

**Collaborative Coaching and Learning in Literacy:
Implementation at Four Boston Public Schools**

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Individual Cases By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction. This report presents four case studies of the implementation of Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) in literacy in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). The study grew out of the BPS' desire to learn more about its unique coaching model and its impact on literacy teaching and learning. This study was seen as a step toward providing the district with data on how the CCL model is implemented and how work in the cycle may be linked to changes in teacher practice and, ultimately, to student achievement. To that end, these cases and the cross-site analysis that follows provide a window into how four schools are implementing the CCL model in light of a set of criteria that identify the components of a high-functioning CCL. (See Appendix A at the end of the report for the criteria.)

Study Focus. The study was designed to answer the following broad questions:

- What school-based factors are associated with high-quality CCL cycles?
- To what extent and in what ways do teachers use what they learn from CCL in their classrooms?
- What are the similarities and differences across the four CCL sites in the sample?

The report is organized as follows. First, we present each of the four cases using pseudonyms for each of the schools and individuals within them. Within each case, we begin with a brief description of the school context and the adaptations made to CCL in light of the model's formal design. Then, we describe the cycle in light of the design components: inquiry, course of study, pre-conference, demonstration lesson, debrief and individual coach follow-up. The descriptive sections are followed by discussions of a) the impact of CCL on teachers and students, as well as b) the factors that challenge and facilitate implementation at that school. After the four cases, we present a cross-site analysis that considers similarities and differences across the cases in light of the CCL model and the criteria for high-functioning CCLs. We end by presenting a few issues the district may want to consider as it moves forward with this coaching model.

Overview of the Findings. Based on its experience, the Boston Public Schools has identified a set of characteristics shared by high-functioning CCL cycles. (See Appendix A) Education Matters found that, overall, the four observed CCL cycles exhibited many of these characteristics in the areas of organization, teacher involvement, coach role, and principal involvement. In addition, our data make it clear that teachers and principals value the cycles and consider them to be important professional learning opportunities. Our data lead us to conclude:

1. The teachers involved in the CCL cycles studied were enthusiastic about the coaching model and appreciated the opportunity to work and learn with their colleagues and with their coach.

2. Principals played an essential role in the extent to which the CCL model was well-implemented. Their role included a) designing an appropriate schedule so that teachers had time to meet, b) providing reliable and consistent substitute or other coverage for teachers, when needed, and c) explicitly linking the focus of CCL to their formal and informal teacher supervision and evaluation.
3. Regardless of principal support, finding time for CCL was challenging. As a result, these CCL cycles had less time available than what is recommended by the BPS. Indeed, the BPS recognizes that its original time specifications for CCL are greater than most schools could provide.
4. The adaptations made by coaches were based on informed professional judgment and responsive to their settings. Nonetheless, adaptations varied in the extent to which they strengthened or weakened CCL in light of its conceptual underpinnings, formal design, and goals. A few adaptations, as some coaches noted, were supported by principals and teachers but were not supported by the district's CCL leadership.
5. Teachers in all of the cycles reported that a) CCL was a positive experience, and b) they used what they were learning in their classrooms. However, the largest impact of these cycles was at the level of teacher thinking, as opposed to teacher practice or student work. The classroom observations we completed confirmed this point.

These positive findings strongly suggest that the CCL model in literacy has, in these schools, become a valued part of standard professional development practice. However, cycles varied in the extent to which they demonstrated specific high-functioning characteristics. None of the observed CCL cycles excluded components of the model, but all sites altered the components, sometimes substantially, with some adaptations running counter to the characteristics of high-functioning CCL cycles identified by the BPS. For example:

- Some coaches reduced the amount of professional reading they discussed with teachers and focused more on looking at student work and discussing the teachers' instruction. Several coaches did not assign professional reading outside of the CCL sessions, although the BPS has concluded that CCL is more likely to be highly functioning when teachers voluntarily read outside sessions.
- None of the sites included more than four demos in the eight-week cycle and two CCL cycles included only three. Furthermore, Education Matters identified a number of ways in which the demo aspect of these CCL cycles was not likely to maximize teacher learning.
 - First*, in several sites, teachers were not deeply involved in planning demos.
 - Second*, poor substitute coverage sometimes made attendance at demos inconsistent.
 - Third*, at one school the coach planned and implemented all of the demos, although the BPS has found that demos that are planned collaboratively and conducted at least some of the time by teachers characterized high-functioning CCL cycles.

Four, in some cycles, the coach provided specific directions regarding how the demo related to the cycle's focus and what teachers should notice while observing. In such conditions, debriefs were specific and substantive. When the coach did not guide the teachers in what to attend to in observing the demo or connect the demo to the CCL cycle's larger focus, the ensuing debriefs were too general to lead to deep teacher learning.

- Cycles varied considerably in the amount of individual coach follow-up that was available to teachers. At the extremes, one school had created a schedule of cycles that allowed a great deal of individual coaching while another had a schedule that impeded individual follow-up from the coach.

Thus, while some modifications were consistent with the CCL model, others contradicted recommendations by the BPS and appeared to lead to weaker implementation of the cycle.

Challenges and Emerging Questions for District Consideration. Education Matters identified several challenges that seemed to influence the extent to which these CCL cycles affected teacher practice and student work. Some of the challenges affected all the CCL cycles to the same degree while others were felt more acutely by one or two cycles. Challenges arose regarding a) how to maximize teacher learning in the demos and debriefs; b) how, within the classroom, to find time to experiment with high-leverage teaching strategies learned in CCL while under pressure from curricular demands; c) the extent to which teachers engaged in deep discussions of instructional strategies; and d) what coaches should do when teachers' learning needs were more basic than those addressed in the CCL.

Education Matters recommends that the district address these challenges. Additionally, Education Matters noted variations in the practices at the four observed CCL cycles that may have affected their impact on teacher practice and student learning. These important variations suggest the following questions:

What is the role of professional texts and student work in CCL?

The observed CCL cycles used professional readings to varying degrees. The district might consider and clarify to coaches and teachers what it seeks to gain by having CCL cycles include the use professional texts and what may be lost when such texts are used only minimally. The district might clarify how it expects demo lessons to be research-based. As with professional texts, the BPS might want to clarify whether and how looking at student work is related to CCL.

How should demos be organized? How many need to occur in an effective cycle?

The BPS has found that the inclusion of teachers in planning demos is a characteristic of high-functioning CCL cycles. In this sample of CCL cycles, demos were planned with and without teacher involvement. The district might consider the trade-offs and make explicit its expectations about what it seeks to achieve in the demo-planning process. In addition, given that demo lessons are integral to the CCL model, the district might collect

further data in order to understand how coaches are using CCL time and how that use might be altered to permit time for additional demo lessons.

How can debriefs be structured for maximum teacher learning? Education Matters observed variation in the format and structure of CCL debriefs. Two sites used explicit protocols to guide debriefs. Without an explicit structure for analyzing the demo, some of the value of the debrief may be lost. Education Matters also noted that debriefs sometimes failed to generate deep and detailed discussions of the instruction within the demo lessons. It may be important for the district and coaches to consider what they want to achieve in the debrief and how this purpose is best achieved.

What sorts of adaptations facilitate CCL success? What sorts of adaptations impede it? Given the idiosyncrasies of schools, the BPS would do well to continue to permit adaptations that are supported by a reasonable rationale and continued fidelity to the CCL model's basic structure and underlying assumptions about learning goals. However, without clear guidance from the district, some adaptations may seriously compromise the purpose of the CCL. Therefore, given that adaptations are pervasive, the district might want to ask: at what point has a school modified its CCL practices so much that it is no longer "doing" CCL? How should the district organize coach and principal professional development to ensure that these key educators understand the model and can implement it effectively?

Conclusion. These CCL cycles appeared to serve a vital purpose to the teachers who took part in them. Bringing together special education and regular education teachers to discuss instruction, these CCL cycles seemed to promote small, gradual changes in how teachers thought about instruction and how they worked with students in their classrooms. Importantly, the teachers in this sample felt they had benefited from their participation and wanted to take part in future CCL cycles. The BPS should build on the good will and enthusiasm of teachers such as these to promote more substantial improvements to CCL implementation and, thereby, to teachers' practice and students' achievement.

Introduction

Morgaen Donaldson and Barbara Neufeld

This report presents four case studies of the implementation of literacy Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). It is designed to provide insight into the way these schools – one elementary, one middle, one recently developed small high school, and one high school organized into Small Learning Communities (SLCs) – are using CCL to strengthen teaching and learning. The study grew out of the BPS' desire to learn more about its unique coaching model and its impact on teaching and learning.

While the district has confidence in the value of CCL and has extended this approach to coaching in other content areas, it has few data on the ways in which the model is implemented and the links between its implementation and improvements in teachers' practice with Readers' and Writers' Workshop, the district's primary approach to literacy instruction. No research or evaluation has been implemented to address this link or the potential link between participation in CCL and improvements in students' achievement.¹

With the goal of beginning to gather such data, in October, 2005, the BPS and Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), the district's partner in the development of CCL, asked Education Matters to implement a study of CCL in four schools selected by the district. These schools were selected because they were thought to be implementing the coaching model with fidelity to its spirit and principles. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

- What school-based factors are associated with high-quality CCL cycles?
 - What factors influence teachers' choice of course of study (e.g. WSIP, data)?
 - How do CCL participants adapt the CCL design?
 - How does the coach implement his or her role?
 - What is the principal's involvement in CCL?
 - How are teachers engaged in CCL work?
- To what extent and in what ways do teachers use what they learn from CCL in their classrooms?
 - To what extent can students of teachers participating in CCL talk about what their teachers are trying to teach them?
 - What do teachers find more and less useful from CCL?
- What are the similarities and differences across the four CCL sites in the sample?

In order to collect the data with which to address these questions, Education Matters proposed to observe four complete sessions of CCL (two near the beginning and two near

¹ Education Matters completed several reports that analyzed CCL during its first two years (available at www.edmatters.org) but we did not look for links between implementation, teaching practice, and student achievement.

the end of the cycle) in each school. In addition, in each of the four schools, we planned to interview the principal once (near the end of the cycle); the coach twice (near the beginning and end of the cycle); and two participating teachers twice each (near the beginning and end of the cycle). We proposed to observe the two teachers whom we interviewed twice each (near the beginning and end of the cycle), and to interview two focus groups of students taught by the participating teachers near the end of the cycle to learn their perspective on the skills their teachers were stressing in light of the CCL focus. All participants were assured that neither their names nor the names of their schools would be used in any reports produced from this study.

Although we had the cooperation of the CCL coaches, principals, and teachers at these schools, we were not able to complete the data collection precisely as planned. Schedules changed as a result of testing requirements, vacations, lack of substitute coverage, and teacher and coach absences. Some students did not return permission slips and, as a result, we could not complete all of the planned focus-group interviews. Finally, given the adaptations to the formal design of CCL made at each of the schools, we made adaptations in the data collection plan. Nevertheless, we collected sufficient data at each of the schools with which to develop the cases that follow.²

The Background of Coaching in the BPS: Getting to CCL

The BPS, in collaboration with the BPE, has supported on-site coaching since the 1996-1997 school year. During that first year, 27 of the district's schools each had a whole-school change coach who visited the school once a week to help the principal and teachers establish an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), begin the process of Looking at Student Work (LASW), and identify a school-wide instructional focus. In year two, the change coaches, as they were called, were joined by content coaches who were responsible for supporting teachers in implementing their school's literacy program. Like the change coaches, these content (or literacy) coaches also worked in schools once a week, helping individual teachers and providing small group literacy professional development.

Although teachers and principals valued the literacy coaches' work, the coaches were frustrated by challenges that were associated with the organization of the role, namely the one-day-per week, one-teacher-at-a-time model. Coaches who worked with a few teachers for an extended period of time wondered whether they were making sufficient impact school-wide. They wondered how to balance implementing the literacy strategies broadly and deeply. Too often, coaches could not find time to debrief with one or more teachers after a demonstration lesson or observation. Thus, this important step in the coaching process was often omitted. Coaches who worked with very weak teachers or with teachers who had serious classroom management problems wondered whether this was a good use of their time. They were unsure of how to set priorities and focus their efforts for maximum impact. Other challenges were connected with the fact that coaches could work only with those teachers who wanted their help. These and other challenges

² Prior to producing this document, each coach reviewed the case pertinent to her school. Education Matters made appropriate revisions in light of the coaches' comments.

left coaches, many principals, and the BPS and BPE feeling that the impact of literacy coaches was too limited.

CCL grew out of the BPS and BPE's learning and was designed to remedy the problems of the initial coaching model. It was introduced to a small set of the district's schools, those designated as Effective Practice Schools,³ at the start of the 2001-2002 school year. The BPE provided technical support for the first year implementation of the model. One year later, at the start of the 2002-2003 school year, CCL was adopted as the literacy – focused coaching model for all of Boston's schools. As stated in *Introduction to CCL: Collaborative Coaching and Learning* (September 2002, BPE, p.1, available at www.bpe.org), "This approach to staff development represents a breakthrough in Boston's reform – both a turning point and a clearer direction on which to move forward."

CCL is now a significant feature of professional development in the district, a standard practice in the district's schools primarily in literacy but present in mathematics coaching, as well. The model has four components: inquiry, pre-conference, demonstration/observation lesson, and debrief.

According to the BPE's publication, *Straight Talk About CCL: A Guide for School Leaders* (available at www.bpe.org), **the inquiry** component of a cycle should last for 60 minutes per week. It is described as follows: "Working with the literacy or math coach, a team of teachers chooses a course of study about which they need to learn more based on their student performance data. The team, which may include teachers of ELL and special needs students, meets weekly to discuss and reflect on readings and research related to their course of study" (Page 2).

The classroom-based work associated with a cycle has three components: **the pre-conference, a demonstration/observation lesson, and debrief**. Designed to last for 90 minutes per week, "Each week's lab site begins with a pre-conference in which the team reviews the purpose of the lesson and agrees on what to watch for. Then, the teachers, coach and principal/headmaster observe a demonstration lesson in a host classroom and analyze the strategy's effectiveness in a debrief. During a cycle of eight weeks, they take turns doing the demonstration, using strategies they have studied in their inquiry" (Page 2).

Each cycle should include a CCL component in which, "Teachers set goals for their own implementation of the strategies they study together. During the cycle and between cycles, the coach and/or members of the teacher team make visits to individual classrooms to support teachers as they make new strategies a regular part of their classroom practice." During and after the cycle, then, the coach helps individual teachers as they implement the strategies that are the focus of the inquiry and have been modeled

³ The Effective Practice Schools were 26 Boston Public Schools that the district identified on the basis of a) high levels of implementation of some of the Essentials of whole-school improvement, b) and strong principal leadership for instruction. These schools had in place conditions conducive to taking the step of testing a more collaborative, focused, and intense approach to coaching.

in the demonstration lessons. Coach support is individualized in light of the teachers' and students' needs.

The goal of this study was to begin a program of research that will provide the district with data on how the CCL model is implemented and how work in the cycle may be linked to changes in teacher practice and, ultimately, to student achievement. To that end, these cases and the cross-site analysis that follows provide a window into how four schools are implementing the CCL model in light of a set of criteria that identify the components of a high-functioning CCL. (See Appendix A at the end of the report for the criteria.)

The report is organized as follows. First, we present each of the four cases using pseudonyms for each of the schools and individuals within them. We use the first initial of the school to identify the associated coach and principal. For example, at Cummings, the coach and principal are called Coach C and Principal C respectively. In addition, we wrote the reports as if all principals, coaches and participating teachers were female. Again, we did this to preserve the confidentiality of those who so willingly gave their time and insights to this study.

Within each case, we begin with a brief description of the school context and the adaptations made to CCL in light of the formal design detailed above. Then, we describe the design components of the cycle: inquiry, course of study, pre-conference, demonstration lesson, debrief and individual coach follow-up. The descriptive sections are followed by discussions of a) the impact of CCL on teachers and students, as well as b) the factors that challenge and facilitate implementation at that school. After the four cases, we present a cross-site analysis that considers similarities and differences across the cases regarding the CCL model and the criteria for high-functioning CCLs. We end by presenting a few issues the district may want to consider as it moves forward with this coaching model.

As we turn to the cases, we want to highlight a few broad findings that arise from the cases and can help to orient readers to the features of the four cycles described.

1. The teachers involved in the CCL cycles studied were enthusiastic about the coaching model and appreciated the opportunity to work and learn with their colleagues and with their coach.
2. Principals played an essential role in the extent to which the CCL model was well implemented at their schools. Their role included a) providing an appropriate schedule so that teachers had time to meet, b) providing substitute or other coverage for teachers, when needed, and c) explicitly linking the focus of CCL to their formal and informal classroom observations.

3. Regardless of principal support, finding time for CCL was challenging. As a result, these CCL cycles had less time available than what is recommended by the BPS⁴.
4. The adaptations made by coaches were based on informed professional judgment and responsive to their settings. Nonetheless, while reading, it is worth considering whether and how the adaptations at each school strengthened or weakened CCL in light of its conceptual underpinnings, formal design, and goals.
5. Teachers in all of the cycles reported that they used what they were learning in their classrooms. The classroom observations we completed confirmed this point.

Before going further, we want to express our thanks to each of the principals, coaches, and teachers who participated in the case studies. Each of them made a valuable contribution to the district's ability to learn from their experiences and, in light of that learning, further support coaches and teachers in their efforts to improve their practice and their students' achievement.

⁴ Although it set 150 minutes per week (60 minutes of inquiry; 90 minutes of pre-conference; demo; and debrief) as its standard, the BPS has found that CCL cycles can function well at somewhat lower time allocations.

Introducing Independent Reading: A Literacy CCL at Cummings Elementary School

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I. CONTEXT⁵

When Cummings' principal came to the school three years ago, she encountered a staff that had been trained in many new approaches to instruction, including Readers' and Writers' workshop. Yet, upon visiting their classrooms, she found that implementation of these approaches was weak. This was a staff, she concluded, that had gained a great deal of knowledge about the theory of Workshop instruction but had not yet applied that learning to their classrooms. Principal C and her literacy coach, Coach C, agreed from the start, therefore, that Coach C would focus on producing concrete results in classrooms while responding to teachers' needs for support as they began to apply theory to practice.

Teachers at the Cummings have been participating in CCL since its inception. In addition to working with a literacy coach, they have extensive experience with the district's math initiative and have begun to work in math CCL cycles. Moreover, K-3 teachers have a Reading First coach to support them with implementing this reading program that began in the 2004-2005 school year.

The participants in the focal CCL were members of a three-person grade three team characterized by collegiality. They relied on each other for support with curriculum development, thinking about students and their work, and feedback supporting their own reflection and professional growth. One teacher described how the beginning of the day was a flurry of quick conversations related to the curriculum and day's lessons. This professional give and take, she found, was invaluable to her work. The fourth member of this cycle, a special education teacher, was a colleague to these teachers who supported some of their students in the resource room. She and the grade-level team were used to talking with one another about how to connect the curriculum between the mainstream and special education programs. In addition to their comfort with collegial interaction, teachers in this cycle had participated in a writing-focused CCL cycle led by Coach C two years earlier and in cycles guided by the school's previous coach.⁶

At the end of the 2004-2005 school year, according to Principal C, Boston identified independent reading as an area in need of attention for the district's twelve Reading First schools. This goal was reflected in Cummings' WSIP. Both Principal C and Coach C agreed with this emphasis, with the principal noting that, based on her observations, there was a need at this grade level for teachers to work on independent reading and the associated Reading Notebook entries. This was of particular importance given that within

⁵ Note that data presented in this case are drawn from observations of four cycle sessions, one observation and interview each with two teachers from the cycle, two coach interviews, one interview with the Elementary School principal, and one student focus group.

⁶ Because last year was the grade team's first year implementing Reading First, the district recommended that only Reading First coaches work with them during that initial year.

the Reading First program, teachers have little time in which to help students choose books on an appropriate level and allow students to read them independently and respond to their reading in journals. When teachers did have an opportunity to teach whole-class lessons on book choice, they still felt that students were not always choosing appropriate books. Furthermore, teachers at Cummings had not developed skills in conferencing with students during independent reading time so that they could determine how well their students comprehended what they were reading and determine instructional goals.

Based on these concerns about finding time to integrate independent reading and a desire to help students make more appropriate books choices, Coach C created a cycle to help teachers strengthen their skills in these areas. She reported:

I wanted the teachers to have some sense of understanding of where their students were as readers, and get them to feel somewhat in control in terms of the colors [that indicate the levels of books]. But I'd say the two biggest things were, I wanted them to understand how to get kids to write [journal] entries, without giving them prompts, in their reading journals, and how to use the one-on-one conference time to instruct kids in reading. Coach C

Adaptations to the CCL model

The coach made a number of significant adaptations to the CCL design in order to meet the needs of her teachers. First, Coach C conducted all of the demonstration lessons while teachers observed. There was, as a result, no formal pre-conference prior to the demonstration lesson. Teachers were not provided with an observation guide to focus their attention during the demonstration lessons. Second, if Coach C decided, based on teachers' reflection on their own work and the demonstration lessons, that they should spend more time in discussion and looking at student work than in an additional demonstration lesson, she allocated their CCL time to such discussions. As she put it, "if there's something else that would fit my needs better, then I'm doing something else."

Third, this cycle brought in professional readings only once. The coach understood that the model called for professional reading and a link between that reading, inquiry, and the demonstration lessons, but experience had led her to select an alternate model that focused teachers' attention on using the coach's demonstration lessons as a source for practical learning, as opposed to drawing heavily from theoretical texts. From Coach C's perspective, by taking this approach, teachers were focused on the practical application of the theory underlying Workshop instruction.

I might give less [professional] text than most coaches because I don't do it for the sake of doing it. I think I said to a teacher, "Yes, my program director said I should be using more text," and the teacher said, "No, no. We like the practical stuff. That's what we need." And I think a lot of schools maybe, [have teachers who] are very well read. It's the practical application that they need. Coach C

Coach C provided teachers with relevant readings, but "I don't assign them," she explained. She did go over portions of the professional texts during one observed CCL

discussion, and she anticipated that the teachers would “tuck away” the readings and return to them at a later time for reference or as a refresher.

Because of this adaptation in the use of professional readings, there was no distinct inquiry portion of the CCL in which participants focused their discussion only on professional reading. Instead, there was a “melding” of inquiry and debrief into one component of the cycle. Coach C felt this was appropriate, “because the demo is supposed to be about what your inquiry topic is about.” Given that the inquiry was about the professional practice observed in the demo, this adaptation made sense to her and to her teachers. As Coach C stated, “the focus [of discussions] is not on the readings. I bring in the readings to support the practice when needed.” A focus on the readings, in Coach C’s view, would have taken teachers away from the practical, classroom-oriented focus desired. Finally, because the focus of the cycle was clear, the coach and teachers reported that they did not set explicit, more detailed learning goals for themselves. The learning goals, in other words, were sufficiently implied by the focus of the cycle.

II. COMPONENTS OF THIS CCL

In adapting CCL to the needs of teachers at Cummings, and the teachers in this cycle in particular, Coach C took an approach that focused on the specifics of teaching practice more than on professional reading. Teachers appreciated this focus and, although they were simultaneously engaged in learning how to use the Trophies program, at no time did any of them indicate that the focus of the cycle conflicted with what they were already doing in their classrooms or learning in other professional development. Instead, teachers seemed to see what they were learning as a valuable addition to their repertoire in literacy instruction.

Setting the course of study

Coach C noted that the district’s approach to improving literacy instruction at the twelve schools designated to implement the Trophies program was to insert Trophies into the Workshop structure. However, the match was not perfect and, in particular, teachers had been unable to focus much time on independent reading. The attention to independent reading in this CCL cycle thus allowed teachers to complement their literacy instruction with Trophies by adding this instructional component. Importantly, with this cycle the principal relied on data to shape her ideas about the CCL course of study: she shared her knowledge that from conducting classroom observations, she was aware that little independent reading was occurring in the classrooms where Trophies was being implemented.

The course of study for this CCL did not come only from the principal and the coach. The teachers themselves had asked to focus on independent reading. As Principal C put it, “The teachers identified independent reading as something they needed help with, because...last year was the first year of Reading First, and we focused on the core programs, and the teachers didn’t have any professional development really on independent reading.” As a result, these teachers saw their students struggle to a) choose books at the appropriate level and then b) respond thoughtfully and independently to those books in their Reading Notebooks.

Teacher A noted, “What we ended up doing is we started thinking about what is the need of the children, and what the curriculum was asking for; what had worked in the past, and what wasn’t working? And one thing that stood out was the notebooks.” This need among the students prompted the teachers and coach to shape the course of study for the CCL around independent reading, responding to text, and conferring to support independence. What students needed to know and improve upon served as a way of focusing everyone involved with this cycle.

Teachers and Coach C administered a “pre-cycle” assessment to students during the second week of the CCL. This assessment was intended to gauge students’ ability to respond to their independent reading books and to provide baseline data from which teachers could assess student growth in this area as a result of the cycle. The assessment was open-ended, asking students to write about their independent reading book. Upon examining the pre-cycle products, teachers realized that all students but one summarized or retold the stories that they had been reading. This helped to confirm the need to teach students other ways of thinking and writing about their reading.

With this clear focus for the cycle, teachers did not create explicit, individual learning goals for themselves. Some, however, like Teacher B, reported they had developed informal, personal learning goals for themselves. Teacher B’s goal was to strengthen what she already knew about Workshop teaching during the course of the cycle.

Adapting the Components: Responsiveness to Teacher Needs

Sessions in this cycle varied in content. While some included formal demo lessons and a debrief of the lesson following the demo, others involved looking at student work, a discussion, and the creation of lessons for teachers to implement in their own classrooms. Two of the four observed cycle sessions involved demos, while the other two involved lengthier conversations and looking at student work. Session contents, according to the coach, responded to the progress of the cycle, as well as to what teachers experienced in their own classrooms.

As noted earlier, although Coach C offered teachers the opportunity to do demonstration lessons, she taught all of the demonstration lessons during this cycle. She explained her reasoning for this adaptation of the formal model of coaching. First, teachers are not required to teach demonstration lessons. Second, Coach C believed that the demo lesson should model good teaching: “If you’re supposed to be modeling good practice, it just makes so much more sense [for the coach to demo].” When teachers are working on implementing a new kind of instruction, such as they were in this cycle that encouraged them to implement independent book choice, reading, and journal responding, Coach C believes that they should see a model mini lesson, as opposed to a teacher struggling to communicate a concept. As she put it, “I don’t want teachers to walk away with a misconception.” For this reason, Coach C believed that expert modeling is more useful for teachers who are learning something very new.

Third, Coach C also noted that it is often difficult, indeed nerve-wracking, for some teachers to teach in front of one another. Since she wanted CCL to be a safe space for professional growth, she avoided putting teachers in such uncomfortable positions. Additionally, providing feedback on a colleague teacher's teaching can be challenging. Coach C noted, "That's a really hard thing to do, to be a fellow teacher and critique each other's work." Teachers, for their part, greatly appreciated the opportunity to observe Coach C, as opposed to conducting the demos themselves. Teacher B, in fact, expressing a sentiment that seemed to be shared among the participants, explained, "the best part of all was that Coach C modeled [the lessons]."

Finally, Coach C viewed her teaching of the demos as a bargaining chip. Since she did the demo lessons during CCL sessions, she felt that it was easier to expect teachers to allow her to observe them teaching and to provide feedback on this teaching when she visited them during their weekly one-on-one follow-up coaching.⁷ Coach C provided this one-on-one support to teachers on a weekly basis during and after the cycles.

In teaching the demos, Coach C was acting both strategically and responsively, doing what she believed would most benefit the cycle as a whole and the individual teachers and their learning. The principal supported Coach C's decision to do most of the demo lessons at Cummings Elementary. She noted, "She [the Coach] is very skilled, and I don't mind the fact that they get to see that....I'd rather you take a look at her anyway, as long as you're able to engage in a conversation about what went well and things you noticed, I think that could be very valuable." Both the principal and Coach C herself saw value, then, in Coach C modeling for teachers during the demo lessons. For them, it was an opportunity for teachers in the cycle to see a teacher who was already skillful with the pedagogy they were trying to implement. This adaptation, in their view, provided a valuable learning opportunity for teachers.

Demonstration Lessons

While demo lessons were used during this cycle as meaningful learning opportunities for participating teachers, they did not take place every week. Two demos took place during the four sessions that Education Matters observed. The other two sessions that were held instead of demonstration lessons included opportunities for teachers to look at student work related to the focus of the cycle. The final session also included an opportunity to reflect on student growth and to discuss how teachers might deepen their implementation of independent reading in their classrooms in the coming months. The Coach developed a schedule prior to the start of the cycle that indicated which classroom would be the demo site for each week. By the end of the cycle, the Coach had completed at least one demonstration lesson in each of the three teachers' classrooms.

Coach C developed the demo lessons by building off discussions from the previous sessions. For example, during the second CCL session, teachers discussed scaffolding students' independence in choosing what to write about in the Reading Notebooks. They discussed using a classroom poster to list ideas that students might use if they were at a

⁷ Coach C noted, however, that it was difficult to persuade teachers to demonstrate even for her alone and that they preferred to watch her teach a lesson in their classes.

loss as to how to frame their responses to reading. The poster would be a record of suggested writing topics developed out of a series of mini-lessons.

As a result of this discussion, Coach C's mini lesson during the third CCL session introduced this poster to Teacher B's students. Coach C prepared for this lesson by talking with Teacher B about her students' needs and abilities:

Ultimately, since it was her classroom, [I needed to know:] what were the skills that were familiar to the kids? Because the emphasis was on building independence and the use of the poster, not on introducing a new skill. Coach C

After learning about the response to reading ideas with which Teacher B's students were familiar, Coach C designed a lesson that built upon this knowledge in order to introduce the poster. When teachers ultimately observed the demo during the next session, they saw a lesson that related to their conversation from the previous week.

The demonstration lessons in this cycle were always succinct mini lessons in which Coach C taught discrete skills to students or demonstrated a teaching point for the teachers. For example, as described above, the teachers agreed during the second meeting to introduce a set of ideas that students could use to frame their Reading Notebook responses. The set of ideas was meant to guide them away from simply retelling, by giving them a range of clear, concrete options from which to choose. Coach C ended that session suggesting that teachers each teach a mini lesson introducing one or two ideas that students could use for a reading response. She emphasized the importance of introducing this concept in small steps and making it concrete for students.

Coach C then modeled the introduction of a possible reading response idea the next week in Teacher B's classroom. The lesson emphasized the students' use of the poster for response ideas. The ideas themselves had already been taught in other contexts. After modeling the beginning of a reading response, Coach C asked students where she could look to find ideas for her response. Having been introduced to the poster, students knew to point to it as the source for ideas. Having confirmed students' understanding of the poster's use, Coach C asked them to read and then respond to their reading. She reminded them they should refer to the poster when needed. In a sharing session of student responses at the end of the class, students reported when they used the poster, thus confirming their learning of its value from the lesson.

Throughout the 40-minute lesson, teachers in the cycle observed Coach C, walked around to check in with students about their work, and watched Coach C conduct a reading conference with a student. Teachers were not given any specific direction in terms of what to observe during this demo, because, according to the Coach, a) it built off of discussions during the previous CCL, and b) the goal of her lesson was transparent to both students and teachers.

In another session, the coach modeled a conference with a student during which she made a number of comments to the observing teachers to help them understand how she was

thinking about the conference. The following exchange took place during the conference:

Coach to Student: Where are you [in your book]?

Student: Up to page 8. (She is reading an Amelia Bedelia book.)

Coach to Teachers: If the student is not fluent, your teaching point will be about the reading. If they are totally fluent, teach into the reading journal.

Coach to Student: This is nice stuff. (referring to the student's reading journal). She then reads aloud an entry [from the student's journal].

Under the ☺, Coach writes: Uses words "I think" in reading journal.

Coach to Student: Let me tell you why [this is important.] When you put "I think," you're not just saying what the book is about, but you're saying what you think.

The student then reads her book aloud from the first page. The coach stops her on page three.

Coach to Student: One thing I noticed that's good is you got to here and went back (a part where the student seemed not to understand and so went back and re-read). That's something good readers do – go back and check. Some kids may get to this and not get it and go on. The coach writes under the ☺ "Goes back to sentence to re-read." The coach asks the student to read this comment aloud. The student repeats to the coach what she did well and the coach affirms her comment.

Coach to Teachers: The coach now explains to the teachers why she has the student repeat what she did well: it insures that the student is paying attention and that she takes ownership of her skill. The coach would have done the same thing with a comment about something that needed more attention from the student. Under the ➔ (which indicates what to do next), the Coach explains to the student that when she gets to dialogue in a book and reads aloud, she should sound like a person. She uses Teacher A as an example, talking about how Teacher A sounds like a real person when she is reading out loud. She adds, "it's entertaining, it's like a movie in your head." The coach then models how to do this with the student's book and asks the student, "Want to try it?" The student tries to read with some inflection.

Coach to Student: Better. Under ➔ she then writes: Dialogue should sound like people.

Coach to Student: Let's find another one. She then reads the dialogue first and the student rereads it after her.

Coach to Teachers: The coach explains to the teachers once more how she asked the student to repeat what she is going to work on to make sure the student is paying attention and that she takes ownership of this teaching point.

Coach to Student: [What will you work on?] The student says, "dialogue," and the coach asks, "What about it?" The student then shyly says that she'll work on sounding more like people.

This exchange between Coach C and the teachers during the demonstration lesson reveals one of the ways in which the coach focused teachers' attention during the lesson without the use of an explicit observation guide. She made her thinking about her work and teaching moves transparent to the teachers.

There are other examples in which Coach C made her thinking available to teachers so that they could understand the rationale for her actions. For example, in describing how she assigned a reading level to a student who was just transitioning from yellow to green (2nd to 3rd grade), she said, “He was ready for green. I could tell that if he read other greens, that he’d have a hard time. So, in green I wrote *Harry* and *Littles*, two series. He can do those for a while.” Coach C explained to the teachers how, in suggesting two series at the green level, Coach C provided guidance to this student as to the appropriate books for him to read within the level. This strategy illustrated to the CCL teachers a way to both respond to a student’s growing reading ability and to place appropriate boundaries around his independent reading choices such that his independent reading would support his continued skill development.

Debrief

The combined inquiry/debrief sessions that followed demo lessons focused on the modeling that Coach C had done. They were informal in nature and guided by the underlying ideas that focused the cycle. After reflecting briefly on how the lesson went, coach C “tried to open it up so that I’m not directing what they saw.” During this cycle, Coach C opened both of the observed debriefs with questions that led to animated conversations. Coach C tried to give teachers the opportunity to shape the debrief conversations; she did not overtly lead them.

For example, after the lesson in Teacher B’s classroom, Coach C asked the teachers, “What do you think?” Teacher B then began the debrief conversation by describing why she thought the lesson was good, as well as some explicit strategies that she might implement based on what she saw:

Coach C: What do you think?

Teacher B: It was good, especially after we nudged some kids. Sometimes they do what’s comfortable, so the nudging worked.

Coach C: I noticed that it really pays off to walk around and nudge like we did today.

Teacher B: And then maybe have a conference. When you think that they need it.

The conversation continued in a productive and casual manner, as teachers shared their impressions of what worked and what might be changed in future lessons. Their discussion showed how teachers would take the lesson they observed and apply it in their own classrooms. Teacher B, as noted above, noticed that “nudging” students to think deeply about their reading and to write about that helped the quality of their responses. Teachers took up this idea, remarking that they would try this in their classrooms as well. This exemplifies the way in which teachers used debriefing as an opportunity to shape their own lessons, based on Coach C’s teaching, while responding to the needs of their own students.

To extend the example, following Teacher B’s suggestion, Teacher A described how she might explicitly nudge a student in her own class by saying: “In the mini-lesson you mentioned [making a] personal connection. So, the next step might be [nudging a student to make] that connection. ‘You’ve [the student] told us what you think [about your

reading], so now can you make a connection?” In this way, Teacher A built off of the coach’s model lesson, creating “next steps” for her own teaching. She described this strategy as thinking about “what is the next step that we’re going to do to get them to [our] goal?” For Teacher A, this embodied the purpose of the debrief. The other members of the CCL responded enthusiastically to Teacher A’s idea, as was often the case during CCL discussions. These teachers clearly respected their peers’ ideas and knew that sharing their thoughts helped them to improve their own practice.

Teachers saw debriefs as a vital opportunity to solidify what they learned from observing the demos, to discuss what might need to be adapted or improved for future lessons, and to gain suggestions from their colleagues for similar lessons or next steps. Teacher B noted that the debrief “is very essential...[It is] very important. You need to find out exactly what went well, what we can improve upon, what we’re going to do next.” Teacher A, too, described debriefs as a chance to “make sure we’re all clearly on the same page and understand what just went on, and what’s the positive things that occurred.” She saw the debrief, also, as “an opportunity to have suggestions,” both from the coach and her grade team, particularly relating to best supporting her students with independent reading and work in the Reading Notebooks.

Importantly, the combined inquiry/debrief sessions in this CCL always led to concrete, manageable next steps for teachers. After discussing how teachers were implementing strategies such as independent book choice or independent reading responses, Coach C would gently guide the discussion towards next steps. For example, after discussing the use of a poster for independent reading response ideas, Coach C suggested that teachers introduce this poster to their class and teach lessons about one or two ideas for reading responses that could then go on the poster. This concrete suggestion led the group to agree on two possible response ideas from which they would choose. By the next session, teachers promised, they would have introduced the poster and one idea to their class. This discrete next step provided not only a way for teachers to take the work of the CCL back to their own classrooms, but also to implement a common experience that could shape the next week’s group discussion. Additionally, Coach C explained, “I create documents with our plans,” which she passed on to teachers to remind them of their agreed upon goals and work that should be completed in preparation for the next CCL session.

Applications to classroom practice

The work that teachers did in CCL sessions at Cummings Elementary School translated directly into classroom practice. This was facilitated not only by manageable and replicable demo lessons, but also by adapted inquiry sessions that included the sharing and discussing of numerous ideas that teachers could apply in their own classrooms.

For example, after the initial introduction of independently choosing how to respond in a Reading Notebook, Teacher A built off lessons that both she and the coach had taught on reading responses. Following a demo in her classroom, Teacher A and the others had noted that students who were reading non-fiction books could not use the suggested response topics. In response to this insight, Teacher A devised a mini-lesson on how readers might respond to non-fiction in their Reading Notebooks. Acknowledging that

students had tried to use the poster as instructed, but found it inappropriate if they were reading non-fiction, Teacher A suggested three possible responses to non-fiction: 1) writing about a similar experience to that described in the book; 2) writing about what you learned from the book; or 3) writing about questions you still have or confusing parts in the portion of the book that you read.

This mini-lesson, just like those modeled by her coach, was short and contained a manageable amount of new material for students to utilize. The lesson built on the previous lesson meant to support students' independence in responding to their books. For those reading non-fiction books, the mini-lesson proved quite useful. After a short summary of what they had read, most students offered a few sentences on what they learned from their books. The lesson effectively addressed the need to provide response ideas for non-fiction, and students utilized these ideas in their independent practice immediately. Further, those students reading fiction continued to use the poster to provide them with response ideas. For example, one student reading a fiction book provided a brief summary of the book and then reasons why she liked it. In giving those reasons, she made personal connections between the character learning to swim and how she might learn how to swim. This was direct evidence of a transfer of learning from a CCL session into a classroom, along with the responsiveness on the part of Teacher A to her students' needs for non-fiction response ideas.

Teacher B, too, built directly off of the work of the CCL with her students. During an observed lesson with her structured English immersion class, Teacher B continued to add response ideas to the poster that Coach C had introduced previously to her students. By the time of this observation, Teacher B had compiled six possible response ideas on her poster. Coach C's initial lesson had started students off with two ideas on the poster, which Teacher B then expanded upon in subsequent mini-lessons.

During a lesson focused on helping students to understand how they might write about what they think a character learned in a story, Teacher B reminded students, "If I'm stuck with something to write about, you could choose from here [the poster]." She then modeled her own thinking about what a character in the story had learned using a book the class had read together. Teacher B recalled some specifics about the story aloud for the class, then wrote, "I think that Patricia learned that her brother, Richie, really love her."

She continued to think out loud about the book to her students, honing in on an example that illustrated how Patricia might have learned of her brother's love and care for her. She wrote, "He showed her that he cared about her because when she got hurt, he took care of her." Teacher B continued to think out loud and add evidence of Richie's love for his sister to her response. Her modeling for students was careful, deliberate, and explicit. It served as a clear example of how a student might write about what a character learned.

She closed this portion of the lesson by saying, "That's something I was thinking about. That's what I thought she learned. You might write about what a character learned, or you could look on the poster." With that, Teacher B summarized for her students how

this lesson exemplified a way that they might write about their thinking in their Reading Notebooks, and how they could use an idea from the poster of possible entry ideas to get them started. She was careful to note that students did not need to use the idea that she introduced in that lesson; they might independently choose a different idea from the poster if they did not know what to write about. In so doing, Teacher B continued to give students possible ideas for Reading Notebook entries, while nurturing their independence in this area – both of which were explicit goals of the CCL.

Following Teacher B’s mini-lesson, students worked independently on reading and responding in their Reading Notebooks for twenty minutes. Some students chose to respond using the response idea from the day’s mini-lesson, while others used other suggestions from the poster. For example, one student worked on explaining the ways in which her character learned to read, while another student made a personal connection to the character in her book. Students’ responses indicated that they were becoming familiar with the idea of responding to their reading in their Reading Notebooks in ways that moved beyond only summarizing their books. Some students used the poster to give them ideas for their responses, ideas that they learned through mini-lessons similar to the one described above in which Teacher B demonstrated her own thinking about a book so that students could then try such approaches in their notebooks.

III. IMPACT OF THIS CCL

Teachers in the CCL saw a direct benefit in their classrooms as a result of their work in the cycle. For example, Teacher B described trying everything that she saw or heard about during CCL in her classroom. By participating in CCL, she believed,

You’re really helping your own teaching. It really helps. This is exactly what we’re supposed to be doing, and it’s having somebody show you what exactly it is. So I use it, I really use it. Teacher B

Teacher B was thrilled to have a practical source of information to support her implementation of independent reading, and, as noted above, she implemented ideas that she saw and discussed during CCL in her own classroom. She valued not only what the coach modeled, but also the opportunity to hear and discuss how other teachers were implementing these strategies. This helped her to “see it from a different perspective,” which in turn helped her teaching to become more effective. Teacher B saw CCL as an “invaluable” model:

We need more of that, in every subject that needs to be taught....As things change, you also want to be up on everything, and having somebody model what you need to be doing is something you can’t – there’s no price on it, definitely. Teacher B

Teacher A, who described the purpose of CCL being “to strengthen me as a teacher by giving me various opportunities to take a closer look at places where children are having difficulty,” felt that this purpose was achieved during the cycle. CCL served as an opportunity for her to hear and discuss ideas that she might not have otherwise tried. She noted,

It can even get you thinking about other things to do. Or someone gives an idea and you're like, 'Hey, I never thought of that. Let me try that out!' Teacher A

Teacher A began to implement lessons in her classroom that built upon those she saw demonstrated during the CCL sessions. As described in the example above, these lessons helped her students to become more independent as they wrote about their reading. Based on what she learned in the CCL, Teacher A began to teach concrete strategies for her students to use in their Reading Notebooks – lessons that helped her students to decide on their own what to write about in these notebooks.

Both the teachers and the coach felt that the impact of this CCL cycle could be seen directly in their classrooms. They reported that students began to know themselves as readers, choosing books independently at their level. Coach C described seeing these results: “I see more kids engaged in their reading. I really do.” Students also began to express rich thoughts about their reading in their Reading Notebooks. Again, Coach C noted these outcomes: “Some of them I can see are more successful in their reading journals because they can understand the book.” They chose what to write about in these notebooks, referring to the poster of ideas in their classrooms as a resource. In this way, students took on a new level of responsibility for their reading.

In this regard, Education Matters observed one student respond to a non-fiction book about Thanksgiving. She chose to write about specific facts that she learned instead of merely summarizing what she had read: “I learned that Pilgrims had to be friends with Indians and for their country, and they had a feast called Thanksgiving.” Students also pushed themselves to think in new ways about their books. Another student, in explaining how the main character in her book learned to read at a late age, pointed to specific evidence throughout her book to illustrate both how this character was smart and the strategies that he employed in learning to read. These students exemplified the type of growth that Coach C described.

Towards the end of the cycle, teachers administered a post-assessment, asking students, once again, to write about their independent reading books. Upon examining this assessment during the final CCL session, teachers noted that students overwhelmingly summarized or retold the stories that they had read. As teachers and Coach C discussed this result, they realized that the prompt encouraged such retelling, as opposed to encouraging students to write about their thinking as they read. Based on this realization, some teachers considered administering an alternate assessment to gauge students' growth in writing about the thinking that occurred as they read.⁸

⁸ Additionally, it was reported to Education Matters that Teacher A, who was not at the final session, did obtain post-assessment products that demonstrated students' thinking about their reading. When they received the post-cycle assessment, students had asked her whether they were meant to summarize or share their thinking, as they had recently been working on the latter. Teacher A explained that she was interested in their thinking about their reading. Students then wrote responses that demonstrated their thinking about their independent reading books.

The new teaching strategies that teachers implemented as a result of CCL led to classrooms in which, as Coach C described, “there’s a better accountability that kids are reading on their level.” Additionally, Coach C saw that “teachers now don’t have to give the prompts of what to write about anymore. And the notebooks show that. I can see the progression.” Towards the end of the cycle, during observations, many students did in fact have books that were appropriate for their reading levels. Additionally, many students wrote responses in their Reading Notebooks that were no longer just summaries. They finished their reading and began, independently, to describe their thinking about their books in their notebooks, often using the posters in their classrooms as a resource for entry ideas. According to the coach, teachers were delighted with the outcomes of their new practices:

They seemed to really sometimes be excited about what the kids write, which I think is more about-- Because they’re seeing *them* take ownership, maybe? Like, look at what they did! Like they surprised the teachers, I think, in what they can do and what they can say on their own. ...And it’s almost like their kids are capable. I feel like some of them see how capable their kids are, that they just have a system in place. Because I know that’s the thing that I think, as a coach, is my job, is to help with the practical steps of how to make it work. Coach C

IV. CHALLENGES TO THIS WORK

There is much about the culture at Cummings Elementary School that supports the implementation of CCL at the school. The professional culture is one that embraces learning, collaboration, and instructional improvement. The principal assured implementation of CCL by arranging a school schedule that permitted the use of preparation periods and specialist coverage for teachers involved in cycles. CCL implementation was a priority to the principal. Only once during data collection was a teacher unable to attend CCL because of a lack of coverage for her class.

There were, however, challenges to the effective implementation of CCL at Cummings. For the grade-level involved in the cycle studied, implementation of the Reading First Initiative proved to be an enormous challenge. Teachers were still adjusting their instructional strategies to the demands of Trophies, a basal-based program that differs markedly from Readers’ Workshop. As they struggled to find a place for independent reading within their schedules, it was often hard for them to find time in which to implement and try out the content that they were learning in the CCL. Additionally, these teachers were still learning how to effectively implement Trophies. Adding more new information about workshop-based literacy instruction, at times, felt overwhelming.

Finally, because teachers were not required to do demonstration lessons, Coach C adapted the demo component so that she generally taught the lessons. Overall, from both the coach’s and teachers’ perspective, teachers benefited from this adaptation by observing expert implementation of teaching strategies. However, because of this adaptation, teachers did not have the opportunity to practice in front of colleagues and

benefit from their feedback during debriefs⁹. Coach C felt that her one-on-one follow-up work with teachers during and after the cycle would give them ample opportunity to demonstrate teaching strategies.

V. FACILITATORS OF THIS WORK

Language Arts CCL at Cummings Elementary School is a vital and valued component of the professional community. The school's principal played a key role in facilitating both the effectiveness of CCL within the school, and the value placed on the work. She saw CCL as an ideal learning model: "I think it's great, it's the way to learn...if you really want to move a school forward, you do it together." Upon coming to Cummings, Principal C brought the literacy coach with her from her previous school. In doing so, she brought in a coach whom she trusted, who shared her philosophy about Readers' and Writers' Workshop, and who she knew worked well with teachers towards changing their practice. The trust that Principal C placed in Coach C and her work was vital for the functioning of CCL at the school. Principal C explained, "I have full confidence in her. If I didn't, then I probably would feel a need to be more of a presence [in the CCL cycles]." In placing her trust in Coach C and the CCL model, Principal C modeled for teachers the value of this opportunity for professional learning.

Additionally, because Principal C saw CCL as such a vital component of teachers' professional lives, she nurtured its existence and growth at the school. She did this through valuing time for CCL, providing trustworthy and regular coverage for teachers to participate in sessions. She also worked closely with the coach to determine the course of study. Additionally, she followed up on the work of the CCL in her observations of teachers. She explained that she frequently communicated with Coach C about the content of the CCL sessions and then looked for this content in teachers' individual classrooms, learning about the quality of classroom implementation "from classroom observations [and] discussions with children, primarily...If the kid can't tell me what they're doing, I don't care how good it looks, it's obviously not working."

Because Principal C knew what was happening in the CCL meetings from week to week, she knew what to look for when visiting a classroom. She noted that she often entered classrooms looking for a poster or work-product that she knew had been a recent result of CCL meetings. This exemplified her partnership with Coach C in supporting a successful CCL.

What we've found to be successful is that if she's there and she's leading the work, and I serve more as the accountability piece. I know she's telling me exactly what was talked about and what people said they were going to try out then I'll just happen to do classroom visits and make sure – or ask about that.
Principal C

This sent the message to teachers that Principal C both knew about and valued the work that they were doing in CCL and that she expected to see the results of the CCL in their

⁹ Note that there are many reasons, explained above, why the teachers, coach, and principal, felt that having Coach C do the demonstration lessons was effective at Cummings.

classroom practice. It also communicated to teachers the partnership that she and Coach C had developed in support of CCL.

The deep and trusting relationship between the principal and literacy coach at Cummings provided a strong foundation for CCL. Principal C explained that the relationship between the coach and principal was crucial to the success of CCL and that the quality of her relationship with Coach C facilitated CCL at the school: “I think that’s just the key, if you don’t have a good relationship, it’s not really going to work. And we have a similar philosophy about how things should be done. I think we’re just in sync.” The two met frequently to keep each other abreast of issues emerging within the CCL and relating to the teachers and topics covered in the cycles. This trust seemed to be central to facilitating the strong and effective presence of CCL at the school. There was no tension between the literacy coach and the principal. Instead, they were seen as a part of a team focused on a common goal: improving teaching and learning at the school in a way that was responsive to teachers’ needs.

Another aspect of CCL at Cummings Elementary that facilitated its success was that, within the CCL sessions themselves, Coach C carried out the role of coach as an “expert participant.” She was honest about the ways in which the conversations with participants helped her to learn and improve her own practice. Coach C explained how ideas emerged organically in discussions and how she learned from them:

A lot of brainstorming things came up organically that were really exciting for me. And I learned practices that kind of just came up in the conversation. And sometimes you couldn’t even really point to whose idea it was. It was like we all kind of came up with it together. Coach C

Modeling the ways in which she was learning from the group, in turn, opened up participants to learning from her and from each other. She was respected and brought into the community of teachers, as opposed to entering as an outside expert, there to instruct the teachers on prescribed best practices. Additionally, Coach C won trust from the teachers because of her willingness to adapt the CCL components to respond to their needs both in designing the cycle and over the course of the seven cycle sessions. Teacher B, for example, noted her thankfulness for Coach C’s adaptation of doing all the demos:

The best part of all was that Coach C modeled it. We knew exactly what we wanted to do, and she modeled it. It wasn’t like, I’ll have Teacher B do that. Because I don’t think I knew exactly what she wanted to do. The idea was she modeled it and we tried it, which was a good setup. Teacher B

The success of this cycle was also facilitated by the strong working relationship already developed among the members of the grade-level team. The teachers described how they collaborated on a daily basis. Teacher B noted that “we work very closely as a grade team,” and Teacher A described how these teachers always find time “to just imitate each other. You know, ‘What are you doing in math? What are you doing in reading?’ ... We try our best, when we can, to go and talk to each other about issues.” Whether sharing

resources before school, puzzling over curriculum at lunch, or discussing their work after school, these women were constantly working together. As Teacher B described, “We’re always talking, always chatting about anything that comes up.” The ease that these teachers felt with each other helped to create a natural working relationship within the CCL itself. These teachers were already familiar with providing feedback to each other, grappling over hard issues, sharing ideas, and challenging each other’s thinking. Thus, the CCL discussions built off of this prior working relationship. There was no need for the coach to spend time building trust and relationship among participants.

Finally, the follow-up learning that the principal and the coach collaborated to make available to all CCL participants after their cycle was complete facilitated the ongoing implementation of what teachers learned in CCL. Both the coach and principal saw such follow-up as a vital continuation to the learning that teachers do within cycles. Principal C created a schedule for Coach C that prioritized one-on-one support. This was made possible by the fact that Coach C did only one CCL at a time. Principal C explained, “She always focuses on one CCL and then the rest of her time is one-to-one support, usually with the people that have just finished CCL.” Principal C saw these one-on-one sessions as an opportunity for Coach C to address specific issues that arose during observations. Additionally, the one-on-ones were an opportunity to deepen the learning from the actual cycle. This off-cycle learning plan was a crucial piece of the CCL model at Cummings.

For Coach C, the follow-up one-on-one coaching, as well as the one-on-ones that she did during the cycle, were opportunities to hold teachers accountable for implementing what they learned in the CCL. She described a “tripod effect” from the different CCL components:

I feel like it’s that tripod effect of, you can see it, you’re seeing the good practice. There’s time to talk about it, ask questions, make specific plans. And then there’s the accountability side, which is the one-on-one. And I think the one-on-one is *the* most important component. Coach C

The one-on-one observations gave Coach C an opportunity to see how teachers were implementing the strategies that they learned during CCL. She provided feedback on these observations, which helped teachers both to adapt their CCL learning to better fit the needs of their specific classes, and to remain accountable for implementing what they learned in CCL. Teacher B described feeling this accountability in the one-on-ones: “She comes in, she wants to know what I’m doing...and we talk about how it could be better, or she says, ‘I saw this being done this way,’ she just gives suggestions.” This individualized feedback, for Teacher B, was an important part of her learning. Teacher B also confirmed that she would definitely rely on Coach C after the CCL was over. She hoped to have Coach C visit and observe her and to remind her about how to implement the strategies discussed in CCL. Thus, one-on-one support from the coach, during the CCL cycle, but more importantly when teachers had completed the cycle, may have served to deepen the impact of the cycle in teachers’ classrooms.

VI. SUMMARY

Participants in this CCL seemed to value their collaboration for the opportunity and time to learn it provided them. For some of the teachers, the cycle provided an opportunity to grapple with how best to enhance the independent reading that was already taking place in their classrooms. For others, it provided an opportunity to begin to integrate small elements of independent reading into the Reading First Trophies program. Participants in the cycle valued the opportunity to see Coach C model the types of mini-lessons that she hoped they would teach in their own classrooms. They learned a great deal from observing her teach and discussing this learning with each other. Teachers were able to transfer what they learned in this CCL into their classroom practice, and they saw results in their students' work. Teachers began to see students choosing books at appropriate levels. Students also began to respond independently to their reading, instead of relying on prompts. The teachers and Coach C anticipated that this learning would deepen further in follow-up coaching sessions after the cycle was complete.

Comprehending Non-Fiction Texts: A Literacy CCL at Keats Middle School

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I. THE CONTEXT

During the year and a half that Coach K has been the coach at Keats Middle School, CCL has become integral to the culture and fabric of this school of approximately 500 students. CCL's development has been nurtured by the school's a) principal, b) assistant principal, c) director of instruction, and d) literacy coach. The school has dedicated a room to CCL that is complete with a computer, a conference table and chairs, file draws, white boards, and flip charts. The room functions as an office for the coach and as a meeting room for teachers involved in CCL cycles.

Because the room is dedicated to CCL, Coach K has the luxury of leaving charts and other materials developed during previous inquiry sessions posted around the room so that she and the teachers can refer to them throughout the year. For example, at the beginning of the school year, each grade-level cluster developed its own procedural and interpersonal norms to guide their activities during CCL sessions. The seventh grade cluster generated and posted procedural norms such as "be on time," and "do homework," and interpersonal norms, such as "listen" and "be polite." In addition, there were charts that outlined the structure and components of Workshop instruction. Coach K has kept these charts posted and noted that, while teachers have had some professional disagreements, their ability to refer to the norms has helped them manage them productively.

The CCL room also houses English Language Arts (ELA) resources. For example, there are multiple copies of Stephanie Harvey's book, *Non-fiction Matters* (Stenhouse Publisher, 1998), which the teachers read last year as part of the inquiry portion of CCL cycles. And, there is the Comprehension Toolkit, a set of materials that supported the teaching of six reading comprehension strategies in non-fiction also developed by Stephanie Harvey.

Keats Middle School's schedule, developed carefully by the administrative team, supported the implementation of the observed CCL. All teachers within the same grade level have the same P & D time. This allows regular, predictable times in which grade-level clusters can meet for CCL. Coach K works at Keats Middle School between two and three days each week.

Throughout the year, Coach K has been meeting with each grade-level cluster on Thursdays during their 40-minute P & D time when they are off-cycle. When a grade level is on-cycle, Coach K meets with them twice each week, on Tuesday and Thursday, for a total of 80 minutes. Demonstration lessons have been scheduled on one of these days depending on the preference of the teacher who would demonstrate. The

administration has arranged coverage for all of the teachers in the cycle so they could observe. Debriefs usually have followed directly after the demonstration lesson on the same day. They typically last for 30 minutes. If additional time is needed or if looking at student work is part of the debrief, Coach K might extend the debrief to the next CCL session, which happened once during this CCL cycle.

In addition to her work with the cluster as a group, Coach K has met with the teachers individually each week. When a cluster was off-cycle, Coach K occasionally checked in with members individually. One-on-one meetings usually involved an informal check-in to see how teachers were doing and if they had any concerns related to the focus of the cycle. Coach K indicated that, if the teacher requests, she would observe the teacher or, perhaps, do a demonstration lesson so that the teacher could observe her.

Coach K was, effectively, a member of Keats' staff who worked in the school for two to three days each week. She was on the ILT and, for example, played a central role in the development of the school's WSIP. She also participated in after-school professional development and noted that staff members had included her in their social functions.

II. COMPONENTS OF THIS CCL

This CCL demonstrated the potential power of CCL when the focus is a) jointly developed by the coach and the teachers, b) tied to relevant data, and c) connected clearly and immediately to teachers' ongoing curricular and instructional focus with their students. The cycle studied involved seven, seventh-grade teachers: two ELA teachers, the Resource Room Teacher, the LAB cluster teacher, two social studies teachers, and a special education teacher who worked with language-impaired students. Not all of the teachers attended every session but most teachers attended most sessions and all of the teachers attended the demonstration lessons observed by Education Matters. The Director of Instruction attended several sessions as well, including the two observed demonstration lessons, and the principal attended one of the observed demonstration lessons.

During this cycle, Education Matters observed one inquiry session, one pre-conference, two demonstration lessons, one debrief, and one class taught by a teacher in the CCL group. In addition, the coach was interviewed three times, two teachers were interviewed once each, and the principal was interviewed once. Students from Teacher B's class did not return permission slips, and, therefore, only students from Teacher A's class were interviewed.

The CCL cycle focused on improving reading comprehension in non-fiction texts. The coach and the principal selected this focus because the seventh grade ELA teachers were implementing a non-fiction unit in their classrooms and non-fiction was an area in which their MCAS and FAST-R (Formative Assessment of Student Thinking in Reading) data indicated students needed improvement. Four of the teachers were doing a unit on writing an I-search, a short (e.g. 2-5 pg.) personal research paper on a topic chosen by the student. Coach K had worked with the seventh-grade teachers on the same unit the

previous year. This therefore was a second opportunity for the teachers to work with Coach K on the same unit.

Adaptations to the CCL model

From the coach’s perspective, there were only a few modifications to the CCL structure during this cycle. Coach K reported that she “pretty much followed the structure that it is supposed to be,” rotating sequentially through three components: Inquiry, Pre-conference, and Demonstration-Debrief. However, Coach K separated the pre-conferences from the demonstration lessons and debriefs, holding the pre-conference during the Inquiry time at the session before the demonstration lesson. She did this so as to not take time away from the demonstration lesson as well as to allow more time for the pre-conference. With respect to Inquiry, teachers met for inquiry for only 40 minutes rather than the recommended 60 minutes.

In addition, during this particular cycle, teachers did not meet at all during Thanksgiving week because of the holiday and a school-wide field trip. And, Teacher A asked that her demonstration lesson be postponed a week because her class was not ready for the demonstration lesson she was planning to do. Coach K adjusted the schedule to do an inquiry session at their next meeting and then had a more focused pre-conference before Teacher A’s demonstration lesson the following week. In a third modification, Teacher A’s debrief was extended to a second session. As a result of these adaptations and situational modifications, the cycle included only three demonstration lessons.

Overall, the teachers met twelve times during the cycle, meeting only once during their first and last weeks.¹⁰ Their first meeting served as an introduction to the cycle. The second session and half of the third session were devoted to designing their course of study. Three sessions were demonstration lessons (two by the same teacher). Pre-conferences were held during the sessions prior to the demonstration lessons. A debrief followed immediately after each demonstration lesson on the same day. Two sessions were devoted to inquiry. The chart below summarizes the eight-week cycle.

Week	Tues	Thurs
1	No meeting	Initial planning
2	Planning "Course of study" *	Finish planning/preconference *
3	Demonstration lesson/debrief *	Inquiry *
4	No meeting	No meeting
5	Preconference (short) *	Inquiry
6	Preconference *	Demonstration lesson/debrief *
7	Debrief *	Preconference
8	Demonstration lesson/debrief	No meeting
	* Attended by Ed. Matters	

¹⁰ The last week was the week before Christmas. They had one demonstration/debrief that week and Coach K decided to give the teachers the last scheduled day of the session off.

Setting a course of study

While the overall focus on non-fiction had already been decided and was based on Keats' WSIP, MCAS, and FAST-R data, the group of teachers and the coach still needed to develop: 1) their specific focus within the broader parameters of teaching non-fiction texts; 2) the guiding questions; and 3) their goals for the session. As noted above, the second and part of the third meeting of the cycle were devoted to establishing the "course of study," that is, the specific focus of this CCL.

Coach K's facilitation skills effectively engaged the teachers in a collaborative process for developing the focus. She began by quoting the student learning goals from their WSIP. Teachers then offered ideas for the student learning goal and the teacher learning goal as well as the course of study. Coach K facilitated the discussion by asking for more clarification, rephrasing ideas to link the goals more tightly with the course of study, and keep the discussion focused on the items on their "Crafting a Course of Study" form. To illustrate this process, the discussion that led to establishing "determining importance" as the focus is summarized below:

Coach K started the discussion by talking about the learning goals of the cycle. Drawing from their WSIP goals, teachers then talked about developing stamina in reading. One of the teachers quoted the WSIP: "Students will build stamina in reading to more successfully identify and analyze main ideas, supporting ideas, and supporting details in any text they read and use this evidence orally and in their writing." As they continued their discussion, Teacher A said that one of her concerns was how students interpret data. She said that she thought students found it challenging to weed out things that don't belong. At this point, Coach K, rephrasing what Teacher A said, wrote down that one focus of the cycle would be on "determining importance."

As the group continued to develop the student goal, Teacher B mentioned that "we always take for granted that [students] are computer savvy but they weren't really able to sort out what was important." She talked about how she thought students had trouble knowing what information was relevant when different websites come up.

Coach K again mentioned they would look at students' ability to determine importance. Coach K's restating of this focus brought comments from several of the teachers. Teacher A mentioned that she thought students should be able to focus on one thing – whatever the question is. Teacher C said that [students] should not get overwhelmed by the amount of information that they had to deal with. Teacher D added that students should be able to stay focused on immediate questions, noting that students often leave the main topic and lose its main focus.

Coach K reiterated that they would be working on determining importance.

Coach K said that she did not plan ahead of time that "determining importance" would be the focus of the cycle and that she felt that it did indeed emerge from the concerns and questions that the teachers brought with them. When asked what she felt her key role

was in facilitating the discussion was, Coach K said that she wanted to guide them to “narrow the focus” because, as she explained,

There was the potential to have so many different things come into the course of study. And really, our goal is to narrow it down to a particular focus that we can look at. And in this case, we ended up with determining importance. Coach K

The process of crafting their guiding questions during their third meeting also relied on Coach K’s facilitation. The discussion allowed them to consider more carefully what they wanted to pay attention to during the cycle as well as how they would link what they wanted to learn during the cycle with what they had learned while doing the I-search unit the previous year. The excerpt below, in which they established their first guiding question, illustrates the group’s collaborative process as well as Coach K’s facilitation of that process,

Coach K started the discussion by saying that the only thing left on the sheet that they had to fill in were two to four guiding questions. Teacher B asked if a guiding question could be: “Which mini-lessons scaffold student learning?” She then rephrased to suggest: “Which mini-lessons support student learning and improve comprehension?”

Coach K suggested: How about “How do we use mini lessons to support student learning or student comprehension?”

Teacher B said that she didn’t think that all the mini-lessons from the I-search unit they did the previous year supported learning and mentioned one lesson from the unit that she thought only confused what was covered in the first lesson. She said that if they hadn’t done the unit last year, she wouldn’t know that.

In response to this, Coach K noted that one of their goals for this year is to learn from what they did last year. She suggested that Teacher B might be suggesting the need to remove some of the lessons that didn’t work so well. Teacher B added that they should make sure that they address this issue during the cycle.

Coach K followed Teacher B’s comment by asking, “How about “Which mini-lessons support our goals?”

Teacher A also said that she didn’t do all of the lessons last year, noting that she skipped one on interviewing because only the students who had to do an interview as part of their I-search would benefit from it. Rather, she just made the information on interviewing available for students who needed it. She said that she understood what Teacher B was saying, “that you don’t need to use all of the mini-lessons.”

Coach K then asked, “Okay, does that question accurately reflect that? It would say, “Which mini lessons best support our stated goals?”

This extended excerpt shows both how the teachers contributed to the crafting of the guiding questions and how Coach K’s facilitation allowed them to think through why

they were asking particular questions. It is interesting to note, in particular, that when Coach K offered the alternative suggestion, “How do we use mini-lessons to support student learning or student comprehension” both Teacher B and Teacher A drew on their experience the previous year to say that they had a concern about some lessons that did not work well. Coach K listened to the teachers’ concerns and did not push her own question on the group.¹¹ Yet, she did help frame the question so that it referred back to the “stated goals” of scaffolding students’ ability to determine importance.

Inquiry

Coach K based the discussions at both of the cycle’s two inquiry sessions on an article by Stephanie Harvey.¹² The article, “Nonfiction Inquiry: Using Real Reading and Writing to Explore the World,” is a 10-page article that includes practical suggestions for ensuring that students have good non-fiction texts available to read, examples of how to encourage students to read non-fiction, resource references, and research references. When asked why she had chosen the article for this cycle, Coach K first jokingly said that she was a “big fan” of Stephanie Harvey but then described more seriously how she and the teachers had studied Harvey’s book, *Nonfiction Matters*, last year, working through each chapter of the book. With reference to the article for this cycle, Coach K said that she finds the author’s work to be very accessible:

You have to know your audience, let’s put it that way. And I know that this particular audience likes her and finds her accessible, and finds her suggestions around instruction easy to implement in their classrooms. And they are willing to take things that she talks about, especially around the nonfiction, and try it out in the classroom. Coach K

Indeed, most of the teachers read the article before the first inquiry session, which followed the first demonstration lesson. Because one teacher did not attend the demonstration lesson, Coach K gave everyone about ten minutes to scan the article. They had about fifteen minutes for the discussion at this session.

As a way of prompting discussion, Coach K used a strategy of having the participants look for “Golden Lines,” lines from the text that they found particularly poignant or relevant to their work. Coach K asked each teacher to share a “golden line” and then to say what was significant about it. When teachers shared the lines, a short discussion about their implications ensued. For example, Teacher B shared the line, “We needed to get more trade nonfiction into our classrooms so the kids could read it, appreciate it, and learn from it.” Teacher B noted that this line resonated with her because she had found

¹¹ It is interesting to consider how the discussion about the phrasing of the question might reflect where the teachers were with regards to their readiness to discuss pedagogically deeper questions about how to use mini-lessons. It appears they were still learning how to select or design particular mini-lessons to support instruction in determining importance. This point is also addressed in the “Challenges” section of the case.

¹²While there was only one assigned inquiry reading for the cycle, Coach K said that she worked on the assumption that the teachers regularly referred back to additional resources on teaching non-fiction, including Stephanie Harvey’s book, *Non-Fiction Matters*. It was also clear that Teacher A reviewed the *Comprehension Toolkit*, including lesson plans and readings in preparation for her demonstration lesson. Coach K clearly felt that this group had some degree of self-directed inquiry, especially Teacher A and Teacher B, for whom, as Coach K noted, “such self-direction just happens.”

that the students in her classes are interested in topics for which she has no texts in her classroom. This prompted a brief discussion about how they might get additional non-fiction texts in their classrooms.

In another example, Teacher B noted the line, “We demonstrate every step in the learning process,” indicating that Harvey and her colleagues, as teachers, would do “most everything we assign.” Coach K used this example to point out to the group that what was described in the article was “what we are doing here.”

When asked what they found useful about the reading and discussing it in an inquiry session, the two teachers interviewed focused on two related themes. Teacher B noted that she found the article to be “relevant, easy to read, easy to be able to have a discussion about, to hear everybody’s thoughts.” She also found that the article provided a framework to reinforce the work they were doing in their classrooms:

Teacher A and I both do a lot with the kids to make sure that they’re understanding, that they’re grasping things. And I think, also, reading articles like that just helps to reinforce what we should be doing or maybe looking at something through another lens. Teacher B

Teacher A emphasized how Coach K used the article to facilitate the discussion in the first inquiry session, noting that she would use the such discussions as opportunities to model strategies that they might then use in their own classrooms.

Coach K always gives us something to do. So, that’s quite typical because sometimes we may be marking the texts. Sometimes we may be reading. Sometimes we may be looking for evidence. It depends on what it is that she’s working on at the time. Teacher A

Both of these teachers recognized how the article supported their own inquiry into improving their instructional practices and how the discussion of it could help them to reflect on their practice.

Pre-conferences

The CCL meeting prior to each demonstration lesson was devoted to preparing teachers to observe the upcoming lesson. For both pre-conferences that were observed, Coach K used a protocol called “Pre-Conference/Demonstration Lesson Planning Worksheet.”¹³ (Attachment A.) The pre-conferences were mostly discussions between Coach K and the demonstrating teacher, with other teachers listening and offering occasional comments, and asking questions about what they would be watching and what the teacher would like them to pay attention to.

During each pre-conference, Coach K described the lesson the teacher was demonstrating to the teachers and then clarified the sequence of the lesson; that is, what exactly they

¹³Coach K said that another coach had given her this form, which was adapted from “The Post-Observation Conference” developed by Teachers 21, a non-profit organization that provides professional development to teachers and administrators.

would observe during the class. She then asked the demonstrating teacher if she had any concerns. They established together what specific activity they would actually pay attention to and then the demonstrating teacher's key question. Finally, they established the nature of the data they would collect or what the observers should look for in order to answer the teacher's key question. For example, during the pre-conference before Teacher B's first demonstration lesson, the first lesson in the I-search unit called "Collecting Wonderings," Teacher B said that she wanted the observers to pay attention to how she would scaffold the students' thinking to help them to generate their own list of wonderings. Observers were asked to look for evidence of her scaffolding.

During the pre-conference before Teacher A's demonstration lesson, Coach K described how Teacher A had agreed to demonstrate a lesson from a new set of materials, *The Comprehension Toolkit*. After they had discussed the sequence of the lesson, which focused on using a graphic organizer called an FQR [Fact/Question/Response] chart, Coach K and Teacher A clarified her key question and linked it to the activity to be observed and what the observers should look for:

Teacher A said that her concerns were "will students be able to identify the facts and develop questions based on what they're reading – to stick to the text."

Coach K responded: So, basically can they accurately complete the FQR chart. Teacher A said, "Okay, that works."

Coach K responded: I'm just thinking ahead to the activity to be observed then." Teacher A followed with: "And are they able to do that?"

Coach K: So, under "activity to be observed" we'll be looking for them working on the FQR chart and seeing if they accurately are able to come up with those. And that's a key question as well. So, filling in the chart is the activity and the key question is whether or not they can fill in the chart.

This excerpt illustrates how Coach K worked with Teacher A to develop an explicit and concise focus that could guide the observers, particularly as they observed a new lesson.

Demonstration lessons

Education Matters observed two demonstration lessons, one by Teacher B at the beginning of the cycle, and therefore taking place early in the I-search unit, and one four weeks later by Teacher A, when students were further along in the I-search process.¹⁴

Coach K indicated that the teachers at Keats Middle School were generally willing to do demonstration lessons. Yet, both Teacher B and Teacher A acknowledged that, despite being veteran teachers, they still were uncomfortable doing such lessons:

¹⁴ Education Matters also observed Teacher B teach the lesson she was planning as her demonstration lesson to a class the day before she did it as the demonstration lesson. This lesson focused on "talking to the text," and aimed at helping students learn how to mark texts more effectively. Teacher B said that she chose this lesson because they had watched a video of the same lesson.

I hate it. It makes me so anxious and nervous Teacher B

It seems like I'm being judged, and I feel sometimes intimidated because I think sometimes people have a lot more expression than I have and a lot more knowledge than I have. And it's just something that I don't think I'll every get used to. And I guess because being from the old school, you came in. You closed the door. And you did your thing. . . .So, now, the inviting [in of] people makes you vulnerable. At least that's the way I feel about it. Teacher A

But, even though they acknowledged the discomfort they felt in doing demonstration lessons, they felt it was important to do them. Teacher B was willing to demo, in part, because she liked Coach K and Coach K had asked her to demonstrate. Teacher A also felt that part of her responsibility as a teacher at Keats Middle School was to be willing to demonstrate lessons and that it was important for her to practice what it was that she was teaching her students:

Teaching is the only profession where you don't collaborate, you know. So, this is something that's new in the teaching field. And so, in business they do it all the time. They sit together. They work. They put thoughts together. And we're the ones that teach the kids to do it. But we have difficulty ourselves doing it. Teacher A

The teachers readily acknowledged that, their discomfort aside, there were benefits for them and their colleagues, to being observed and observing others. As Teacher A aptly noted, "when you get a chance to see someone doing the same thing that you do, they validate what it is that you do." Teacher B and Teacher A were thus willing to work through the discomfort and anxiety of demonstrating lessons for the benefit it would provide both them and their colleagues. Teacher B welcomed the feedback that she herself received and Teacher A welcomed the way in which the demonstration lessons allowed teachers to focus on student learning:

I think the feedback is helpful, you know, in trying to do things differently, better. This is my castle during the day. And I want to be in control of it. And if I'm not doing a good job, then, I'm not going to be [in control]. Teacher B

We're all on the same page. We're all working toward the same goals. We're all working toward the same goals, and we realize that the student is the one who is the most important in the classroom not the teacher. So, that's what we have to focus on -- the students. So, we have to remove ourselves from the spotlight. So, I think that's what CCL does. Teacher A

Because the demonstration lessons were part of the I-search unit of study, they were clearly related to each other and built on ideas raised in the debriefs. Each demonstration lesson focused on the mini-lessons the demonstrating teacher did. However, teachers in the cycle watched the entire lesson, including the independent work time that followed each mini-lesson. Consequently, the observation took in both the mini-lesson as well as the effect the mini-lesson had on the students' independent work and any whole group discussion that followed the independent work.

Debrief

The debrief component of each lesson offered teachers the opportunity to reflect on the lesson and to consider the implications of the lesson for their own practice. Coach K's facilitation of the debriefs, as in her facilitation of the planning and the inquiry sessions, helped to ensure that the key questions they crafted at the pre-conference were addressed during the debrief.

The debrief of Teacher B's demonstration lesson, which was a lesson that some of the teachers had done before, followed immediately after the class. When the group began their conversation, they focused on whether the students in the SAR (Substantial Academic Remediation) class had been able to generate "wonderings" that they could research and whether they thought that the students could actually do the research. After several minutes of such a discussion, Coach K brought them back to what they had agreed would be their key question: Teacher B's scaffolding. She told the group:

I think this is a good conversation. I think that during the inquiry time we have on Thursday is the more appropriate forum for this kind of discussion. I want to be sensitive to your time, as well. So if you can just narrow the focus in to the key question that we're looking at for this particular lesson, which would be looking for evidence of Teacher B's scaffolding of her students. And some of the things we've mentioned so far are: the personal connections she's made, the reference to the cat, the knitting, how she shared her own notebook, her writer's notebook. So I'm wondering what else you noticed as far as what supports did she provide her students for this particular aspect of the lesson. Coach K

When Coach K said this, the group refocused to identify what they thought would count as examples of "scaffolding" and note how the students responded to what the teacher did. In particular, they discussed how Teacher B had set up the students to share their wonderings with each other and ask each other questions about them by a) having them work in small groups, and b) giving them direct strategies they could use to ask each other why they had a particular "wondering."

Teacher A's debrief had a slightly different focus for two key reasons. First, as noted, Teacher A was trying out the lesson for the first time, and secondly, the debrief extended to a second session primarily so that they could take the time to look at the students' responses on the FQR chart.¹⁵ In that second debrief, each teacher had read several of the charts and then discussed what the students had written. At one point, when the discussion started to shift more to considering the layout of the chart and away from the focus of the debrief, Coach K interceded to bring the discussion back to the content by asking, "So, what do you notice about the depth of their responses – the depth of their thinking, especially around the questions and the response part?" When she asked this, the conversation turned back to considering what the students wrote on their charts. One teacher said that she was not sure she actually understood what it meant to write a

¹⁵ Looking at the students' completed FQR charts was the only time that this group looked at student work during the cycle. Coach K noted that they would sometimes look at student work during their inquiry times when they were off-cycle as well.

“response.” This comment led to some further questioning about whether or not students understood the idea of a response. Coach K raised the possibility that they might show a video of the same lesson to students so that they might gain a deeper understanding of what the lesson could look like. She said, “I’m wondering if we have the kids watch what the kids are doing in that video it would provide them with a model for marking up the text and capturing their thinking.”

In both of the debriefs of the demonstration lessons, Coach K’s facilitating helped to keep the discussion on the key questions they had generated and on the evidence that addressed the questions.

Application to Classroom Practice

As already noted, the course of study, “Scaffolding students’ ability to determine importance in non-fiction texts” was tied directly to what the ELA and special education teachers were doing in their classrooms at this time. Coach K described the I-search as a “vehicle” through which teachers could practice some of the teaching strategies they were examining and emphasized that having the seventh grade cluster in the cycle at this time was done deliberately to coincide with their doing the I-search unit.

The CCL structure appeared to help sustain momentum around trying the different mini-lessons and thinking about modifications for implementation in different classrooms. Throughout the sessions, the four teachers doing the I-search unit described the issues they faced while trying out lessons as well as how they addressed them. The three teachers not doing the I-search unit would listen and offer occasional comments or suggestions from their own practice. Coach K noted that one of the social studies teachers had been working very intently with students on marking texts as a way of supporting their reading of non-fiction.

A central theme that came up in their discussions was how to ensure that the lessons were appropriate for their students so that the students could access the material. For example, Principal K said that she had observed Teacher D, the LAB cluster teacher, teach a lesson after observing Teacher B demonstrate it:

I saw [Teacher D] modifying some material that Teacher B had demonstrated. Several of our new kids were experiencing a little difficulty, so she had broken it down to smaller pieces. Yet expectations were the same; she just broke down the pieces smaller. And I wanted to see that; I wanted to see if people would take what they had seen and adapt it to the kids in front of them. And I have observed that [they do]. Principal K

Teacher D also tried the lesson using the FQR chart that Teacher A demonstrated, but using an alternative text, one from weekly news magazine that she thought would be more engaging to the students. She eagerly reported her experience to the group at debrief session the following week:

My experience was that I had a text that was too difficult. Unlike [the text that Teacher A used], there already was instant buzz about text [I chose] because

there was some visuals on the article. It was good. But, the problems I ran into were around vocabulary . . . I thought, I really needed to do some scaffolding before this lesson took place, like around vocabulary, around me doing a reading of it first, some other stuff. Because a lot of the low-level readers were just struggling with it. We did some marking up of the text and a lot of the kids were just highlighting everything and that's another thing. We're talking about picking out the most important information and highlighting everything is not the way to go. It was a real lesson for me in what I needed to do and what I need to do next time. Teacher D

Teacher D's description illustrates how the CCL functioned to provide teachers with a context in which they could see different lessons taught, consider how it would work with their students, try the lesson, and then talk about how it went. In fact, Principal K felt that CCL was "opening up teachers to be "risk-takers." She talked about how teachers had talked with her about how they were becoming more comfortable both with visiting other people's classrooms and with demonstrating lessons.

It would seem that the CCL cycle helped the four teachers to implement the unit on I-searches by keeping them focused on the different elements of the unit. Teacher A and Teacher B continued trying different mini-lessons to support the I-search unit during the cycle. During this time, Education Matters observed each of them teach a lesson that was not a demonstration lesson. Teacher B taught a lesson that she then did as a demonstration lesson the following day. For that lesson, she used a poem to continue having students explore different ways of "talking to the text", which involved using different strategies to mark texts. When asked why she selected the poem she said it was because it was the text used in a video of the lesson she observed.¹⁶ She said that she did the lesson to learn how it would work and how she might have to modify it for a different group of students:

Part of why I did it today was because the group that I'll be doing this with tomorrow morning is academically needier. So, it kind of gave me an idea of how I need to frame it maybe a little bit differently tomorrow. And I might use a different text with that tomorrow Teacher B

Teacher A did a lesson in which her intent was for students to understand the different ways they could organize and write their I-searches. In the lesson, students worked in small groups to discuss three different I-searches provided by Teacher A and talk about the different ways the stories were written. One example had a more structured format, with headings and interview data. The other two were written more as personal stories or essays. In the discussion, Teacher A highlighted some of these features. In talking with her afterwards, she was reflective about how she might want to modify the lesson, tying her reflections to what she thought the students understood from the lesson:

I think I would have to restructure that lesson again because they saw that it was a story form. They got that much. But they did not evidently see the features of the other [examples] that I was trying to get them to look at because the other

¹⁶ It was not clear why she did a lesson using a poem instead of a non-fiction text.

ones had the topics laid out, and it was very easy for them to follow. And somehow they missed that. I was asking myself what would I have done differently. And I think I probably would have done a little bit more scaffolding, you know, going through [each I-search] and explaining [the structure] . . . or maybe take some other I-searches and look at the way they were structured. So, I think I might have needed to scaffold that lesson. Teacher A

The willingness and ability to reflect on a lesson and its impact on student learning had emerged, in part, from what Teacher A had learned and seen modeled in CCL. All in all, teachers in this cycle understood that the goal of CCL is to help them improve their practice and the way to do that is to apply what they learn to their classes.

I apply quite a bit because that's the reason they have CCL so that you can use it in the classroom. So, what we do in class, we try to come back and model for the students -- I mean in the meetings -- come and try to model for the students. For instance, we talked about nonfiction. We talked about maybe the structure. We talked about the features of nonfiction. You come back and you deal with the kids with that. You talk about writing. You talk about talking to the text. You come back and you share that with the students. Teacher A

III. IMPACT OF THIS CCL

From the perspective of the coach, principal, teachers, and Education Matters researcher, this CCL cycle was having a positive impact on teachers' thinking and on their practice as well as on student learning. From the coach's perspective, the cycle enabled most of the teachers to go deeper with work they had begun the previous school year on a topic of great importance to increasing student achievement. In the process, teachers were changing their thinking as well as their practice in ways likely to help them teach their students.

I think the teachers are getting a lot out of it. I think one of the biggest things is building on the work of last year. Because this is not brand-new to them, they feel a little more comfortable, I think, maybe taking some risks. For example, Teacher A is using one of the new resources for the school, demo-ing a lesson from the Comprehension Tool Kit. That's something that is brand new, so she's actually even stepping outside of, I would say, her comfort zone for the I-search process, trying one of these comprehension lessons, tied to our focus of determining importance. I mean she pulled that lesson because the focus is determining importance. And especially for her, she's a veteran teacher. And in my conversations with her last year especially, she said as far as her change of practice, this whole CCL process has helped her to rethink her classroom instruction and try new things. So I'm always excited when I get to see her volunteer to do a demo lesson. Because I know for her, even though she looks very calm, cool and collected, I know for her that this is really putting herself out there. So it's really huge for her, personally. Coach K

Teachers agreed, noting that in the process of changing their instructional practices, they were learning more about their students' capacities.

I learned that through the CCL cycle I'm able to scaffold because that's something that's important for the students. I also learned that the mini-lesson should not be too long. And sometimes I can get a little long-winded and talk too much. So, it teaches me to step back a bit. I also learned that students are able to engage in conversation. You're enabling them to engage in conversation [and that] helps me to learn it helps them as well. And so we're getting the students to become a little bit more involved in what is it they're doing rather than have the teacher [do everything]. And that has been really difficult for me to let go of. So, I'm learning that I can let go and release them. So, that's what I'm learning about my students, that they have a wealth of knowledge, and they're very, very bright. So, I'm learning that the students are okay. You can let them fly. If they make mistakes, fine. That's what education is all about. And also the classroom is not mine. The classroom belongs to all of us. That's also a shift for me.
Teacher A

Teacher A also felt that her students were becoming more familiar and comfortable with the routines and reading comprehension strategies that they were exploring in the context of CCL. She described, for example, how students were coming to expect that they were supposed to mark texts as a part of their reading practice.

I think there has been a difference [with students] because sometimes when I pass things out, they'll ask me, "Are we supposed to mark the text?". . . And sometimes I don't have to tell them . . . because that's something that we had been doing. So, that's one thing I've noticed right off the bat. They'll ask. Teacher A

Students in Teacher A's class also appeared to be grasping some of the key ideas of the I-search unit. For example, even though Teacher A felt that the students in the class that Education Matters observed might have needed more guidance to understand the features of the different I-search reports she used for the lesson, in talking with several students from her class, it seemed that they did identify some of these differences. One student, for instance, was excited to understand how she could write her I-search as a more personal narrative, not having to write what she considered a more traditional research paper. She said, that as a result of the class, "I learned how to write in a different way." Another student, who was going to write an I-search on football camps, found one I-search example, which was on basketball camps, to provide a good model for how to approach writing his own. He, in particular, found that the format of a chart would be helpful in laying out his own data. These students could talk about what an I-search was and were able to describe the process they had been going through to develop their own topic.¹⁷

The teachers in this CCL cycle were also committed to connecting their work with student outcomes through the use of data and were able to use the CCL cycle as a context to help make these connections. For example, they had agreed to administer the FAST-R assessment at the end of the cycle to see if they could identify any measurable improvement in scores from the beginning of the school year when FAST-R was first

¹⁷ It was not clear at this point how well the students were able to research their I-searches and what issues they faced in finding relevant data to support their topics, one goal of the cycle.

administered. At a FAST-R follow-up session three weeks after the end of the cycle, Coach K and a data coach facilitated a preliminary discussion with the teachers to consider how the seventh grade students progressed. While they found that the seventh grade as a whole did better in December than at the beginning of the school year, they also found that the students did less well on questions that involved drawing inferences than on questions that involved finding evidence. At the meeting, they began to consider what that would mean for their teaching, such as what kinds of practices might they need to institute to address this issue, for example, reading aloud and modeling visualization. They also considered how they might better understand how students' reading strategies might be interfering with their ability to make accurate inferences. For example, they mentioned the risks of skimming a text, where students do not read the text carefully enough to identify key points. Coach K suggested they might in fact have a discussion with students directly about why they answered particular questions as they did.

In sum, the CCL cycle at the Keats Middle School was having a positive impact on school culture by fostering teachers' willingness to collaborate with each other and to take risks by demonstrating lessons and trying new strategies in their classrooms. It also appeared to have a positive effect on student learning. Students appeared to be comfortable with using some of the reading comprehension strategies that teachers explored through CCL, were feeling positive about their own work and ability to do it, and appeared to do better on the FAST-R assessment.

IV. CHALLENGES TO THIS WORK

Although this CCL cycle ran smoothly this fact should not hide the reality of the challenges that accompany implementing this coaching model. From the principal's perspective, the challenges centered on scheduling and of ensuring that the teachers both were able to participate and were willing to provide coverage for one another so that their colleagues could participate when it was their turn.

The only obstacle I could really see from Day 1, was how to have people observing, how to give them enough time to do the feedback and how to let that teacher who was doing the demonstration lesson, sit and also talk to that team about what her intent was. I think that's the key to this. If you're not getting feedback, this will not work. You have to have the feedback, and you have to have the time to plan. You have to have the time to do the inquiry. Time is of essence! And it has taken a lot with my AP, my DI, all of us agreeing that we will make a way to have these people free. This is just not me. It has to be my whole team believing that we need to do this. Principal K

Principal K also described the challenge of creating a system with which to provide coverage for teachers during demonstration lessons. One step that she took, at the suggestion of the building's union representatives, was to have a building substitute; that is, a substitute who is permanently assigned to the school. Another step has been to call upon teachers from different grades to cover for teachers who are observing and participating in demonstration lessons and debriefs. Principal K described how she aims to cultivate good will among her teachers by assuring them of reciprocity in this structure. For example, she noted that because the teachers realize they all will need

coverage when they are on-cycle, they are willing to offer coverage and therefore avoid having an outside substitute who may leave their classes in disarray. She also talked about being willing to give teachers who may have to do overtime when offering coverage some form of pay-back, either a stipend at the end of the year or use of the building substitute at a time that they might need some extra time. The collaborative culture that Principal K is cultivating enables her to work with her teachers in these ways.

Teacher A identified the challenge of building up resources for CCL. She was concerned that there were not enough texts for students, as well as not enough materials for teachers. She thought, for example, that because each teacher did not have her own Reading Comprehension Toolkit, the richness of the discussions they could have about the materials were compromised. She felt that, were they each to have their own set of materials, Coach K could have given them more long-range assignments rather than just getting photocopied materials at the time they were using them. She also was concerned that they were still building up materials that could be used during demonstration lessons.

Coach K identified “going deeper” with the teachers’ thinking as her major challenge. She described how she had seen growth in the teachers from the first year to the second year and was starting to see that teachers were more reflective about their practice. She mentioned that even some veteran teachers whom she would consider to be quite traditional in their practice were now willing to try out new teaching strategies and, more importantly, were willing to talk about how their lessons went. As Coach K noted, “I mean that in itself is huge. It really is -- to share with their colleagues.”¹⁸

The challenge of “going deeper” seemed evident particularly in the debrief discussions. In the discussion of Teacher B’s first demonstration lesson, for example, the teachers took a while to move the discussion to the topic of scaffolding. They initially focused on individual students and their unique situations and less on teacher moves and consequences, which was the intended focus of the observation. When they discussed how Teacher B modeled the process of generating “wonderings,” the discussion was more descriptive. CCL participants identified the strategies that Teacher B used but did not push further to explore what she might have been trying to do with the different strategies or how the scaffolding worked to help students generate their own “wonderings.”¹⁹

In the case of the second debrief of Teacher A’s demonstration lesson, as the teachers examined the student work, Coach K had to intercede to ask the teachers to consider what they noticed about the *depth* of the students’ thinking as a way of moving the discussion

¹⁸ It is important to note that because this case focused on a cycle that involved only the seventh grade teachers, Education Matters did not collect data about how CCL worked with other grade levels at Middle School. Coach K mentioned that, while the seventh grade teachers worked together collaboratively, the other grade level teachers were still working on developing this level of collaboration and reflection. However, Coach K did not provide details about the issues with which they were dealing.

¹⁹ Time may have also played a role in the depth of discussions that teachers had or could have. Teacher B noted that sometimes the teachers would get involved in a discussion and Coach K would have to tell them to it was time leave. Teacher B also felt that the CCL eight-week cycle was too short. She would have liked additional sessions.

from a more functional discussion about whether or not the students were using the form correctly.

While noting that teachers were making progress, the principal, too, commented on the need to go deeper and to do it more quickly.

I guess the limitations are that we need to move fast. And a lot of our population of teachers is older. And to be effective [with the learning process], I think you have to walk through this slowly. And that eventually, it's going to "work the teachers". But as our teacher population is aging and we need children to be literate, we don't have the time. So I worry about the time that we're spending, and is it going to be quick enough for what we need for children. It's meant to improve the quality of instruction in the classroom, and I worry that we need to move a lot faster. And if we move a lot faster, will we lose some of the more experienced teachers who are just on the threshold of understanding. That worries me. Principal K

In sum, even though CCL at Keats Middle School was high-functioning, it still required substantial attention to ensure that it was implemented with integrity and that teachers continued to deepen their learning through participating in it. Principal K felt that there continued to be challenges in ensuring that teachers had the time for CCL. She also recognized an ongoing tension between the need to make changes faster for the benefit of students and the need to go more slowly for the teachers. Teacher A highlighted the ongoing challenge of having resources to support both teacher and student learning. Finally, Coach K felt that, even though the components of CCL were in place and that the teachers were committed to working together, it was still challenging for the teachers to delve more deeply into the ideas they were exploring.

V. FACILITATORS OF THIS WORK

Four key factors contribute to the overall quality of the CCL cycle observed at Keats Middle School: 1) the support of the administration in making sure that the teachers had the time and the coverage to attend all components of the cycle, including demonstration lessons; 2) the coach's understanding of CCL and her implementation and facilitation skills; 3) the teachers' trust in the coach and commitment to the CCL process; 4) the clear connection between the focus of the CCL cycle, the WSIP, and what teachers were doing in their classrooms during the cycle.

Administrative Support

The CCL at Keats Middle School could not have worked as smoothly as it did if it were not for the support of the Principal, the Director of Instruction, and the Assistant Principal. This administrative team made sure that the schedule at the school was set up to allow teachers of the same grade level to be off at the same time in order to meet regularly and have coverage so they can attend demonstration lessons and debriefs. As Principal K noted above, the challenge was getting her entire administrative team on board. Having accomplished that task, maintaining the schedule is key to the success of implementing this coaching model.

CCL is sacred in this building right now. It's sacred. So we will do everything it takes to preserve the integrity of it. That we can't cancel out, that we can't have an excuse as to why we can't have it. *It has to happen*. All of the people in the background like me, my assistant principal, we have to solve these problems.
Principal K

In addition, the principal played a significant role in following the progress of teachers a) during the cycle, by attending and/or ensuring the DI attends the sessions, and b) when it is completed, by following up with the teachers who participated.

I consider my role not to just be having a part in going through the inquiry and doing the study, and deciding with the teachers what they will teach. Basically, I need to know what they have decided, so that when I observe in their classroom, I'll see some evidence they're using this. So that's a main reason for trying to get in and out of the cycles. I need to know what the teachers are learning, what they are practicing. So that when you see it in the classroom, you can put a star by their name and say, "And I have observed you using Technique X, which was something I *know* you were working on during your inquiry, during the CCL cycle." Principal K

Finally, Principal K stressed that she must be a "cheerleader" for the teachers as they engage in the difficult work of changing their practice.

I am the cheerleader. When you take a chance and you risk-take, I cheerlead. Because I wrote Teacher B a little note and I said, "Thank you so much for getting up in front of other peers, and doing something that I know was a first-time activity for you. And putting yourself out there so that all the people could discuss this. And this is great, because I'm so proud of you. Thank you!"
Principal K

Administrative support, in all of these forms, ensured high fidelity implementation of CCL and encouraged teachers' commitment to the work.

Coach Skill and Knowledge

Coach K was a skillful facilitator. She established a clear structure and agenda, which she communicated to the teachers through written documents. For example, she started their second meeting by passing out an agenda that outlined the issues they needed to discuss at the meeting. She also worked with the form, "Crafting a Course of Study" which first appeared in *Plain Talk about CCL: Learning in a Lab Site* (BPE, 2003) (See appendix C for their completed form). In the two sessions devoted to crafting their course of study, Coach K used this form to guide teachers' discussions. The completed form then served as a framework for the remaining sessions.

Coach K was also skillful at facilitating teachers' discussions to ensure that decisions were collaborative and the conversations stayed focused on the appropriate topics. When asked what she valued about CCL, Teacher B identified Coach K's knowledge and facilitation skills as key:

I like that Coach K knows what she's talking about. I think it's really important to have a coach that can facilitate CCL. . She's structured. She knows where she's going with us. She's got relevant information. She's not a pushover.
Teacher B

Teacher B also talked about the value of having Coach K in the building through the whole school year:

I think Coach K provides a sense of consistency for us. She's not disappearing. She knows her stuff. I think she's got a pretty good handle on where people are at within the building, who needs help with what things. Teacher B

Teacher participation

CCL's success and effectiveness rest ultimately on the active participation of the teachers. Even though participation in CCL is required, the teachers in this cycle all seemed committed rather than merely compliant. Most of the teachers talked in the sessions about having tried out lessons and having brought back to the group thoughts about what worked well and how they had to modify the lessons. While some teachers seemed to participate more than others, they all seemed genuinely engaged in the sessions and willing to consider the ideas that were being discussed.

Connections

One of the important features of this CCL cycle was the way in which it was tightly connected to what teachers were doing in their classrooms. Four of the seven teachers in the cycle were implementing a unit on I-searches. In this context, the CCL cycle focused on helping teachers help students develop their ability to determine importance in non-fiction texts. To this end, teachers were looking at how they could select and adapt mini-lessons to further that goal. In the cycle, they were able to practice these lessons and raise questions about how they might choose or modify mini-lessons that would better help guide students in their development of I-searches.

For the teachers who were not implementing I-searches, the CCL cycle offered an opportunity to discuss key issues about how to help students improve their ability to determine important ideas in non-fiction texts. Critical here were their discussions about what was involved in marking the text and what strategies might help students keep track of information

The two demonstration lessons observed by Education Matters were directly tied to 1) the I-search and 2) scaffolding student learning around their ability to determine importance in non-fiction. There was, therefore, a close connection to the unit, where teachers who were teaching the unit could discuss the value and effectiveness of different mini-lessons in helping students develop, research, and write their I-searches and there was also the more general connection to strategies for helping students read non-fiction texts, such as "talking to the text" or using various graphic organizers.

The cycle also had a clear connection to data. It was structured so that there would be data that could allow them to gauge student progress. In addition to their own

observations and notes, there were two other key forms of data. First, for the teachers doing the I-search unit, they could use the students' reports to gauge the degree that students understood the assignment and could do it. In addition, because they had administered the FAST-R earlier in the fall and then again at the end of the cycle, they were able to compare the findings to understand how students might have improved their reading comprehension and what students still needed to work on.

VI. SUMMARY

Overall, the observed CCL at Keats Middle School affected teachers' thinking and practice and their students' work. Committed teachers, a skilled coach, a supportive principal, and a clear focus that was informed by data and related to teachers' immediate curricular goals furthered the success of this CCL.

Attachment A
Crafting a Course of Study

Identify a student learning goal based on various forms of data.

Based on data collected from our WSIP, MCAS, FAST-R, and teacher observations, our goal for our students is to have them become more proficient in determining importance in non fiction texts and improve their comprehension skills

Choose a teacher learning goal linked to the student learning goal.

We want to learn how to scaffold student learning around their ability to determine importance in nonfiction text and improve their comprehension skills through the use of mini-lessons.

Link these goals to create your group's course of study.

Our course of study is: Scaffolding students' ability to determine importance in nonfiction texts and improve their comprehension skills through the use of mini lessons

Craft several (2-4) focused guiding questions that explore the link between the student learning goal and the workshop strategy, principle, or structure you've chosen to address it with.

- Which mini lessons best support our stated goals for student learning?
- Which strategies best support students' ability to determine importance in nonfiction texts?
- How will our use of data collection inform our instruction?

Decide how to measure success and student progress.

We will measure success and student progress through our conference notes, a teacher/student-developed rubric, a process log, the FAST-R (administered prior to Christmas Vacation), and the students final research product.

Plan inquiry readings and demonstration lessons that will help answer your inquiry questions.

Inquiry Texts: *The Comprehension Toolkit*, Anne Goudvis & Stephanie Harvey; *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading*, Chris Tovani; *Nonfiction Matters*, Stephanie Harvey; *Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math*, Laura Robb

First Demonstration Strategies: Session I, Collecting Wonderings, Writer's Workshop; Teacher B, Demonstrating Teacher.

Experimenting with Strategies to Bolster Students' Critical Thinking Skills: A Social Studies CCL at Whitman High School

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I. THE CONTEXT

The CCL cycle on which this case focuses was comprised of four social studies teachers at Whitman High School, a recently formed small high school. One of the teachers was new to the school and to CCL, but had prior teaching experience, while the other three had taught at the school and taken part in one CCL during the 2004-2005 school year. While the teachers varied in teaching experience, all expressed interest in collaborating with one another in the cycle in order to improve their practice.

Members of this CCL group met in inquiry sessions on Monday afternoons. Demonstration lessons took place on Tuesday or Wednesday, and debriefs occurred at the beginning of the inquiry session the subsequent Monday. One week, due to testing in the school, the group met for inquiry but did not participate in a demonstration lesson. The following week, no sessions took place due to the Thanksgiving holiday. The cycle lasted for ten weeks. During the last five weeks of the cycle, the Education Matters' researcher observed five inquiry sessions, three of which began with debriefs of demonstration lessons, and four demonstration lessons. Teachers in the cycle taught three of the demonstration lessons; one was taught by an ELA teacher who was participating in a different CCL group.²⁰ In addition the researcher observed three lessons taught by the two teachers in our sample and interviewed the coach and two teachers twice each, once near the middle and once near the end of the cycle. The headmaster and six students, organized into two focus groups, were interviewed near the end of the cycle. The two other participating teachers made comments that were included in the database for this case.

The cycle was designed to address multiple goals. First, it addressed the coach's primary goal of shifting teachers' practice from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction by focusing on the theory and principles of Workshop instruction and applying them to the teachers' social studies texts. She stressed, for example, the importance of "turning over thinking to the students." (Coach W)²¹ Second, the coach targeted the cycle more directly toward helping teachers to increase students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. She defined critical thinking as students' ability to monitor their comprehension of a text meta-cognitively:

²⁰ Coach W intended for a social studies teacher to conduct an additional demonstration lesson. However, when she presented a draft lesson at one of the inquiry sessions, no teacher felt ready to teach it. Therefore, she arranged for teachers to observe the ELA teacher's lesson because that teacher was implementing a strategy related to the social studies CCL cycle's focus, and teachers wanted to learn how to use it. Teachers from the ELA CCL group also observed.

²¹ The coach focused less on the structures of Workshop instruction, such as mini-lesson, independent work time, conferencing, and sharing during this cycle.

Do I notice what I understand? Do I ask questions about what's going on? Do I look at the text? Am I asking questions as I'm reading? Am I wondering, am I noticing those questions that I have? Am I noticing what I do understand? Am I trying to construct some meaning? Am I beginning to see some ideas? Am I beginning to notice things that seem important in the text? Coach W

She supported teachers by developing lessons that they could teach, providing them with materials matched to their course content, and offering one-on-one consultations to support teachers in implementing the new strategies.²² Then, she encouraged teachers to experiment with the examples she provided, urging them to adapt strategies to work in their classrooms, with their own students.

Third, she incorporated the headmaster's recommended focus on assessment. As a result of students' low scores on standardized tests, the headmaster requested that the coach focus the cycle in part on developing assessments and teaching test-taking strategies. To support this focus, the headmaster participated in the planning of the cycle and led an early CCL session on this topic. Coach W reported achieving the focus on assessment both through the inquiry sessions and one-on-one work with teachers.

Lastly, the coach attempted to shape the cycle based on the learning needs and interests of teachers. For example, when teachers reported that they needed additional skills for working with small groups of students and fostering student talk, the coach provided them with support in establishing small groups and providing them with appropriate tasks.

Adaptations to the CCL model

The coach made the following adaptations to the CCL cycle: 1) She did not assign reading to teachers outside of the CCL sessions because prior experience in other schools had led her to conclude that teachers would not complete the reading. 2) The CCL cycle began in October and extended a few weeks beyond the typical eight weeks of a CCL cycle.²³ Coach W felt this extension was appropriate given her goal of increasing teachers' "broad understanding" of how to promote student-centered instruction.²⁴ 3) With the agreement of the teachers, CCL debrief and inquiry sessions occurred after school so that all of the teachers could attend. 4) This cycle followed the pattern of inquiry, pre-conference, demonstration lesson, and debrief; however, as noted above, a) the debriefs were not held immediately after the demonstration lesson but rather at the start of the next inquiry session, and b) teachers in the cycle conducted only three demonstration lessons. 5) Lastly, while the teachers set broad learning goals for

²² The coach reported that, although she found time to meet with teachers outside of CCL sessions, these meetings were difficult to arrange. She attributed this to other demands on teachers' time, including the history pacing guides, lack of clarity around her role in the school outside of the CCL sessions, and to her own limited time, as a result of conducting CCL cycles in two high schools.

²³ As a result, sessions devoted to determining the course of study took place before Education Matters' observations began. We therefore rely on teacher, coach, and headmaster reports to determine what took place in those early sessions.

²⁴ Coach W noted that a much narrower focus, such as "conferencing" or "work on questioning," could work in an eight-week cycle. However, she thought teachers needed to have a strong foundation in Workshop instruction before they could narrow the focus.

themselves, they did not establish explicit goals for students' learning. Teachers' goals included, for example, finding strategies to help students "enter that world of [non-fiction] reading without being so scared." (Teacher A) In addition, Coach W asked teachers to focus on "turning over thinking to the students." (Coach W)

II. COMPONENTS OF THIS CCL

Inquiry

The inquiry sessions Education Matters observed incorporated four components: 1) the coach modeling strategies, such as "three-column note-taking" and "jigsaw" group work, for the teachers; 2) collaborative discussion and adapting of lessons that the coach and, in one case, a teacher had planned for demonstrations; 3) reading and discussion of excerpts from professional texts, example lessons, and descriptions of teaching strategies; and 4) discussion of coach- and teacher-developed assessments. When inquiry sessions followed demonstration lessons, the first 10-15 minutes were devoted to debriefing the demo lesson.

Most of the time, the coach integrated multiple topics into each inquiry session. For example, she began one session by asking teachers to respond to a multiple-choice assessment that a teacher in the cycle had developed based on an op-ed article. She then provided teachers with time to read and discuss an excerpt from a professional text explaining the theory of socially constructed knowledge and the importance of student talk. She concluded the session by asking teachers to provide feedback on a lesson plan she had prepared for the next demonstration. The group discussed the lesson plan briefly, and one teacher remained with Coach W well beyond the session's official conclusion, excitedly tossing around ideas about how to improve the lesson.

During inquiry sessions that focused on modeling and adapting lessons, teachers often discussed the purpose of instructional strategies. In one inquiry session, for example, Coach W prepared the group for Teacher A's demonstration lesson by modeling the lesson she had designed and using the teachers as "students." Throughout the lesson, teachers interrupted to ask questions about how the lesson would be taught. These "interruptions" resulted in brief but fruitful discussions about the purpose of the lesson's components and implementation:

As a Do Now activity, Coach W asked the teachers to turn each of seven sub-headings in the article students would read into a question. After beginning the Do Now, Teacher B asked, "What's the point [of the activity]?"

Coach W explained that it was designed to get the students to notice the structure of the text and that, if time allowed, teachers could use the questions later to have students write a summary. Teacher B said she still didn't understand: "It seems like there are other ways to get them to notice the sub-headings. . . . I just think there are other ways to do it."

Teacher A wondered aloud, "What if they just write, 'What is X?' 'What is Y?' as their questions? What would they be learning?"

Coach W asked the teachers to reflect on their own experience. “Did the activity give you a structure for the text and where it is going?” “Yeah,” Teacher B responded. “But why do this? Why not just write down the sub-headings?”

Teacher A answered, “To get them to engage with the text.” Teacher C added, “At least there is a little piece of thinking there. It gets them to play with the language. And, then if you can answer the question, then hopefully you’ve got a good idea.”

At this point, Teacher B agreed, “Okay, it makes sense.” Coach W encouraged the teachers to try it with their students and Teacher C added the advice to “make it explicit to the students, why do this.” Thinking aloud, she noted, “After you’ve done the questions, when you’re processing, say, for example, ‘How did the Europeans react to the Indians?’ you’d know where to go in the article [to find the answer]. You look at the headings.”

In this case, the discussion convinced Teacher B that the activity made sense. Other discussions raised questions that remained unresolved, however, such as how best to teach vocabulary from a difficult article or whether improving group work was best achieved by giving students more opportunities to practice without instruction or by explicitly teaching them effective group work procedures. Although the coach stressed that both approaches were necessary, teachers never came to agreement about how to establish group work practices in their classes. They were, however, deeply engaged in this and other instructionally focused conversations. Observations and interviews suggest that, outside of the CCL, teachers continued to think about these questions and try different approaches with their students to find what worked best for them.

When the coach focused inquiry sessions on professional texts, during the sessions teachers read excerpts from texts that discussed topics such as how to pose good questions, improve group work, or promote student comprehension and critical-thinking. Coach W worried that these inquiry sessions were “just scratching the surface” in building teachers’ understanding of Workshop instruction. The brevity of the excerpts and number of other tasks to complete during inquiry, she felt, might have limited what teachers learned from these professional readings.

Teachers reported that many of the materials Coach W provided were useful and of high quality. For example, Teacher B used materials from the coach in her demonstration lesson, and Teacher A referred back to articles Coach W provided to help her improve the weekly assessments she developed.

One of the things she does is she gives us a lot of materials, which are all really quite helpful. . . . I feel very grateful for the papers. I feel like I haven’t had enough time to look at them . . . [but] they’re not superfluous, and they’re all very practical and concrete, and could be easily implemented. And every time I do finally sit down, like maybe two weeks later, I’m like, “Oh!” And I think I mentioned that there was one – it had to do with the kind of questions we had, like in terms of eliciting more higher levels of cognitive function. [I found that to

be] *really* helpful because it's very simple, but I immediately started changing how I ask my questions. Teacher A

However, teachers also reported that they referred back only to those materials that they reviewed during the sessions. If they did not use the materials during inquiry, they tended not to return to them in the future.

Throughout the cycle, teachers often grounded their discussions and classroom experimentation in their own experience. They tended not to refer to any current research. On one hand, this was beneficial: teachers were able to share their experiences with one another, building the group's collective knowledge. At times, however, a greater knowledge of research – for instance, what research says about how to prepare students for group work – may have helped teachers to broaden their instructional repertoires in ways that discussion based primarily on their own experiences could not.

Demonstration lessons

Both Teacher A and Teacher B valued the demonstration lessons. Teacher B thought they were far-and-away the most valuable aspect of the CCL cycle.

I think the opportunity to see other teachers teaching and to talk about your own practice with other teachers, and specifically, talking about a particular lesson, is really helpful when it comes to practice. . . . And I guess my biggest criticism of CCL is that I'd like more of that. I think we only got to see three or four, and one of them was sort of on a whim, [the ELA teacher's] class. Teacher B

It's like a level of collaboration and collegiality and discourse that we often don't get an opportunity to do in the schools. And I think nothing is more helpful than actually watching practice, and being able to dialogue and have discussions about it. Teacher A

The four demonstration lessons in this cycle occurred during its last five weeks. Coach W asked specific teachers, a week or so in advance, if they were willing to demonstrate a lesson. While some were reluctant at first, three of the four teachers in this group eventually taught a demonstration lesson. In addition, the group attended one demonstration lesson based on a "Socratic Seminar,"²⁵ taught by a teacher in the concurrent ELA CCL cycle. This observation was related to the social studies cycle's sub-focus on group work and student talk.²⁶

Coach W helped teachers to prepare for the demonstration lessons in two ways. 1) She prepared lessons that two of the teachers demonstrated and spent time with the teachers, both during and outside of inquiry sessions, adapting aspects of the lessons to strengthen them, target them to their students, and align them to the current unit of instruction within the social studies class. 2) When one teacher prepared her own lesson, Coach W and

²⁵ A "Socratic Seminar" is a group discussion format in which students, arranged in two concentric circles, conduct a text-based discussion driven by open-ended questions with minimal support from the teacher. Students in the outside circle observe and provide feedback on the inside circle's discussion.

²⁶ See Footnote 1.

other teachers in the cycle discussed the lesson with the demonstrating teacher and suggested revisions, some of which she incorporated. This was the case when Teacher B developed a lesson based on the ELA “Socratic Seminar” demonstration.

According to Coach W, she planned lessons for some of the teachers because they were “so strapped for time.” Ideally, she thought it would be better for teachers to design their own lessons “because they’d own it; it would be more directly relevant to what they do.” The headmaster felt the same way:

I think the adaptation [of designing lessons for the teachers] makes sense. . . . I think it makes sense to say . . . these social studies people are not English professionals. Let me work with them and design something that will help them learn these reading comprehension strategies and then they can go practice with them. That’s the positive. The negative is, it doesn’t generate from the staff and grow out. . . . I think people really internalize something when they actually start it and grow it and do it. Headmaster W

Coach W, however, thought that adapting the lessons with the social studies teachers addressed, at least in part, the issue of ownership. Furthermore, it helped the coach focus on the social studies content for the lesson, something she could not have done without collaborating with the teachers.

I think [reviewing and adapting lessons together] was good . . . because I’m not a history teacher. I think they were able to take my lesson and work with it, and make it a better vehicle for their social studies classes. . . . I actually thought that was good . . . so [the teachers] owned it. (Coach W)

Teachers’ ability to plan lessons that aligned to the focus of the CCL cycle also depended on their previous experience with student-centered instruction. While some of the teachers in the cycle were well enough versed to plan successful student-centered lessons, other teachers reported that they needed additional help with planning. Since they had not ever developed the desired kind of lessons, they did not know where to begin. Having the coach make the initial plan provided them with a place to begin the process of adapting the lessons for their students. In addition, one of the teachers noted that she appreciated Coach W’s planning as well as modeling the lesson with the teachers, both because it saved her time and because she was able to see how such a lesson could be implemented before trying it with her class. “So for me, it was fabulous. It was like I had a curriculum and I got to engage with it, and then add my touch to it.” (Teacher A)

Teacher A reported that she then spent several hours the night before her demonstration going over the lesson, familiarizing herself with the article students would read, and figuring out how to address the difficult vocabulary in it. This teacher reported that when she tried teaching another lesson that Coach W brought to CCL without having seen it modeled first, “I thought I could do it, and I thought I understood it, but I didn’t.” (Teacher A) Thus, the modeling of lessons prepared by the coach was an important coaching strategy for some of the teachers in this cycle.

The coach observed Teacher A's entire lesson, and two other teachers observed for about 15 minutes each. Coach W provided these teachers with an observation guide that asked them to note what they saw and thought regarding activities in the lesson and student work. One observing teacher peeked over students' shoulders and made notes about their work during their independent work time. However, neither of the teachers was able to see the beginning of the lesson, including Teacher A's mini-lesson, because the large number of teacher absences in the school that day meant that substitute coverage could not be found at the beginning of the period. The fourth teacher did not observe at all due to lack of substitute-coverage. At the end of the lesson, Coach W debriefed with Teacher A informally.

Teachers did not like missing all or parts of the demonstration lessons. With respect to this point, Teacher B commented on the challenge posed by missing the "set-up" which is crucial to understanding the independent work students undertake later in the class:

Particularly if we're doing the Workshop model, it seems like as a teacher, the most important part would be to see the set-up, the first maybe 20 minutes of the class. And then once the students are working, that's good to see, too. But as a teacher, the most instructive is, "How did you get to this point?" Teacher B

The question of how and whether to use coach-prepared lessons arose from time to time from the teachers. For example, early in the cycle, Teacher B was reluctant to present a demonstration lesson because she worried that preparing to teach a new and challenging lesson would be time-consuming. Yet, she wasn't interested in using a lesson the coach prepared because she wanted the lesson to fit within her curriculum.

I don't want to just volunteer to do it next week, because then we'd need to figure out how it would fit in to what I'm doing already, and find readings that . . . the students would be engaged in and what to talk about. Teacher B

Other teachers expressed similar scheduling concerns in light of the fact that the coach-prepared lessons included the social studies content that would be taught. Even though teachers appreciated the coach's preparation of the demonstration lessons, they were reluctant to agree to demonstrate on a particular day because they had trouble predicting when they would arrive at the content on which the lesson focused. Neither the coach nor teachers suggested that demonstrating teachers could apply the strategies in the lessons to other content in their curriculum, which may have increased their flexibility to schedule demonstration lessons.

Observing and discussing the ELA teacher's Socratic Seminar during CCL sessions ultimately convinced Teacher B to demonstrate a lesson based on a Socratic Seminar for the CCL group. Teacher B had tried Socratic Seminars in the past, with mixed results. The ideas she gained from the ELA teacher's demo lesson and from subsequent CCL discussions and materials bolstered her interest in making a second attempt. While Teacher B's demonstration lesson began with some bumps – with a few students confused by the directions and some hesitant to participate in the new structure – Teacher B persisted through the lesson, and, notably, student talk filled the majority of class-time.

The demonstration lessons in this cycle succeeded in getting teachers to try student-centered strategies that were relatively new and challenging to them. They valued the opportunity to observe and learn from their colleagues' instruction, even when it was unpolished.

Debrief

Coach W facilitated debriefs of demonstration lessons using a basic structure: the demonstrating teacher would comment first on her perceptions of how the class went. Observing teachers would then comment generally on what they noted in the lesson in light of the observation guide they had completed. Finally, the coach and teachers would exchange ideas about how the work could be built upon in subsequent lessons. Debriefs in this cycle provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect critically on the strategies, gain ideas about how to improve upon strategies, and consider their impact on student learning.

With respect to extending and improving strategies, teachers discussed, for example, how they would change a handout to make it easier for students to follow. The coach and teachers also occasionally suggested alternatives from materials or professional literature related to the demonstrated strategies. For instance, when Teacher A commented on how the ELA teacher had given clear directions that allowed her to “pull back from the discussion,” Teacher B told the group that she had read some instructions for a Socratic Seminar that recommended that teachers “look away from the students” in order to avoid affirming students' comments, and thereby, build their independence.

According to Teacher B, the debriefs also provided a point for reflection on the success of experiments teachers tried in their classes. In one case, after the debrief discussion on the “jigsaw” strategy that another teacher had demonstrated, Teacher B considered her own experience with the strategy and this teacher's experience, and concluded that it was not a good approach for teaching new content.

Seeing her demonstration lesson with [the “jigsaw”] and talking to the other teachers about their ideas about how it went, I realized that I probably will never try it again. . . . I just don't think it works. I just don't think that kind of a jigsaw really is effective for teaching new content because it's too likely that one person, for whatever reason, will not hold up their end of the bargain. . . . When it comes to content, they're not going to learn it unless they do some reading on their own.
Teacher B

Regardless of whether or not teachers concluded that strategies were worth trying, their willingness to reflect critically on the effectiveness of the demonstrated strategies and apply them to their own practice speaks to their commitment to learning during this cycle.

Critical comments and questions, which teachers made in most debriefs, almost always centered on the lesson or strategies within it, not on the quality of demonstrating teachers' instruction. For her part, Coach W was extremely positive in her comments,

which addressed both the strategies and instruction. She occasionally pushed gently on teachers, encouraging them to model the strategies for their students before they asked students to do them. This was important feedback in a cycle focused on improving students' critical thinking skills and in which demonstrating teachers frequently asked students to use strategies without modeling them first.

Each debrief also focused in part on students' responses to the lessons and what they appeared to have learned. Coach W frequently noted students' ability to complete work that they may not have believed they could complete. In several debriefs, teachers highlighted and discussed parts of the lesson that seemed challenging for students. For example, teachers noted that an activity that was difficult for students was "more of a critical thinking activity than what they're used to." (Teacher D) This comment demonstrates that teachers were implementing demonstration lessons that incorporated more critical thinking activities than their usual lessons and that they noted a difference in students' responses.

Debriefs in this cycle provided an important opportunity for teachers to reflect on the demonstration lessons and students' learning, strengthen their understanding of new student-centered and critical thinking strategies, and develop ideas for adapting and improving these activities. However, attendance emerged as a key obstacle to their effectiveness. Due to lack of substitute coverage during demonstration lessons, some teachers missed the demonstration lessons and, therefore, could not contribute to the debrief. Conversely, some teachers who had observed demonstrations missed the corresponding debriefs due to absences from school. As a result, demonstrating teachers missed the benefit of their observations and they missed the opportunity to learn from the debrief discussions.

Application to classroom practice

Teacher A incorporated some strategies in line with those introduced in CCL into her non-demonstration lessons, observed by Education Matters. For example, in one lesson, she showed students a few models of journal entries written by other students before asking them to write a historical journal entry. In another lesson, she asked students to look up vocabulary words and write their definitions "in words you understand." Coach W had emphasized asking students to pay attention to what they understand when reading texts. In retrospect, Teacher A noted that she wished she had asked the students to

look these up in the glossary and see if you understand the definition. Talk to a partner and try to figure out what it is. Because then there would be some processing. And then, together, write them in words that third grader could understand, which ties into our other assignment. Teacher A

In this lesson, Teacher A also asked students to work in partners, sharing written responses to the following questions with one another: 1) What is a right all people should have? 2) How do you think that right can be protected? In an observed pair, one student questioned another, leading the second student to slightly elaborate on what she had written.

Student 1 read from her paper to Student 2: “I think all people should have the right to liberty, unless they are criminals.” Student 2 asked, “What do you mean?” Student 1 responded, “If they are criminals, they should be put in jail. Like, an allowance is a privilege. You don’t have a right to do it. And, the right to liberty could be protected by a world-wide law.”

Student 1’s response was still not fully developed. In talking about “privileges” in comparison to “rights” Student 1 referenced a brief discussion that took place in class before the partner activity and seemed to be sorting out for herself the difference between the two terms. This activity did not take students much further into considering why particular rights were important or how they could be protected – beyond Student 1’s answer above that “law” could protect rights or Student 2’s answer, later, that “government” could protect them. However, this activity represented an effort on Teacher A’s part to ask students to begin considering ideas together rather than filtering all of their ideas through the teacher.

In addition to these strategies, Teacher A’s lessons featured more traditional teacher-centered instruction, such as a teacher-directed question-and-answer session focused on recall of historical facts from a chapter of the textbook. Teacher A noted that she had not had time to plan lessons that centered on strategies from the CCL for the observed lessons.

In other lessons, Teacher A reported, she had implemented more CCL strategies. For example, she reported adapting a close-reading strategy Coach W had created to a different section of the history textbook. After implementing it, she noted some small gains in student comprehension. For example, she said that when she asked students to read a section in the textbook and develop questions based on what they read, the questions they came up with were “very concrete.”

If it said, “They left Boston on December 7, 1775,” they asked, “What day did they leave Boston?” rather than, “Why did the British have to leave Boston?”
...But at least they felt like they could do it and they were engaged with it.
Teacher A

She thought that her students would need more practice with the strategy in order to deepen their critical thinking skills. Teacher A hoped to implement strategies from the CCL more often in the future.

Teacher B, in contrast, reported that she regularly incorporated strategies such as “marking up the text” and “pair-shares” into her classes. Marking up the text, in particular, was a strategy she had learned and begun implementing during the previous year’s CCL cycle, which had been revisited in this year’s cycle. When Education Matters observed, she implemented a lesson that incorporated a modified version of the “three-column note-taking” strategy Teacher A had demonstrated, combined with a “jigsaw” activity Coach W had modeled in which students “teach” other students about a section of text they have read. Teacher B reflected that the “three-column note-taking” seemed to support her students’ comprehension of the text.

In teaching the Socratic Seminar demonstration lesson, Teacher B implemented a new, student-centered strategy that drew considerably upon discussions and materials from the CCL cycle. She briefly reviewed “the roles people play in groups,” such as “idea-giver” and “idea-seeker,” and provided examples of “sentence stems,” such as “I agree with what you are saying and would add...” and “I have more evidence to suggest what you are saying is correct...,” explaining to students, “Sometimes we don’t know what to say. . . Here are some ideas.” She then provided brief directions to students before letting them try out the Socratic Seminar method themselves. After students had engaged in two Socratic Seminar discussions, she facilitated a short debrief of the students’ discussions, asking students to reflect on the quality of their discussion and the critical thinking strategies they employed.

At the conclusion of the second group’s discussion, Teacher B asked the students for “a couple of observations from the outside group? What did you notice about what worked for the group and what didn’t?”

A student responded, “They had a lot of participation. They all were talking over each other. The group discussion was good, but you all went off topic a lot.”

Another student added, “I think this group worked better than the first group because there were more [loud] people in it. In the first group, the discussion was good, but you went off topic a lot.”

A third student commented, “There was a lot of talking in this group, especially [a student] leading the conversation.”

Teacher B concluded the debrief session by telling students, “I have to notice, at times it worked really well. People tried to use the sentence stems. . . . I was impressed with your conversation. I also noticed, some people were trying to make a point and were ignored. Shutting down [others] is not good for the group.”

The set-up of the lesson and the debrief that followed it represent efforts to support students in learning how to use critical thinking strategies and to reflect meta-cognitively on their learning. Teacher B reported at the end of the cycle that she would continue to implement strategies learned during the CCL, including the Socratic Seminar, and would continue to refine and develop them.

Students’ responses to the strategies teachers implemented

Students varied in their assessment of what they had learned and what changes had occurred in their teachers’ classes.²⁷ Students in one class spontaneously and independently “marked up the text” during an observation early in the cycle. One student described, “marking up the text” as follows:

²⁷ Six students, three each from two classes, participated in focus group interviews for this case study.

Read it thoroughly, [write] comments that you want to say about sentences, about lines, quotes. And underline things, words that you don't understand and stuff like that. Student 3

Students reported that they had learned the strategy in their ELA classes and were used to employing it in their social studies class, as well. This strategy, they reported, did help them to understand text, at least to some extent. It helped them to “know the information” and “get a better understanding” (Student 4 and Student 5).

Likewise, students in the other class described the value close-reading strategies held for them. The strategies, such as three-column-note-taking, which the students describe below, did help them to increase their comprehension of the text.

This helps you because when you have a chart like that. . . she gives you a complete paragraph and you have a chart like that [“What I understand”/ “What I wonder” / “Important sentences and phrases”], and you can read different things, like what you learned and what you're wondering, everything like that, and you discuss it at the end. It answers all your questions. If you had any question about the reading, or if you didn't really completely understand what you was reading about, it helps you answer those questions. And have a better understanding of whatever you was reading about. Student 6

...you can read something, you can read it through. But if you don't mark it up, if you don't break it into parts, you can forget large parts of it, the most important parts. And by doing [the three-column-note-taking], we're retaining anything that might be lost. Student 1

These comments, for instance, when Student 6 says that she is able to answer her own questions through the reading, suggest that the strategies helped students to take ownership of their learning. The strategies allowed students to develop their own questions and build their own understandings rather than respond to questions or interpretations the teacher or textbook judged important or correct.

Students' assessments of activities involving group work and student talk were more mixed. Some students liked group work and discussions because these activities helped them to understand course content and made class more lively.

I think the discussions do help us learn in that classroom, because I think a class cannot grasp a concept without discussing it. So that's why we should have discussions in the classroom. Student 2

[Group work] is all right. And we get to talk! . . . We're not just doing work for ourselves; we get to talk about the work. And it's better that way. . . . It makes it more interesting. Student 4

However, most students reported that the success of group work depended on their peers' preparation and active participation. In their experience, students' lack of preparation and participation had made group work and discussion “boring” or frustrating.

Well nothing good came out of my group. . . I think, because nobody really read in my group, so we never really got the main point of what we did. There was no point for us to go up because we didn't talk about anything important. Student 4

The student data suggest that the close-reading strategies teachers implemented helped students to engage with and increase their understanding of text. Students reported more mixed reviews of group work and student talk activities, including the Socratic Seminar. These data make sense given that teachers in this cycle reported struggling to make group work meaningful in their classes and were just beginning to try new strategies, such as the Socratic Seminar. By the end of the cycle, most of the strategies from the CCL had not yet become regular fixtures in the teachers' lessons. Students' reports, however, suggest that these practices hold promise for engaging students and helping them to increase their comprehension and critical thinking skills.

III. IMPACT OF THIS CCL

Teachers in the cycle valued CCL because it provided them with the time and structure in which they could meet together, share ideas about practice, learn new strategies, and observe each other teaching. These teachers demonstrated an interest in collaboration. The cycle provided the "push" to make it happen. Those teachers who were less experienced with student-centered instruction became more familiar with its strategies and theory. The demonstrating teachers all experimented with student-centered strategies designed to foster students' critical thinking, as discussed below:

I think that as a group, that we've identified some possible strategies, we've tested them out, we've given feedback to each other. And we've seen obstacles; we've identified the obstacles. And at least I feel inspired to continue the process. And in some cases, have been pleasantly surprised at the level of work that the students have been able to produce. Teacher A

I think the most valuable part about it is really seeing other teachers teach. And then I guess the second piece to that is getting an opportunity to talk about teaching and learning, as a group. . . . I felt like it did get me to think more deeply about my practice, and to share ideas that I may not have had the time to do otherwise. . . . I probably would have tried [a Socratic Seminar] again at some point [without the CCL cycle]. I don't know if right now I would have done a Socratic Seminar. I don't think it would have gone as well, because I think there are definitely things that I picked up in CCL that improved it from what it would have been. Teacher B

As noted in "Application to Classroom Practice" above, teachers varied in the extent to which they implemented strategies from the CCL in their classrooms. However, teachers had begun to make changes.

Each of the teachers in this cycle implemented regular assessments based on the school-wide requirement. Teacher A described using the materials she received in CCL sessions to improve the questions she asked on these assessments, and Coach W reported that Teacher A's questions had indeed improved. In addition to the time spent reviewing

assessments during CCL, Coach W reported working one-on-one with teachers in order to strengthen their assessments.

While they varied in their implementation of strategies during the cycle, all of the teachers in the CCL group were determined, by cycle's end, to implement strategies they had learned in their classrooms. Several, including Teacher B, had tried challenging strategies, become excited by students' responses, and committed to use and build upon them again in the future. Other teachers had not yet begun to implement strategies from the CCL regularly and had not yet succeeded in shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. However, Coach W reported that these teachers had shifted in their conception of student-centered instruction by the end of the cycle. According to the coach, the final debrief of the cycle served as a culminating point in this shift for several teachers.²⁸

When we discussed how the Socratic Seminar gave students an opportunity to make their ways of thinking visible to the teacher and to each other, people said that the meaning behind that phrase ["making their thinking visible"] finally clicked. Coach W

Teacher A confirmed Coach W's report, noting that during the debrief she suddenly grasped what the strategies and lessons from CCL were designed to elicit from students.

I'm like, "Oh!" . . . when we take the time to make the reflection, to have them write it down, what they're thinking, and then it becomes verbalized, to have other students hear it, that there's just a very big step forward, just based on that. And so that I see in some ways that all these worksheets and structures are set up to achieve that goal of having them see their own thinking. Teacher A

Coach W described this realization by Teacher A and another teacher in the cycle as an important step along the "slow conversion" from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction:

During that debrief, Teacher A said that we've mentioned over and over again all year about the importance of making the kids' thinking visible. And she said, "It wasn't until this discussion today that I really see what that means." And so that's what I meant by the theoretical underpinnings of all this. I think that's where the slow conversion comes in because, really, we're talking about how learners learn and thinking about that. And shifting from a transmission model to "How do I hope the students really own this thinking in the classroom?" Coach W

She further elaborated:

I think every one of those teachers is thinking about ways to turn thinking more over to the students. And not only to do that, but also to help them become better thinkers in their subject area. And I think there is a range of skill among the

²⁸ Education Matters researchers did not observe this debrief.

teachers in doing that. And then I think they're getting the idea that many forms of student talk – the small group talk, the Socratic Seminars – that those are ways to help the kids process their thinking. But in terms of articulating all those thinking strategies that they can teach kids, I think we still need to do work on that. But, I think there is a willingness to do that and an awareness of its importance. I guess that's the most important thing, that they are aware that it is important now, and it's not just an add-on. Coach W

As reported in “Applications to Classroom Practice” above, while students’ responses to the new instructional strategies varied to some extent, overall, students reported that the strategies helped them to increase their comprehension and, in a small number of cases, to feel excited about their work. Moreover, students’ comments suggest that some had begun to take ownership of their own learning, one of the core principles of Workshop instruction.

Coach W and the teachers noted that they saw modest changes in students’ affect and work when student-centered, critical thinking strategies were implemented, as well:

In [the teachers’ classes] I’m seeing more confidence on the part of the students. . . . That they are not leaving things blank, that they’re taking some risks and writing their ideas down. . . . I think it’s more they’ve had the opportunity to express deeper kinds of thinking than they were given the opportunity for, before. And I think the teachers are beginning to say, “Oh” – both in their discussions and in their writing. . . . – “Oh, the kids can do a lot more than I thought possible.”
Coach W

I really was excited by some of the questions that I saw. They seemed really insightful, creative, went-beyond-the-assignment type of questions. Not just sort of basic questions. Questions that went to the social issues [in the article].
Teacher B

As Coach W noted above, this cycle represented incremental steps in the direction toward consistent, skilled implementation of student-centered instruction designed to build students’ critical thinking skills and comprehension of social studies texts. Teachers with different levels of skill and understanding of student-centered instruction at the inception of the cycle were able to progress from where they were when the cycle began. These outcomes fit well within the goals and expectations of CCL. Finally, teachers’ willingness and ability to try new strategies, to collaborate, and at the same time to question each other, the coach, and the strategies they learned laid a solid foundation for continued growth in future cycles.

IV. CHALLENGES TO THIS WORK

Challenges in this cycle fall into three main categories: logistical challenges, breadth versus depth, and differentiating the cycle to meet the needs of all learners.

Logistical challenges

A lack of substitute coverage was a major obstacle in this cycle. Teachers prized the opportunity to observe their colleagues teaching and a lack of substitute coverage

prevented teachers in this cycle from attending entire lessons. Frequently, teachers missed the beginnings of the period, when the mini-lesson and set-up for independent work took place. On more than one occasion, a teacher missed an entire demonstration lesson due to lack of substitute coverage.

Secondly, teachers occasionally missed inquiry and debrief sessions due to illness and, in one case, due to a conflict with a district professional development offering. In a small CCL group in which substitute coverage was also a problem, this meant that demonstrating teachers sometimes received feedback from only the coach and the one other colleague who had been able to attend the demo. This compromised the quality of debriefs for all teachers present.

Third, scheduling demonstration lessons was a challenge in this cycle. Teachers found it hard to schedule demonstration lessons in advance because they did not know when they would be ready to teach specific content on which the coach-prepared demonstration lesson focused. Teachers may have been better able to align the lessons to their curriculum if they had planned the lessons themselves or if the coach had planned lessons that could be more easily adapted to different content.

Finally, the coach herself reported feeling spread thin because she was leading four CCL groups with distinct foci during one cycle. Adding to this challenge, she spent additional time planning for the social studies CCL in order to find materials related to the content area and to make links between critical thinking and comprehension strategies and content with which she was less familiar. Moreover, Coach W reported that it was difficult to arrange meetings with teachers outside of CCL sessions. She said she found herself catching teachers on the fly more often than establishing a schedule of one-on-one meetings. In part, this was due to her own tight schedule.

Depth versus breadth

The coach noted that teachers in this content-area cycle felt extremely constrained by the social studies pacing guides. They were reluctant to stray from the guides in order to incorporate supplemental reading into their classes and to take the time needed to focus on critical thinking strategies. Coach W explained,

I think that's the crux of the problem. In a content course, every once in a while it crops up: "But the pacing guide! But, I've got to get through this. I'm way behind." Coach W

Coach W addressed this tension, in part, by developing lessons in which students applied critical thinking and comprehension strategies to the history textbook, rather than to supplemental texts. In this way, teachers could continue to teach the curriculum while also building students' literacy skills.

In addition, the focus of the cycle overall may have tipped too far toward breadth. Coach W intentionally developed a broad course of study in order to provide teachers with a foundation in Workshop theory and student-centered strategies. Coach W attempted to address close-reading strategies, such as "marking up the text" and "three-column note-

taking,” but also attempted to help teachers improve group work in their classes and to support teachers in developing weekly assessments that measured critical thinking skills. While all of these strategies have merit, it was impossible for the group to address each in depth within one cycle, even in a cycle lengthened by a few weeks. A tighter focus may have allowed the group to explore a smaller number of strategies in greater depth, including their theoretical underpinnings and whether or not they promoted greater student understanding.

Addressing different learning needs

Teachers in this CCL group differed considerably in their levels of instructional experience and in their familiarity with Workshop instruction. As a result, one teacher found the cycle to be quite useful because the strategies she learned and the theory underlying them were relatively new to her. Yet, another teacher found the cycle to be less productive because she believed she was knowledgeable about theory related to student-centered instruction and was already applying many of the strategies the cycle addressed in her classroom. She wanted to learn new and more challenging strategies in the cycle.

The broad focus of the cycle was the coach’s attempt to address these varied levels of teacher knowledge and skill. However, it was difficult for the coach to meet each of the teachers’ needs and, at the end of the cycle, she was still considering what support some teachers might need in order to implement these complex strategies at an initial level of expertise.

V. FACILITATORS OF THIS WORK

Several factors contributed to the implementation of this cycle. First, and perhaps most important, the teachers supported one another but were also critical consumers of the suggestions Coach W and their peers made.

They’re very willing to play the devil’s advocate. They speak up. . . .
They’re all there; they’re all taking it seriously. They’re all very
thoughtful. Coach W

Teachers’ ability to disagree in a collegial manner was evident from the beginning of the cycle, and led to discussions like the one quoted in the “Inquiry” section above, in which teachers debated strategies, increasing their understanding of the strategies and the theory behind them. Teachers frequently expressed their views, raised questions, and shared materials, strategies, and ideas with little prompting from the coach. Coach W reported that by the final debrief, teachers’ openness with one another and willingness to make suggestions about each other’s practice had increased. She thought that the culture that had developed within the group would be a boon to them as they continued to work together in future CCL cycles.

Second, the coach’s emphasis on experimentation likely contributed to the development of a safe and collaborative atmosphere in which teachers were able to try out new strategies. Coach W was receptive to teachers’ feedback about the lessons and

encouraged adaptation of them in order to make them more effective. While teachers entered the cycle with an orientation toward collaboration and making their practice public, the focus on experimentation likely added to their comfort in taking risks during demonstration lessons. In each of the three labsites taught by teachers within this CCL group, teachers reported that they were attempting lessons that diverged from their typical instruction.

Third, as noted in the “Challenges” section, Coach W adapted to the needs of teachers, both by addressing issues of student talk and group work when they emerged as challenges for teachers and by shifting her focus from supplemental texts to the history textbook in order to help teachers balance the demands of the pacing guide with the cycle’s emphasis on critical thinking and comprehension strategies.

Fourth, as the headmaster noted, the design of the CCL model itself facilitated its implementation and value.

One, in the short term and for the long term, it helps teachers improve their practice. Number two, it communicates to teachers that there are structures to be used to improve their practice; there are structures to be used to solve instructional and pedagogical problems. It’s useful because you get someone with a depth of knowledge about reading and reading comprehension to be a resource to teachers. CCL allows you to differentiate instruction, differentiate professional development of teachers. The staff cares about CCL, they recognize its benefits, and they want to become better teachers. Hopefully an unexpected or unexpressed outcome [of CCL] is that they’ll know how to work together as a team to solve problems. I definitely want them to know how to do that, and be able to put together protocols, have protocols so that they can engage in the kind of discussions that will help them to solve problems. That’s important because that’s how good practice becomes self-sustaining. Headmaster W

VI. SUMMARY

Whitman High School’s social studies CCL cycle provided a willing group of teachers with a structure in which to collaborate, learn new strategies, and, to differing degrees, to implement them in their own classrooms. The broad focus of the cycle allowed teachers with varied levels of experience to learn strategies that were new and challenging for them. And, it led teachers with little prior experience with student-centered instruction to gain an initial understanding of its theory and goals with respect to student learning. The coach and teachers have laid the groundwork for continued collegiality and collaboration with a goal of improving their practice.

Launching Independent Reading at the Secondary Level: An English CCL at Morrison High School

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I. THE CONTEXT

At Morrison High School, CCL both reflects and reinforces the school's strong professional culture. The Morrison literacy coach, an experienced teacher and professional development provider, adapts the structure of CCL to address school goals and teachers' learning objectives. Although teachers report that participating in CCL while teaching full-time occasionally makes them feel overwhelmed, they generally think the experience improves their teaching. Overall, Morrison teachers want to participate in CCL and the school's administrators actively support this approach to professional development.

Relevant characteristics of the school

Morrison possesses a strong school culture, which supports both the philosophy and structure of Collaborative Coaching and Learning. At the time of data collection, Morrison was running five CCL cycles²⁹, which demonstrated teachers' and administrators' commitment to this initiative.

Many teachers at Morrison were comfortable with making their practice public and with being observed, which is an important component of CCL. According to Teacher A, many Morrison teachers had an "open door policy" and visitors, whether administrators, teacher colleagues, or educators from a nearby university, often passed through her classroom while she was teaching. Numerous teachers, some who have participated in CCL and some who have not, had approached Coach M for help in preparing lessons, advice on teaching new topics, or to look together at student work. At Morrison, teachers appeared to welcome feedback on their teaching.

The headmaster believed that she and her two predecessors had played an important role in developing this culture of learning at Morrison. According to the headmaster, in the late 1990s, Morrison had a relatively veteran faculty and therefore experienced large-scale retirements earlier than other district high schools. As a result, she said, she and her predecessors were able to hire energetic and self-reflective new teachers into vacant positions. Among the experienced teachers, the headmasters had also been able to develop teacher leaders who, the headmaster said, "treat teachers professionally and respectfully and expect a lot of them at the same time." She believed these changes had made the faculty more receptive to collaborative, reflective professional development, such as CCL.

²⁹ Two of the five cycles were held after school, met less frequently, and extended beyond eight weeks. The BPS does not consider these formal CCL cycles because of their different format.

Relevant characteristics of the observed CCL

Several aspects of the observed CCL are notable. CCL sessions, which were 45-50 minutes long, took place twice a week in the coach's office. Demo lessons, which the coach videotaped, occurred at the demonstrating teacher's convenience and were shown within the sessions (see "Adaptations to the Model"). Additionally, all four participating teachers knew the course of study in advance and chose to participate in this specific CCL. The English department strongly encouraged all of its teachers to participate in one CCL per year.

As a group, these English teachers were relatively homogenous. All four were new to Readers' and Writers' Workshop and had not yet incorporated independent reading into their teaching. Two were first-year teachers who had student taught at Morrison the previous year, one was a fifth-year teacher who was new to the school and to teaching English, and the fourth teacher was a veteran. Two of the four teachers taught special education English exclusively. One teacher taught a blend of special education and regular education English classes and the final teacher taught only mainstream English classes. The goal of this CCL, according to Coach M, was to launch independent reading. She elaborated that this launch should occur, "in a way that helped teachers use a more constructivist approach to teaching, reviewed strategies to prompt students to think and write more deeply about text, and helped teachers scaffold instruction that would lead to students' independence."

Education Matters observed six CCL sessions, three near the beginning of the cycle and three near the end. Education Matters also observed three approximately 90-minute classes and two demo lessons that were screened in the CCL sessions. Lastly, Education Matters interviewed the headmaster once; two teachers twice each; and the coach three times. At the headmaster's request, student focus groups were not included in the data collection plan³⁰.

Adaptations to the model

Coach M adapted the CCL model to fit the structure and culture of Morrison. Most significantly, she modified the demo aspect of this CCL cycle to include videotaped rather than live demos. She made this change in response to requests from participants in 2004-5 CCL cycles who were reluctant to leave their classes supervised by substitutes in order to observe their colleagues' demonstrations³¹. With the headmaster's consent, Coach M taped the demos in this cycle and showed the videos during regularly scheduled CCL sessions. This modification allowed participating teachers to teach uninterrupted while also saving approximately \$3200 from the substitute budget, according to Coach M. The headmaster allowed Coach M to use these savings to purchase materials, such as books for independent reading libraries, for the participating teachers' classes.

³⁰ The headmaster requested that no student focus groups be conducted for this study because there were already multiple research projects underway at Morrison that required student interviews.

³¹ Coach M further explained her rationale for videotaping demos, including the opportunity it affords participants "to see a focused complete piece of the lesson that pertains to the CCL" rather than a slice of instruction that might not pertain to CCL; and the opportunity for the demo teacher to observe herself teaching. Coach M continues to conduct live demos in other CCL cycles, however, and said she would have conducted a live demo in the observed cycle, had teachers requested one.

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which includes Coach M, the headmaster, and the English Language Arts department head, further modified the observed CCL by setting the course of study before the cycle started. Aware that the BPS had chosen to emphasize independent reading in English Language Arts, the ILT decided to reserve all of the school's fall CCL cycles for English teachers and dedicate them to supporting independent reading implementation department-wide. In interviews, both Coach M and the headmaster acknowledged a tension between allowing the Whole School Improvement Plan to drive a CCL cycle's course of study while also permitting participating teachers to contribute to setting the course. This essential tension emanates from a model that holds that, on the one hand, data drive the course of study and, on the other hand, that teachers in the CCL "actively participate" in setting these goals (See Appendix A, "Components of a High-Functioning CCL"). For the observed CCL cycle, the ILT decided to establish launching independent reading as the umbrella for the course of study in advance and encourage inexperienced English teachers to participate. Coach M said that she and the participating teachers narrowed this focus as the CCL progressed in part by looking at student work. Thus, data, reflected in the WSIP, drove the choice of independent reading as a focus for this CCL and, in the form of student work, narrowed the focus of the CCL.

Additionally, Coach M adapted the CCL format by front-loading the inquiry portion of the CCL so that, as she explained, "we get a real handle on our topic, our questions, get some reading and strategies under our belt and then we start looking at student work and testing them out." As a result, demos clustered near the end of the cycle.

Lastly, the sessions within this CCL were shorter than those outlined in the CCL design. This group met for 90-100 minutes total, per week, whereas the model calls for 150 minutes weekly (*Straight Talk About CCL*, 2003).

II. COMPONENTS OF THIS CCL

Inquiry

Inquiry served a vital purpose in providing teachers with basic information about how to teach independent reading and in developing lessons for demos. Coach M said that the goal of inquiry was "to give teachers tools so that they can navigate through independent reading to meet their students' needs while maintaining their unique teaching style." According to Coach M, inquiry also played an important affective role in CCL. She explained, "It really builds a mini-community, that teachers don't feel alone in trying these things. It validates their feelings, which is really important...it's also the solid part of CCL. It's the part where they get the information."

Teachers felt that inquiry gave them an opportunity to gain new skills and examine their assumptions. Teacher B believed that inquiry "generates a lot of ideas for what I can confer with students about, and that has been helpful." Teachers also reported that inquiry pushed them to revise their own beliefs about how to teach students to write. By reading and discussing professional texts, Teacher B said she had realized,

the purpose of all this [independent reading], that it's not about how many entries you write, are you doing a two-column journal entry; not about the length of them, how many paragraphs. It's more about investigating things further...it's not about me telling you [students] what to write; it's about identifying what moves you in investigating it further. Teacher B

The observed CCL engaged in inquiry early in its cycle. The group's overall inquiry question focused on how to launch independent reading in a way deepened students' understanding of text while promoting their greater enjoyment of reading. For each session, Coach M created a guiding question that reflected the previous session's discussion and teachers' current needs. Framed with this question, a typical inquiry session consisted of a short reflective writing exercise, a thorough text-based discussion, and a conversation about how to apply the ideas and questions raised by this text to the teachers' work with independent reading. Texts included short, relevant excerpts (1-5 pages) from literature by Workshop experts such as Nancie Atwell, Lucy Calkins, and Cris Tovani. Typically, the teachers read these excerpts within the CCL session rather than outside. Often, inquiry was supplemented with activities based on looking at student work. For instance, each teacher chose one student and, by looking at the student's independent reading notebook over time, gauged her progress in teaching students to think and write more deeply.

Coach M reported that she chose inquiry texts to build on the teachers' emerging questions regarding how to implement various aspects of independent reading. Four weeks into the cycle, Coach M explained how she chose "Response and Analysis" from *The Reader and the Text*, by Robert Probst as the centerpiece for an inquiry session:

For this one, we've been having a lot of debate over the enjoyment of reading. The main purpose of the independent reading is that we create lifelong readers and thinkers. Yet, by having them do the notebook, people are finding that kids are resistant and they don't want to do it...they'd prefer to read without writing. And so I looked for an article that addressed the purpose of the notebook, an article that would address this idea of ownership and enjoyment. Coach M

Coach M chose the Probst piece to support her primary goal for that session: to help define with teachers the purpose of independent reading and help them foster student ownership of the process. This inquiry session began with Coach M asking the teachers to write a reflection about the student whose notebook they had chosen to follow over the course of the CCL and how they would come to know that student as a reader. After the teachers had shared their reflections, Coach M noted that all four teachers had chosen to follow a student who enjoyed reading and that they should also keep more reluctant readers in mind when crafting lessons. She then asked how all the students were reacting to the requirement that they maintain a reader's notebook. The teachers said that students generally did not like this aspect and found it, as Teacher A said, "forced." Coach M posed the question, "How do we get students to own independent reading and the notebook more?" With this, she turned the teachers' attention to the Probst reading, a two-page excerpt that the teachers proceeded to read.

Coach M began a conversation about the text by asking, “How does this connect to students’ ownership of the notebook?” Teacher B pointed to a section of the text in which Probst argues that teachers must tap into “adolescent self-absorption” (p.30) and encourage students to read for “self-indulgent” reasons (p.30). Another teacher said she wanted to try to apply Probst’s suggestion that a teenager could be motivated to read a text in order to judge it.

A rich discussion ensued in which the teachers debated the merits of “selling” independent reading and identified a core tension between encouraging student ownership of the activity and requiring students maintain a notebook that they would grade at the quarter’s end. Coach M then showed the teachers notebook entries written by students who had been doing independent reading for over a year. These entries showed curiosity and, the teachers concluded, student ownership of the notebook. Coach M asked how teachers might have helped students get to this point and one participant surmised that the teachers must have talked with the students. Coach M replied that this was correct, that conferring with students (a key piece of Readers’ Workshop) played a significant role in deepening students’ writing and that they would work on this more as the CCL cycle progressed.

This inquiry session was much like the others. All teachers participated and, in general, the discussion focused closely on text, whether this was the Probst excerpt or student work. The teachers appeared to talk freely about their own challenges regarding how to foster ownership and promote deep thinking. Overall, this session, like others, moved fast and provoked many questions. Curiously, these teachers did not appear disconcerted by the many unanswered questions they had raised; rather, they seemed interested in pursuing the answers as the cycle evolved.

Over time, inquiry focused more on the participating teachers’ student work than on outside readings. This made sense, as looking at their own student work with other group members helped the teachers prepare their demos. Moreover, the group members applied the same empirical approach to Looking at Student Work that they had used in reading experts’ texts, forming questions and generating conclusions based on evidence from the student work. Teacher A and Teacher B, both in their first year teaching English, found Looking at Student Work helpful because it gave them new, practical strategies for teaching students to read and write more reflectively and skillfully. Teacher B, for example, explained how looking at independent reading notebooks from other teachers’ classes benefited her: “looking at student work is helpful to get ideas about the types of things to look for, to get ideas about other ways to use it [the notebook] because I don’t want to get stuck in a rut of always...making a prediction, always writing a letter to a character. So it’s good to see how other people set theirs up and swap ideas about things to put in it.”

Demonstration lessons

According to all of the teachers who participated in the observed CCL, demos provided the most valuable learning experience of all the activities in the cycle. Participating teachers found demos helpful because they gained concrete strategies for teaching, thus

expanding their instructional repertoire. The teachers also said that the preparation for the demo, in which they looked the student work and planned the demo together, taught them as much as doing or watching the demo itself.

In most cases in the observed CCL, Coach M entered teachers' classrooms and videotaped their demo, which she later aired during regularly scheduled CCL time. While most teachers appreciated that this arrangement preserved their instructional time, some teachers expressed an interest in seeing live, rather than recorded, teaching. The coach and the teachers acknowledged that videotaping limited what teachers could see in the demo and discuss in the debrief. However, it also allowed the demonstrating teacher to observe herself, which may have deepened her learning. Moreover, the teachers could review the demo multiple times, which might enable them to learn more from the experience as well.

The demos generally occurred later in the cycle, after the teachers had established a common vocabulary and inquiry questions. Most of the time, in the session preceding the demo, the group helped the specified teacher prepare for her demo by looking at her student work—often an excerpt from the student's independent reading notebook—and offering teaching suggestions. In this way, the demos were motivated by student work but incorporated strategies, such as conferring, that the group had learned in CCL. Formal pre-conferences did not occur in this cycle, although the coach often communicated briefly with the demonstrating teacher between the demo planning CCL session and the demo. For example, in addition to the providing guidance during CCL, the coach provided specific feedback on Teacher A's lesson plan before she taught the demo.

Looking at the student work often began with Coach M asking the designated teacher to identify her goal for the student(s). Then that teacher listened while the rest of the group looked at her student's work and, based only on that work, asked clarifying questions, made observational statements about what the students were doing well and not doing well, and offered suggestions for the demo. Coach M later explained her rationale for this approach to designing the demo: "What I was trying to do, not just for Teacher B, was to get everyone to [ask], 'how do you look at a student's notebook and get a sense of what the need is and what the next step for the student is?'"

Teacher B said that this process of looking together at the notebook and deciding what to teach in the demo "was actually very helpful, because the idea of being taped was intimidating and I didn't really know how to start. But now I can use the same approach every single conference that I have with a student."

Teacher B felt that the process of collaboratively planning the conference that comprised her demo was useful well beyond the demo itself. After planning the demo, a one-on-one conference in which she worked with a student on how to make "connections" when reading, she explained, "I have more confidence in conferring now and I know what process to go through in order to determine what we're going to talk about and what I want their next step to be."

Teachers differed in how they prepared their students for the demo. Teacher A gave her students no warning regarding the videotaping while Teacher B informed her students as soon as her demo date was set. Additionally, she talked to the student with whom she would conference in the demo and called the student the day before the demo to make sure she still was willing to be videotaped. Teacher A's and Teacher B's approaches differed in part because of their classes and in part due to the nature of their demos. Teacher A's demo class consisted of honors sophomores, generally attentive and accustomed to visitors, while Teacher B's class was comprised of special education ninth graders, who struggled to focus. Moreover, Teacher A's demo involved whole-class instruction while Teacher B's consisted of a one-on-one conference.

Probably also due to these differences in class composition and demo format, Teacher A and B differed in their assessment of how much the demo interrupted their regular class flow. Teacher A felt that the occurrence of the demo and the presence of Coach M and the video camera had not affected the way the class proceeded. By contrast, Teacher B felt that the demo and the presence of a video camera had disrupted the class. She felt that the other students were "distracted" by the camera and unable to focus on their assigned task while the demo occurred. She also felt distracted by conducting a conference on camera while the rest of the class read independently. She said, "I think the conversation maybe would have been better if I wasn't worried about what everybody else was doing and if the student wasn't worried about all eyes being on her."

The two demos also differed in their relationship to the lesson as a whole. In Teacher B's case, the demo was a short, discrete activity within the lesson. It involved only one student and took place in a corner of the room, away from the other students. By contrast, Teacher A's demo, which came later in the cycle, took place throughout the entire 90-minute period, during which Coach M kept the video rolling. As a result, the students seemed to adjust to the camera and Coach M was able to capture several different moments that she could show in CCL. This reduced the pressure on Teacher A and the students to create a high-quality demo in a short period of time. By comparison, Teacher B reported feeling somewhat intimidated and nervous about carrying out the demo conference within a short period of time while also making sure the other students were attending to their assigned work.

Despite some challenges, overall, Teachers A and B felt that the demonstration segment of the CCL cycle was its best aspect. The teachers who were not interviewed for this case study also reported that the opportunity to observe their peers was important, with one reporting that she thought, "demo lessons were great."

Debrief

For this CCL, Coach M used a fairly structured protocol to debrief the demos but framed these debriefs differently. In all cases, Coach M and the demonstrating teacher introduced the demo. Coach M typically reminded the teachers not to pass judgment on the teaching but to focus instead on the aspect of the lesson designed by the CCL to determine whether it was effective and how the teacher could have implemented the plan

differently. The demonstrating teacher often told the others about the student(s) in the demo and usually brought student work from before and after the demo. Coach M later indicated this gave the teacher an opportunity to provide evidence, in addition to the tape, of the relative effectiveness of the lesson.

Generally, demonstrating teachers exhibited substantial anxiety about watching themselves on video. Teacher A chose to leave the room while her colleagues watched the video and Teacher B said, “that was horrifying” after watching her demo. Nervous about being on camera, one participant said that, while she was willing to teach a demo, she did not want to be videotaped.

Coach M handled these anxieties deftly and adapted to preserve teachers’ learning opportunities while reducing their apprehension. For example, she encouraged Teacher B and reminded the group that the tape showed only a few moments of a longer class. For the debrief following the demo that she had not taped, Coach M recounted the lesson to others in detail, gave participants a copy of the lesson plan, and, as with all debriefs, provided copies of student work from before and after the demo. Because the observation “data” were more removed, the conversation focused more on the student work from before and after the demo than on the teachers’ decision-making within the demo itself.

Coach M usually began the discussions by asking the teachers what they noticed. Generally, the teachers commented thoughtfully on the demos, often incorporating terms and strategies that they had learned in CCL. For example, in the debrief of Teacher B’s demo, Teacher A referred to the model for holding conferences with students consisting of “Research-Decide-Teach.” She observed that in the group’s preparation of the demo, they had researched and decided on a strategy for Teacher B in the absence of the student’s feedback. As a result of their planning, Teacher B was focused on teaching a skill in the demo rather than gauging the student’s understanding and building her comprehension from there. Teacher A noted that the student did not get a chance to speak and, as a result, it was difficult to discern whether the student’s misunderstanding persisted at end of the conference.

Within the debriefs, Coach M pushed the discussions in different directions. In Teacher A’s debrief, she asked the group what Teacher A did to promote deeper thinking. Her questions guided the other teachers to identify the positive impact of components of Teacher A’s demo lesson on students’ class contributions. She appeared to want the other teachers to understand Teacher A’s decisions in the classroom and begin to adapt some of these thought processes in their own planning and instruction. By contrast, Coach M facilitated the debrief of Teacher B’s demo so that the teachers identified what Teacher B was attempting to teach, what the student learned, and the gap between these two entities. Coach M distributed a sheet of questions such as “Do you guide the student to discover his own solution to his dilemma?” that the teachers were supposed to pose in response to the demo. She seemed to guide the teachers to conclude that the demo plan was too teacher-centered and did not enable the student to respond during the conference. She emphasized that she and the group were responsible for this plan and assured

Teacher B that she had executed the group's plan well. Coach M indicated that, within this CCL, subsequent discussions on conferring stressed the balance of letting the student *and* the teachers' goals for the student guide the conversation.

Consistently, the teachers in this CCL expressed support and offered suggestions for each other during the debriefs. The group also looked at student work from before and after the demo with the goal of seeing whether the students learned the particular skill the teacher had taught. Coach M explained,

we looked at one of Teacher A's student's work and saw, 'summary, summary, summary.' And then when we looked after the demo lesson...at the work that resulted from that, we're not seeing any summaries. So it's a mini-case study, but it just shows that there's an immediate effect of doing that conference or doing that mini-lesson. And when there isn't an effect, that makes us question, 'Well, what happened? Did it really change?' Coach M

Looking at student work was important but it competed for time and attention with analyzing the demo instruction itself. This is significant as time was frequently the most substantial impediment to exploring issues in depth in these sessions. The rich discussions that resulted from watching the instruction *and* from looking at the resulting student work suggest that additional time may be needed to accomplish both these related tasks in depth.

Application to classroom practice

Overall, the teachers in this CCL transferred much of what they learned in their CCL to their classrooms. The goal for this CCL was to help teachers launch independent reading, which, fundamentally, all four teachers succeeded in doing. In teaching independent reading, they tried specific strategies that they had learned in their CCL.

More specifically, all of the teachers established a practice of having students maintain notebooks. All of them began to set aside class time during which students read independently while they conferred with individuals. With funds saved from eliminating the need for substitute teacher coverage, the four participants established classroom libraries and bought other materials like post-its and chart paper that they used during independent reading.

Several instances stand out as examples of how teachers transferred their learning in CCL to their teaching. Relatively new and unfamiliar with Workshop, these teachers were eager to learn how to set up and manage independent reading. Teacher A said that the group had "planned out a whole first week of independent reading and that was perfect for launching it. So I just took those and then I wrote full lesson plans for the ideas that were presented." Teacher C reported that she had adapted systems recommended by a more experienced teacher at Morrison, Ms. K., whose approach to independent reading the CCL had discussed. She explained that this system helped her keep track of students' progress and meet their need for one-on-one attention:

I use Ms. K's system with stickers. Not all kids are comfortable with conferring in class in front of other students. I have them come after class. They have the responsibility to come to me at lunch or after school. Lots of kids do this, they want the privacy. I keep the sticker in their book as an immediate reference point and I try to confer with everyone at least once a week. Teacher C

The teachers also used instructional strategies in their classrooms that they had learned in the CCL. For instance, Teacher B said that during independent reading one of her students had laughed aloud. She gave him post-it notes and told him to write down why he was laughing. Teacher B explained that CCL had influenced her teaching more broadly. Having completed her first CCL cycle, she said,

The things I'm looking for in their writing, it's different. So again, if they're using incorrect grammar or spelling, obviously, we want to address that too. But that's not the goal, and it's not about getting a plot summary about the book; that's not the intention. Teacher B

Teachers' classes also showed evidence of the CCL's influence. Early in the CCL cycle, Teacher A devoted part of the class Education Matters observed to independent reading, during which time she held several conferences with students. This class fell before the CCL had studied conferring in depth, but Teacher A was determined to try out this strategy she had heard about in CCL. This example shows Teacher A's first conference with one student about his independent reading book:

Teacher A: How's it going?

Student: Ok.

Teacher A: What are you reading? [student shows her *House on Mango Street*]

Teacher A: This is independent reading, which means you need to be reading your independent reading book, not the class text. What point are you at in your independent reading?

Student: Half way. [Teacher A, crouching in front of the boy's table, is writing down what the student says on an index card]

Teacher A: Are you reading *Friday Night Lights*?

Student: Yeah, but I'm also reading a book about hip-hop, which I'm half way through.

Teacher A: Tell me what it's about.

Student: The foundation of that culture, hip-hop. It breaks down the controversy over hip-hop.

Teacher A: Really? How so?

Student: It talks about the material and the lyrics. It also talks about stereotypes in the music.

Teacher A: What kind of stereotypes?

Student: How men portray women; the stereotyping of women in rap.

Teacher A: Does the book argue that these stereotypes are true or that these stereotypes exist and must be challenged?

Student: It's true, even though it's unintentional sometimes, it still happens. It talks about female rappers who battle stereotypes.

Teacher A: Do you think they are battling stereotypes or are they creating their own?

Student: Both. [Teacher A continues to write on index card.]

Teacher A: So this book is non-fiction, which is a little different than the other books that students are reading. Is the whole book about stereotypes or just a chapter?

Student: A chapter.

Teacher A: What are the other chapters about?

Student: One is about Tupac's life, others are about corruption and drugs' influence in hip-hop.

Teacher A: Do you want to focus on something, a goal or target? What would help guide your reading?

Student: Nothing really, I'm reading it because I want to get into the industry.

Teacher A: I didn't know that. Do you want to perform or produce?

Student: Both.

Teacher A: So how about for next time we meet, you write in response to what you read as if you're already in the industry, you're a young, up-and-coming rapper, and you react to what you read. Do you agree or disagree with what's written and what can you learn from it?

Student: I've been doing that a little already. I've been taking notes on what I read so I can use it later.

Teacher A: Great, for next time make sure your notes are in your notebook, and write a paragraph about how you react to what you're reading. I'll put this on your index card as your goal. Next time you also need to make sure the book comes to class, ok?

Student: Ok.

In this conference, Teacher A identified the student's personal connection to the book and capitalized on the fact that he was already taking notes on its contents—outside the notebook—to prepare for a potential career in hip-hop. She encouraged the student to use these notes as a starting point for his notebook entries. In this way, Teacher A attempted to cultivate student interest and ownership over the notebook, which had been the focus of that week's CCL inquiry session using Probst's *The Reader and the Text*. Teacher A also pushed the student to set a goal, which she noted on an index card. This conference also shows, however, that Teacher A was just beginning to learn how to confer. She failed to ask the student questions that pushed him to think deeply about his book. She worked on these questioning skills as the cycle progressed.

Teacher B had been able to apply some of what she had learned in CCL but also looked forward to starting the second semester and incorporating more strategies from CCL. In general, she felt she had received “tons of handouts and different things to use...graphic organizers and sentence starters, materials for the classroom, rubrics and everything. There's a wealth of information and we have access to all of it.” Considering the impact of these CCL materials on her teaching, she said, “I think I could use all of it at some point...what I need to do is sit back and go through my binder and start pulling out things...I feel like this is going to be great in January when I get my new classes and I can just start fresh.” Specifically, she reported, “I'd like to use more student work to generate discussion [in] the mini-lessons, I think the students respond well to that. And [I'll] do more conferring.”

Overall, this group of teachers applied the strategies and approaches that they learned in this CCL within their classrooms. Section III considers the impact of these strategies and approaches on teachers' thinking and teaching, and student learning.

III. IMPACT OF THIS CCL

Overall, this CCL appeared to have influenced the participating teachers' thinking and teaching and their students' work. The teachers who participated in this CCL found it a valuable experience. All of them were relatively new teachers or new to teaching Workshop and they reported that participating in this CCL helped them launch independent reading successfully. Teachers' thinking and practices also seemed to have shifted over time. Additionally, students' written work and classroom exchanges revealed more evidence of independent reading approaches at the end of the cycle than at the beginning.

On teachers' thinking

Over the course of the cycle, teachers began to speak differently about their teaching. In designing lessons and providing feedback to students, they began to incorporate the key messages that had formed the foundations for the CCL sessions. At the end of the cycle, this group of teachers was less likely to dwell on obstacles to deep student writing and more likely to think creatively about how to push reluctant students to stretch their thinking.

One of the main lessons of this CCL was for teachers to focus reading instruction on individual students as readers. Coach M contrasted this approach with one that emphasized the content and specifics of the book, rather than the skills and interests of the reader. At the end of the cycle, Teacher B vocalized this lesson of the CCL. She said that CCL had been "so helpful in just giving us ideas of how to run Workshop, different ways to get the students to write. Just those big ideas about 'teach the reader, not the book,' and trying to present it [the notebook] like, 'this is your record of your progress as a reader, and it's not thought about so much as an assignment and a grade.'"

More specifically, Teacher B said that doing her demo and debriefing it had changed the way she approached teaching students. At the same time, she echoed a second main lesson that Coach M had emphasized during the CCL: use student work as the final evidence of whether a teaching strategy worked. By debriefing the demo, she said she learned,

to reflect more, take more time to think about what happened and how I could improve upon it, to give the students more opportunity to talk. [In the demo conference] I felt like I did most of the talking. And I should have tried to prompt the student to talk more. But I think, ultimately to use the student's work as the judge of whether things are successful or not, and whether they're doing what I ask them to do. So that's the ultimate. Teacher B

Teacher A said that over the course of the CCL her thinking had changed as well. In her demo, Teacher A conducted a mini-lesson that prepared students to ask questions of one student to expand that student's writing, which she had placed on an overhead projector.

During the demo, Teacher A said the other students “asked serious questions of him, and he responded seriously.” This experience and others led Teacher A to conclude that, by trying out CCL strategies in her classroom:

I think I learned that they’re [students] capable of very deep thought and they can ask critical questions of somebody else’s reading. So I’m almost thinking about changing the format [of notebook responses] again, maybe in January, maybe for the third term, and having them do response journals instead, where they have to write a response, and maybe they could trade with somebody else in class.

Teacher A

On teachers’ practice

As with their thinking, teachers’ practice also seemed to change over the course of the CCL cycle. Such changes ranged from the procedural to the pedagogical. Teachers credited CCL with giving them good ideas about how to launch independent reading, including ways to set up independent reading libraries, organize notebooks, and devise procedures for conferring. The teachers incorporated these changes in their classrooms. As the cycle progressed, the teachers also seemed to demonstrate new techniques for deepening their students’ thinking and writing in their classes.

Coach M framed her assessment of the impact of this CCL on teachers’ practice by recalling “the overall purpose for this particular study group...is not to make them ‘expert conferrers,’ but literally launching independent reading and being able to know all the components that go along with making it successful.” As the cycle progressed, Coach M said “the goals really became helping them to see the bigger picture about independent reading, that it is student-generated.” At the cycle’s end, Coach M felt that this group had made “incredible, incredible progress.”

Coach M talked specifically about the impact of this CCL on Teacher D’s thinking and practice. She noted that “after watching Teacher A’s demo,” Teacher D had experienced, in the coach’s words, “an ‘aha’ moment.” Teacher D had told the coach: “‘I get it, it’s about student-generated stuff, that’s why it works. It’s not about teacher-generated [stuff].’” Moreover, Coach M said that Teacher D had told her, “‘You know, I really didn’t want to do this when we started. I thought it would be a waste of time, and I value my time a lot. But I got a ton out of this, and I’ve seen changes and I’m changing the way I teach because of this.’”

Teacher D further explained, “We are conferring weekly and they are getting better. So am I. I have changed the way we do class texts. It is more student centered and lessons are more student-generated.”

Teacher A’s practice also appeared to change over the CCL. During early CCL sessions, she and the other teachers often asked how to ask questions that expanded students’ thinking. Early on, Teacher A said, “I’m not sure my questions are very thought-provoking. They’re more vague.” Teacher A, a first-year teacher, also tended to dwell on her own shortcomings in the classroom, prompting Coach M to advise her in one CCL session, “Judge the [student] work, not yourself.” By the end of the CCL cycle, Teacher

A felt that one of the primary things she had learned in CCL was “how to stretch my student’s thinking,” which was shown in the following class excerpt and the resulting student work:

Teacher A [to students]: While we’re doing this exercise, I want you to practice being a constructive audience. What does that mean? Be helpful in a positive way. We’re going to use a peer sample, and we want to talk about what works and what must be done to “stretch out” this student’s thinking? [puts sample of student’s response to *Manchild in the Promised Land*, her independent reading book, on the overhead projector]

Teacher A: What is good about this entry?

Student 1: I see a text to self connection.

Student 2: This student talks about the motivation of the character, what makes him do this.

Teacher A: Remember, your task is to give the writer suggestions and ask questions to prompt her to stretch out thinking. What questions could you ask her?

Student 3: What were the pressures on him? [Teacher A writes this]

Student 2: She could brainstorm different kinds of pressures.

Teacher A: How about other strategies she could use?

Student 4: She makes an inference.

Teacher A: Let’s talk about this. Is this an inference? [points to student work]

Student 4: Yes but we need explanation; why does she make this conclusion?

In this mini-lesson, Teacher A explicitly modeled the concrete questions the students should ask themselves of their own writing. Students also showed that they were learning how to ask questions that would prompt more writing, such as when Student 4 asked why the writer drew a certain conclusion. When Teacher A and the group looked at subsequent work from the student who wrote this response, she found “several much improved things.” The student had made predictions about the plot and justified this prediction with evidence from the book. Overall, the teachers agreed that the student had anticipated a reader’s questions and answered them. Coach M congratulated Teacher A: “You’ve taught her to ask questions. It looks like this student is getting it. Now get her to go back and ask more questions and get deeper.”

Teacher B had also incorporated the CCL cycle’s teachings in her class instruction. When the headmaster evaluated Teacher B’s class, she saw evidence of the impact of CCL on Teacher B’s instruction:

I saw students using their readers’ notebooks. I was able to look and see the different kinds of entries she had them do over the course of several months in their readers’ notebooks...I saw them using different specific text strategies, text to self, text to text, and a variety of others in her class. I was able to talk with students...about ‘How many of these strategies did you learn from middle school and how many of them are new to you as part of Teacher B’s class?’ It was neat because a lot of them, they had done Readers’ Workshop, they had used these strategies before, it wasn’t new to them...you had that foundation to build on and they were learning new strategies as a part of this [Teacher B’s] class.

Headmaster M

The headmaster also saw evidence of this CCL cycle's impact on these teachers' practice more broadly. She said she had seen "substantial progress towards" the goal of launching independent reading and pushing students to think and write more deeply. She had come to this conclusion by,

observing those teachers' classrooms, getting feedback from other administrators on those teachers, or from teacher leaders...I've been frequently in two of those teachers' classes, one or two times, and a third one, I got some good updates from another administrator about, so I kind of know where they are and what connections they're making to that course of study. Headmaster M

All four teachers felt participating in this CCL had benefited their instruction. In particular, they valued the opportunity to see others' teaching and student work. They felt they gained an array of practical strategies from these opportunities as well as the chance to plan mini-lessons as a group. They also welcomed the opportunity to learn about the resources Coach M could provide (interview, Teacher B). Teacher B felt that CCL helped her teaching because, she said, "it's relevant and it's useful and there's actual concrete things you can come and use in your classroom for the next day."

On student learning³²

The real test of a CCL is whether it improves the quality of student work. In their class contributions and their written work, students in these teachers' classes demonstrated evidence of the impact of CCL.

During an observed class focused on reading and interpreting a Maya Angelou poem, students showed that they had internalized the strategies Teacher B had taught them in independent reading. She asked her students what they should look for when reading a text on their own. She began, saying,

Teacher B: Remember it's important to mark up the passage. Now what should you write? What sorts of notes should you make?

Student 1: Look for text-to-self connections.

Student 2: You could make a prediction, an inference, or look for personification.

Student 3: You could write a note to yourself or someone else about the text.

Teacher B: Right, exactly! Very good. Those are all great ideas.

In this small part of the class, three different students volunteered ways to approach "marking up the text" that Teacher B had discussed in CCL and incorporated into her instruction. In fact, Student 1 was the student with whom Teacher B had conferred during her demo. Teacher B viewed Student 1's class contribution as evidence that the student had progressed since the demo, which focused on how to make connections. Teacher B said that Student 1 "was actually the one who brought up connections today." She added, "I think that she struggles with the writing aspect of it. But now she knows what to write about."

³² As noted previously, Education Matters was unable to conduct student focus groups at Morrison.

Teacher A saw evidence of the impact of CCL on her students' written work. At the end of the cycle, she said, "I have noticed that many of their entries in their notebooks have gotten better over time, using some of the mini-lessons that I've used. So a lot of students are summarizing less, putting their thoughts in more. A lot of them are elaborating so that their entries are longer and more detailed." Based on the sample notebook entries they brought to CCL in the early sessions as compared to the later sessions, all of the teachers appeared relatively successful in promoting longer, more thoughtful, and more analytic notebook entries.

Coach M felt that this group in general had made good progress in improving student work. She said the student work had become "less formulaic...I've definitely seen great pieces of change." As noted, she saw a positive change in the work done by students in Teacher A's class. Early in the cycle, she noted, they tended to summarize in their notebooks while at the end of the cycle, they posed and answered questions with evidence from the text.

On teachers' sense of support

Additionally, the teachers were grateful for the opportunity that CCL provided to get to know the other participants (interview, Teacher A). In effect, this CCL built a small community of colleagues in a large, busy school. Teacher B, who had just begun working at Morrison in fall, 2005, welcomed this aspect of the CCL. She said that, among the CCL participants, "a lot of the people have the same struggles and successes, so that's always nice to know that it's not just you and you're not alone in this game." This echoed Coach M's observation that CCL "builds a mini-community" that helps the teachers "not feel alone in trying these things." Teacher B spoke for many in her CCL in saying,

It's a small number of people that are involved, [which gives us] the chance to hear what other teachers are doing and to share that, and to borrow ideas from each other about what works and what doesn't...And it's just nice to get time to talk about what's going on in class, in a professional environment where people's opinions are respected and shared. Teacher B

IV. CHALLENGES TO THIS WORK

Although this CCL at Morrison appeared to function well, it also encountered challenges. These arose in large part due to time constraints and scheduling vagaries.

Because Coach M was running five CCL cycles simultaneously, she spent most of her time planning and conducting inquiry, demo, and debrief. She had little time to meet with participating teachers one-on-one outside of CCL and, if a demo went poorly for any reason, there was rarely a second opportunity for that teacher to demo. As a result, Coach M reported she had worked with the teachers one-on-one only during the week that they were demonstrating lessons. Coach M and the teachers expressed a desire for more interaction during the cycle.

Given the difficulty in scheduling one-on-one follow-up during this CCL cycle, off-cycle one-on-one work may also prove challenging. Coach M hoped to follow-up with these teachers during January and had scheduled several meetings with them by the end of the CCL. However, if Coach M runs five new CCL cycles during the second semester, it may prove challenging to follow through on these intentions.

On another level, time constraints seemed to limit the depth the CCL sessions could achieve. In some sessions, the group seemed to run out of time before engaging in all of the valuable materials and activities deeply. Teachers indicated that they felt rushed in some sessions and would have liked to engage in fewer activities but in more depth. Moreover, the amount of material they received during CCL sometimes made them feel overwhelmed. The coach indicated that, because this particular CCL was focusing on launching independent reading successfully, she wanted to provide the teachers with many tools. After the cycle's end, she hoped to work with these teachers one on one to help them explore the tools in further depth.

Time also presented a challenge in terms of the schedule of the CCL. Due to unforeseen events such as the scheduling of MCAS retests, one session was canceled and, other sessions were rescheduled. Unforeseen personal events also caused one individual to be absent twice, which, in a small group, made the conversations less rich. While to a certain extent unavoidable, these scheduling obstacles interrupted the flow of the cycle.

V. FACILITATORS OF THIS WORK

In many ways, the people and culture of Morrison facilitated the success of this CCL. According to the headmaster, Coach M deftly connected to teachers and steered them towards appropriate resources. Similarly, one teacher commented that Coach M is “willing to do whatever you need.” In the observed CCL, her encouraging yet no-nonsense manner seemed to stimulate the participating teachers to take risks and try new things. Within this CCL, she fostered an environment of trust, respect, and high expectations.

In addition to Coach M's positive influence, the headmaster lent considerable support to this CCL at Morrison. By conversing regularly with the coach and observing the teachers in their classrooms, the headmaster stayed abreast of this CCL cycle's progress. Last year, she participated in a CCL and, this fall, an assistant headmaster took part in another CCL. Thus, the headmaster was familiar with the CCL structure and how teachers might react to this sort of professional development.

The headmaster also prioritized CCL within her school. In letting Coach M spend the substitute savings on independent reading materials, the headmaster demonstrated her support for CCL both symbolically and literally. Additionally, she relieved CCL participants from administrative duties. As a result, she concluded, “we end up suffering, we end up not having somebody at the front door last period on Thursdays...but, you know, that's an appropriate prioritization. I'm looking at how important this is in terms of the overall success of our school.” From the headmaster's perspective, CCL is integral to the functioning of the school. She commented, “we're explicitly trying to create a

strong professional culture...and we have a really diverse staff of teachers...who are also excited about learning from their colleagues and willing to do that. CCL is not some foreign thing, it's a logical next step for their professional development.”

In addition to the force of their personalities, these supportive leaders had built a strong foundation for CCL at Morrison by weaving it into the goals of the school. The objectives of this CCL deliberately cohered with school- and department-wide goals. In this case, CCL furthered the English department's goal to implement independent reading department-wide. At the same time, the department expected that all teachers would participate in one CCL per year. By weaving CCL into the school's and department's goals, the school may have increased the chance that this CCL would succeed.

Lastly, Morrison facilitated the success of this CCL by virtue of its teachers' commitment to improving their teaching. It is significant that teachers were so invested in teaching that they were unwilling to give up class time to observe demos. The Morrison teachers in the observed CCL valued their teaching time and seemed to be becoming more comfortable with being observed. Teacher A said that she felt fairly relaxed about being observed and tried to find time to “pop into their [colleagues'] class and see how they teach...as long as the other teacher doesn't mind, which most people I know wouldn't.”

Although not as comfortable with observation as Teacher A, Teacher B was becoming more accustomed to it. New to Morrison, she had experienced observation as surveillance in her previous school, where the headmaster “would come in the back door and do like a sneak attack.” She said at Morrison she was “learning to let go a little bit...it's a learning experience.” In contrast to her previous school, where observations made her anxious, she said “it's not that way at all here, and I've had people just stop by...they were all nice and they wrote nice comments and left them in my mailbox. So it [observation] feels like ‘help’ here instead of ‘threats.’”

Teacher B further commented, “this is a vibrant place, a lot of energy, enthusiasm, a very collegial bunch of teachers, very supportive. And I think that definitely contributes to the success of CCL and a lot of other things that go on here,” In the observed CCL, teachers were willing to try new strategies, take risks, and support each other in this effort.

VI. SUMMARY

Overall, this CCL cycle helped teachers launch independent reading successfully and promote deeper student thinking and writing. The teachers felt the CCL benefited them considerably and were determined to continue to practice the techniques and strategies they had learned in CCL. Although finding enough time was a challenge to the coach and the teachers, they felt that this CCL helped teachers improve their students' thinking and writing. Buoyed by a culture of collaboration and the active support of the headmaster, this CCL appeared to achieve its goals and set these teachers on a course of steady instructional improvement.

Common Themes, Emerging Questions: Literacy CCL in Four Boston Public Schools

Morgaen Donaldson and Barbara Neufeld

I. INTRODUCTION

This analysis examines the work of four literacy CCL cycles that occurred in fall, 2005 in four Boston Public Schools. Guided by literacy coaches, special education and regular education teachers worked together to analyze their practice and make their instruction more student-centered. Although these CCL cycles encountered challenges, teachers appeared to be invested in the work and felt it benefited them and their students, in some cases substantially.

This cross-case analysis begins by describing several key features of the cycles, which took place at Cummings Elementary School, Keats Middle School, Whitman High School, and Morrison High School. Such features include the focus and organization of the CCL cycles, adaptations to the CCL model, teachers' engagement with the work, the coaches' roles, and the principals' involvement. In discussing these features, Education Matters places them in the context of characteristics of high-functioning CCL cycles, as determined by the BPS (see Appendix A). It then describes the impact of these cycles on teachers' thinking and practice and their students' work. It further considers challenges, common themes, and emerging questions for the district regarding how CCL works as focused professional development in its schools.

II. KEY FEATURES OF THE OBSERVED CCL CYCLES

Based on its experience, the Boston Public Schools has identified a set of characteristics shared by high-functioning CCL cycles. Education Matters found that, overall, the four observed CCL cycles exhibited many of these characteristics in the areas of cycle focus and organization, teacher involvement, coach role, and principal involvement. However, within these broad categories, cycles varied in the extent to which they demonstrated specific high-functioning characteristics.

According to the BPS, high-functioning CCL cycles derive their focus from data. All of the four CCL cycles selected their course of study by referring to their school's instructional priorities, detailed in its WSIP. Moreover, at each of the sites, teachers, coaches, and, in some cases, principals assessed the cycle's impact by looking at student work during and after the CCL cycle. The Keats Middle School CCL was the only school that examined quantitative data (MCAS and FAST-R) to set its course of study and assess its impact after the CCL cycle concluded.

The BPS also specifies that CCL cycles be organized around key components of the model. The observed CCL cycles included the key components of inquiry, demo, and debrief but varied in the extent of one-on-one coaching. The district also allows that "thoughtful" modifications may be present in high-functioning CCL cycles. None of the

observed CCL cycles excluded components of the model, but all sites altered the components, sometimes substantially. For example, the observed CCL cycles conducted at most four demos, rather than the six to eight demos (approximately one per week) called for by the design. Coaches said they needed additional sessions to set up the cycle and narrow the course of study, which reduced the time left in the cycle for demo and debrief. The reduction in the number of demos may also have been influenced by the fact that none of the observed CCL cycles met the recommended weekly allotment for time, 150 minutes total for Inquiry and Lab Site (pre-conference, demo, debrief) [*Straight Talk About CCL*]³³. The Whitman High School CCL met for 60 minutes weekly, plus time spent observing demos when they occurred. Morrison High School met for 90-100 minutes weekly. Cummings Elementary met for 90 minutes per week, including the demos when they occurred. Keats Middle School met for 80 minutes weekly, plus time spent observing demos.

The sites made additional, specific adaptations, some of which ran counter to the characteristics of high-functioning CCL cycles identified by the BPS. At some of these sites, coaches reduced the amount of professional reading they discussed with teachers and focused more on looking at student work and discussing the teachers' instruction. Additionally, several coaches did not assign professional reading outside of the CCL sessions, although the BPS has concluded that a CCL cycle is more likely to function well when teachers voluntarily read outside sessions. At Morrison, the coach videotaped the demo lessons in response to teachers' requests not to lose instructional time in their classrooms. At Cummings Elementary, the coach planned all of the demos, although the BPS has found that collaboratively planned demos characterized high-functioning CCL cycles. Thus, while some modifications were consistent with the CCL model, others contradicted initial recommendations by the BPS.

The BPS has also found that CCL cycles in which teachers actively participate are more likely to function well. Participants in the observed CCL cycles appeared genuinely engaged in all aspects of the CCL in which they took part. All four consisted of teachers who were committed to their own learning and that of their colleagues. Teachers actively participated in inquiry and debriefs, encouraging their colleagues while also posing questions to one another. Across the sites, teachers said they valued the opportunity to discuss their practice with colleagues. In each of the four settings, teachers also appeared to share strong relationships that allowed them to take risks. For example, one veteran teacher at Keats explained that she felt nervous to teach in front of her colleagues, but did so because she recognized how doing the demo would benefit her colleagues and herself. The strength of these relationships may also have allowed them to provide critical feedback in debriefs. Generally, these CCL cycles were characterized by pervasive trust, not just among teachers, but also among teachers and the coach and among teachers, the coach, and the principal. Although this quality is not recognized by the BPS as a characteristic of high-functioning CCL cycles, Education Matters found that the presence of trust helped teachers take these risks in making their practice public and in critiquing their colleagues' practice.

³³ It should be noted that the BPS has recognized that CCL cycles that devote somewhat less than the recommended 150 minutes can be effective.

According to the BPS, coaches also play an important role in the success of CCL by skillfully facilitating sessions and working one-on-one with teachers. In these four sites, coaches set a positive learning environment but implemented their roles differently. At Cummings Elementary, the coach spent considerable time working with teachers one-on-one. In contrast, the coach at Morrison High School seldom met with individual teachers. At Whitman High School, the coach created two of the four demos and modified them with the teachers. In contrast, at Morrison High School, the coach worked with the group to create the demo lessons that teachers then conducted. Despite these differences in how they worked with them, the coaches consistently offered materials and encouragement to the teachers.

The BPS further notes that coaches of high-functioning CCL cycles facilitate skillfully. Education Matters observed skillful coaching in several CCL sessions. Clear and focused facilitation seemed to help teachers think concretely about how they could translate CCL learnings into their classroom instruction. In particular, when coaches facilitated inquiries and debriefs that focused on clear, guiding questions, teachers were more likely to be able to articulate new learnings from CCL. Structured inquiry and debrief sessions in which the coach and teachers drew explicit conclusions about instruction seemed to facilitate teachers' adoption of practices emphasized by their CCL.

Additionally, the BPS has found that principals serve a vital role in successful CCL cycles. According to the BPS, CCL functions well when principals are aware of the course of study, participate in at least one CCL in the school per cycle, and observe participating teachers with their cycle's goals in mind. Education Matters found that principals played a key role in supporting the success of the four observed CCL cycles. Across these four sites, principals were aware of the observed CCL cycles' progress and actively supported them by communicating and collaborating with coaches. In all cases, they played a key role in setting the course of study with the coach. They kept abreast of the CCL cycles' work by talking with the coach and teachers and occasionally observing classes. In this way, principals reinforced the work of the CCL and set an expectation that teachers would implement the skills they learned in the CCL in their classrooms. In one CCL, the Director of Instruction participated in the CCL and the principal attended a demo lesson, which may have further informed the principal about the CCL and increased the likelihood that teachers applied the strategies they learned in CCL in their daily instructional practice.

Principals also played a key role in promoting the CCL cycles' success by providing sufficient materials and arranging adequate substitute coverage, which the BPS notes is necessary for CCL to function well. Some principals worked especially hard to find and protect time for CCL. Principals who prioritized CCL found ways to provide consistent coverage for participating teachers. They relieved CCL participants from administrative duties, made skillful use of building substitutes, and, in certain instances, arranged for other teachers to cover participating teachers' classes. In instances where this kind of principal support was less evident, CCL cycles struggled. For example, when a principal was not able to provide consistent substitute coverage, teachers could not observe each

other teach demos. As a result, not only did the debrief discussions suffer, but the teachers also lost an opportunity to observe their peers, which they believed was the most beneficial aspect of CCL. When principals prioritized CCL, cycles ran more smoothly and teachers were able to benefit from all aspects of CCL.

Overall, while none of the CCL cycles exhibited all the characteristics of a high-functioning CCL as specified by BPS, all of them had distinct qualities that facilitated their implementation.

III. THE IMPACT OF CCL CYCLES

The four CCL cycles studied appeared to influence teachers' approach to their work, their practice itself, and their students' work. On the whole, the greatest gains appeared at the level of teacher thinking. Moreover, the extent of the impact of these CCL cycles varied, which will be discussed in sections IV and V.

Within the CCL cycles, teachers were engaged in important conversations about teaching and learning. They actively participated in all facets of CCL, providing thoughtful feedback to colleagues and considering how they could implement what they learned in CCL within their classrooms. Over the course of the CCL cycles, teachers' thinking about instruction began to change. In line with their cycles' underlying effort to promote Workshop-based instruction, many teachers began to consider how to prompt deep, independent thinking on the part of their students. For example, by participating in CCL, a teacher at Whitman realized the importance of having students "make their thinking visible." In all of the CCL cycles, at the end of their cycle, teachers talked about the importance of first establishing what their students knew and then developing a plan for how to advance the students' understanding. According to the coaches and several teachers, this stood in contrast to teachers' initial emphasis on the content and how they would transmit it to the student.

Furthermore, teachers appeared to transfer some of the strategies and approaches they learned in CCL to their classrooms. The teachers described the impact of CCL on their planning and assessment practices and observations revealed further changes in their instruction itself. At Keats Middle School, for example, most of the participating teachers adapted and used a number of the mini-lessons they observed during demo lessons. At Whitman, teachers began to use more student-centered instructional strategies, including structured partner and group work.

On the whole, students seemed to benefit when their teachers incorporated the strategies they practiced during the CCL cycles. When their teachers used instructional strategies from CCL, students' class discussions deepened and their written work became more complex. For example, the Morrison High School CCL members noted that, by the end of the CCL, students' independent reading entries, once dominated by plot summaries, now posed questions and answered them with evidence from their independent reading text. At Cummings Elementary School, which was also working on independent reading, students had begun to draw conclusions about their books rather than simply recalling basic facts. Interestingly, the CCL cycles' focus on independent reading led to similar

results in Cummings Elementary and Morrison High School. Despite differences in the age of their students and the approach of their coaches, teachers in both sites saw students' writing become less oriented to summary and more analytical as the CCL cycles progressed.

Overall, Education Matters observed less evidence of the CCL cycles' impact on student work than on teacher thinking and practice. However, due to data collection constraints, researchers had less opportunity to examine how CCL might have affected students' thinking and work as opposed to that of teachers. For more detailed examples and discussion of impact, please refer to the individual cases.

III. CHALLENGES OF CCL CYCLES

Education Matters identified several challenges that seemed to influence the extent to which these CCL cycles affected teacher practice and student work. Some of the challenges affected all the CCL cycles to the same degree while others were felt more acutely by one or two cycles. Challenges arose regarding how to maximize teacher learning in the demos and debriefs; how, within the classroom, to find time to experiment with high-leverage teaching strategies learned in CCL while under pressure from curricular demands; the extent to which teachers engaged in deep discussions of instructional strategies; and what coaches should do when teachers' learning needs were more basic than those addressed in the CCL.

Maximizing Teacher Learning in Demos and Debriefs

Perhaps the most significant challenge experienced by these CCL cycles arose regarding demos and debriefs. In each setting, teachers said that observing and conducting demos was the most valuable aspect of CCL. Moreover, demo lessons are one of the main components of the CCL model. However, none of the sites included more than four demos and two CCL cycles included only three. Furthermore, Education Matters identified a number of ways in which the demo aspect of these CCL cycles did not maximize teacher learning. First, in several sites, teachers were not deeply involved in planning demos. Second, poor substitute coverage sometimes made attendance at demos inconsistent. Lastly, some coaches provided little guidance to teachers regarding what they should look for when observing demos.

Some sites failed to include teachers in planning demo lessons. In one site, the coach planned all the demos alone and, in another site, planned the demo with only the demonstrating teacher. One goal of this model is to prepare teachers to plan for and implement strategies on their own; thus, by excluding the majority of teachers from the demo planning process, teachers in these CCL cycles lost an opportunity to deepen their skills.

In some cases, the effect of demos was additionally limited because of challenges regarding scheduling. Although almost all the schools found a way to cover teachers' classes so they could observe colleagues' demos, in some instances such arrangements failed. When teachers were unable to observe colleagues' demos or could attend only a small segment, the resulting debrief was substantially limited. The demonstrating teacher

suffered because she received only partial feedback on her demo and the other teachers suffered because they failed to see a new strategy in action. When inconsistent substitute coverage occurred, debriefs were noticeably less fruitful than when all CCL participants could attend.

Even when substitute coverage was consistent, some sites suffered from lack of clarity regarding what observing teachers should focus on during the demos. In some cases, the coach did not guide the teachers regarding what to look for when observing the demo or connect the demo to the CCL cycle's larger focus. The ensuing debriefs were quite general. In other instances, when the coach provided more specific directions regarding how the demo related to the cycle's focus and what teachers should notice, the debriefs were more substantive and specific. The use of a protocol to structure the debrief also seemed to facilitate more productive discussions.

Competing Instructional Priorities

Another tension arose regarding how teachers could experiment with new strategies learned in CCL while maintaining curricular pacing. In the high school sites, teachers feared losing time that they felt they needed to devote to preparing students for the BPS mid-term examinations or the MCAS. At Cummings, teachers worried about how to implement independent reading while teaching the Trophies program. These teachers sometimes struggled to find time to try new student-centered strategies from CCL while also covering the content required by district pacing guides. This tension was not evident at Keats Middle School, where the CCL focused on a strategy—helping students conduct an “I” search—that was a central part of the seventh grade curriculum. At the high schools and elementary school, however, teachers perceived the student-centered strategies supported by CCL as additional to—and sometimes in conflict with—their regular curriculum that dictated they cover content and skills at a predetermined rate.

Breadth over Depth

Teachers identified a third challenge in the volume of new materials and strategies they gained from CCL. While they appreciated the range and number of new resources their coach introduced to them, they sometimes felt that their cycles emphasized breadth over depth. As they struggled to learn new practices, some teachers felt overwhelmed by new readings and concepts. Instead, the teachers wanted to focus in more depth on fewer strategies.

Education Matters noted a related challenge in that some conversations within the inquiry and debrief did not examine practice at a deep level. A deep discussion of a strategy would attend not only to how to implement the strategy but also why and to what end. Yet, CCL discussions sometimes focused on instrumental questions of how to execute a strategy and stopped short of interrogating the strategy and its implications. Conversations that examined practice on multiple levels may promote more thorough adoption of practices by teachers.

Addressing Teachers' Current Learning Needs

Another challenge, discussed by coaches, arose due to a tension they felt between achieving the goals of CCL and addressing teachers' instructional issues. In some cases, teachers struggled with classroom issues more fundamental than those directly addressed by CCL. Before CCL could have a substantial effect on teacher instruction or student work, these teachers needed to improve their basic instruction and classroom management practices. Coaches felt they should work with the teachers on these pressing, current learning needs, but also knew they needed to maintain the focus of the cycle. Often, coaches resolved this tension by deciding to work with the teacher one-on-one after the end of the CCL. In the meantime, the CCL cycles had less impact than they might have had if the teachers' basic teaching skills had been stronger.

Limited Time

Overall, many of the challenges encountered by these CCL cycles can be grouped under a larger challenge regarding limited time. Coaches and principals encountered difficulties finding substitute coverage that would provide the time for CCL participants to view colleagues' demos. Teachers struggled to find the time to implement what they were learning in CCL while keeping pace with school and district curricular expectations. Teachers felt they had little time during the eight-week cycle to make use of all the materials their coach gave them.

It is important to note further that coaches made substantial adaptations to the CCL model to preserve time. None of the four sites did more than four demos within the cycle, although the model calls for six to eight demos. To save instructional time, Morrison videotaped its demos. Several of the coaches did not assign reading outside of CCL because they knew the teachers were busy and surmised they would not have time to read. Coaches often wished they had more time to meet one-on-one with participating teachers. Overall, coaches seemed to adapt the CCL model to make the time they spent in CCL most useful.

However, all of the observed CCL cycles spent less time on CCL than is recommended. The BPS might examine this finding more closely. Schools may simply be unable to find more time for CCL, in which case the model may need to be revised in light of the practical constraints on school's time and scheduling flexibility. However, if schools can spend more time on CCL, they may be able to reduce some the challenges that may have limited its impact on teacher practice and student work.

V. COMMON THEMES, EMERGING QUESTIONS

Supported by certain careful, local adaptations, these CCL cycles promoted some change in teachers' classrooms. Teachers found CCL a positive experience and felt they had gained practical strategies to apply in their classrooms. They also said they enjoyed the opportunity to work with other teachers. However, the largest impact of these cycles was at the level of teacher thinking, as opposed to teacher practice or student work.

These CCL cycles encountered a number of challenges and, in several ways, did not meet the district's standards for functioning well. Thus, the four cases suggest a number of

questions the district and schools should consider as they plan for the future of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Boston Public Schools.

What is the role of professional texts and student work in CCL?

The observed CCL cycles used professional readings to varying degrees. The Morrison CCL used excerpts from texts in almost every session whereas Whitman and Cummings used professional texts considerably less often. The district might consider and clarify to coaches and teachers what it seeks to gain by having CCL cycles include the use of professional texts and what may be lost when such texts are used only minimally. Additionally, the district might clarify how it expects demo lessons to be research-based. The observed CCL cycles did not make explicit connections between research and constructing demos. However, they often developed lessons based on professional texts by experts such as Nancie Atwell.

Moreover, some of the observed CCL cycles used student work in nearly every session while others looked at student work in only one or two sessions. As with professional texts, BPS might want to clarify whether and how looking at student work is related to CCL.

How should demos be organized?

In this sample of CCL cycles, demos were planned in four different ways. At Cummings School, the coach planned the demo alone. At Whitman, the coach planned two demos and the teachers and coach revised them; teachers planned the other demos with feedback from the coach and other teachers. At Morrison, the group of teachers and coach co-planned the demo, or at least its broad outline, and at Keats Middle School the demonstrating teacher and coach co-planned the lesson. The BPS has found that the inclusion of teachers in planning demos is a characteristic of a high-functioning CCL. However, such planning, especially as a group, can be time-consuming, especially since some teachers are just beginning to learn the strategies featured by the CCL. The district might consider the trade-offs and make explicit its expectations about what it seeks to achieve in the demo-planning process.

Across the sites, there was variation in which CCL participants did the demo. At Cummings Elementary School, the coach performed the demo, which the coach, principal, and teachers felt was wise because the coach was an expert at the strategies covered in the CCL. However, it is important to consider what might be lost in such a model. Teachers did not have the opportunity to watch each other teach or learn from their own efforts. Instead, there was always an “outsider”—the coach—teaching the students. Additionally, because the coach was a skilled teacher, her demos were of very high quality. They rarely contained the mistakes that a teacher might make in implementing these strategies for the first time. This limited the debrief in the sense that being able to discuss a less-than-expert lesson might, in some instances, have provided teachers with a more fruitful and realistic learning opportunity.

Moreover, when teachers do not demo, they lose the opportunity to learn from this experience. At Morrison, teachers said that planning and doing a demo based on a

strategy that they had learned in CCL helped them understand how to implement that strategy on their own, in real time. These teachers also valued the opportunity to reflect on their demo teaching with their colleagues and coach. Feedback, they said, helped them revise how they would teach the strategy in the future.

In three of the four sites, teachers performed the demo. While most teachers felt that the opportunity to do their own demo and see colleagues teach other demos was a primary benefit of CCL, they also voiced a desire to watch instruction by teachers who were experts in the strategies CCL emphasized. Thus, as at the Cummings School, there may be some benefits in having coaches demonstrate, in addition to teachers, or in observing a more advanced teacher from outside the CCL, such as occurred at Whitman. The BPS might consider what is the best for teachers' growth: modeling by experts, including the coach, or by participating teachers, who may be relative novices in using the new strategies. It is possible that the best solution might be a combination of demos conducted by the coach, by the participating teachers, and, if logistically possible, by an expert colleague.

The district should also consider what is lost and gained by having teachers observe videotaped demos. The savings for Morrison site for this CCL were considerable (\$3200) and all teachers were able to observe colleagues' demos. However, teachers were able to observe only what the coach captured on video and were not able to talk with students in the class about their learning. This may have limited what the teachers learned from the demo session and debrief.

How can debriefs be structured for maximum teacher learning?

During debriefs, teachers analyze instruction and discuss how strategies work in real time, thus providing them with an important learning opportunity. Education Matters observed variation in the format and structure of CCL debriefs. Two sites used explicit protocols to guide debriefs. One site did not use a protocol and let debriefs proceed organically. Without an explicit structure for analyzing the demo, some of the value of the debrief may be lost. Again, it may be important for the district and coaches to consider what they want to achieve in the debrief and how this purpose is best achieved.

Education Matters also noted that debriefs sometimes failed to generate deep and detailed discussions of the instruction within the demo lessons. Instead, they focused on the activities within the demos and how teachers might use those activities within their classrooms. Across the sites, Education Matters observed few debriefs in which CCL members asked the demonstrating teacher or coach questions about why she decided to make a certain teaching move and what other moves she had considered at that moment. Often, debrief conversations were general, focused on the observing teachers' next steps rather than a careful, specific analysis of the instruction within the demo. Teachers' emphasis on transferring the strategies and techniques in the demo to their own classrooms is important and positive. However, this transfer would perhaps be more successful if the teachers discussed the instruction within the demo in more detail and depth. Moreover, if colleagues stop short of analyzing the demo fully and carefully, the demonstrating teacher receives weak feedback on her own teaching. She is not pushed to

reflect on her own instructional decision-making, which might benefit her teaching considerably. Thus, it seems that demonstrating teachers and their observing colleagues would benefit from deeper debriefs that comment more closely and at greater length on the instruction within the demo.

This may mean that CCL cycles need longer debriefs and that coaches should aim for greater depth in their facilitation of these discussions. In one site, debriefs lasted only 10-15 minutes, which seems inadequate to examine and discuss instruction at a deep level. In other sites, coaches allowed a more general discussion rather than insisting the debrief focus on the demonstrating teacher's decision-making. Teachers may be less comfortable analyzing colleagues' practice at a deep and specific level than generating next steps and ways that they could apply the demo strategies. However, such deep and specific conversations may enhance the learning of all teachers involved. The BPS might consider how better to support deeper and more focused debriefs.

What sorts of adaptations facilitate CCL success? What sorts of adaptations impede it?

Given the idiosyncrasies of schools, the BPS would do well to continue to permit adaptations that are supported by a reasonable rationale and continued fidelity to CCL goals and basic structure. However, some adaptations may seriously compromise the purpose of the CCL. The BPS should consider whether four (or three) demos within an eight-week cycle is reasonable and under what circumstances. It should also consider the minimum amount of time per week that must be allotted to CCL in order to implement all its components successfully. After several years of CCL in the Boston Public Schools, the district might want to revisit the goals and purpose for CCL and its components. None of the four sites were conducting CCL in a manner that conformed strictly with the district's initial CCL design. Given that adaptations are pervasive, at what point has a school modified its CCL practices so much that it is not "doing" CCL anymore? After several years of implementation, what does it mean to "do" CCL in the district?

These schools were selected for this study because their CCL cycles were thought to be relatively high-functioning. Across all sites, Education Matters found evidence of teacher engagement and trust among teachers, coaches, and principals. However, beyond these common features, Education Matters found considerable variation in the extent to which the cycles exhibited characteristics thought to help CCL cycles function well. Moreover, Education Matters found that conversation generally did not examine practice at a deep level. It is important to ask whether the small instructional changes that CCL seems to be facilitating are, in fact, adequate or, as the principal at Keats Middle School worried, teachers' instructional growth and improvement needs to be more substantial and rapid. While the principal's perspective might be accurate, given the lack of evidence that professional development has had an impact on teacher practice or student achievement (see, e.g. Garet et al., 2001), CCL might, in fact, be one of the more successful approaches to instructional improvement available.

On the whole, the BPS might examine more closely 1) what CCL looks like across the district schools, 2) the extent to which CCL cycles as a whole qualify as "high-

functioning,” according to the district’s definition, and 3) how, if at all, CCL could be strengthened to produce more substantial changes in the classroom.

VI. CONCLUSION

Although these CCL cycles encountered challenges, they appeared to serve a vital purpose to the teachers who took part in them. Bringing together special education and regular education teachers to discuss instruction, these CCL cycles seemed to promote small, gradual changes in how teachers think about instruction and how they work with students in their classrooms. Importantly, the teachers in this sample felt they had benefited from their participation and wanted to take part in future CCL cycles. The BPS should build on the good will and enthusiasm of teachers such as these to promote more substantial improvements to teachers’ practice and students’ work.

Reference

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001, Winter 2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 915-945.

Appendix A

Components of a High-Functioning CCL

- ❑ All components of CCL are implemented. When modifications are necessary, they are thoughtfully planned
- ❑ A year long schedule for CCL is in place at the site
- ❑ Time Allotted – At least 45 minutes for inquiry and lab/debrief
- ❑ Coverage for teachers for lab is in place
- ❑ Readings presented to course of study participants are timely and related to the focus of the cycle
- ❑ Scope of the cycle is thoughtfully planned
- ❑ Active participation by group members
- ❑ Teachers voluntarily read outside of CCL time
- ❑ Data is used to inform course of study
- ❑ Inquiry drives the lab demonstrations
- ❑ Demonstration lessons are planned collaboratively
- ❑ Lessons are based on research evidence from professional texts
- ❑ Coach is knowledgeable about CCL content and theory
- ❑ One-on-one visits are scheduled with teachers in the course of study
- ❑ Coach has an off-cycle plan
- ❑ Coach sets expectations for classroom implementation of learning
- ❑ Coaches uses skillful facilitation to engage all participants and to keep the group focused
- ❑ Coach regularly documents their work through logs and the CCL binder
- ❑ Principals are aware of the course of study and the participants
- ❑ Administrators actively participate in at least one cycle
- ❑ Principal actively supports teachers' implementation through classroom observations of CCL participants
- ❑ Assessments and samples of student work are used as evidence of student learning
- ❑ Teacher and student goals are set at the start of the course of study and are revisited throughout the cycle
- ❑ Participants reflect on their learning at the end of the cycle and create a plan for continuing their learning when they are off-cycle