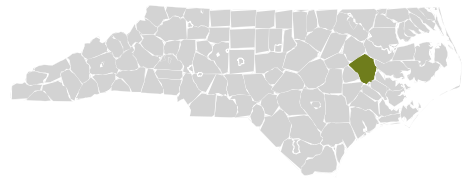


Pitt County Schools

*As Case Study of Empowerment Through Partnership:
Co-Teaching and Communities for Transformative Teaching*



The Pitt County Schools (PCS) operates 39 schools, including 15 elementary schools (10 starting at pre-kindergarten), seven middle schools, seven high schools, one primary school (grades PK-2), one intermediate school (grades 3-5), and five PreK-8 schools. Of these, 38 are classified as regular schools and one as a special education school, situated in suburban (6), rural (13), city (15), and town (5) areas. The district currently serves 24,091 students and employs 1,557 teachers (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2023). As highlighted in Table X on the following page, 29 schools currently employ Advanced Teachers, including 16 elementary, 4 K-8, 4 middle, and 5 high schools. Collectively, 53 Advanced Teachers provide direct support to 171 classroom teachers.

Program Context and Goals

Aptly named, “Recruit, Retain, Reward (R3),” Pitt County has tailored their Advanced Teaching Roles program to focus on developing and providing additional leadership opportunities for their teachers. PCS R3 is unique among other ATR districts in two distinct but very important ways. First, it is one of the few ATR districts that have implemented a locally developed approach to ATR rather than adopting a program from an external vendor. Second, R3 has received substantial funding from a range of sources since its launch during the 2016-2017 school year. Initially funded through the Teacher Incentive Grant (TIF) for \$4.5 million over 5 years, it has since received an additional \$16.2 million from the NC General Assembly via the Teacher Compensation Grants with NCDPI. Since 2016, funding from other sources has supported this program including, a federal Teacher and School Leader grant, the state of North Carolina Teacher Compensation Model, a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant, the Z Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Wells Fargo Foundation, and local charitable foundations (Pitt County Schools, 2024).

Recruit, Retain, Reward (R3) is a program within Pitt County’s Division of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership (DEEL). DEEL serves as a bridge between Human Resources and Educational Programs and Services, aiming to align instructional initiatives with the necessary personnel support. This alignment allows DEEL to focus on various aspects of teacher development, effectiveness, and leadership, while offering a wide range of career progression options. These options enable teachers to grow and advance in their careers while remaining connected to classroom teaching.

“

Teachers are never the problem. They’re always the solution ... you just need to build their capacity.

- Pitt District Leader

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Table X. Summary of Pitt ATR Schools and Teachers

School Name	Teachers Supported	Advanced Teachers		
	Total	Facilitating Teacher	Multi-Classroom Teacher	Total
Ayden Elementary School	3	1	0	1
Ayden-Grifton High School	6	2	0	2
Belvoir Elementary School	2	0	1	1
C M Eppes Middle School	11	3	1	4
Chicod School	9	2	0	2
Creekside Elementary School	5	1	0	1
E B Aycock Middle School	4	1	0	1
Eastern Elementary School	12	3	0	3
Elmhurst Elementary School	3	0	2	2
Falkland Elementary School	4	1	1	2
Farmville Middle School	9	1	1	2
G R Whitfield School	3	1	0	1
Grifton School	4	0	2	2
H B Sugg Elementary School	3	1	0	1
Junius H Rose High	7	3	0	3
Lakeforest Elementary School	6	1	1	2
North Pitt High School	2	1	0	1
Northwest Elementary School	9	2	1	3
PCS Early College High School	3	1	0	1
Pactolus School	7	2	0	2
Ridgewood Elementary School	12	2	1	3
Sam D Bundy Elementary School	5	2	0	2
South Central High School	8	2	0	2
South Greenville Elementary School	7	0	2	2
W H Robinson Elementary School	6	1	0	1
Wahl-Coates Elementary School	2	0	1	1
Wellcome Middle School	7	1	1	2
Wintergreen Intermediate School	6	2	0	2
Wintergreen Primary School	6	2	0	2

The PCS ATR program, R3, was designed to increase the stability and quality of the teaching workforce at historically hard to staff schools. TIF grant funds were used to implement strategies designed to:

1. Recruit, retain and reward effective and highly effective teachers to high-need schools;
2. Increase student growth and academic achievement in participating schools;
3. Reduce the number of high-need schools with “low performing” designations.

To date, the PCS program focuses on two aspects of recruitment: attracting top candidates from across the state to work in Pitt County and promoting the best teachers within the district to become teacher leaders.

These program goals are aligned with two core beliefs upon which DEEL operates. First is the belief that teachers, when properly supported and developed, are the key to solving educational challenges. Second, DEEL leaders believe in the transformative power of action research. One staff member explained that teachers are natural “seekers of information” who are proactive about improving their practice: “I’m not just going to sit here and wait for you to tell me what I’m doing wrong... I want to act on it.” These values—recognizing the potential in every teacher and viewing them as key agents of change—are central to DEEL’s approach to teacher development.

Selection of ATR Schools and Advanced Teachers

The DEEL office ultimately determines where to allocate the resources across the district for these positions. School level administrators are invited to apply for Advanced Teacher positions based on their demonstrated needs. Principals and teachers co-create a proposal for Advanced Teacher positions within their schools, based on an assessment of their needs. Once positions are awarded to schools, Advanced Teacher candidates must meet position specific content expertise, collaboration, pedagogy, leadership, effectiveness criteria to be eligible.

Beginning teachers, residency licensed teachers, and targeted problems of practice drive the selection of ATR positions. When principals apply for Multi-Classroom Teacher positions (an Advanced Teacher position described in the following section) cadres of beginning and residency licensed teachers serve as a driving motivation for principals. One PCS staff member described principals’ thought process as follows, “some of them have looked at, do I have a grade level that I need to build capacity in? Are there certain teachers that if I could just tweak a few things over this year, they could take off and become leaders for others. Low performing teachers, teachers, maybe with red data who need the assistance.”

School principals also described being motivated by a specific grade or school level issue when applying for Facilitating Teacher (FT) positions, another Advanced Teacher position in PCS described on the following page. In these instances, principals reported that they felt that FTs could help orchestrate a shared investigation into a “problem of practice” and motivate colleagues to iterate towards a solution. Described in more detail below, FTs focus on helping school- or grade-level teams in, “getting a deeper understanding of what the problem might be...implementing a change idea...[continuously] collecting data to see if things are shifting in a more positive direction.”

Position Descriptions of Advanced Teachers

PCS currently has two distinct Advanced Teacher roles, both of which they classify as Adult Leadership. One of these roles, the Multi-Classroom Teacher, is closely aligned with recent legislative requirements for Adult Leadership positions, with these teachers being held directly accountable for student academic performance of the teachers they support. The other role, Facilitating Teachers, is entirely unique to PCS and accounts for the majority (73%) of their Advanced Teachers. Due to the nature of their role, Facilitating Teachers are evaluated by PCS using other performance measures. PCS does not currently support a Classroom Excellence position is only 1 of 5 ATR districts comprised entirely of Adult Leadership roles.

A **Multi-Classroom Teacher (MCT)** co-teaches, co-plans, and co-assesses with teachers across multiple classrooms (2-6) and receive a \$10,000 supplement. Teachers receiving support from MCTs are called Co-Teachers (Co-T). MCTs work with two or more teachers (Co-Ts) daily as assigned by the principal. The number of Co-Ts can change based on dynamic needs within the school. The MCT provides intensive support to their Co-Ts through modeling, co-teaching, and planning supports, typically over the course of three years. In AY 2023-24, there are 14 MCTS across 12 schools (35% of Pitt County schools have at least one MCT).

A **Facilitating Teacher (FT)** works with a team of 2-4 Collaborating Teachers (CTs) in a **Community of Practice (CoP)** to co-plan and lead action research influencing the learning in multiple classrooms and receives a \$5,000 supplement. The CT receives a \$1,500 district funded stipend. FTs work with a team of teachers in a Community of Practice (CoP) to investigate a shared problem of practice and implement and evaluate solutions. Overall, 23 Pitt County schools have anywhere from 1-3 CoPs within their buildings for a total of 39 CoPs across the district (see table X for distribution of CoPs over the school levels). The current focus of these CoPs falls under one of the following categories: Literacy, Math, Equity, ACT, or Building Capacity.

There are also several **Non-ATR Supporting Roles** in PCS that assist Advanced Teachers. These roles function in support of the broader R3 program but are not directly funded by NCDPI's Teacher Compensation Models and Advanced Teaching Roles grant. These roles include the following:

- **Career Pathway Specialists (CPS).** PCS employs seven Career Pathway Specialists (CPS) each assigned to a group of schools to offer career support to all staff in their designated schools. Some CPS also oversee specific R3 roles and as part of their regular duties, offer on the job training of MCTs and FTs and develop and refine tracking and coaching tools.
- **Equity Partners.** At the school level, Equity Partners use improvement science to lead a group of teachers to address an inequity in the school and receive a stipend of \$2,500.
- **Facilitating Mentor.** Facilitating Mentors, facilitate the work of Beginning Teacher Mentors at each school to address the onboarding, support and needs of Alternative Licensure and Beginning Teachers. They receive a \$1800 stipend. These roles are not clearly aligned with current legislation; they are not included in this year's evaluation report.

Additionally, four reading focused CoPs (2 elementary and 2 high school) came together to meet four times to collaborate as a Network Improvement Community (NIC) during the 2023-2023 year. The NIC focused on sharing strategies and learning across elementary and high schools.

The Supporting Role of Advanced Teachers

Advanced teacher activities in Pitt County Schools are rooted in practices of mutuality and partnership according to district leaders. Multi-Classroom Teachers and Facilitating Teachers have several overlapping responsibilities, which they approach in different ways, but also serve very distinct roles in support of the broader goals of R3.

All PCS Advanced Teachers support colleagues through co-teaching, planning, and reflection. Multi Classroom Teachers (MCTs) form a close partnership with a team of 2-3 teachers who have been identified by administration or self-identified as underperforming. Within this partnership, MCTs reported engaging in co-planning, co-teaching, and co-reflecting as a means to address their colleagues' specific professional goals (e.g., classroom management, increased rigor in a particular subject, optimizing small group instruction.) Typically, this intensive support lasts around 3 years, though in interviews, advanced teachers reported that changing school needs may impact the length of partnership. Both MCTs and their supported Collaborating Teachers emphasized the importance of "trust building" and "togetherness" in interviews. MCT's work to position themselves as embedded, non-judgmental support.

A key feature of this close partnership is tailored support based on the teacher's previous experiences and training. For instance, one MCT summarized the support necessary for a beginning teacher or an alternatively licensed teacher. In response to a common frustration among new teachers who say, *"I just wish that I could hurry up and learn this,"* she emphasized that teaching expertise takes time to develop and can't be rushed. She highlighted the importance of having a mentor to provide real-time guidance, which helps new and alternatively licensed teachers learn more effectively, gain professional insight, and receive immediate feedback.

Facilitating Teachers (FTs), in turn, lead a Community of Practice (CoP) that conducts action research on a principal identified instructional issue with 2-4 Collaborating Teachers (CT). Facilitating teachers plan alongside their CoP members, develop and implement strategies together, and collect and analyze data all in an effort to solve the identified problem of practice. Across interviews, FTs and members of their CoP reported that the process increases understanding of academic standards, improves pedagogy and deepens capacity for reflective practice. One FT described how important sharing findings across the school, and sometimes district, community is: "this is how we can extend our influence and impact positive change for classrooms and the best part is that we are all together deepening our knowledge and practice."

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I am responsible for planning, reviewing data and making sure plans for interventionists are ready to roll. I also teach some of the harder small groups to make sure we can get students where they need to be."

- Pitt Multi-Classroom Leader

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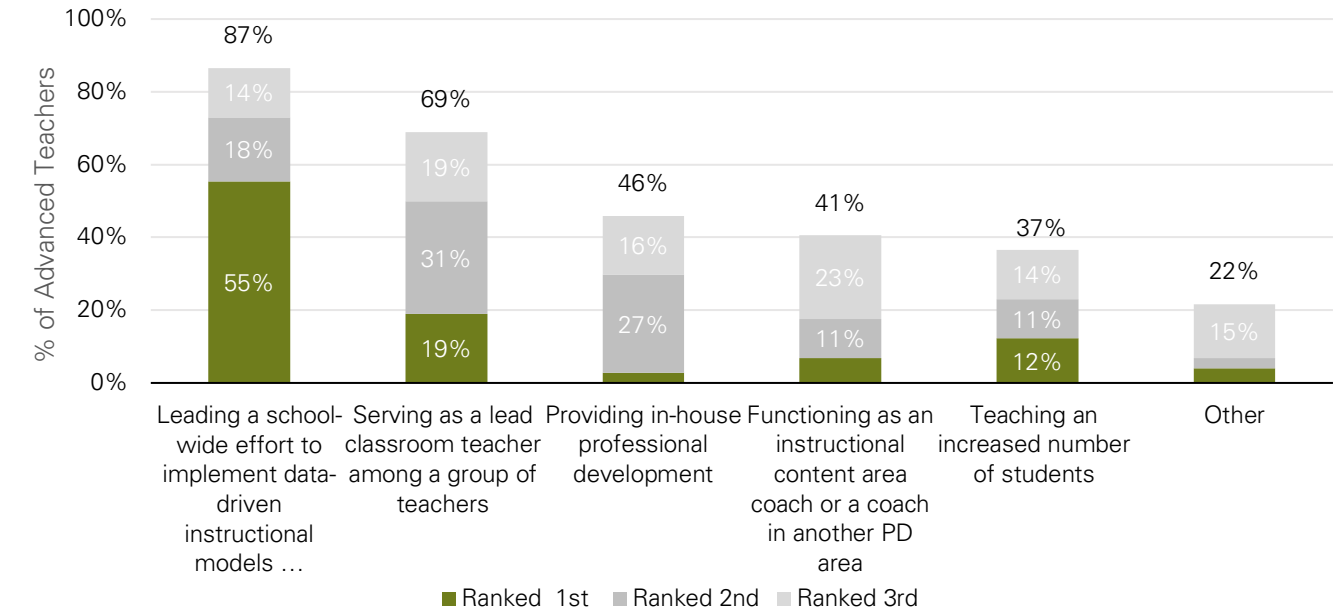
Facilitating Teachers lead work on a cross-classroom instructional problem of practice designed to support student learning. ATR staff describe the work of FTs as having both breadth and depth. The FT led CoP is focused on a very specific problem of practice that affects students across classrooms and positions teachers as levers for improved student learning. A district level staff member, who offers support to FTs, describes the underlying philosophy, “people closest to the problems are the ones best equipped to really come up with the solutions...These are people who have direct influence over the problem.”

The CoP structure affords FTs and teachers on their team the opportunity to go into depth within an identified problem of practice. For example, one CoP member described how the FT led action research impacted student learning. First, the CoP clarified the problem of practice by drawing from student assessment data: "we essentially found that through looking at multi-years of data, vocabulary was a big hindrance for our students, especially in math."

Drawing from best-practice research in vocabulary instruction in math, the FT led group: “came up with the game plan... a way for students to map out their thinking that implements understanding the math problem, doing the math correctly, and implementing that vocabulary so we can see if it's being used correctly, incorrectly, completely out of context, [or] almost there.” After collecting data and engaging in group analysis, the CoP member reflected on the impact on student learning: “just to see their growth and their confidence and they're much more comfortable.”

Emphasis on use of data to drive instructional practice also surfaced when Advanced Teachers were asked to rank the three legislatively prescribed responsibilities that most closely align with their role. Advanced Teachers indicated that implementing data-driven instruction and serving as a lead classroom teachers were the two most closely aligned. Among those surveyed, 87% of Advanced Teachers selected leading a school-wide effort to implement data-driven instructional models as a primary responsibility, and 55.4% ranked it first among their primary responsibilities; 69% of advanced teachers selecting it as a primary responsibility and frequently ranking it as the top responsibility (ranked 1st=19% and ranked 2nd=31%),

Figure X. Advanced Teacher Ranking of Top 3 Legislatively Prescribed Job Responsibilities in their Role



ATR Spotlight: Communities of Practice

According to Elizabeth Myers, a Career Pathway Specialist in Pitt County Public Schools, the county has been working to more directly involve teachers in finding solutions to challenges within their schools. From this initiative, Communities of Practice (CoP) were developed to allow for the people closest to the problems to provide solutions:

"These are people who have direct influence over the problem. They are the people, if it is a STEM problem, then they have STEM going on in the classrooms...we're empowering teachers to come up with their own solutions and recognizing that they're the experts in whatever this thing is."



Pitt County currently has 39 school-based communities of practice across their 38 schools, each addressing various problems of practice chosen to impact student growth. The work is led by a team of teacher leaders: Facilitating Teachers who take on the primary leadership role and collaborating teachers (CT) who support the process. Elizabeth Simmons, a Career Pathway Specialist supporting CoPs, describes their membership and work:

"So, the facilitating teacher, they're the ones who facilitate the learning of the group. They're in charge of planning the meetings, there's two meetings that occur at least every month...And then your CTs, they come along and they help the process."

Problems of practice are often identified through data by principals. Ms. Taylor, an FT, describes her work with her CoP to include digging through data to learn that vocabulary was a big concern for the students. Her team worked to create a solution called the "game plan" that has undergone many iterations along with a grading rubric:

"We came up with the game plan, which is a template that's undergone several revisions at this point, probably four to five, that kind of scaffold a way for students to map out their thinking that implements understanding the math problem, doing the math correctly, and implementing that vocabulary

She explains that her team members use the "game plan" and rubric with their students and track their progress while making adjustments.

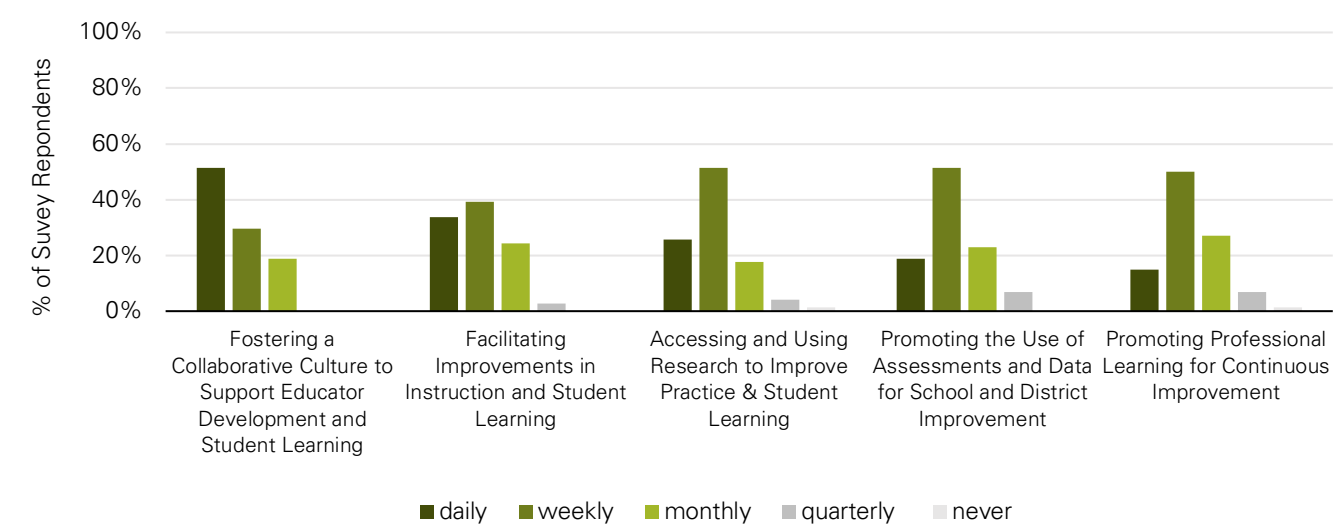
Both members of the CoPs and principals have found that the CoPs within their buildings allow for the exchange of impactful ideas across the school. Many FTs appreciate having the space to come together with teachers across their buildings to see common issues and reflect together. Eastern Elementary Principal Allison Setser noted that CoPs support vertical alignment by bringing together teachers across the grades to have a school-level impact:

"And a lot of it was that vertical piece. If you've got something going on in one grade level, it doesn't help unless we have it going on across school. And the other piece was sharing out frequently...So not just a team doing it, but us carrying it through as a school across the board."

Through CoPs, teachers are provided leadership opportunities to have a school-level impact.

Creating a culture of collaboration is frequent practice among Advanced Teachers in PCS. On surveys, Advanced Teachers varied in how often they engage in different areas of teacher leadership, but nearly half (51.4%) of reported engaging in fostering a collaborative culture on a daily basis and fostering a collaborative culture occurs more frequently than other dimensions of teacher leadership. At least 65% of advanced teachers report engaging in key domains of teacher leadership weekly, suggesting that these activities are core functions to carrying out the myriad duties of an Advanced Teacher.

Figure X. Frequency in which Advanced Teachers Engage in Domains of Model Teacher Standards



Multi-Classroom Leaders directly support students in classrooms that have been identified as having an instructional need. Within their daily co-planning, co-teaching, and co-reflecting efforts, MCTs ensure that students in identified classrooms have access to two teachers at all times. Along these lines, MCTs offer targeted instructional support to students who may be struggling or need enrichment in specific areas.

Across interviews, school administrators and MCTs noted that intensive collaboration ensures that instructional strategies are aligned and that all students enrolled in the class receive cohesive and comprehensive support. One principal described it as “on the job training for teachers that happens at the same time as improved student learning” and went on to say “it provides peace of mind about students in classrooms that need that extra support and when it goes well it’s an insurance policy that that teacher will be able to excel on their own in the future.”

Collaborating teachers also described student support as most frequently taking the forms of small group instruction and specialized teaching strategies. One teacher colleague emphasized, “I can rest easy knowing she [MCT] will make sure that I don’t let anyone fall through the cracks.”

The following ATR Spotlight highlights a rural school principal in Pitt County who uses the R3 program to tackle post-COVID challenges, particularly through co-teaching. In this spotlight, a veteran teacher who initially struggled with the district's teaching expectations has greatly benefited from co-teaching with an MCT. This partnership has increased the teacher's confidence and improved student outcomes. While co-teaching offers personalized attention and professional growth, it also presents challenges like limited co-planning time in a small school setting. Despite these challenges, the principal views co-teaching as beneficial for both teachers and students.

ATR Spotlight: Co-Teaching in Rural Schools with an MCT

Principal Newman loves her school, her students and their “supportive families” and her staff—but leading a rural school, post Covid has presented tremendous challenges including changes in staffing and in student enrollment. Neman believes that Pitt County’s R3 program helps her address her most pressing teaching development needs across the career spectrum.

Ms. Watson, a 13 year teaching veteran, described initial difficulty adjusting to expectations in a new context when she moved to Pitt County:

“It was a lot— the lesson planning expectations were much more detailed and the atmosphere was new to me...I needed support with the technology and understanding the ‘Pitt’ way.”

As the only 8th grade math teacher in the school, these commonly experienced context adjustment issues were compounded, as Ms. Watson didn’t have a built-in PLC. Principal Newman immediately recognized the potential for a co-teaching partnership to support Ms. Watson: “In a co-teaching situation my goal is that you want them to be like partners and collaborators. And talk to each other as well. And try to think through things that might be challenging.”

Co-teaching, a daily practice amongst Pitt County MCTs, can be a highly effective strategy for addressing diverse student needs and promoting inclusive education. During the One Teach, One Observe model, Ms. Watson instructed the class while Ms. Dreschler, her MCT, observed student behavior and engagement, collecting data to inform their future instruction. Later in the same lesson, the duo moved to the One Teach, One Assist model and took turns leading the lesson while the other provided individual support to students as needed. Janet Dreschler, MCT credits this dynamic approach to recent improvements in Ms. Watson’s student data.

According to Ms. Watson, coordination in co-teaching has greatly increased her confidence:

“It’s my 13th year, but I can tell from working with her I’ve grown in a positive manner as an educator. I mean, I’ve learned so much from her. She’s a resource, you know, and having her help, and her input just makes me more confident. And if you’re more confident, the kids know that and they are more confident with what you’re presenting to them.”

Principal Newman notes that with two teachers in the room, the student-teacher ratio is effectively halved, allowing for more personalized attention. “It’s a win-win,” she said, “one teacher is building capacity and that will hopefully lead to a long career in our school and at the same time students are getting expert instruction.”

There are numerous benefits to sustained co-teaching, but it’s not without challenges. In a school like Grifton with smaller grade level teams, consistent time for co-planning and co-reflection can be difficult to manage. MCTs like Janet Dreschler, work across a span of grades and subject levels and, in doing so, manage myriad instructional standards, assessment data, developmental needs for students and teachers, than counterparts at schools with larger teams.



The Role of Administrators in Supporting Advanced Teachers

The ATR program in Pitt County aims to enhance teacher capacity to improve student achievement across various subjects and grade levels. Like many districts, however, it is challenged by under-prepared beginning teachers, lateral-entry and international teachers, and even more experienced teachers who struggling with data-informed instruction, student relations, or social/emotional learning. PCS offers extensive professional development opportunities for Advanced Teachers to help address these challenges.

Advanced Teachers participate in a wide-range of formal and informal professional development activities. Since beginning their role as an Advanced Teacher, PCS has increased emphasis in select areas of training and support for Advanced Teachers. As show in Table X below, for example, 48% of Advanced Teachers participated in professional development in assessing and using research to improve practice and student learning and 56% after assuming their new role. Two areas ranked by Advanced Teachers as most critical to their role included: 1) professional development in promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement, and 2) in professional development in promoting professional learning for continuous improvement, which have both seen an increase since assuming their role, from 58% to 63%.

Table X. Number of Advanced Teachers Who Participated in Training and Opportunities Before or After They Began Their Role and Ranked by Order of Importance

Training and Professional Development Opportunities	Rank by Importance	Prior to ATR	Since ATR
Professional development in promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement	1	58%	↑ 63%
Professional development in promoting professional learning for continuous improvement	2	59%	↑ 63%
District formal pipeline program	3	55%	↓ 49%
Informal leadership opportunities	4	76%	↓ 60%
Networks/communities of practice related to teacher leadership	4	49%	↑ 53%
Mentoring by school leaders	5	59%	↓ 48%
Mentoring by other teacher leaders	6	33%	↑ 38%
Professional development in assessing and using research to improve practice and student learning	7	48%	↑ 64%
District partnership with a university for certificate or degree programs that prepare teacher leaders	7	59%	↑ 60%
Professional development in leadership	8	44%	↓ 37%
District partnership with an external vendor that provides training	8	59%	↓ 56%
Professional development in facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning	8	60%	↓ 53%
Professional development in fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning	9	44%	↓ 36%

“

It's the Pitt way, I mean there is never not an opportunity to grow and learn and take on a new role. If you want it, district leaders will help you get to that level.

- Pitt Multi-Classroom Teacher

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Advanced Teachers noted a pervasive spirit of collaboration with district leaders, which drives their passion for teaching and supports them in continuous improvement. Across interviews, PCS advanced teachers spoke highly of district level support, including monthly professional development sessions referred to as Skills Refinement opportunities, and routine, school-based check-ins with district level staff. Professional development, offered at the district level, tended to emphasize working well with adults and adaptive leadership/coaching competencies. One district level staff member explained, “we realized that the expertise we needed to build was in how do we collaborate? and how do we build the ability of people to both collaborate and investigate problems in a way that leads to action?”

Survey respondents recalled memorable courses such as Adaptive Schools, Cognitive Coaching, and Purposeful Data-Driven Dialogue, which align with the essential skills and capabilities needed by ATR teachers and their colleagues. Within professional development sessions, the research team observed substantial time dedicated to peer-to-peer dialogue around problems of practice. One advanced teacher described the value-add of this approach, “we get a lot of opportunities to collaborate and discuss issues with other [advanced teachers] which is really great because for some of us [we] are the only ones in the whole school, so we need that extra sounding board.”

Advanced Teachers largely agree they have the support needed to be effective, but highlighted several areas that could help them further grow in their role. The majority (75%) of Advanced Teachers surveyed in WCS agree or strongly agree that professional development aligns with their responsibilities and that they have the support and resources need to be effective (79%) in their roles.

PCS Advanced Teachers identified several areas in which they'd benefit from additional professional development that span both leadership skills and specific instructional challenges. These included areas such as:

- leadership skills
- data-driven dialogue
- school-wide behavioral management programs

They also expressed interest in student-focused topics such as differentiation and strategies for reaching students unresponsive to interventions and not identified as exceptional.

Improvements in Teaching and Learning

Since participating in ATR, teachers and administrators have experienced notable improvements in areas such as student outcomes, classroom instruction, and the overall attractiveness of the teaching profession. Overall, the findings suggests that participants in PCS are broadly supportive of the initiative and believe the program has had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Educators especially valued school- and district-wide collaboration efforts focused on improving student outcomes. Specifically, PCS stakeholders note the ability of the program to bring teachers together across a school or district to collaborate on data analysis, identify problems, and implement school-wide strategies. Administrators and teachers frequently highlighted how the program has supported collaborative data analysis and implementation of new solutions for addressing persistent problems of practice.

An MCT, for example explained how she works with her Co-T on a running spreadsheet of student data to “make these sort of pre-instructional design decisions” to support student growth. A principal highlighted how her Communities of Practice enabled teachers from different grade levels to analyze data, identify low vocabulary scores, and implement school-wide strategies, such as focus walls, to ensure consistent instruction and vertical alignment across all classes. Furthermore, the Network Improvement Communities (NICs) bring together CoPs from multiple schools around a similar problem of practice, which one principal remarked: “sometimes just hearing what other schools are doing and getting ideas has been very helpful.”

PCS ATR practitioners shared positive perceptions about the programs’ impact on student growth.

MCTs often discuss how they support their Co-Ts to build pedagogical skills, such as working with technology or planning and implementing small group pull-outs through planning together, co-teaching, or parallel teaching. For example, one MCT describes how she only co-teaches in one block per day, but the student improvement is happening across all the Co-T’s blocks: “there's been lots of improvement because I'm only with her that one block, and her other two blocks are doing amazing, like we are fourth. We were fourth in the county last check...we're a performing school. We're outperforming a bunch of these other schools.” One principal put it succinctly when asked about the benefits of this program: “Invest in teacher leaders because that's investing in our students.” Another commented, “I do feel that we're keeping a lot of teachers in the building that wouldn't be here otherwise...And we're supporting a lot of students at the same time.”

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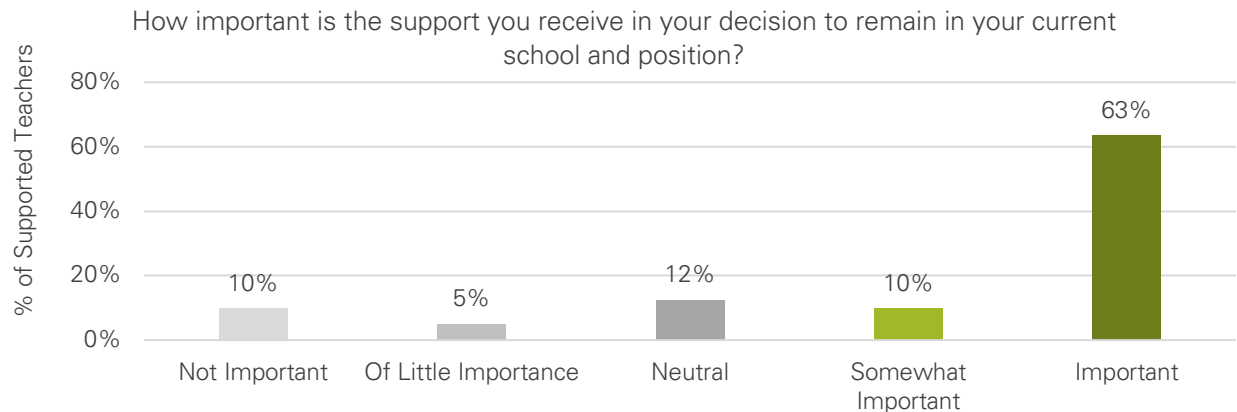
From the past NC Check-Ins that we've done, we are doing significantly better ... and compared to the other middle schools we're way higher than we were last year.

- Pitt Multi-Classroom Teacher

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The supporting role that Advanced Teachers provide is an important consider for classroom teachers for remaining in their school or position. Classroom Teachers supported by an Advanced Teachers were surveys to help determine how important the support they receive from an Advanced Teacher is to their decision to remain at their current school or position. The majority (73%) of classroom teachers indicated that it was important (63%) or somewhat important (10%). Classroom teachers also highlighted several areas of support they considered important such as Instructional support for small groups and lesson planning. Collaboration and resource sharing are also valued, as was support for data analysis, with one teacher noting the importance of "looking at data as a school, not just as a grade level."

Figure X. Supported Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Advanced Teacher Support to Remaining in Current School or Position



School administrators and Advanced Teachers appreciate the salary supplement but indicated that the supplement alone does not solve the teacher pay gap. Most teachers expressed appreciation for the salary supplement, and a few acknowledged that this was the only way to get a pay raise: "there's not much you get a raise for in teaching. I mean, I'm at year 28 and I finally got a step after 10 years. So, I mean, that is another nice incentive— that in this leadership role, we're also being recognized by getting a little bit of extra money in our paycheck." While teachers were appreciative of the extra money, a few suggested that the amount of extra work was not commensurate with the amount of extra duties: "when you really sit down and you look at it, you're like, okay, so by the time I divide that up by all of the time that I spend doing everything for that, then no." Additionally, while the salary supplement is appreciated, stakeholders signaled that it is not a comprehensive solution to the broader issue of teacher pay.

Participants in the Pitt County R3 initiative share their appreciation for increased leadership opportunities and associated professional growth. Generally, Advanced Teachers in PCS value "the opportunity to have a leadership role and spark change in the building." Advanced Teachers express satisfaction for the ongoing recognition they receive for their work. One Advanced Teacher pointed out that "most other professions, there's ways to move up. We can't move up. So, I think this is a stepping stone for us." Additionally, many express how having these roles provides opportunities to learn new skills and grow as educators. One MCT explained that being an MCT has "given me the opportunity to learn a lot of new things, new roles and new responsibilities and new content."

The following ATR Spotlight highlights Beth Meeks, an elementary teacher who struggled with small group instruction after returning to teaching. Through ATR, she received daily support from a Multi-Classroom Teacher and is now an MCT who mentor other teachers.

ATR Spotlight: A Career Ladder From Co-T to MCT

While it's common for elementary teachers to switch grade levels throughout their careers, it's never easy. Two decades ago, Beth Meeks enthusiastically began her teaching career in 4th grade and after five years took an extended break to be a stay-at-home mom, before returning to teach 2nd grade. Ms. Meeks' new students were younger and their individual needs were more pronounced. She quickly realized that she needed support with planning and implementing small group instruction:

"I was always telling [my principal], I'm trying with these small groups, and I just don't feel as if I had the skills that I needed. So I was constantly reading things, trying to do it on my own trying to find the answers. And it was just such a big struggle trying to put all those pieces together. I really was lost."

R3, Recruit Reach and Retain, Pitt County's Advanced Teaching Roles program, is designed in part to support educators in pivotal moments just like these. As part of the program, Ms. Meeks was matched with a Multi-Class Teacher (MCT), to co-plan, co-teach, and co-reflect daily until her professional goal was met. She described the intensive experience as an "absolute job-saver." First, she carefully observed her MCT plan and facilitated small groups. She took copious notes and, in co-reflection sessions they discussed each students' academic needs and the appropriate pedagogical choice. It wasn't long before Ms. Meeks and her MCT were planning and running small groups together. About the opportunity to refine her pedagogy alongside a master teacher, Ms. Meeks said:

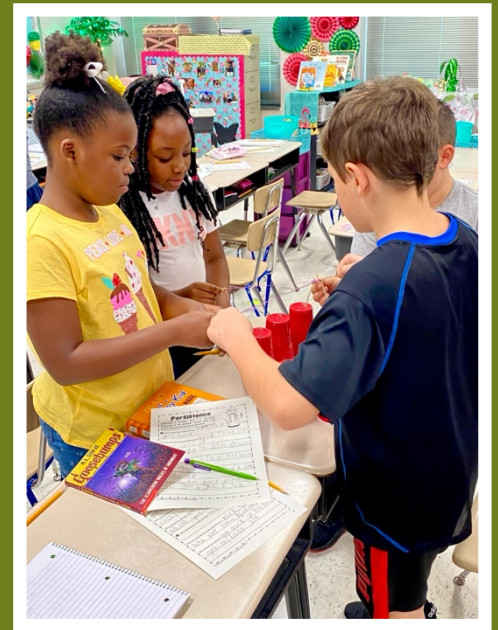
Teaching is something that just takes a great deal of practice and there is only so much you can do on your own. Working through it together is much more powerful than sludging through.

The impact on students was tremendous. Ms. Meeks recalls one student in particular who was reading several grade levels behind his cohort:

With my co-teacher support, we were able to really grow this kid in his confidence and his readability by the end of the year, and his mom was so proud of him. And I know, because I know his 4th grade teacher this year he actually made a 4 on his reading EOG. I believe and know that his journey in school turned when he got to work with both of us.

The impact on Ms. Meek's leadership capacity was also tremendous. In AY 2024-2025, Ms. Meeks will serve as a master classroom teacher herself, supporting a cadre of other second grade teachers in their specific professional goals. In anticipation of her new role she says:

I will listen carefully to each teacher's goals and help them achieve them. We will meet students' needs as a team and talk everyday about what's working and what's not, creating a model of how to teach most effectively with our [shared] students. Teaching is hard work. I want to reinvigorate my team.





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