This edition of the *R3 Framework Evaluation Brief* focuses on the one-to-one coaching that is provided to teachers who are filling Advanced Teacher Roles (ATRs) at Pitt County Schools. The ATRs include the Facilitating Teacher (FT) and Multi-Classroom Teacher (MCT), and they are part of the County's teacher retention and leadership initiative, the *R3 Framework*. District-level coaching is provided by Career Pathway Specialist (CPS) staff. The work of the CPS staff is grounded in principles of distributive leadership that develop teacher autonomy and efficacy as leaders. They perform four coaching functions from the Cognitive Coaching[SM] model by the Thinking Collaborative[1]: coaching, collaboration, consultation, and the facilitation of self-evaluation. This brief provides descriptions for each function along with examples demonstrating how the CPS staff utilizes various conversational tools to support teachers' growth.

The findings presented in this brief derive from several data sources. Observations and recorded meetings between CPS staff and teachers in ATRs, were the first of the data sources. Six observations took place in September 2021 and three recordings occurred in May 2021.[2] The second data source was three focus groups with FTs and MCTs that were conducted via Zoom in May 2021.

Cognitive Coaching[SM]

Cognitive Coaching[SM] is a process of mediating teacher thinking to develop self-directness and cognitive autonomy. It is the primary support function utilized by the CPS staff. When coaching, the CPS uses several conversation tools to promote teachers' thought processes when making decisions, identifying actions, and developing conclusions. The conversational tools include

- pausing when listening to encourage creative and reflective thinking;
- paraphrasing to acknowledge and clarify understanding of what is being said and/or to summarize and organize the teacher's thinking;
- posing questions to invite and promote deeper and more detailed thinking on a particular topic/issue.

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[1] https://www.thinkingcollaborative.com/aboutcc
[2] Please note that transcriptions of the conversations may have been modified to shorten their length.

Following are several examples of CPS staff applying Cognitive Coaching^{SM} to their conversations with teacher leaders.

Cognitive Coaching^{SM} Example 1

The first example involves a calibrating conversation between the CPS and an FT. They discuss what the FT has identified as a professional growth goal using the FT Evaluation Rubric. The FT wants to focus on moving her Collaborating Teachers to the next level of leadership by encouraging them to lead Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and take greater initiative in presenting data to their principal.

> FT: I want to take the CTs and move them more into being a leader. I want to be seen as one person in the group and not the leader…They have leadership roles but don't own it. For example, when we did PPT to staff, we build it together. But they didn't feel comfortable presenting. I said, 'it's your words,' but they didn't feel comfortable presenting. I want them to be more comfortable.
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> CPS: It seems like you want them to find their voice.
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> FT: Yes, that's exactly it. I'm retiring so I want them to become leaders.
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> CPS: I came in here thinking that I would ask you, 'what makes this goal valuable?' and you just said it, 'It's a legacy. Being able to build capacity for someone else to carry on the work.'
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> FT: Yes! that's the point. For example, if a brand-new FT came in, they wouldn't be able to hit the ground running. We have new assessments, and the current group can keep the work going rather than taking a step back to build community with a new person. We talked about it this year, and we are already working in that direction, informally. We included teachers in the PLC on all our data discussions. They will be involved in the Cycle of Inquiry and will come to meetings to read and discuss articles. My 1st grade teacher was the one who invited them. And I didn't tell her to do that, so she is on her way!
>
> CPS: Let's tease that out. What might be some success indicators to know if you are making traction on your goal?

At this point in the conversation, they discuss indicators such as behaviors by the other teachers that might demonstrate self-directed leadership such as sharing information with the principal and taking a larger role in leading conversations in their Community of Practice (CoP). The CPS helps facilitate the FT's identification of success indicators, ultimately resulting in the FTs ability to name a few. At the end of the conversation, she states, "I'm hard on myself, and I was worried that I was asking too much. But this conversation confirmed my reasons. When you said that I wanted to build capacity, that's exactly what I wanted to do. I needed to hear that."

Cognitive Coaching[SM] Example 2

In this second example, another FT reflects with a CPS in conversation. The CPS invites the FT to "reflect on how his use of Adaptive Schools strategies and protocols have evolved throughout the school year and to formulate a plan for continued development."[3]

> *CPS: How have you developed your strategies in working with your CoP and PLC? Over [the] course of school year, how have meetings compared to meetings before the training?*
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> *FT: Meetings are now more beneficial. They get done in the time needed which is funny because you wouldn't think that because there's more thinking involved, but we get it done. In the past, there were a lot of "me" stories. Now you have to really focus on listening. Once you do it and understand…and when you focus on what is being said, it gets better. We feel more comfortable having discussions about anything. The 3 of us— we are so comfortable talking to each other…and I think it's the trust because they know you listen. We are supporting one another, we are listening to one another, and we are actually paraphrasing one another. The listening takes away the need to give a reason or try to solve problems. The listening part of it is trying to have a common understanding of the issue.*
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> *CPS: Listening has been the key to developing the relational trust which in turn has led to a much deeper collaboration. Time is more efficient by avoiding all of the unproductive conversations. So, what are you learning about yourself as a teacher leader?*
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> *FT: What I thought of as a leader was someone who speaks a lot or does a lot. True leaders listen more and they can delegate more because there is a trust there. No matter who you are, you are only as good as the people you are with. We have a strong group and I wish we could expand it to the whole department. The principal is always referring to our 'dynamic group'…We are comfortable showing each other how we do math problems. We bounce ideas off each other all the time because you're always learning, you're always getting better…we've been in PLCs forever, but we would never be comfortable doing that but now that there's trust, we don't mind doing that.*
>
> *CPS: You've been able to increase your craftmanship because the trust was in place and now when you get to looking at the fine detail [in instructional strategies] it's just adding [to everyone's strengths]. People aren't going to do that if the trust isn't in place.*

In both examples, the CPS uses paraphrasing to help the FTs put a label on what they are describing and to reinforce the impact of the FTs' work. It is also worth noting that both

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[3] Excerpted from the CPS notes on the conversation

examples demonstrate how the FTs, themselves, have encouraged leadership in their Collaborating Teachers.

In addition to these examples, the impact of Cognitive Coaching^{SM} was evident in how teacher leaders described the CPS staff during the focus group discussions. For example, the CPS staff was described as "servant leaders who empower us to empower our co-teachers to empower our students." Teachers characterized the support as non-judgmental. They remarked that the CPS staff did not present themselves as the experts who would solve problems, but rather as guides. They stated that the CPS staff provided teachers with questions that would help teachers reach solutions and coached them when they were faltering. In turn, the teacher leaders applied the same type of Cognitive Coaching^{SM} when working with teachers on their teams. The comments below show this distribution.

> "They have taught us this brand of leadership where we can coach people through things to ultimately reach their own decision, hopefully, to make the right decision. And it's not like 'Hey, this is what you're doing and that's that.' There are still people I see around (my school) building that have that style of leadership and it's just like, that doesn't work anymore, and it just pushes me away because I have seen how we are supposed to be doing it in training. We lead our group; we facilitate our group without bossing other people around."

> "I think of the term servant leadership because all of the CPSs…would be responsive to my needs in a kind, gentle way. They are these leaders that know more than us, but we have an awe and respect for them because they have an awe and respect for us, too. Every time [my CPS] comes out, [my CPS] makes me feel like a rock star, tells me how wonderful and great I am doing, and is super, super encouraging. It's this very unified, encouraging community... They're just very unified in the way that they communicate, in the way they act, and just the way that they serve. It's always 'How can I help you? What can I do? How can I meet your needs?''

> "I am doing vocab…[the CPS] instinctively knew through probing questions whether you needed more ideas or just those question probes to think for yourself. I didn't feel like [the CPS] was telling me exactly what you should do, but definitely helped me along the way to get to what I needed."

Consultation

Consultation is a form of technical assistance aimed at increasing pedagogical and content knowledge and skills or increasing teachers' understandings of the district or school practices and policies. It is the second support function used by the CPS. In other words, the CPS directly provides information, strategies, and/or resources to a teacher. When utilizing this function, the CPS staff often begins with coaching strategies to ensure that the teacher does require more direct support. In the words of one CPS, "we often wear this hat when working with a newer teacher. I always begin by probing their thinking because many times they are better

than they think, but their brain is flipped. I'll ask them to talk to me about some of the things that they've considered, and when I've decided that their well is dry, I will offer suggestions." Two examples of consultation are provided below.

<u>Consultation Example 1</u>

In the first example, the CPS helps an FT organize her CoP meetings. Note that during the conversation, the CPS is valuing the teachers' concerns and then offers strategies that will allow the teacher to decide how to structure her meetings.

FT: I'm trying to organize my first four meetings. My concern about the meetings is that I want to make the meetings valuable to them. The meetings are at the end of the day.

CPS: You don't want this to be a waste of time and you are wondering how to make the meetings productive. One of your wonderings for the 1ˢᵗ meeting is 'what is the big purpose'?

FT: Yes, I get the agenda. I feel good about it, but when I close the meeting however, I'm not sure how to do it. I'm big on closing routine. Should we come up with one together?

CPS: You are talking about 2 things 1) summarizing and 2) being intentional about action steps. I understand that having the next steps helps people to know they haven't wasted time. I have several resources that might help you pick summarizing activities. Let me offer them to you, and we can talk about them together.

[The CPS walks the teacher through several different resources, and they discuss different summarizing activities together. The teacher identifies several activities that she feels will work well with her group. The CPS wraps up by validating her concerns.]

CPS: In education we are fast-paced and we are used to this way. One thing I have to offer you is that this work is different. The most successful FTs build community first. That's not the norm for education but try it. We can't do the work if we don't have community first. These activities go back to what we said in the beginning, it's about valuing all voices and building trust.

FT: Okay, hearing you say that makes me feel better and more confident. I have a better understanding. It's about knowing what it means to build a community of practice. I'm going to try these and I know that I can reach out to you if I need help in December when we get to the cycle of inquiry.

Consultation Example 2

The second example offers a different approach to the consultation function. Two teacher leaders are asking the CPS to talk them through situations they would use coaching versus consultation. The CPS consults with them on how to distinguish between the two functions and their use.

CPS: How are your mentors?

Teacher 1: Our crop of mentors is good and strong. We've tried to put more emphasis on supporting mentors rather than beginning teachers.

Teacher 2: One of the issues they raised is how to help new teachers with problem solving. We know that the role of mentor is not to solve all the problems, rather to listen and help them to be effective at problem solving. If I'm talking to a beginning teacher and I give strategies, then I'm not helping them to own the act of problem solving. But sometimes it is not apparent when they just need more support.

CPS: You have a lot of success to lean into and that is a strength. And you see value in the difference between coaching and being a consultant. It sounds like you want to give them more agency and autonomy and then they own the problem-solving piece. It sounds like you need to help mentors discern the difference between coaching and consulting. I'll share an example. I recently met with a beginning teacher. I asked her, 'What do you need from me today? Do you need a coach or do you need ideas?' Turns out, she needed ideas. So, it's okay to ask that. It's okay to say, "I have resources," to help if they are stuck.

Teacher 2: That sounds perfect.

CPS: There may be a few shortcuts in Cognitive Coaching that will help with conversations starters so that they can decide on coaching and consulting. Would that be helpful?

Teacher 1: Yes, that would be wonderful. We have a lot more clarity on where to go next.

Teacher 2: If this is such an aha for us, then I know there are other mentees pulling their hair out. The beginning teachers have so much on their plates and some of it is urgent. So, it's a struggle for all of us to decide if we should be coaching or consulting.

The topic of consultation also came up during the focus group discussions with teacher leaders. For instance, the FTs noted that the CPS staff provided specific resources and rubrics and procured data that was relevant to the problem of practice. Several FTs stressed that the

CPS had taken the time to get to know each CoP member individually. Their supporting comments were as follows:

> "Our research has been mostly around cross-curricular literacy and our CPS has been helpful, and the DEEL office in general, in pointing us in the direction of research that has been published lately."

> "We are dealing with the part of writing that has to deal with foundation. [Our CPS] actually came out and saw what we were doing and went out of the way to get data for us."

> "My CPS would not just send us research, but would also suggest 'Have you heard of this conference?' Especially now that we are virtual, it opened us up to a lot of different opportunities."

> "My CPS was super helpful in finding and matching the right protocol and then giving me the resources to be able to do that, to have a successful meeting. I really don't feel like [we] would have been nearly as successful without my CPS."

Teacher leaders pointed out that the CPS provided more consultation when they were new to the position, and particularly, when the positions were new to the district. In the beginning, the teachers filling these roles felt they were in uncharted territory. One said, "There is absolutely no way we would have had any type of success without [my CPS]."

Another teacher leader, "None of the things we have done would have been as effective without the data and the process of inquiry...We needed them." Over time, however, the CPS staff changed their support from how to perform the role to how to think deeper about teaching. An MCT noted that "over time, the support changed from strategies and support to making us think through other topics—our lens of how we teach, thinking through things differently."

Collaboration

The third support function is collaboration, which involves a two-way exchange of ideas and equal participation between the coach and the teacher. When performing this function, the CPS is engaged in mutual brainstorming with the teacher to form ideas, inquiries, and solutions. The CPS also engages in collaboration with a teacher to solve instructional problems or test shared ideas.

One point of engagement, typical in CPS collaborations, occurs during a Cycle of Inquiry (CoI)[4] with a Community of Practice. Sometimes an FT will invite a CPS to join and facilitate the group's CoI so the FT can be a participant in the analysis, rather than a mediator. While the CPS

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[4] Cycle of inquiry is a process for analyzing data that is designed to challenge assumptions and identify patterns and root causes for performance.

facilitates the discussion, they are also an active participant in discussions about data patterns and root causes for student performance. This is demonstrated in the following exchange between a CPS and teachers in the CoP. In this example, the CPS acts as facilitator but is not mediating the other teachers' thinking.

> *CPS: Today we are looking at test results from last year. What are our patterns as a school? Let's talk about your assumptions.*
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> [Teachers each share their assumptions.[5] The CPS also contributes to the conversation and offers assumptions. For example, the CPS notes that their patterns were consistent across several data points.]
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> *CPS: I agree that your predictions were on par…Let's talk about what we want to do now?*
>
> *Teacher A: I am struggling to formulate it further.*
>
> *Teacher B: This is the data we aren't sure is reliable because it was taken during COVID.*
>
> *Teacher C: Yes, we have DCA assessments coming up and I think that data will allow us to dive deeper into patterns. I don't trust the reliability of last year's data.*
>
> *CPS: I agree. Maybe we don't need to do an autopsy and take a big deep dive in it. We gave it the appropriate amount of attention. You are getting ready to have a DCA and can look at more relevant data. I would also wait until you have that data to do more analyses.*

Facilitation of self-evaluation

The final coaching function involves the facilitation of a teacher's self-evaluation. It is important to note that the CPS is not evaluating the teacher, but rather, they are guiding the teacher through deeper self-reflection of their skills, knowledge, and capacities as a leader. The following example shows the outcome of a self-evaluation conversation between the CPS and an FT. The FT reflects on how her understanding of a leader has changed over the past few years.

> *FT: I [was] the person to work behind the scenes, but this work has really forced me out of my comfort zone. It has been a growth point, and it helped me grow as a teacher leader, and what that looks like in my mind has changed. Teacher leaders used to be the teacher down the hall who had all the experience, but that is not what this is about. What has been interesting is reaching out to other people [to address a problem] that matters to them, and they are willing to work on this problem, too. And it's not just our little group, [it's teachers outside of the CoP]. I like being a voice and support to others. I*

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[5] Parts of the conversation have been omitted to preserve student and teacher confidentiality.

want to create a safe space [for teachers]; bring me what you have, and we'll work with it. A lot of our teachers have great ability but may not see it in themselves. Once they realize that they are doing good things, they go to the next level. Helping people grow, that's really it. If that can happen then we automatically help the kids.

CPS: Your experience has led to a culture shift in the building and in your self-identity as a leader.

FT: Absolutely…I want to share that with everyone else.

Focus group discussions with teacher leaders touched upon the supports provided around self-evaluation. For example, MCTs reported that the CPS used the 360 Leadership Survey[6] and MCT Weekly Reflection data to identify points of discussion, topics for future professional development (PD) sessions, and to reflect on the MCTs' practices and leadership skills.

Conclusion

The Career Pathway Specialists fulfill a unique and important role supporting and advancing teacher leadership in Pitt County Schools. This brief demonstrates how they masterfully use the four coaching functions from the Cognitive Coaching[SM] Model to empower teachers to become leaders. The examples and feedback from the ATR teachers speak to two types of support: (1) functional support around the duties of a teacher leader, such as organizing meetings, providing data, and obtaining materials and resources, and (2) moral support around the human side of leadership such as building community, problem-solving, and the offering of perspective. While the need for functional support lessens over the tenure of the leadership positions[7], the need for moral support continues, particularly when teachers experience inevitable setbacks, doubts, or lack clarity. Undoubtedly resulting from the genuine connections that result from mutual respect and trust, the CPS staff are successful in providing reassurance that re-energizes the teachers.

Equally important, the brief provides evidence that leadership is spreading throughout the district because of the coaching support and the work of the teacher leaders. For example, teacher leaders noted that the activities and strategies that they use in their smaller groups, such as the use of norms, Adaptive Schools strategies, and Cycles of Inquiry, are embraced in larger team meetings such as grade level meetings and PLCs. Moreover, teacher leaders and their team members are sharing successful instructional strategies with larger groups of teachers outside of their teams. Consequently, teacher leaders agreed that the overall school culture is being positively impacted.

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[6] Each ATR teacher participated in 360 Leadership Surveys, which are completed by the teachers in their co-teaching (for MCTs) and Community of Practice (for FTs).

[7] Except for occurrences like the pandemic shift to remote/hybrid learning and administrative turnover in some schools, for example.