and combined into categories. The transcripts were cut apart with sections labeled by CIT number and year, with a second copy of each transcript kept in complete form. In addition to identifying specific examples of how the online coaches provided support for communication skills, it became clear that three supplementary themes emerged that were not directly related to either research question but occurred with sufficient frequency that they should be recognized. They were concerns that were not identified as focus skills by the CITs.

Communication as a Focus Skill

One of the research questions is what skills are selected most frequently as focus skills and how often are collaborative communication skills selected. This question will be addressed first. Focus skills were one way that the CIT could request help. The use of

collaborative, reflective communication skills was the most frequently selected skill identified as a focus skill, for those CITs who selected a focus skill, over the three years of data. The focus skills selected by year are summarized in Tables G.1, G.2, and G.3 in Appendix G. Of the 138 focus skills selected by the CITs, 40% (56) were collaborative communication skills.

Not all CITs identified a focus skill consistently. Across the 33 sets of data, there were 241 opportunities for the CIT to identify a focus skill. These opportunities included the taped sessions as well as reflections on the instructional assessment, which is not taped as it involves a student. Of the opportunities available, only 57% (138) were utilized to identify a focus skill. Although some CITs identified a focus skill consistently, others were inconsistent. Of the 33 data sets, 12% of the CITs identified at least one focus skill for each of the stages, 12% did not identify a focus skill for any stage. The remaining 76% identified a focus skill inconsistently.

For most of the cases reviewed, collaborative communication skills were identified as a focus skill primarily in the contracting stage, when the CIT realizes on reflection that most of this stage involves offering information, and the problem identification stage, where the focus moves toward defining the teacher's concern in observable and measurable terms. Of the focus skills identified by the CIT's in the contracting and problem identification stages, 50% were the use of collaborative communication skills; of the focus skills selected in the intervention design, intervention implementation, and intervention evaluation stages, only 30% were the use of collaborative communication skills. Of the total number of times communication skills were identified as a focus skill, 64% were in the contracting and problem identification

stages while 36% were in the later stages. Once the interventions are developed and implementation begins, collaborative communication skills are seldom identified as a focus skill, despite the fact that these skills continue to be crucial to moving the process along effectively. The focus for the CITs moves to more content related areas such as assessing reading skills or graphing and charting data.

However, even when communication skills were not identified as focus skills, the use of collaborative communication skills was noted as a concern throughout other sections of the CITs' reflections. Moreover, sometimes they needed support but did not recognize it. The coaches were often able to identify this need from the questions asked and reviewing the tapes submitted.

Other Focus Skills Selected

Although communication skills were the most frequently selected focus skill, of the CITs who identified a focus skill, 26% (36) were related to the problem solving process including prioritizing concerns, developing O/M definition of the concern, data collection, instructional assessment, data analysis, and implementing interventions with integrity. Developing an observable/measurable definition of the teacher's concern was selected 13 % (18) of the time. CITs struggled with developing a definition of the concern that was specific enough to be observed and counted. Other skills selected more than once included graphing and charting data (2), data collection and analysis (8), and the use of the Student Documentation Form (7). The Student Documentation Form (SDF) is the form used to a definition of the concern, goals, a description of the intervention developed, and data collected. None of these skills approached the frequency of identification of communication skills as a focus skill.

Using Collaborative Communication Skills Purposefully

.   The purpose of using collaborative communication skills is to support the

development of a collaborative relationship and to facilitate the problem solving process

by drawing on the expertise of both the CIT and the teacher. This perspective is reflected

by the following coach feedback to a CIT who had selected communication skills as a

focus skill:

> You also did a good job with your communication skills, especially paraphrasing.
> You would often paraphrase what the teacher had just said and then ask a question
> to get more specific about the concern. I think that by using the communication
> skills, you are helping the teacher to really reflect on her concerns about the
> student.

This feedback not only reinforces the CIT's skills but also clarifies for her a reason why

the use of these skills is important in supporting and strengthening the teacher's skills,

which is the focus of the IC process.

In addition to being selected as a focus skill, communication skills are addressed

on the CIT reflection form with information about how they are used in the problem

solving process. The use of collaborative communication skills is considered so essential

in the IC process that there is a specific section on the reflection form to identify skills

used and the purpose for each (see Appendix D). In the data set reviewed, 82% of the

CIT's (27 of 33) responded to both parts of the question on the reflection form which

asks not only what skills were used but for what purpose. This question is designed to

connect the use of communication skills to specific goals in moving through the process.

Supportive coach response. In the data, there are multiple examples of responses that support the effective use of communication skills. For example, one CIT indicated that she used clarifying questions and relevant questions to encourage the teacher to "respond and share her thoughts about the results of the instructional assessment" and "paraphrasing what the teacher said to make sure I understood that she was asking to check letter id again." Later in the process, the CIT reflects that she used perception checking to "…let the teacher know that I understand how anxious she is feeling to get the interventions in place for the student." The coach responds:

> Your use of communication skills in these sessions was wonderful. You used
>
> phrases like "so what I'm hearing you saying is…" and "tell me your thought
>
> about…" I love the way you try to get the teacher to reflect and give her input…

In one case, the CIT (A 8) reflects that the contracting stage did not offer many opportunities for using reflective communication skills. The coach responds that:

> …at the same time, you're still setting the stage for collaboration. I thought you
>
> did an excellent job with this. You mentioned several times that you'll be
>
> working shoulder to shoulder, you told her you'll be right there with her…

Mentioning working shoulder to shoulder relates to the collaborative relationship but not necessarily to the use of collaborative communication skills. As the CIT and teacher moved into the problem identification stage, the coach indicated:

> As this was your initial PID meeting where the focus is on developing a shared
>
> understanding of the teacher's concerns, paraphrasing and clarifying are key
>
> skills. You did a wonderful job of using both. Each time the teacher described a

new aspect of her concerns, you paraphrased her statements to insure your

understanding. You also used clarifying questions very skillfully…

 She ends with "Just think if you hadn't clarified, you might still be talking about fluency

when her real concern was decoding! Very nice use of your collaborative

communication skills to accomplish developing a shared understanding of the teacher's

concern." Later coach feedback includes "I also particularly liked the way your

discussion of interventions really pulled on the teacher's experience with the strategies…

That really maximizes her buy in and the likelihood of her implementing the

interventions". As the end of this case approaches, the CIT defines her focus skill as:

> I will focus on using collaborative communication skills to involve the teacher in
>
> the evaluation of the intervention and determination of future direction…I will
>
> also use communication skills to empower the teacher to take the lead in the
>
> decision making process and continue to promote confidence in her abilities.

The coach follows up in feedback with "I think informing the teacher of what you are

going to talk about and then eliciting her thoughts is a nice way to enhance the

collaborative nature of the interaction…" This coach's feedback built on the CIT's

reflection and extended to connect collaborative communication skills to desired

outcomes. The effective responses are specific and directed to the purpose of the

communication skills.

Less supportive coach responses. For the 18% (6 of 33) of the CITs who did

not identify the purpose of the communication skills they used, but simply provided a list,

a less supportive response was from the coaches who did not point out the omission and

missed an opportunity to connect the communication skills to the process. For example,

another CIT expressed concern about using collaborative communication skills, and shared in her reflection that when reviewing her audiotape, she kept a tally of which communication skills she used. She comments "I felt like I did a decent job of using paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions, and requesting clarification. I did not use perception checking at all… I also noted that I did not use summarizing." The "for what purpose" portion of the question was not answered, and the coach did not point this out. Instead, the coach responds (after reviewing the audiotape), "You asked for clarification when you said: What does that look like when you say he orally retells well?" The coach also provided specific examples of paraphrasing and summarizing. This CIT did not select communication skills as a focus area and the coach did not help the CIT connect a particular communication skill to a specific desired result. This misses an important opportunity to reinforce for the CIT the importance of the use of collaborative communication skills.

Supportive Coaching of Communication Skills

Coaches support collaborative communication skills in several ways. Providing feedback with examples and framing the importance of collaborative communication skills are seen most often, but practical and specific suggestions are offered as well.

Use of Examples. Several coaches used specific examples as ways to address CIT's concerns and questions. One CIT (C 10) reports in her reflection: "I was mostly focused on what I had to communicate and talked over her a time or two. I anticipate having a struggle with effective reflective communication skills." The coach responds with a personal example:

I too struggled with that. As teachers we feel we must do everything so quickly in order to move on to the next thing…The teacher must have time to reflect so slow the pace and expect some pauses as you communicate. Focusing on clarifying questions and requesting clarification insures that you have the same picture of the student that she has. During this next session your job is to encourage her to do more reflecting and talking while you do more listening.

The CIT apparently found this helpful and followed the coach's advice. The coach then provides this feedback:

Your use of reflective communication skills was clear and effective…You anticipated struggling with effective reflective communication skills so I commend you on how well you did!...Your clarifying questions led to more reflection by the teacher and more information for you as well as for her.

In commenting on the working relationship between the teacher and the CIT, the coach indicates: "You have a natural and easy sounding dialogue…your collaboration is readily apparent." Still later in the process, the coach comments:

This was the most collaborative session that you have had…Your use of reflective communication skills was readily apparent…and you sounded more relaxed at letting her have some time to reflect and give a suggestion. You always do such a good job of summarizing at the beginning of a session…

Another coach provides this feedback to a CIT (C 5) :

…your choice to focus on collaborative communication skills…is extremely appropriate. PID is a time when these skills are most important…You will probably spend most of the session listening to the teacher describe the concern

and you will be clarifying, summarizing, etc. to help narrow the focus of the problem.

Offering specific feedback. Some coaches provided feedback that was very specific in terms of communication skills to use with examples. One coach suggests to a CIT (C 4) who identified collaborative communication skills as a focus skill in the early stages of the process:

This would have been a great time to practice some of the communication skills you mentioned – maybe perception checking to involve the teacher a little more in this stage…to make sure you are both on the same page…The teacher…seemed fairly comfortable, but communication is key in this process and I don't think we ever do enough of this kind of interaction.

She also offers the following feedback:

In your next steps…don't rely on just the data you collect…to determine concerns. Let the teacher do most of the talking…and try to use those reflective communication skills (paraphrasing, perception checking, clarifying – requesting or asking clarifying questions, and summarizing) to really get her to elaborate on the concerns she sees with this student. This type of discussion can really help the teacher to reflect on this student and she may come up with thoughts or see perspectives she hadn't considered yet.

With this feedback, the coach reminds the CIT of the focus of the IC process which is to strengthen the teacher's skills. In the next feedback (after the CIT has again selected communication skills as a focus skill), the coach compliments the CIT on her use of

communication skills and then identifies specific skills used with examples of each. She ends with this comment:

> I think your use of communication skills made the teacher reflect and narrow down her concern from " He needs a ton of support during journal time" to "I would really like to see him write 3 or more sentences on one of the topics on the board or one of his own choice."

By providing specific feedback, the coach is letting the CIT know clearly what she did well. She highlights how the CIT helped the teacher develop and observable and measurable description of her concern. She also provides practical suggestions to the CIT's reflection on feeling that she was talking too much:

> This is very easy to do because you know where you want the conversation to go. Asking the teacher for her input puts the ball in her court, and then from there you can steer the conversation. For example, the teacher may say "I had no idea he was able to…" or "It confirmed exactly what I was saying." From here, you can use your reflective communication skills (tell me more, explain what you mean) to really push the teacher to reflect on the student's abilities and needs.

This feedback points out the importance of extending the use of reflection skills to the teacher as well as engaging in self reflection.

Another coach complimented a CIT (B5) who selected communication skills as a focus skill with this feedback:

> Your use of communication skills in this area was wonderful! You paraphrased and restated the concerns, offered information, and asked clarifying questions about the concern…At times you seemed to struggle with how to phrase your

questions, but this did not disrupt your communication…I don't know if you are aware of how often you are using these skills. It's great! You consistently paraphrase and summarize what the teacher has said. You follow her leads nicely and work from what she says in conversation…You are helping her clarify her concerns through each of these meetings.

Later in the process, the coach again reinforced the use of communication skills with:

You used phrases like "so what I'm hearing you saying is…" and "tell me your thoughts about…" I love the way you try to get the teacher to reflect and give her input on the information.

As the process proceeds, the coach continues to be enthusiastic and shares with the CIT:

I cannot state enough how your collaborative communication skills are growing! To check for understanding you said "Let me rephrase my question" and expanded on the teacher's ideas…I like how you shared and explained but continually did some perception checking and clarifying to help be sure you were creating a shared understanding of the strategies you and the teacher would be implementing. WOW!

The case was completed and the final feedback from the coach is:

You have done a great job building a shoulder to shoulder relationship with this teacher. You have encouraged her to give input and developed a safe environment for her to share opinions, perceptions, and frustrations with you in a non threatening environment. You have successfully passed the torch and the teacher is off and running. Yippee!

The coach has reinforced the goal of IC as a consultee-centered approach that focuses on building the consultee's capacity to address similar problems in the future

Use of visual images. Some coaches used visual images such as passing the torch mentioned above. Another coach used a visual example in responding to a concern about switching their professional role: "I tell my case managers to think of themselves as a guide on an archeological dig-not the archeologist-just the guide." In this way, the coach provides a visual connection for the CIT to use in shaping her communication with the teacher. This is useful for the CIT and reinforces the approach in a way that words alone could not.

Supporting appropriate use of questions. As practicing professionals, many of the CITs are accustomed to using questions to gather information. Since questions can be the least collaborative of the communication skills, coaches recommend limiting them, even though they are widely used in many professional interactions. Some coaches encouraged the CIT to use other approaches while supporting the strategic use of questions. The coach describes a CIT's (A5) skills as wonderful but cautions:

> There was a segment …where you began asking questions that…become more student focused…These are all questions that we are used to asking, but I want you to reflect on these questions and ask yourself if these questions will help you conduct your instructional assessment…It is so easy to begin asking these questions, we all do it but ask yourself what purpose they will serve you at this time…

Through this feedback, the coach helps the CIT maintain a frame to clarify when it is appropriate to use questions to acquire information.

A CIT (B4) who did not select communication skills as a focus skill area reflected: "I seem to have trouble moving smoothly through them (the meetings), especially around academic areas. I have a hard time knowing what to ask." The coach responds:

> The only thing I would suggest you continue to work on is pulling back some from taking the lead to guiding the teacher to her own conclusions. This is a hard skill to develop but it really allows the teacher to practice reflecting and linking assessing information to instructional strategies. The more opportunities a teacher has to do this within the structure of a consultative model, the higher the probability that they will carry this new way of looking at students into their classroom instruction/assessment. This will also open more opportunities to use perception checking.

The coach responds to the CIT's concern and also explains the advantage of what she is suggesting in building the teacher's capacity and making her an equal partner in the collaborative relationship.

Providing specific examples of communication skills. Some coaches included specific examples of communication skills used by the CIT to help clarify for them how the skills look. One coach provides this feedback to a CIT:

> I heard you ask clarifying questions (can you share a little more about what that looks like…?), paraphrase (So he is missing the vowel often which leads to…), requesting clarification (Tell me if he knows all his vowels), and summarized at the end all that was discussed to confirm with the teacher that you both were on the same page with initial concerns.

This specific feedback helps the CIT maintain her understanding of how specific

communication skills look and their purpose.

Another CIT (A5) who selected collaborative communication skills as a focus

skill received this feedback from her coach: "You did an excellent job of explaining that

IC is collaborative and that you and the teacher were going to work shoulder to

shoulder…" She also says:

> You say that you did not use communication skills but you did…You summarized
>
> back to her what she said she knew about IC and offered relevant information
>
> back to her…In PID you will need to utilize more communication skills to gain a
>
> shared perspective of the student with the teacher but you have set the
>
> groundwork for easing into the next step.

A later recommendation from the coach was: "…use your communication skills to help

her (the teacher) clarify in her own mind what her concerns are." She also adds:

> You have great communication skills. Your session had the flow of a
>
> conversation with the communication skills embedded in the dialogue…You
>
> summarized and clarified throughout the session. This was really effective when
>
> you paraphrased what the teacher said about the student not being able to read
>
> sight words. You spent time there getting the teacher to reflect on what she meant
>
> by that statement…

In one case the CIT (B 2) reports that the teacher expressed concern about the

time commitment, but at the same time, wanted to participate. The coach suggests a way

to use communication skills to address this: "One possible reflection could have simply

restated her concern about how long the process would take…Additionally, a reflection

integrating her concerns and interest could be used." The coach suggest possible wording: "It sounds like you have some concern about the time commitment, but are also feeling that this would be a very valuable process to you." She goes on to say: "Such reflections can let the teacher know that you are hearing what she is saying, and at the same time, allow her to think about how the process will work for her."

Sometimes CITs needed validation that an interaction they had with the teacher was appropriate. One CIT (B4) reflects that:

> I used perception checking once but that didn't go well. I reflected a feeling that the teacher wasn't feeling so it didn't fit. I asked clarifying questions with my favorite being "what does that look" like kinds of questions. I began the meeting with a "tell me more/requesting clarification" kind of statement but I'm not sure if it counts at the beginning like that or if it should have been later in the conversation to be helpful.

The coach responds with specific reference to the use of communication skills:

> . I think that you did a fine job of identifying which skills you used. You mentioned that your use of perception checking didn't go well because the teacher was feeling something different than what you reflected. Actually, this information was very helpful in clarifying her feelings and making sure you understood how she felt. Good job!

The coach has let the CIT know that although she felt the interaction as not useful, it actually was.

Using communication skills to redirect the consultee. Sometimes a teacher will begin focusing on issues other than instruction and it can be a challenge to redirect

attention to modifying the instructional component to meet student needs. Some coaches

provided feedback on this process. For example, a CIT (A 4) receives this feedback from

her coach after reviewing the contracting tape:

> Your teacher asked a lot of questions and you handled it well by providing
>
> information about the school and school district's plan, and other issues related to
>
> special education identification. With so many questions, I started to wonder
>
> about the teacher's underlying thoughts and concerns. How do you think she
>
> feels about this process? Reflecting some of her statements, summarizing, and
>
> asking for clarification might have helped to elicit some of her feelings and
>
> facilitate collaborative problem solving. To me, she seems either apprehensive or
>
> suspicious about the process. What did you think/feel about this?

When the CIT and the teacher begin to examine concerns and the teacher focuses on

issues other than instruction, the coach offers suggestions:

> When your teacher shared concerns about the student not caring about school,
>
> being emotional, etc. I think you might have used a reflective statement to address
>
> her apparent concern. How do you think she would have responded if you said
>
> something about her worrying that the student is not motivated and that is also
>
> affecting how she is doing in class? Or worrying that if the student isn't
>
> motivated, how can she really help her? I wondered if the teacher feels that
>
> motivation is a big issue and if she feels a little like she doesn't have control over
>
> the student's learning – like it's out of her hands to some extent?

The coach is clearly trying to help the CIT pull the teacher into the process while at the

same time, insuring that the teacher is framing the IC process correctly in terms of how it

is different from the special education process and also focusing on what the teacher can control, that is, instruction.

Framing the problem solving process. Since using a collaborative problem solving approach is a new skill set for the CITs, sometimes feedback is provided related to how the problem solving interactions between the CIT and the teacher are framed. The coach for CIT (A4) offers this feedback relative to framing the case for the teacher to increase her interest in participating:

> Several times you talked about this being a practice case. I wondered about the implications of this – what message the teacher takes away from hearing that. Could she think she's just helping you out as opposed to this being the first real case at your school? Maybe an approach that suggests your teacher is doing something that's 'groundbreaking' and 'forward thinking' would encourage her to really take responsibility for the process with you and possibly help her if there's apprehension or suspicion about the value of the process. Also, it's not really practice since it is a real case even though you are getting coached.

> The coach also offers:

> I like how you validate the teacher's suggestions and how you summarize the information for her. She seems to clarify more information each time you summarize because she realizes when she hears her own thoughts repeated back, that she has left out some crucial information.

Less Supportive Coaching Strategies

Not providing specific feedback. Although most coaches provided appropriate feedback that was specific and addressed the expressed needs of the CIT, some coaches

did not. Sometimes CITs requested feedback and the response lacked specificity. One CIT said in her reflection after contracting, "I am not sure that the reflective communication skills apply to contracting as much as the problem identification stage." The coach provided this feedback – "You did a great job with contracting. You started out by talking about the collaborative nature of this process…". A better response would have addressed the CIT's reflection by pointing out that the contracting stage sets the tone for the rest of the process, and would also have suggested that instead of talking about the collaborative nature of the process, it would have even more appropriate to demonstrate collaborative language.

This coach's style was often to simply restate the content of the work done by the CIT and teacher as feedback. For example, later in the problem solving process between this coach and CIT, the coach discusses the quality of the working relationship as follows, "She (the teacher) seemed very willing to listen to you. I felt like you were carrying the conversation though. She seemed very quiet. Next time, try to pull her in more." No guidance is provided on how to use collaborative communication skills to accomplish this. Later, the CIT reflects "I tried to use a lot of 'tell me more' and 'what does that look like in the classroom…' She was very open to talking and looking at the strategies." Although the case was completed and the CIT reported that the teacher was pleased with the success of the intervention, the focus of the use of collaborative communication skills in building the capacity of the consultee (teacher) to address similar problems in the future was not emphasized. This CIT did not select communication skills as a focus area at any stage of the process and coach feedback was minimal on the use of communication skills.

Not responding to CIT needs. CIT's sometimes become so focused on completing the stages of the problem solving process and resolving content issues that they ignore applying and practicing the important collaborative communication skills. One CIT (B 13) expresses this as:

> I must admit I wasn't thinking at all about using the reflective communication skills because I was just trying to present the information regarding… That was one area of our training over the summer that I wish we could have spent more time on. I don't feel solid about how it all works.

The coach did not provide feedback on this important reflection and misses the opportunity to reinforce the importance of practicing the communication skills. Later in the case, the CIT reflects that she used some of the collaborative skills (clarifying questions, relevant questions, and paraphrasing) with a student during the instructional assessment (while the teacher observed) and wasn't sure if this "counted". The coach responds "These skills are great for any situation – it all counts. You're also providing good modeling for the teacher." This coach did not provide feedback which was helpful or supportive to the CIT.

Summary of Coaching Strategies. The coaches generally did a good job of both modeling collaborative communication skills and helping the CIT's tie together the pieces of the process so that it was clear that collaborative communication skills and the problem solving process represent a marriage rather than two separate skill sets. They accomplish this by offering examples, providing specific feedback, supporting the appropriate use of questions, using visual images, providing specific examples of communication skills, using communication skills to redirect the consultee, and framing

the problem solving process. Supporting the use of collaborative communication skills as the engine which moves the consultation process forward should be the major emphasis of feedback in this area.

Areas which could be addressed more completely include the following: a) addressing CIT's who do not select a focus skill, since coaches rarely did this in the transcripts reviewed; b) emphasizing the continued importance of using collaborative communication skills, in addition to content through the later stages of the process (intervention design, implementations, and evaluation); and c) being more consistent in providing examples with their feedback, to let the CITs know what they are doing well and what needs to be addressed further or in a different way. Comments such as "You're doing a great job" certainly instill positive feelings but are not useful in clarifying for the CITs exactly what they did or said that was effective. In the long run, this can reduce the likelihood that this behavior will occur again in a planned way.

Of the 33 coaches, 15 consistently provided supportive feedback and 11 provided some supportive feedback. Seven coaches were less effective in their support and often provided feedback that was not consistent with the CIT's questions and concerns.

Supplementary Themes

In analyzing the data, three supplementary themes emerged: a) the difficulty in switching one's professional role, b) dealing with scheduling concerns, and c) moving through the problem solving process with integrity. These were identified through coding and memoing, and were seen outside the two research questions.

Theme 1: Professional Role Change

One of the supplementary themes that emerged from the data was the lack of comfort with changing one's professional role from being an expert to being a collaborative consultant. The CITs struggle with this shift as a visitor to a foreign country would in terms of attempting to master a new language while fulfilling a new professional role. The CITs describe this struggle in different ways: a) as a lack of comfort with the role change, b) wearing different hats, c) struggling with the concept of no "right" answer, d) struggling to be on the same page as the teacher, and e) developing a shared vision of the concern with the teacher to guide the process. Since the role shift is supported by the effective use of collaborative communication skills, the importance of reinforcing the connection between the role shift and communication style is clear. Struggling with altering one's approach to resolving a professional problem while at the same time using different language that feels uncomfortable initially can be daunting.

Although cognitively the CITs' comments suggest that they recognize the value of working in a collaborative framework, many find the reality of changing professional hats quite challenging in actual practice. This challenge is expressed by the CIT's in several ways. For example, one CIT (B 6) reflected:

As a school psychologist, I am used to being seen as the specialist. …in order to truly make this a collaborative process, I need to work on using fewer I's and more we's. I need to make a concerted effort not to guide the conversation with the teacher.

The coach responded by commenting, after reviewing the tape, that the CIT was more successful than she realized in letting the teacher guide the conversation and effectively prompting her to continue. The coach also reinforced that the CIT had used "we" a lot and made a special effort to highlight the teacher's strengths.

As the CIT and the teacher began to define the concern in observable and measurable terms, the CIT reflects that she felt like she was "floundering" and was unsure about how many concerns to address, how to prioritize them, and that she was being redundant. The coach reminded her that,

...it is not your job to decide which issue is prioritized and addressed first, the teacher needs to make that choice. Often though, you need to remind the teacher that the process works best taking one issue at a time.

The CIT comments in her next reflection that she "…struggled a bit during this phase. I felt as though I had a lot of difficulty making the teacher's concerns as observable as possible. I also wasn't clear on how many concerns I should address at once." She goes on to say "I don't know what is wrong with me sometimes. I am learning though". At this point it is clear that the CIT is still taking ownership for making the process work and solving the problem but at the same time, experiencing some level of cognitive dissonance. The coach reminds her in feedback that part of what is fueling her feeling of floundering is her sense of taking responsibility for making the IC process work but "…if it is truly collaborative then all the decisions are either shared or given over to the teacher to decide." The CIT comments in her next reflection that the teacher shared with her how much the meeting helped her understand and prioritize the concerns. The CIT indicates that this was a pleasant surprise since she had felt that the meeting did not go well. From

this point on, the CIT seems to gain confidence with the process although the coach cautions her that "…you also mentioned me quite a bit, which could communicate that there is an expert who knows the answers."

In another case, the CIT (C6) expressed that she felt she was talking *at* the teacher (during contracting) rather than engaging in a give and take conversation. The coach responded that the CIT should not be concerned, as the contracting stage involves conveying information. The teacher had indicated that her understanding of the process was that it would involve "ways you can give me strategies to work with my students". The coach suggests that this would have been a good opportunity for the CIT to explain how the collaborative approach differs from the expert model.

The CIT later reflects that she was uncomfortable with periods of silence while she was taking notes during a session with the teacher. She wanted to respond more quickly, a characteristic of the expert model. The coach responded that it sounded on the tape as if the teacher understood that note taking is part of the process, while the CIT comments that "I don't have all the answers" and indicates again her feeling of talking too much and reflects on a need to talk less. The coach points out "Remember this is not an expert model and you do not need to have or to get all the answers yourself". She provides an example of statements made by the CIT that were "…statements from you making you the expert. It seems as if you had the meeting mapped out in your mind and only needed to inform the teacher of how you would do it." The coach asks how this conversation could be made more reflective, what talking was not needed, and asks what the CIT could have done to encourage more verbalizations from the teacher. She suggests that when reviewing and reflecting on the next tape, the CIT should pay

attention to the things she said that encouraged the teacher to talk more. The coach again reminds the CIT that this is not an expert model and that although the CIT is an expert in the process, "…when you do the majority of the talking you are failing to collaborate and have the teacher reflect".

> One CIT (B13) reflects that she needs to

> …remind myself to use the reflective skills…This is difficult for me because I think I am very used to being in the role of the expert and feeling some pressure to have wise input that no one else has thought of.

This is a good example of the intertwining of the difficulty in shifting professional role and the use of communication skills. The coach provides supportive feedback:

> I don't know anyone who hasn't struggled with this at first. It's an adjustment for the teacher too as they are used to handing the student off to a team of experts…I tell my case managers to think of themselves as a guide on an archaeological dig – not the archaeologist – just the guide.

The coach has provided support, validated the CIT's concern, and offered a new framework for the CIT with a visual correlate. Later in the process, this same CIT offers:

> I'm starting to become more comfortable with more reflecting and less 'as an expert here's what I think we should do'. In fact, it's beginning to feel quite liberating to say to my teacher 'what do you think?' and 'how do you see…

The coach's response – "Very cool!" Toward the end of the case, the coach provides feedback:

It sounds like you and your teacher are in a frustrating spot. I totally understand

your concern about reverting back into the expert model and appreciate the care

you are taking to follow the IC model.

In these examples, the CIT did not specifically identify communication skills as a focus area although they included their concerns in this area in other sections of the reflection.

One CIT (C10) with extensive experience as a special educator reflects that she struggles with using collaborative communication skills. The coach offers this feedback: "You used your communication skills well and elicited much information from the teacher. You used 'tell me more' extremely well and paraphrased accurately." Later in the case, the CIT comments that she did not use many of the communication skills in the session and the coach responds:

It is hard for us to remember during our first practice case that we are not in the

role of the expert but that our role is to ask questions like 'what did you notice

when he read?...This does get easier with practice. It is a process most of us are

not used to using with other teachers and…the teachers are not used to seeing you

in this role.

This coach utilized her own experiences as well as the common background in teaching she shared with the CIT to provide support and skillfully wove the use of collaborative communication skills into suggestions supporting the role change from expert to collaborative consultant.

Another CIT (A5) with a professional background as a reading specialist and general education coordinator reflects that "…I am finding it difficult in refraining from just telling the teacher what to do. I need to make sure that I am guiding and that we are

working through this process together." Although the coach does not address this very

clear concern directly, she does reinforce the CIT's comments to the teacher describing

the IC process as a "…learning experience for both of us." She also praises the CIT's

comments to the teacher that she is not there to solve the teacher's concerns but that they

would be resolving them together. The coach also cautions that the teacher's comment

on "…any interventions you can give us…" is a red flag. She reminds the CIT that

designing the intervention together is what makes the IC process unique, as the CIT and

the teacher work together to determine what fits with the classroom and instruction as

well as student needs. The CIT comments that she needs to reflect on some of the

teacher's concerns because "…I feel like I'm missing something…I don't have all the

answers to what he is capable of doing." The coach reminds the CIT that her role is to

help the teacher reflect and that "…this is not an expert model and you do not have to

have or get all the answers yourself." In her final reflection, this CIT provided a detailed

summary of her use of collaborative skills and indicated that the teacher commented on

how much the process had helped her in working with this student and also developing

confidence in her own ability. It appears that this was a successful case despite the CIT's

concerns and that she was able to effectively use her new skill set to achieve this result.

The coach feedback emphasized the effective skills demonstrated by the CIT.

     Another CIT (B2) reflects that she was concerned that she felt confused about

where to go in the conversation with the teacher to achieve a shared vision. The teacher

believed that the student's behavior impacted academic performance and the CIT

disagreed. She states that she "…didn't want to appear the expert" by stating her

disagreement and found it difficult to retain a shoulder to shoulder perspective at that

time. The coach pointed out that it can be difficult to determine when to point things out directly or let the teachers figure it out on their own. She reinforces that the CIT had built a collaborative relationship so that expressing an opinion based on data would be appropriate. She cautions that this should be done in a non judgmental way that does not make the teacher's view appear wrong. The coach also points out that when designing interventions, asking direct questions which are not reflective such as "have you tried this?" or "what about this?" can actually become suggestions disguised as questions and can make the session less collaborative. The CIT later reflects that in discussing implementation of the intervention that she felt she "…became too invested in solving the problem for the teacher than investing in the process for the teacher. I was wearing my teacher's hat and not wearing my consultant's hat." The coach responded that both the CIT and the teacher appeared to be learning from the experience.

In another case, the coach suggests to the CIT (B 3) that she and the teacher put aside the data that the teacher brings initially until after they have completed their instructional assessment (IA) because teachers are "...used to a traditional child study team model where they go to a team of experts with their extensive data and prove they have done everything they can for the student." She suggest that by putting these data aside for a while until it can be compared with what the CIT and the teacher discover, the focus is redirected on looking at the student in a new way and focusing on what the student can do rather than what the student cannot do. The coach also suggests that the CIT exercise caution in doing things for the teacher since the goal of the collaborative process is to enhance student and staff performance, which only happens when the teachers are allowed to develop the skill themselves.

One CIT (B 13) had suggested to the teacher that she (the CIT) could work in the classroom with a small group to provide more intense intervention than the teacher could provide and requested feedback from the coach. The coach is very clear in her feedback saying "No – that is not your role as the case manager". She elaborates by providing some things to think about, asking specifically:

How will going into the classroom impact staff moving away from the expert model where the teacher does all they can…and then drops them off for the experts to either suggest some magical intervention or test for special education?

The coach also suggests that going into the classroom to provide services outside the realm of what was planned collaboratively with the teacher could set the expectation that the case manager would need to be a content expert in addition to an expert in the problem solving process and could have a negative impact on recruiting new members for the IC Team. The CIT says:

I knew at the training that this would be one of the toughest areas for me. I really didn't even need to ask you the question…I know the answer. I guess I'm more comfortable with the expert model than I realized.

The coach validates her comments:

It took me a while to get out of the expert model too. In the beginning, I had to consciously stop myself from my natural response of wanting to rescue. It takes time and that's okay.

Later in the process, the CIT reflects that the teacher is frustrated because she feels that she is doing all she can and the student needs more intense small group intervention. She offers "I feel like we've come full circle and are ending up with the

same expert model of intervention…I want to stay true to the IC model but…I am really concerned about the student." The coach models perception checking in her feedback with "It sounds like you and your teacher are in a frustrating spot. I totally understand your concern about reverting back into the expert model and appreciate the care you are taking to follow the IC model." The coach also suggests that the CIT and teacher might want to consider accessing the school IC team for consultation.

Summary. This theme of the challenges in switching one's professional role from an expert one to a collaborative one was identified as a concern in reflections in 9 of the 33 cases reviewed (27%). Even though it was identified directly as a focus skill only three times (2%) by these CITs, the concern was expressed in the CITs' reflections and addressed by the coaches. The coaches offered suggestions on next steps for the CITs and emphasized using collaborative communication skills to move the process along in a more collaborative way. They also reminded the CITs that this is not an expert model and that they are not expected to have or acquire all the answers. Through their well crafted feedback, the coaches encouraged the CITs to take the risk of not having the answer, but using collaborative procedures to discover an appropriate resolution with the teacher. The coaches did not have difficulty responding to these concerns from the CITs and were also skilled in identifying concerns in this area even when they were not stated directly by the CIT but suggested by reflections.

Theme 2: Scheduling Concerns

Even when the process is moving along smoothly, there are sometimes unforeseen circumstances that interfere with this. These include scheduling, other responsibilities, weather interruptions, and students/teachers who become ill. Dealing with these issues is

another theme that emerged from the data. Throughout the email exchanges included in this study, issues related to scheduling are seen in 14 of the 33 exchanges reviewed (42%). Coaching cases begin in September and although a suggested time frame for completion is provided in the online coaching participants manual, there are often scheduling issues that interfere with maintaining a focus on the case management skills. As a result, the CIT feels increasing pressure to move through the problem solving stages as quickly as possible to complete the case. This results in the focus of the process moving from working with the teacher to develop a new framework for viewing their concerns and finding new ways to address them to finding a strategy to resolve the concerns as soon as possible. In the process, using effective communication skills to develop a collaborative working relationship between the CIT and the teacher assumes a less important role.

Interruptions to the process can start at any point in the case. In 30% of the cases reviewed for this study, there were interruptions to the process. These included: teacher absences due to illness or family emergencies, problems in scheduling meetings between the CIT and the teacher because of other assigned duties at the school level, school closures because of weather, or system wide high stakes testing. In these circumstances, the CITs report that the teachers begin to lose interest because they feel that the process is taking too long in comparison to referral to special education. Although this is also a lengthy process, it is a familiar one and there is the perception that there are experts who have answers that can only be accessed through special education referrals. This is despite the fact that the special education referral process can take up to 90 days and can still result in no services provided if the student does not qualify.

For example, one CIT (A 5) indicates that after completing the contracting stage, she was not able to meet with her teacher because "something has come up." She goes on to say that she is going to be out of the building the following week so the coach suggests that she and the teacher schedule their next meeting before she is out to minimize the time before they can meet again. When they did meet next, the CIT's schedule delayed the completion of her reflection so the coach did not receive it until shortly before the next meeting. The coach advises not meeting with the teacher until she is able to provide feedback on the previous meeting. As the process moves along, additional meetings are missed and the CIT reports feeling "very frustrated." The coach offers supportive feedback:

> I know it's frustrating when you miss meeting with the teacher and you feel like things are slowing down. However it will pay off in the long run to just focus on the steps and make sure you do not skip a step because you feel rushed. You're doing great!

The CIT next reports feeling "stuck." She indicates that "…my teacher has now stood me up for our meetings three times." She describes the teacher as interested in participating in the process, but that she has many other responsibilities which "…keep her from honoring our time together. I'm not really sure what to do…we are constantly trying to scramble and reschedule…" The coach responds with empathy:

> This is an uncomfortable situation I know. You don't want to be too pushy, but you want to keep moving ahead with the case. This is when most people begin to skip steps or begin working with the student without the teacher.

She then offers a practical suggestion:

…I think you should meet with your teacher again…and re-contract with her. Ask her if she still wants to participate, and if so, how can you two find time to meet regularly… I am sure she would like to hear you acknowledge all of her responsibilities, but it will also remind her of her commitment to you.

This apparently was an effective approach. In her next communication, the CIT thanks the coach "…for your encouragement…I did have a long talk with her this morning – and guess what!? It worked! And you were right about all of it – her feeling overwhelmed, etc. And she does want to participate." Effective feedback from the coach encouraged the CIT to be proactive in resolving the scheduling problem.

Another CIT (B4) encountered scheduling issues when the teacher she had initially identified to work with decided she did not want to participate because of concerns about the time commitment. Another teacher was identified but cancelled the initial meeting. After finally completing the contracting stage with the second teaacher, the CIT had to cancel the next meeting because of a crisis at another school where she is also assigned. The coach responds: "Unfortunately things like that happen and we have to be flexible…" The following week, another crisis required the CIT to be at another school. She states to her coach that she is "…really starting to get worried about getting these tapes done. Please know that it is on my mind and it's important to me." The coach suggests a way to schedule meetings to catch up and says "…just try to encourage the teacher to stick to a set day…to meet every week and remind her that it will be worth it in the end." When the teacher cancelled the next meeting, the coach validates the CIT's concerns: "I know you are concerned about missing so many weeks of meeting with your teacher." She suggests adjusting the meeting time to better fit with their

schedules. She also encourages the CIT to "…gently remind the teacher that during contracting, both of you made an agreement to meet weekly and that having a back up time to meet may be necessary if the sessions keep getting cancelled." She follows up with a reminder for the CIT that she is doing well with the parts of the process she has completed.

Despite this positive reinforcement, the CIT reflects:

I'm frustrated with the amount of time (months) that I've been on this case with nothing happening for the student. How many times can we meet and keep talking before we're just plain ineffective and doing the student a disservice?

She goes on to describe that she is assigned to two buildings and provides individual service to about 45 students while also carrying responsibility for crisis intervention. The coach models perception checking with: "I can hear that you are very frustrated with the amount of time that the process seems to consume. I understand that it may seem like it is not helping the student as quickly as you would like." She then offers a personal example of cases she had been involved in where by taking the time to work through the process, she and the teacher were able to identify the real problem. She says:

If we had not taken the time to share what we saw, we would have missed the real problem…Even though we were both present and involved in the assessment, we both saw completely different things and interpreted what we saw differently. This was when I saw the benefit of the process.

Although the teacher continued to miss scheduled meetings, the case did reach criteria for completion, that is, completion of five audiotapes covering all stages of the process. The

coach concludes her feedback by acknowledging that this was a difficult first case and validated the CIT's comments with;

> You indicated…that it seemed like it took a long time to work on a simple goal. I think that if you would have been able to meet every week, you probably could have charted the data with the teacher more efficiently and the decision to close or begin working on another area of concern would have been made sooner.

She validates the CIT's efforts with; "…you did a good job by following through and not giving in to the obstacles you have been faced with." Although the coaches' feedback was supportive, she did not address that the focus of the process is to support the teacher in adjusting instruction to meet the needs of the student.

Another CIT (A 4) initially selected one teacher to work with and completed contracting, but then changed teachers and had to recontract with the second teacher. Problems began when the initial meeting had to be rescheduled because the CIT was out of the building. When she returned the meeting had to again be rescheduled because of an emergency IEP meeting. The coach provides this feedback: "Scheduling can definitely be a challenge at times." She then sets a schedule for reviewing upcoming tapes so the CIT will receive her feedback before the next meeting with the teacher. Another meeting was cancelled by the teacher, then scheduling conflicts interfered with meetings, and then statewide assessments occupied two weeks. The coach says:

> I am concerned that it has taken so long for you and your teacher to get to the point where you are. Do you think just rescheduling, testing, etc are what interfered? Since these things will always happen, do you think there will be ways to handle this differently so that an intervention can be implemented sooner?

Although we do spend most of our time in problem identification, several months at this stage may prevent you and your teacher from figuring out an intervention that's effective.

The CIT responds: "The time factor is a big concern not only with my case but with most of the cases in the district…Getting through the problem identification stage…in a reasonable amount of time is tough, especially in a middle school." She then describes the teacher having a health emergency and also problems with tape recorders which resulted in a completed tape being destroyed. The CIT provided a detailed summary for the coach and feedback was provided. As the case continued, there were ongoing problems with last minute IEP meetings, delays in completing the reflection, and delays in getting materials to the coach. The coach provides support with: "It's great that you are sticking with your case despite scheduling changes, other conflicts, etc."

Summary. The coaches addressed dealing with these interruptions to the flow of the cases by recognizing the CIT's frustrations using perception checking, reinforcing them for staying with the IC process, and offering practical suggestions for addressing the issues with the teacher in a collaborative way.

Although these interruptions and scheduling issues are a part of daily life in a school setting, they do seem to provide stress on CITs who are already anxious about working through a new process using new skills and maintaining a new focus on teacher skills instead of student outcomes. Although student outcomes are not ignored, the focus of the process is on strengthening teacher skills. Although the online coaching process eliminates many of the problems in scheduling time to meet with the coach face- to-face, the daily interruptions of life in a school remain as the CITs work on their cases.

Theme 3: Working Through the Problem Solving Process with Integrity

A final supplementary theme identified is working through the problem solving process. For the CITs who expressed concerns about following the stages of the problem solving process with integrity, this concern usually first appeared in the problem identification (PID) stage. This is the stage of the process where several factors converge to focus attention on the importance of following the stages with integrity. First, the focus moves from the process to the actual content area of concern (for these cases, reading). This requires the CIT to actively pull on the expertise of the teacher and for some, this presents a challenge, especially if the collaborative relationship is still fragile. Second, the harsh reality of how long the problem solving process can take, even though this was mentioned in contracting, sets in. Third, the task of establishing an observable and measurable (O/M) definition of the teacher's concern, which sometimes is initially stated in a vague way (e.g,, can't read, doesn't complete work), represents a new process for many CITs and teachers as well. It is in the problem identification stage that teachers often become impatient to "get a strategy" rather than taking the time to clearly identify the concern first so that a targeted and effective intervention can be planned. This concern was seen in 14 of the 33 transcripts reviewed (42%).

One CIT (B4) reports having difficulty during the initial problem identification between "…gathering enough information and taking too much time on this stage." The same CIT mentions that she "…doesn't currently see a need for IA (instructional assessment) in the next meeting. IA is, I feel, my weakest area of the process so I may be missing an opportunity. Any suggestions in this area would be helpful." The coach responds nicely, redirecting the CIT to the purpose of the IA:

I would highly recommend that a CBA be done, even if the results just reinforce the information the teacher has shared…Teachers rarely have time to do intensive individualized assessments during class time and sometimes this opportunity is what is needed to clarify the problem.

The coach goes on to remind the CIT of the importance of considering the student, teacher, and task when developing the instructional match. The coach continues by addressing the problem of "jumping to a solution" before the concern is clearly identified:

I heard a lot of plans being made for possible strategies to try and when these could work in the normal course of the day. This would be great if you were in the Intervention Design/Implementation phase but not during Problem Identification. You may feel the assessment step is unnecessary because you have already discussed a plan for intervention, where if you were just focusing on identifying the specifics of the problem, skipping the next step wouldn't be so tempting.

Later in the process, the coach offers feedback on following the problem solving process stages in sequence;

The teacher seemed to hear what you had to say when you began the meeting, but then she ignored the purpose of the meeting and began pushing for an intervention to a problem that hadn't been discussed during any of the PID sessions. I would strongly recommend that you meet with her and explain that it is so important to stay focused on the stage of the process you are in and ask her if she could go ahead and use the strategy that was developed…

Part of the CIT's concern regarding moving effectively through the problem solving process stages relates to maintaining the integrity of the process while meeting the needs of the teacher. One CIT (B4) expresses concern that as soon as an intervention was developed, the teacher moved on to a new concern before implementing and evaluating the intervention that had been developed. She comments:

It seemed as though the teacher had 'moved on' to different concerns before we even started meeting. She likely saw more during the instructional assessment that I did so I assume that she'd shifted her focus before we even began meeting.

The coach addresses this concern with the following feedback:

I heard you try a couple of times to remind her of where you were in the process and though that it was good to add her concern…for later consideration…I didn't hear you discuss any information you found during the instructional assessment or even the steps that you took to conduct the assessment…If you had discussed the assessment results and decided that the data had shown that the initial concerns…were no longer a problems, then moving on to another concern would have been appropriate. It is very important that you help the teacher maintain focus on the step of the process that you are working on and on the concern that you worked on through PID and assessment instead of skipping to something unrelated.

She also offers a specific suggestion: "Don't feel you have to rush through the process just to get done. It really is worth it to put the time in to identify the right concern."

Summary. Although the CITs discuss in the contracting stage that the problem identification stage can take 80% or more of the total time for the process, the CIT and

teacher sometimes reach a point where they become concerned about completing the process; teachers become impatient in working to get an intervention in place, even if sufficient data are not yet available. It is also at this point that the CIT must rely on the teacher's knowledge and expertise regarding content. This can become an obstacle if a collaborative relationship has not yet been established or is still in the process of being cemented.

Results of Peer Review of Transcripts

As stated in Chapter 3, 14 of the 33 (42%) transcripts were reviewed by peers to check for accuracy in identification of themes and coaching approaches. As the transcripts were randomly assigned to the three reviewers, not all of the themes were seen by each of the reviewers. Two reviewers reviewed five transcripts each and the third reviewer reviewed four. Of the transcripts reviewed, the reviewers agreed 87% of the time with my findings and in some cases extracted the same quotes that I did as examples.

Summary of Results

Identification of Focus Skills. In addressing the research question of what skills were selected as focus skills and how frequently communication skills were selected,, it was found that CITs often did not identify a focus skill. Of 241 opportunities to identify a focus skill, only 138 (57%) were utilized. By not identifying a focus skill, the CITs miss an important opportunity to receive targeted feedback from their coach. Of the skills identified, 40% (56) were collaborative communication skills. This demonstrates that communication skills are an area of concern for the CITs. The CITs identified communication skills as a focus skill primarily in the contracting and problem

identification stages of the problem solving process - 61% of the incidents of communications skills as a focus skill were in these stages.   Communication skills were identified less frequently in the later stages of the process where only 39% of incidents of identification of communication skills as a focus skill were seen. Of concern is that the coaches did not address the omission of identifying a focus skill. When this occurred, most provided feedback on the problem solving stage in the feedback form that addresses focus skills.

Of the CITs who identified a focus skill, 36 (24%) identified components of the problem solving process, including developing an observable/measurable definition of the concern, data collection and analysis, instructional assessment, and implementing interventions with integrity.

In an area related to focus skills, the identification of communication skill on the CIT reflection form was examined. Although 27 CITs (82%) were able to identify the communication skills they used and the purpose of each, 6 (18%) simply provided a list of the skills used without indicating why that specific skill was used. Coaches did not address this and missed valuable opportunities to build skills and understanding.

Supportive Coaching of Communication Skills. In addressing how communication skills are coached effectively in an online format, several strategies were identified.

1) *Use of examples.* One effective strategy used by the coaches was the use of examples. Sometimes these were personal ones from the coaches own experience and sometimes they were citations of the CITs performance. They were specific in their focus such as the level of collaboration and use of effective communication skills. The

specific nature of the examples helps the CIT identify what activities were effective and increases the chance that they will use them again in the future.

2) *Offering specific feedback.* Specific feedback was used to offer suggestions about the next steps for a CIT to follow. Suggestions on the use of specific communication skills to use for specific purposes, how the CIT effectively uses communication skills, and how the CIT built a collaborative relationship with the teacher.

3) *Use of visual images*. Some coaches used visual images such a passing the torch or and archaeological guide to reinforce the use of communication skills by tying it to an easily recalled visual.

4) *Supporting appropriate use of questions.* Since questions are the least collaborative of the communication skills, their use is limited. Sometimes however, they can provide information which moves the process along. The coaches encouraged the CITs to reflect on what they were trying to accomplish through their use of questions and to try different approaches.

5) *Providing specific examples of communication skills*. Some coaches gave specific quotes to illustrate for the CIT how they had used a particular communication skill which helped the CIT understand that they were using the skills and what the skills looked like. Sometimes the coach offered specific wording for the CIT to use to address a particular issue.

6) *Use of communication skills to redirect the consultee.* When the consultee begins to focus on issues other than instruction, it can be a challenge for the CIT. The coaches offered specific suggestions on communication skills to use and areas to consider in redirecting the teacher.

7) ***Framing the problem solving process.*** Some coaches addressed ways for the CIT to frame the case for the teacher so that she would become more invested in working through the process. An example would be addressing teacher concerns about participating in a practice case even though student concerns were addressed.

Less Supportive Coaching Strategies. A number of less supportive coaching strategies were also identified.

*1) **Not providing specific feedback.*** Some coaches provided very general feedback which did not clearly address the CIT's concerns or questions. For example, statements such as "You did a great job" do not provide the CIT with the specifics of what they did that was effective to increase the chance that they will be used again. Restating the content of the work done or making vague suggestions such as "Next time, try to pull her in more" do not provide direction for the CIT.

2) ***Not responding to CIT needs.*** When the CIT expresses a concern or a need, the coach has a responsibility to address it in their feedback. For example, when a CIT indicated that she was unsure about using effective communication skills, one coach did not provide feedback on this important comment.

Supplementary themes. Three additional themes were found in the data.

*1) **Professional role change.*** One of the supplementary themes identified was that of the difficulty in switching one's professional from an expert on to a more collaborative approach. This was seen in 9 of the 33 transcripts reviewed (27%). The coaches addressed this concern by reminding the CITs that IC is not an expert model and by offering suggestions for steps to follow in adopting a more collaborative approach. These included not holding themselves accountable for having all the answers, utilizing the

teacher's expertise more frequently, particularly in content areas, and more effective use of collaborative communication skills.

2) *Scheduling concerns*. A second supplementary theme was the issue of scheduling concerns when unforeseen circumstances interfere with the problem solving process. Closing of schools because of weather, teacher absence, and balancing other responsibilities were identified as specific examples. This concern was identified in 14 of the 33 transcripts (42%). The coaches address this issue by providing scheduling suggestions to assist in getting the process back on track and also recontracting with the teacher to review the parameters of the agreement to insure that the teacher still wants to participate. They also use perception checking to reflect their understanding of how frustrating this can be for the CIT. They also provide feedback on the positive aspects of the CITs efforts to maintain a balance.

3) *Working through the problem solving process with integrity*. This theme was seen in 14 of the 33 transcripts reviewed (42%). This usually first arises when the focus of the process moves into a more content focused area requiring reliance on the teacher's expertise and where the CIT must address the teacher's wish to move immediately to developing an intervention before sufficient data are collected. The coaches suggest using the expertise of the teacher more effectively, refocusing the teacher on the stages of the process and reminding them why they are crucial to developing effective interventions, and the importance of continuing to use collaborative communication skills to nurture the collaborative relationship.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In Chapter 4, the results of the analysis of transcripts of email communications between online coaches and CITs were presented. In this chapter, the results will be summarized and connected to the literature as well as to the research questions posed. The strengths and limitations of the study are examined and implications for future research and practice are discussed.

This case study was conducted to examine the process of online peer coaching for CIT's specifically around the use of collaborative communication skills. An analysis of which skills were selected as focus skills (skills identified by the CIT that they wanted specific feedback on) was also conducted. The email interactions between the coaches and CITs were viewed in the context of the total process and a rich description, consistent with the case study approach was developed.

As this study was conducted, three supplementary themes emerged within the coaching process: (a) the difficulty for some CITs in switching their practice approach from an expert one to a collaborative one, (b) scheduling difficulties which interfered with smooth movement through the process, and (c) moving through the stages of the problem solving process with integrity.

Coaching of Communication Skills in the Online Format.

The main research question of this study was to examine the process of online peer coaching of collaborative communication skills within the training model for the IC (IC) problem solving process. All the CITs were conducting their first case with a

teacher to practice the application of skills learned in a multi-day group training. Although they had practiced the skills within the training setting with each other and the trainers, this was their first opportunity to apply them in a real life setting. The online coaching process provided an opportunity for the CITs to receive individual support from a coach trained and experienced in the IC process in a format that eliminated scheduling and meeting issues. As the CITs moved through their cases, they experienced a variety of challenges and successes. Using a new approach to provide support to teachers while at the same time communicating in a collaborative way presented a challenge to many of the CITs.

The CITs used the online coaching experience to support their application of collaborative skills and to address questions and concerns. This support was critical in strengthening their skill application and provided an opportunity for them to receive personalized feedback on their effective use of collaborative communication skills. There were few excursions outside the problem solving process although two CITs asked questions about team building issues at their schools. One coach framed a comment by the CIT in terms of how working directly with a student might send the erroneous message that content expertise was a prerequisite for IC team membership.

The coaches provided feedback on communication skills, both related to the specific concern expressed by the CIT and to what the coaches themselves heard in the tapes. In their responses, the coaches often included examples from the audiotapes and reflections and sometimes shared personal examples such as a similar experience they had when they were a CIT. They related the importance of using the collaborative communication skills to support the teacher in addressing the concern the teacher

expressed. They also posed questions for the CIT to consider in planning their session

with the teacher in terms of what end result they were seeking and how to utilize the

teacher's expertise in working through the process to develop an effective intervention.

Keeping the focus on communication skills throughout the coaching process reminds the

CIT of the important function the skills serve in moving the process to achieve desired

goals. The coaches demonstrated that the effective use of collaborative communication

skills can be supported through online coaching.

However, not all coaches provided quality feedback, which raises concern that

even though the CIT completed their case with the teacher, they might not have acquired

a better understanding of the application of collaborative communication skills. Of the

33 transcripts reviewed, 15 of the coaches (45%) consistently provided feedback that was

supportive, complete, and appeared to be effective. In addition, 11 (33%) of the coaches

provided quality feedback some of the time, but also missed some opportunities to

strengthen the CITs' skills. The remaining 7 coaches (21%) experienced challenges in

consistently providing supportive feedback. Although they were very positive in their

comments, they failed to address important aspects of the use of communication skills to

facilitate the problem solving process and encouraging teacher reflection. The

correspondence between the CIT's reflection and questions and the response from the

coach was sometimes inconsistent in this group.

Advantages of coaching communication skills online. Several advantages

accompany the online coaching process. First, the CITs have the opportunity to reflect on

their communication skills and identify areas of needed improvement. Since the

reflection occurs after the actual interaction with the teacher, there is the opportunity to

develop a different perspective than in the face-to-face setting. This fosters the

development of insights that may have been missed in the actual session where the

communication is immediate with little time to reflect. Reflection is identified in the

literature as an important component of the consultation process that keeps the CIT's

focus on evaluating their own skills and behaviors in relation to the responses of the

teacher (Garcia, 2004). Second, there is a framework provided for the reflection so that

the CIT has a structure for areas that need to be reviewed and reflected on. Third, there is

the advantage for the coach of having time to evaluate their feedback before delivering it,

which provides the opportunity to make the feedback specific and helpful. The

opportunity to take a step back and evaluate one's behavior in an interaction is a valuable

component of development as a professional. Finally, the difficulties encountered in a

school setting with scheduling times to meet are eliminated as the coaching can be

conducted asynchronously.

Online coaching also serves as a way to develop a pool of future coaches.

Although coaching differs from supervision in that it is not primarily evaluative, the

coaches do provide an assessment of the CITs skills, level of understanding of the

problem solving process, and potential as a future coach. Based on this information,

CITs who have completed their initial case experience successfully are offered the

opportunity to serve as an online coach.

Use of reflection form. As part of the coaching process, the CIT completes a

personal reflection form after listening to the audiotape of each session with the teacher.

The form is sent to the online coach with the tape and Student Documentation Form.

This is designed to foster self-management of professional training and, ideally, leads to a

more refined ability by the CIT to identify areas of need as well as areas of strength.

Although the CIT's needs were often identified in this reflection form, the needs

sometimes became apparent in the questions asked by the CIT or in portions of the

audiotapes reviewed by the coaches. Identifying professional needs in writing encourages

the CITs to continually evaluate their own performance and identify challenges as well as

successes. By providing a written record, the CITs can review their observations and

reflections at a later time, if needed.

The CIT's reflections also provide the opportunity for the coaches to build

awareness of the choices the CIT has made in working with the teacher. In working with

a new approach to support teachers, the CIT is sometimes not aware of the range of

possible activities available to them. By modeling the collaborative approach, the coach

can build this awareness and also offer the benefit of their experience and expertise. This

awareness is also built through coach suggestions and specific examples.

Comparison with previous studies. The coaching process serves an important

function in supporting the CITs as they practice the application of collaborative

communication and problem solving skills. This study extends information from

previous ones examining the use of online communication as support in several ways.

Previous studies (Kruger et al, 1996; Kruger & Struzziero, 1997; Vail, 2005) used small

samples while this study used 33 sets of transcripts and so provides a wider range of

examples. Previous studies examined the use of online communication through the lens

of the participants, examining their feelings about the process, but not the content. This

study examined the coaching process through the actual words of the participants in

context. This allows the voices of the participants to speak about the challenges and

successes of the process. An additional dynamic of this study is that in contrast to previous studies, all participants were familiar with the use of email and had easy access to this form of communication. This had been a concern in some of the earlier studies.

Online coaching of consultation skills is a relatively untapped area of research. Given the limited preservice and inservice training opportunities available (Anton-Lahart & Rosenfield, 2004), improving the availability of effective online coaching opportunities represents an important contribution to the training of school psychologists.

Although the Showers and Joyce (1996) model of professional development is consistent with the IC training sequence, one difference is in the provision of feedback, which Showers and Joyce do not advise. In the online coaching process, non-evaluative feedback provides support by the coach. Showers and Joyce (1996) report that "Learning to provide technical feedback required extensive training and time and was unnecessary after team members mastered new behaviors"(p. 15). In the IC process, the opportunity through coaching to experience appropriate, non-evaluative feedback is a valuable one.

Outcomes of online coaching on communication skills. All the cases reviewed in this study met criteria for completion (at least five audiotapes covering all the stages of the problem solving process). Completion also meant that the entire process had been worked through with the teacher, so that both the teacher and the CIT experienced a different way of addressing concerns about a student. Some CITs noted that the teacher they had worked with was using the strategies developed with other students who were experiencing similar problems. Since one of the outcomes of consultee-centered consultation is to build the skills of the consultee to address similar concerns in the

future, additional support to CITs will be needed so that all of them encourage teachers to incorporate the problem solving process in their professional toolbox.

Although communication skills are identified as a critical component of the problem solving process, there is no section on the coaching feedback form to insure that the coaches address this area. Although these skills are generally addressed under the heading of quality of working relationship, it would be helpful to have a section devoted specifically to communication skills. It would also be helpful to provide specifics on addressing the quality of working relationship section. While feedback such as "It sounds like the teacher wants to work with you" instills positive feelings, it does not provide specifics about what led the coach to this conclusion or what specific actions by the CIT supported this statement.

Skill competencies identified by teachers as most valuable in a consultant include exchanging information, listening, and interpersonal communication skills (Hasbrouck, Parker, & Tindal, 1999), empathy, congruence, and positive regard for the consultee (Horton & Brown, 1990), and the use of open ended verbal cues (Henning-Stout & Conoley, 1987). Skills fall into the category of process or content but there is limited research on how the consultant in training (CIT) learns to apply specific skills (Rosenfield & Gravois, 1993). The online coaching process provides the opportunity to refine and apply these skills.

Identification of Focus Skills

Analysis of the data showed that the CITs do not always identify a focus skill and this failure to do so is often not addressed by the coach. This eliminates a valuable tool in shaping the CIT's perception of the process and the potential for feedback from the

coach. Although the coaches did identify areas of need from the reflection form and the CIT's audiotape, this was not done consistently. Over the range of data analyzed, of the 138 focus skills identified by the CITs, 40% (56) were collaborative communication skills. This demonstrates that communication skills are an area of concern for the CITs and that they seek feedback from the coach. During the intervention design, implementation, and evaluation stages, only 34% of the focus skills identified were collaborative communication skills. The focus skills selected in these later stages are more content focused suggesting that either the communication skill issues were resolved, or that the focus has shifted to a more content related area because of the nature of the stages.

Examining the total number of times communication skills were identified as a focus skill, the majority (64%) of the instances occurred in the contracting and problem identification stages. Of the total number selecting communication as a focus skill, 36% occurred in the intervention design, implementation, and evaluation stages.

Inconsistent identification of focus skills by the CITs is an area of concern. CITs who completed the reflection form sometimes left this area blank even when the rest of the form was completed. Of 241 opportunities to identify focus skills, only 67% (163) of these opportunities were utilized. Since identifying areas of need is a part of self reflection, developing competence in this area is critical. In addition, there is no opportunity for the CITs to identify a focus skill for the contracting stage since there is no reflection form completed prior to feedback for this session. The coaching manual specifies that ideally, the focus skill is identified by the CIT and the coach together, but this was not seen in any of the transcripts reviewed

Supplementary Themes

Three supplementary themes were identified in the data, and will be discussed here.

Theme 1. As the review of literature has shown, supporting the application of new skills through feedback and coaching is critical to incorporating new skills into one's professional repertoire (e.g., collaborative communication skills). This became clear in one of the supplementary themes identified, the difficulty experienced for some CITs in changing their professional approach from an expert to a collaborative one. As indicated by Harvey and Struzziero (2008), "All school psychologists are beginners when they enter situations in which they have no previous experience, either in terms of the population with which they are working or with regard to the procedures and/or tools used" (p. 41). Although school psychologists indicate that they would like more training in and opportunities to practice consultation (e.g., engaging in preventive activities), this is impeded by several factors including the difficulty in adopting a new role while continuing the old one (Wizda, 2004) and the perceived lack of competence resulting from limited training opportunities (Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008). Comfort and familiarity with the role of assessment expert are difficult to relinquish as well (Wizda, 2004). This concern is unique to CITs who are practicing professionals, in contrast to those in preservice training. These CITs have developed a professional identity and are now faced with approaching professional activities in a different way. The CITs come from expert roles such as school psychologist, teacher, counselor, and administrator. Although the CITs are practicing the application of the new skill set of collaborative consultation practices, they are not novices in their current professional fields. These

new skills are acquired as inservice experiences; it can be difficult when practicing for them to recognize that it can be necessary for the individuals to practice at the novice/beginner level with new skills until competence is achieved in their application. Replacing familiar and comfortable approaches presents a specific challenge even when the skills currently in use may be recognized as minimally effective.

As the online coaching process proceeds, it is clear that self reflection on their skills is a new concept to many of the CITs. In practicing as an expert professional, there is an assumption that there is no need to reflect on one's skills because as an expert, their skills do not need improvement. When reflecting on skills, there is an evaluative flavor that can be uncomfortable for a professional whose current role is shaped by recognition as an expert. Since all the CITs in this study were practicing professionals and continued to fulfill their regular professional responsibilities while learning the IC process, the use of self reflection was particularly challenging.

Some CITs appeared to struggle with wanting to provide direct services to students while working with adults in their IC cases. This appears to apply to CITs whose professional background is one of providing assistance directly, rather than building the capacity of adults. The CITs struggled with this role switch, since they were continuing to fulfill their regular professional responsibilities, while practicing a new approach. The online coaching provided a safe setting to recognize and work through this challenge.

***Theme 2*.** A second theme identified was the effect of scheduling difficulties on the efforts of the CITs to keep the problem solving process moving while continuing to fulfill their regular professional responsibilities and keep the teacher involved. In 14

(42%) of the 33 cases reviewed, there were concerns in this area. The interfering factors that occur regularly such as illness, family emergencies, and difficulty finding time to meet with the teacher because of schedule conflicts, can derail the process easily. The coaches recognized the disruptive nature of these events, cautioned against skipping steps of the process to catch up, and offered practical scheduling suggestions. They also encouraged the CITs to continue moving through the process.

The coaching process also provided a safe setting for the CITs to share their successes, challenges, and to share how the IC process fits in their individual setting. Since the coaches and CITs were from different school systems and often different states, this offered the opportunity to share information from a variety of settings. The various school systems represented were in different stages of implementing IC.

Theme 3. Working through the problem solving process was a concern in 14 (42%) of the transcripts reviewed. The CITs were challenged by the need to rely more heavily on the expertise of the teacher in content areas while the collaborative relationship was sometimes still developing. They also struggled with wanting to develop an intervention before adequate data had been collected, sometimes to satisfy the teacher's impatience with the pace of the process. They face the challenge of completing the problem solving process within a specific time frame and become concerned when the process moves more slowly than they would like.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the current study. All cases analyzed had been completed. While this characteristic provided a rich collection of data, different coaching dynamics might be seen in cases that did not move to completion. There may be

differences in how the coaches addressed the behavior and communication skills of the CITs, or differences in the CITs or settings that interfered with completion of the case.

Since this initial case was solicited by the CIT, it is possible that the CIT and the teacher already had a relationship or at the very least knew one another. This increased the likelihood that questions and issues could have been discussed outside the taped sessions. The influence of a positive pre existing relationship between the CIT and the teacher is an area to investigate in future research.

Data used were limited to email exchanges including the CITs' reflection and the coaches' feedback. The audiotapes of the CIT's session with the teacher were not reviewed. Reviewing the tapes could have provided insights on how the coaches interpreted the CITs' behavior and therefore impacted the feedback provided. Additional information could have been provided by interviewing the participants regarding their perspective on the process. Although this was not possible because of the archival nature of the data, it would be a topic for further research.

The potential influence of professional training on the effective use of collaborative communication skills was not evaluated since not all the CITs provided information on their professional role. The effect of training in a mental health field such as school psychology compared with training in a more academic area such as a teacher could clarify who might experience difficulty with the use of collaborative communication skills. The lack of other descriptive data about the participants also prevented assessing the potential effect of other factors, such as age, gender, professional role, on the online coaching process.

Another limitation is the lack of data on the effectiveness of the coaching on the outcomes of the case. Although all cases were completed, it is not known whether the teachers continued using the interventions developed or if they continued using the problem solving approach to address concerns; neither were data evaluated on the outcomes for the students.

Implications for Training and Practice

The IC model of consultee-centered consultation has been in use for almost 25 years. As it has expanded and changed over that time, the central role of collaborative communication skills has remained constant. The initiation of the online coaching component to supplement face to face coaching in 2001 added a new strategy for training. Online coaching received positive reaction from both CITs and coaches from the beginning of its use. However, the actual content of the coaching of communication skills had not been evaluated, so this study provides a window on how online coaches support CITs. as well as areas of the process that may need adjustment.

In providing feedback, the structured format insures that there is consistency in the areas addressed. However, there is no section which addresses communication skills specifically. They are often addressed in the section on the quality of the working relationship established and also in the section on the effectiveness of the session as a whole. Given the critical role played by collaborative communication skills in facilitating the problem solving process, there should be a section in the feedback format devoted to this important skill set.

An opportunity should also be provided for the CIT to identify a focus skill prior to the contracting stage. Since the focus skill is identified on the CIT reflection form

which is completed after the session with the teacher, there is no form completed before the contracting session. The CIT could be asked to identify a focus skill before the contracting session to provide a structure for the coaches feedback. In addition, there should be a section on the coach feedback form for addressing collaborative communication skills. They are generally addressed in the section on the quality of the working relationship but given the critical role they play, there should be a section devoted to them.

Given the dearth of consultation training opportunities at both the preservice and inservice levels, the online coaching process as a training vehicle provides an important support to training new consultants at the professional development level. The IC training sequence provides an effective way for CITs to acquire conceptual awareness and develop and practice skills with feedback, while applying them in actual situations.

The supplementary theme identified related to the difficulty in switching professional role may need to be addressed more fully in training. Preparing professionals for the challenges encountered when changing their role and the need to become a novice in practicing this skill set could make it easier for them to meet the challenges this entails.

Future Research

Future research should address a comparison of cases that are completed with those that are not, to identify any patterns which could help identify factors that interfere with case completion. Additional research is needed on how development as a consultant is influenced by skill application in a case where there is no pre- existing relationship, as was often true in this study.   A comparison of online coaches who are completing their

initial experience with coaches who have more experience could provide information on the effect of experience on coaching skills.

A final area for research would be how one's professional role influences participation and progress through the IC training process. For example, do school psychologists have more difficulty adopting a more collaborative role, given their background as perceived experts in certain areas; further, how does this impact their ability to develop and use collaborative language. Although school psychologists indicate that they value consultation and would prefer to spend more time engaged in this practice, they also indicate a lack expertise and lack of inservice training opportunities in this domain (Anton-Lahart & Rosenfield, 2004; Costenbader et al., 1992). How well designed training in the skills of consultation impacts the practice of school psychology is an area for ongoing research. Another area of interest is given that school psychologists have continually indicated that they want more training in consultation skills, why more of the participants in this set of cases were not school psychologists. Although a lack of training and practice opportunities is cited as one of the reasons that more school psychologists do not practice consultation, when an opportunity like this is offered, why more do not take advantage of it is a question.

Summary

As an initial investigation of the content of online peer coaching of collaborative communication skills in context, this study provides a baseline for further research and refinement of the online coaching process. Although many coaches demonstrated good coaching skills, some had challenges even though the cases were completed. The CITs also experienced challenges that provide the basis for developing more effective practices

in training and professional development. Despite this, it is clear that the CITs needed the feedback and support provided by the coaches. From their comments, they valued the experience and would have struggled to apply the skills they had learned without this level of support.

Online coaching serves an important function in training consultants in a process that has been effective in reducing disproportionality in special education (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006) and in fostering the broad-based practice of school psychology. By providing a quality training sequence to build the capacity of school staff in addressing concerns at the earliest level and providing appropriate and effective interventions in the general education setting, all participants benefit.

Appendix A

Table A.1
Comparison of Showers & Joyce and IC Training Stages

Stage	Level of Implementation	Showers & Joyce Activities	IC Activities
Theoretical background/building framework	Awareness Understanding conceptual basis	Readings Lectures Films Discussion	Didactic presentations Modeling Demonstration
Skill acquisition	Use of skills in simulated settings	Live demonstrations Films/videos Modeling	Role plays Simulations Audio/video tapes Modeling
Skill practice	Use of skills in actual situations	Simulations Structured feedback Open ended feedback	Complete initial case Audio/video tapes Feedback
Skill application	Application of skills	Coaching (peer, supervisor, professors, consultants)	Coaching with feedback Ongoing professional development Training and coaching others

Appendix B

Table B.1
Demographic characteristics of CIT's and coaches (2005-2006)

CIT #	Professional Role	Years of experience	Coaches' Professional Role	Years of Experience
337	Educational Diagnostician		School Psychologist	
267			School Psychologist	
268				
264				
338	Special Education Teacher	12	School Psychologist	5
269	Social Worker	2.5	Special Education Teacher	10
331	Teacher/Dept. Head	33	School Psychologist	30
303			Special Education Teacher	5
253				
260	School Psychologist	14	School Psychologist	30
261	School Psychologist	13	Assistant Principal	

Table B.2
Demographic characteristics of CIT's and coaches (2006-2007)

CIT #	Professional Role	Years of experience	Coaches' Professional Role	Years of Experience
396	Teacher	7	Special education teacher	
370			Teacher	
399	School social worker	7	Special education teacher	13
400			Doctoral student	
365				
374			Special education teacher	14
473			Special education teacher, principal	
471	Educational specialist	14	Special education teacher	14
452			School psychologist	
369			Special education teacher	14
468			Special education teacher	

Table B.3
Demographic characteristics of CIT's and coaches (2007-2008)

CIT #	Professional Role	Years of experience	Coaches' Professional Role	Years of Experience
477				
474	Teacher	15	Teacher	
478				
516	Principal			
654				
512			Teacher	30
481			Teacher	
479				
480				
513			Special education teacher	

Appendix C

Table C.1
Participant Responsibilities in IC Online Coaching by Problem Solving Stage

Problem Solving Stage	Responsibilities of CIT	Responsibilities of Coach
Contracting	• Provide information to teacher about process and determine what teacher already knows • Begin to build collaborative relationship • Obtain consent to participate and sign required release forms	• Provide initial start up information • Provide feedback guided by CIT's reflection • Offer suggestions on addressing any areas omitted in initial meeting
Problem Identification	• Work with teacher to define concern in observable/measurable terms • Complete Instructional Assessment • Gather baseline data and record on Student Documentation Form • Set short and long term goals	• Provide feedback based on CIT reflection and review of audiotape • Keep focus on use of collaborative communication skills • Support completing data collection before moving to intervention development • Stress collaborative nature of process
Intervention Design	• Work with teacher to develop intervention targeted to improve specific skills identified in PID • Record complete detailed description of intervention on SDF	• Provide feedback guided by CIT's reflection and review of audiotape • Support continued use of collaborative communication skills
Intervention Implementation	• Work with teacher to implement intervention and collect data to determine effectiveness • Review data regularly and record on SDF graph • Identify data trends	• Provide feedback guided by CIT's reflection and review of audiotape • Assist with review of data
Intervention Evaluation	• Evaluate effects of	• Provide feedback

	intervention based on data collected • Modify intervention if needed	based on CIT's reflection and review of audiotape • Focus on how collaborative communication skills supported process

Appendix D

Reflection on Case Consultation Meeting

Collaborative Problem Solving Process:
What stages of the process did you address in this meeting (see p. C-4)? Within that stage, what steps did you accomplish in this meeting? (see p. C-5 for Contracting, pC-6 for Problem ID, p. C-15 for Intervention Design, C-16 for Intervention Implementation & Evaluation, C-17 for Closure)

What stage and steps do you plan to focus on next meeting?
(Consider: addressing previous steps that still need to be accomplished, completing current steps, or moving to next steps in the process)

Collaborative Communication Skills
Which communication skills did you use in this meeting (see p. B-3)? Did you use reflective (first five) communication skills, and for what purpose?

Thinking about the problem solving stages and steps you plan to focus on next meeting, which reflective communication skills could you use to help accomplish these steps?

Instructional Assessment (IA)/ CBA:
What aspect of instructional assessment did you focus on in this meeting? (e.g., discussed purpose of IA, developed plan for IA, conducted IA, analyzed IA, prioritized using IA data, measured current performance or progress using IA data). Use the Instructional Assessment Manual *in the IC Training Manual to reference the relevant dimensions, procedures, and materials.*

*What aspect of **instructional assessment** do you plan to address in your next meeting? Use the* Instructional Assessment Manual *in the IC Training Manual to reference the relevant dimension, procedures, and materials.*

What questions do you have about problem-solving stages or steps, collaborative communication skills, instructional assessment, the use of the SDF and/or feedback from your coach?

*Based on your **plans** for your next meeting and your questions, what skill would you like to select as a **Focus Skill** for your next meeting?*

Appendix E

<u>E-Mail Feedback Framework</u>

CODE USING THE FOLLOWING:
Participant Consultant Number
Session Number
Stage Abbreviation

Focus Skill Area Performance:

Appropriateness of Content for Problem-Solving Stage

Quality of Working Relationship

Accuracy and Appropriateness of the Student Documentation Form (SDF):

Appropriateness and quality of Instructional Assessment:

Effectiveness and Efficiency of Session:

Cc: Online Coaching Coordinator

Appendix F

Informed Consent for Audiotaping and Release of Information

Your consent to audiotape IC sessions is requested as part of a follow-up learning experience through the University of Maryland. Audiotapes will be reviewed by the Participant Consultant and by the Participant Consultant's supervisor or Online Coach for the purpose of developing IC skill. In addition, the Participant Consultant's supervisor or Online Coach will review copies of the Student Documentation Form (SDF). Finally, the electronic feedback communications from the Participant Consultant supervisor or Online Coach will be reviewed by the Laboratory for IC Teams for monitoring and feedback purposes. If you agree, please sign below:

I agree to allow audiotaping of IC sessions and to release the audiotape and copies of the Student Documentation Form (SDF) to the Participant Consultant's supervisor or Online Coach for the purpose described above.

Consultee
Signature Date_____

Participant Consultant
Signature Date_____

I agree to allow release of my electronic feedback communications to the Laboratory for IC Teams for the purposes described above.
Participant Consultant

Signature Date_____
Online Coach/ Supervisor
Signature Date_____

Lab for IC-Teams - 13, rv. 4/07

Laboratory for IC Teams
Research Database Release

Your consent to release audiotapes of IC sessions, Student Documentation Form (SDF) copies, and supervisory electronic feedback communications to the Laboratory for IC Teams at the University of Maryland for future research purposes is requested. All written identifying information (i.e., audiotape labels, SDF identifying information, e-mail references) will be number coded and kept confidential. However, your identity may be partially revealed to researchers by virtue of the use of the audiotape. Your identity as a participant in any study will not be revealed without your written consent. You may withdraw your audiotape, SDF, or supervisory electronic feedback communications at any time. You may also choose to be contacted for your consent prior to each research use of your audiotape, SDF, or supervisory electronic communication.

If you have questions at any time, please contact the Co-Directors of the Laboratory for IC Teams:

Research Associate Todd Gravois, Ph.D. or Professor Sylvia Rosenfield, Ph.D.

Laboratory for IC Teams
University of Maryland, College Park
B0100K Cole Activities Bldg
College Park, MD 20742
301-405-8428

I agree to release audiotapes of IC sessions, copies of Student Documentation Forms, and supervisory electronic feedback communications to the Laboratory for IC Teams database for research purposes.

Consultee
Signature Date_____

Participant Consultant
Signature Date_____

Online Coach/ Supervisor
Signature Date_____

Please indicate your wish to be contacted for consent prior to each research use of your audiotape, SDF, or supervisory electronic feedback communication by providing contact information on the lines below:

_____ _____
Consultee Name Telephone
_____ _____
Street Address e-mail
_____
City State Zip Code

_____ _____
Participant Consultant Name Telephone
_____ _____
Street Address e-mail
_____
City State Zip Code
_____ _____
Online Coach/Supervisor Name Telephone
_____ _____
Street Address e-mail
_____
City State Zip Code

Lab for IC-Teams - 14, rv. 4/07

Appendix G

Table G.1   Skills identified as focus skills by CITs by stage of process (2005-2006)

Case #	Contracting	PID	Intervention Design	Intervention Implementation	Intervention Evaluation
269 (A1)	Communication skills O/M	IA			
268 (A2)	Communication skills	SDF	Collaborative vs expert role	Reading assessment	Communication skills
267 (A3)		Prioritizing concerns IA			
337 (A4)					
253 (A5)	Communication skills O/M	Communication skills IA	SDF	SDF	
264 (A6)	Communication skills	Communication skills O/M	Baseline Goal setting	Clarifying interventions	Intervention implementation integrity
303 (A7)		O/M	O/M		Use of strategies with other students
338 (A8)	Communication skills	Communication skills IA Data collection	Communication skills Data collection	Communication skills	Communication skills
261 (A9)					

Table G.2   Skills identified as focus skills by CITs by stage of process (2006-2007)

Case #	Contracting	PID	Intervention Design	Intervention Implementation	Intervention Evaluation
471 (B1)		Communication skills			
373 (B2)		Communication skills	Perception checking	Communications skills	
374 (B3)					
399 (B4)	Comfort with process	SDF Baseline	SDF		
396 (B5)	Communication skills	O/M	IA Prioritize concerns Communication skills	Communication skills	
397 (B6)	Communication skills	O/M	Communication skills Comfort with process	Communication skills	
365 (B7)	Communication skills	Perception checking Relevant questions Prioritizing Active listening (2) Offering information Summarizing		Requesting clarification Summarizing Paraphrasing	Active listening Paraphrasing
398 (B8)	Confidence	Confidence (2) IA Baseline	Smoother presentation	Smoother presentation	Smoother presentation
468 (B9)		O/M (2)	Goal setting (2)	Data collection Graphing/charting Data analysis	Data collection
400 (B10)		Communication skills	Working with data	SDF	Clarifying questions Summarizing
473 (B11)		CBA Avoid rush to solution	O/M Intervention development	Graphing/charting	Data analysis

370 (B12)	Communication skills	Communication skills Avoid rush to solution	Communication skills Baseline	Intervention evaluation	
369 (B13)	Communication skills	Communication skills O/M	SDF		
452 (B14)	Communication skills	Communication skills Baseline	O/M		

Table G.3   Skills identified as focus skills by CITs by stage of process (2007-2008)

Case #	Contracting	PID	Intervention Design	Intervention Implementation	Intervention Evaluation
477 (C1)		O/M	Using SDF	Using SDF Modifying intervention	Modifying intervention
474 (C2)					
478 (C3)		Communication skills	O/M	Data collection	
516 (C4)	Communication skills	Communication skills	IA		
513 (C5)		Communication skills O/M	O/M		
654 (C6)	Communication skills	Communication skills	Communication skills	Communication skills	
481 (C7)		Communication skills O/M	Listening	Clarifying Listening	
479 (C8)		O/M Prioritizing concerns	Graphing/charting		
480 (C9)	Communication skills	IA Slowing down	Implementing intervention		
512 (C10)		Communication skills	SDF		

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