Pitt County Schools

R3 Framework:
Recruit, Retain, and Reward
Annual Evaluation Report

MI | **MEASUREMENT**
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October
2018

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I. Introduction

In 2016, Pitt County Schools (PCS) was awarded a combined $21.1 million in state and federal grant monies[1] to support their *R3 Framework: Recruit, Retain, Reward* initiative that began in 2013. This initiative provides an overarching structure and innovative solutions to reducing PCSs' teacher turnover rate, which has exceeded the state average for the past four years. It is believed that teacher turnover has negatively impacted student instruction and achievement; schools' professional culture; and the leadership development and growth of educators.

The *R3 Framework* is a human capital management system that is designed to recruit, retain, and reward highly effective teachers. Its innovation lies in the creation of teacher growth opportunities that enable PCS to recruit the best candidates within the district and across the state and nation by offering them leadership roles in schools while maintaining full-time status as classroom teachers. It retains the best teachers by providing them with intensive and advanced professional learning opportunities to help them further their professional growth goals. Finally, teachers are rewarded with both monetary and non-monetary incentives as they progress through different career pathways. Prior to this initiative, leadership advancement in PCS required teachers to leave the classroom to pursue roles in administration or other non-administrative positions at the school or district levels.

R3's approach to teacher recruitment and retention is grounded in a growing body of research demonstrating both a need for, as well as the effectiveness of, teacher leadership positions.[2] Additionally, it has become clear that simply compensating highly effective teachers in the absence of professional learning opportunities and/or advancement does not translate into long-term improvements in student outcomes.[3]

In the fall of 2017, PCS partnered with Measurement Incorporated (MI)—a full-service educational assessment and evaluation company headquartered in Durham, NC—to conduct a five-year evaluation to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the *R3 Framework*. The evaluation features a robust design that reflects MI's core approach to conducting evaluation studies which includes a comprehensive conceptual framework to guide the evaluation and data collection; multiple data sources to check the validity and reliability of findings; and mixed methods (i.e., quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures) to achieve a balance

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[1] PCS received a $16.2 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant and a $4.9 million state Teacher Compensation Model grant.

[2] Ingersoll, R.M., Dougherty, P. & Sirinides, P., (2017). School Leadership Counts. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.
Backes, Benjamin, Hansen, Michael (2018). Reaching Further and Learning More? Evaluating Public Impact's Opportunity Culture Initiative. CALDER Working Paper No. 181.

[3] Fryer, R. (2011). Teacher Incentives and Student Achievement: Evidence from New York City Public Schools. NBER Working Paper No. 16850.

between breadth and depth of information. See **Appendix A** for more information on the evaluation methodology.

Throughout the first year of the evaluation, MI provided PCSs' Division of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership (DEEL), which oversees the implementation of the *R3 Framework*, with quarterly evaluation briefs. The briefs provided formative-level findings on the development, rollout, and implementation of the various elements of the *R3 Framework* for the purpose of informing continuous improvement efforts throughout the school year. This is the first year annual report that focuses on the initial outcomes of the grant. The report begins with an overview of *R3 Framework* Career Pathways Model, a description of the teacher leadership pathways, and a summary of the positions that were implemented up through the spring of 2018. Following is a synthesis of findings for each outcome area, which are bulleted below.

- Teacher retention impact

- School community and educator impact

- Student impact

The report also includes several case studies that showcase the successes of the newest teacher leadership position, the Facilitating Teacher. The case studies illustrate the role of the Facilitating Teacher and their joint work with a group of Collaborating Teachers in a Community of Practice (CoP). A set of recommendations concludes the report.

II. Implementation of the R3 Framework Career Pathways Model

The *R3 Framework* puts into place a Career Pathways Model that provides multiple opportunities or "pathways" to support, compensate, and retain teacher leaders. Teachers can "choose responsibilities and positions aligned with individual strengths, interests, and school system needs"[4] that will allow them to have a larger impact on their schools, while also permitting them to remain in the classroom.

The Career Pathways Model is depicted in **Figure 1**. The Career Pathways Model offers varying degrees of support, training, and leadership opportunities to teachers within the district. As seen in the figure, the first two pathways—Beginning Teacher (BT) and Professional Teacher— are points of entry for all teachers, which align with the state teacher licensure and compensation model. Four additional pathways, however, are part of the *R3 Framework* and offer differentiated pay and leadership opportunities on top of the LEA-level performance-based compensation system. These include the Facilitating Teacher, Collaborating Teacher, Multi-classroom Teacher, and Co-Teacher. Additionally, two leadership pipelines are available including the Key BT program and the Teacher's Leadership Institute.

**Figure 1
The Career Pathways Model**

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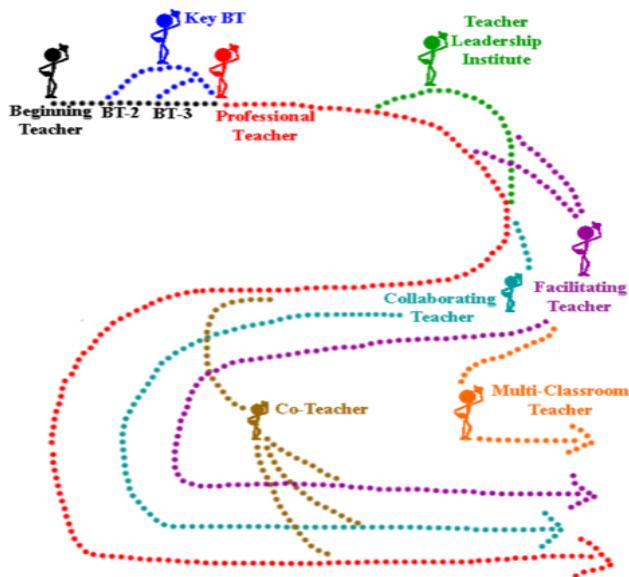
[4] Feller, T.R, Jr. & Brown, S.N. (2018) *Expanding the Professional Influence, Capacity, and Compensation of Teacher Leaders in Pitt County Schools.* NCASCD Spring Newsletter 2018.

This chapter outlines the pipeline programs and career pathways that were implemented up through the 2017-2018 school year. A description of each is provided along with the number of positions that were filled throughout the years of implementation.

Key BT Program (initiated in 2014)

The Key BT program is designed to support the development of promising Beginning Teachers who show leadership potential as viewed by peers and/or administrators in their schools.[5] Key BTs participate in the program for one year, during which time they receive specialized training in how to be collaborative leaders and supporters to other BTs.

The Key BT program includes four areas of support: orientation, training, resources, and advocacy. The first three areas support Key BTs in making connections, facilitating meetings, and providing resources to their fellow BTs. The advocacy component is the culminating event when all Key BTs visit North Carolina's General Assembly to discuss with state legislators key issues impacting education.

Figure 2 displays the number of Key BTs for each year of implementation. As seen in the figure, the number of Key BT participants has increased every year from 38 in the first year of the program to 54 in the most current school year. In total, 190 teachers have participated in the program.

Figure 2
**Number of Key BT Participants**
by Year

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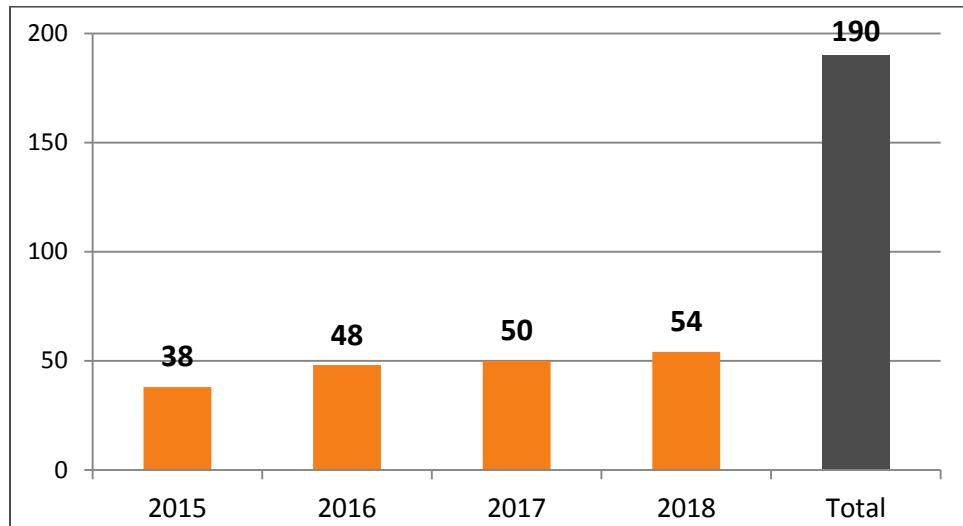
[5] Potential participants are nominated by peers and administrators and are awarded the position in the spring.

Teacher Leadership Institute (initiated in 2016)

The Teacher Leadership Institute (TLI) was launched in 2016 with a class of 25 teachers who demonstrated leadership potential and a desire to expand their influence. TLI is a four-year program whereby teachers participate in two years of intensive professional learning that is focused on building their disposition as a leader, collaborator, and instructor who is adept at using best practices in the classroom. In their second year, teachers complete a Capstone Project that demonstrates their use of one of the foundational leadership strands that undergird the Institute. Upon completion of the Capstone Project, participants graduate from the first two years of the program and are eligible for a $4,800 supplement that is awarded incrementally during years three and four, along with financial and mentoring support to pursue certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

As of spring 2018, 50 teachers graduated from the program and were eligible to pursue National Board certification, while another 23 teachers had completed their first year of the Institute (see **Figure 3**). Of the 50 graduates, 31 were pursuing National Board certification and 13 were already NB certified or were renewing their certification.

Figure 3
Number of TLI Participants
by Year
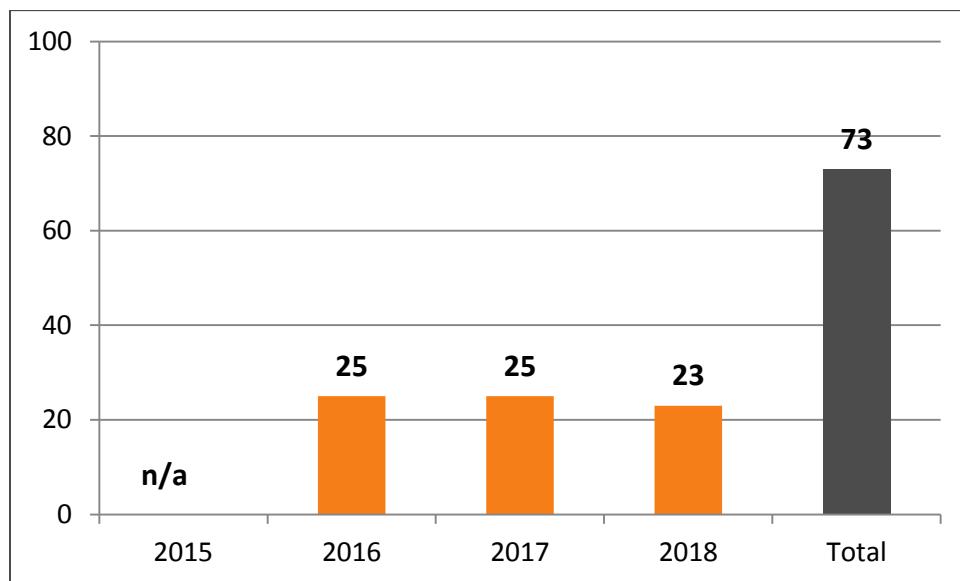
## Facilitating and Collaborating Teachers (initiated in 2017)

In 2017, Pitt County Schools rolled out two new positions, the Facilitating Teacher (FT) and Collaborating Teacher (CT). The FT position is one of the advanced teacher leadership opportunities that include a substantial compensation package. In this case, they received a 15% increase above their base salary. FTs are highly-effective teachers as demonstrated by

their positive impact on student achievement and expertise in content, leadership, pedagogy, and/or collaboration. FTs are trained to lead CTs (between 2 to 4 teachers) in a Community of Practice (CoP) while also maintaining their status as a full-time classroom teacher. CTs are a subset of the FT path. While they do not participate in the same professional learning opportunities as the FT, these teachers benefit from the mentorship of FTs, who share information, practices, and educational resources that they obtain through professional learning opportunities. For their part in the CoP, CTs receive an annual supplement of $1,200 a year.

In year one, FTs and CTs met twice a month in their CoPs to develop a collaborative inquiry project that addressed a problem of practice.[6] The CoPs utilized semi-structured protocols to identify a theory of causation for the problem of practice and a driving question to identify potential strategies and solutions. Lead by the FT, the group implemented a theory of action and engaged in a structured process to examine data collected and to make decisions on the next steps in the implementation cycle.

Beginning in August 2017, Pitt County Schools had 54 FTs and 177 CTs working together in 29 schools. Of those positions, 46 FTs and 143 CTs were placed at high-needs schools and funded through TIF funds, in particular.

Figure 4
Number of FT and CT Participants
by Year

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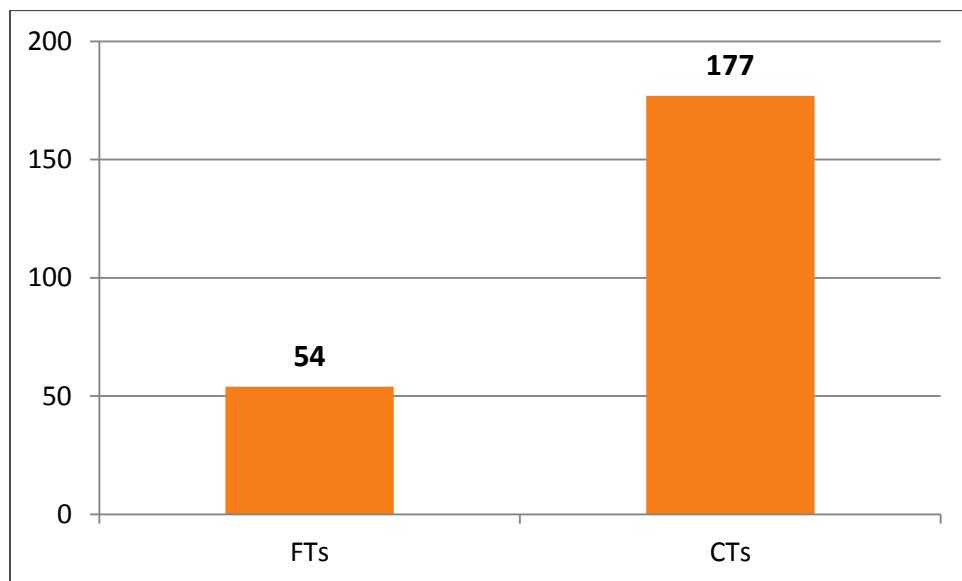
[6] The problem of practice was identified by the school administrator, school improvement team, and/or other leaders from the school using schoolwide data.

Summary

Over the past four years, Pitt County Schools have successfully implemented four of six leadership pipelines and pathways that comprise the Career Pathways Model. Specifically, by the close of the 2017-2018 school year there were 23 newly enrolled teachers to the TLI program, 190 graduates from the Key BT program, and 50 graduates from the TLI program. Additionally, 231 FTs and CTs finished their first year as teacher leaders. While not reported in this section, it is worth noting that all 35 schools have had at least one or more Career Pathways Model participants over the past four years. PCSs' fidelity to the rollout of the R3 Framework demonstrates that it is committed to fulfilling the promise to support, promote, and retain talented educators

III. Teacher Retention Impact

The *R3 Framework* offers the "best of both worlds" scenario because it enables effective teachers to exert more influence on their school and district while continuing to have a positive impact on their students by staying in PCSs' classrooms. The result is higher classroom teacher retention and better outcomes for the school as well as the district.

The current study tracked the number of teachers who participated in the pipeline programs (i.e., Key BT and TLI) and remained in PCS through March 2018. Teacher retention for the FT and CT positions will be provided in next year's annual report.[7] In lieu of teacher retention data, the study measured the likelihood that FTs and CTs would remain as classroom teachers at PCS based on teacher reports. A summary of these data is presented in this section of the report.

Figure 5 presents retention data on Key BT and TLI participants. Specifically, 74% of teachers who participated in the Key BT program from 2015 to 2017 remained in PCS as of March, 2018. Comparatively, only 39% of teachers who were Beginning Teachers during the same time period stayed in the district. Equally impressive, 98% of teachers who participated in TLI from 2016 to 2017 remained in PCS in 2018 as compared to the districtwide retention rate of 85%.

Figure 5
Percentage of Key BT, TLI Participants, and Comparison Groups
Retained in the District as of March, 2018

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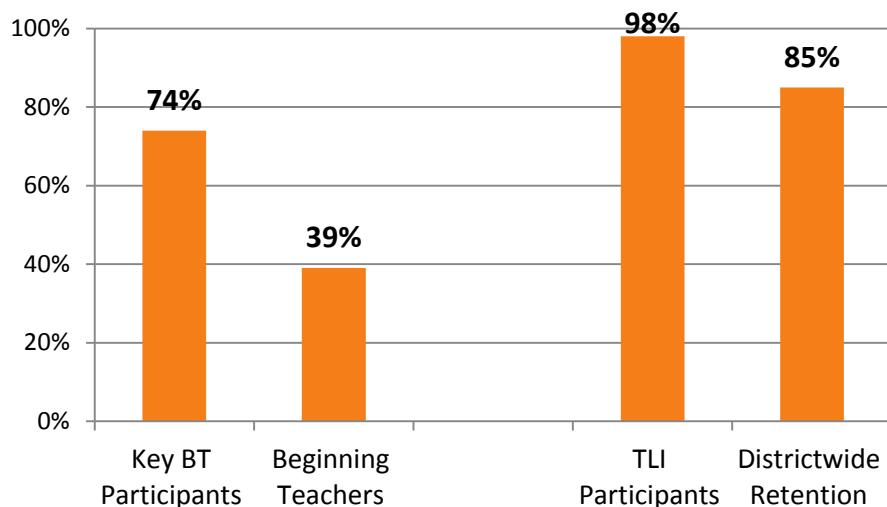
[7] Teacher retention data is reported in March of each school year. As of March 2018, the FT and CT positions were in their first year of implementation.

Figure 6 presents data on the percentage of teachers in each of the Career Pathways Model pipeline programs and positions who specifically indicated that their decision to remain as a classroom teacher in Pitt County was influenced by their teacher leadership roles. As seen in the figure, the large majority of FTs (93%) and CTs (73%) agreed that the position influenced their decision to stay in the classroom. For instance, anecdotal reports indicated that some FTs were close to retirement and that the position motivated them to prolong their decision to retire. Others viewed the positions as an opportunity to advance the level of professionalism for classroom teacher position.

Facilitating Teachers, in particular, were also asked to identify the most appealing components of the position. Thirty-seven percent (37%) identified the supplemental pay, which was followed by both the leadership opportunities (29%) and the support that they could provide to other teachers (29%). Additionally, nearly all were in agreement that the supplemental pay was adequate (i.e., 98%) and that the quality of their teaching was recognized through the position (94%). Collectively, these findings confirm the value of this advanced teacher leadership position to the teachers.

Figure 6
Percentage of Teachers who Indicated that Teacher Leadership Opportunities Influenced their Decision to Remain as a Classroom Teacher at Pitt County
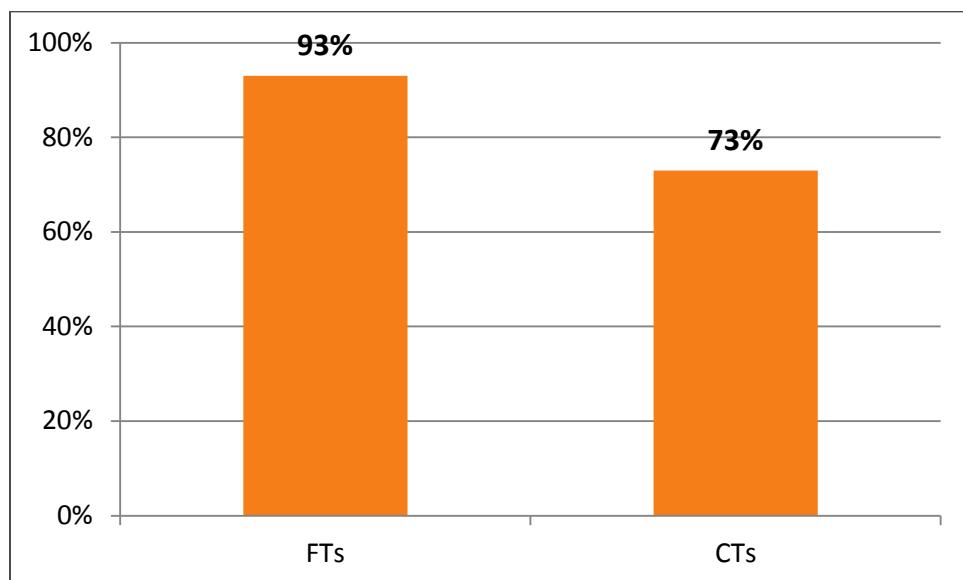
* Source of data: Friday Institute surveys (FTs and CTs)

Summary

Increasing the retention of effective teachers in high-needs schools has been at the heart of TIF and other federal grants. Research shows that retaining effective teachers is difficult in high-needs schools where resources and pay can be lower than in affluent schools.[8] Teacher leadership opportunities, like those that are part of the *R3 Framework*, provide a viable means for increasing teacher retention. Indeed, findings presented in this section provide evidence for the effectiveness of these leadership opportunities. Specifically, the majority of teachers who participated in the Key BT and TLI pipeline programs since their inception have remained in Pitt County schools. Furthermore, most FTs and CTs agreed that these teacher leadership opportunities influenced their decision to remain in Pitt County classrooms. For certain, these findings bode well for the long-term sustainability of the *R3 Framework*.

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[8] *How Retention Bonuses Can Help Keep Highly Effective Teachers in Struggling Public Schools | Scholars Strategy Network*. (2016). *Scholars.org*. Retrieved 9 October 2018, from https://scholars.org/brief/how-retention-bonuses-can-help-keep-highly-effective-teachers-struggling-public-school

IV. School Community and Teacher Impact

The career pathways that are part of the *R3 Framework* are intended to impact teachers and consequently school communities in a variety of ways. The initiative specifically aims to do the following:

- Empower teachers to collaborate, recognizing the synergistic capabilities of individual teachers working together to raise student achievement.
- Impact school culture and climate for collaboration and teacher leadership recognition.

Quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of the R3 pathways on teachers and schools were drawn from a variety of sources, which are listed and described in **Appendix A**. This section of the report summarizes findings that are organized by three main constituent groups in the initiative including teachers across the district, administrators, and teachers who participated in the career pathways.

District-wide Teacher Perspectives on Teacher Leadership

The *North Carolina Working Conditions Survey*, which is administered every two years, assesses teaching and learning conditions from the lens of NC educators. It is particularly useful for the current study because it provides longitudinal data that can help to identify patterns and changes in teachers' perspectives about support for teacher leadership over time. Questions on teacher leadership, teacher recognition, and future career plans can be compared from 2014, the year before the *R3 Framework* was initiated, with those from 2018 to look for changes in teachers' level of agreement that may have resulted from the initiative.

The 2018 survey results revealed gains in almost all areas measured (see **Table 1**). While only two areas of teacher leadership showed significant gains, all areas that were measured appear in the table to demonstrate the level of teacher agreement with the statements, as well as the changes from 2014 to 2018. Statistically significant changes were noted in the following areas:

- *Teachers are recognized as educational experts.*
- *Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.*

While these increases weren't significant, it is notable that three indicators showed a four point gain from 2014-2018. These were:

- *Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues (81% to 85%).*
- *Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school (67% to 71%).*
- *The school's leadership consistently supports teachers (76% to 80%).*

In terms of future plans, a clear pattern of gains has not yet emerged, as might be expected this early in the rollout of the *R3 Framework*. One indicator that did show a significant change was the percentage of teachers with plans to pursue a non-administrative position (e.g. instructional coach). This actually decreased from 4.4% to 1.5% (p<.05), indicating that fewer teachers planned to seek out these other jobs.

Table 1
Pitt County Teachers' Perceptions about Teacher Leadership and Future Professional Plans
2014 versus 2018: Percentage Reporting Agree or Strongly Agree
(2014 N=1,355, 2018 N=1,724)

	2014 Percentage	2018 Percentage
Teacher Leadership*		
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	79%	85%***
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	82%	87%***
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	81%	85%
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	93%	93%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	77%	80%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	83%	85%
Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	87%	88%
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	67%	71%
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	71%	73%
Teachers are comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	70%	73%
The school's leadership consistently supports teachers.	76%	80%
The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.	85%	87%
Future Professional Plans**		
Remain as a teacher in my school	67%	68%
Remain as a teacher in the district but move to another school	5%	6%
Remain as a teacher but leave the district	4%	3%
Pursue an administrative position	3%	4%
Pursue a non-administrative position	4%	1%***

*   Percentage of teachers responding *agree* or *strongly agree*
**   Percentage of teachers responding *yes*
*** Statistically significant (p.<05)

The 2018 data were further examined at the school level based on the number of Career Pathway Model teacher leadership positions that were filled. A high group (10 or more teacher leaders) and a low group (9 or less leaders) were identified and compared to determine if school-level responses differed on the teacher leadership support and retention items. Statistically significant ($p < .05$) findings follow:

- More teachers in schools with a high number of teacher leaders (high group) agreed that *teachers are recognized as educational experts* (88% versus 82% in the low group).
- *Fewer* teachers in the high group planned to *leave the field of education* altogether (2.3% of the high group indicating plans to leave versus 4.6% of teachers in the low group).
- In terms of which aspects of their teaching conditions most affected their willingness to keep teaching at their school, 6.2% of teachers in the high group cited *teacher leadership* versus only 4% in the low group.

Principal Perspectives on Teacher Leadership

School administrators were asked about key factors leading to the success of the initiative as well as its initial impact. The four principals and one assistant principal interviewed on site visits mentioned teamwork, collaboration, trust, and/or willingness to listen as factors that facilitated a successful Professional Learning Community in their school. They also believed these factors were present in the CoPs.

Principals felt that the use of actual data was a factor that contributed to a successful Professional Learning Community in their schools. One put it this way, "They definitely look at data. The presentation (the CoP made) at the faculty meeting—giving us examples…I can tell that they are using types of data to support what they do."

When asked about the short and long-term impact of the *R3 Framework*, they described a variety of indicators that were indicative of impact, including improved test scores, school-wide use of a behavior management program piloted by an FT, culture changes, happier teachers (which transfers into the classroom), changes in school culture, and higher student standards. One principal offered this comment, "The staff know what we are trying to do—changing the culture. Our students don't see beyond high school. We are changing their mindset…what about college?"

Teacher Leader Perspectives

Teacher leaders at the same four schools were queried in focus groups about short and long-term impacts of the *R3 Framework* on their teaching and their schools. Many of those interviewed cited increased collaboration, sharing, listening, rapport-building, and trust as positive outcomes of the teacher leadership positions. Several said that they obtained strategies that they could use in their own classrooms. A few mentioned improved grade level
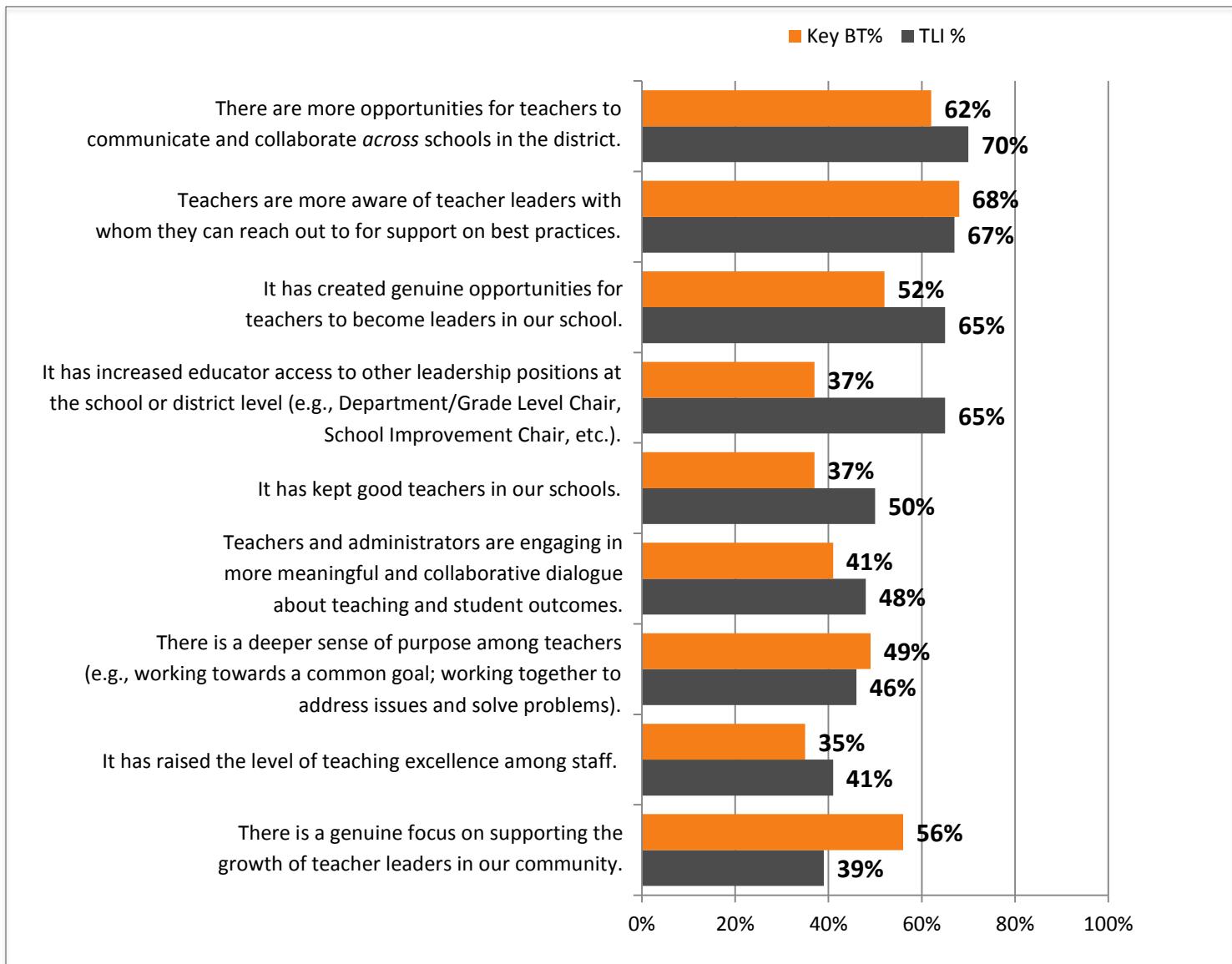
alignment, while several said that they hoped long-term impact would be manifested through improved student test scores.

Focus group participants were also asked how their teacher leadership role had impacted them personally. By far, the most common reply was that it had boosted their confidence. One put it this way, "It has just totally rebuilt my confidence as a teacher leader and it has just been so empowering and it makes me not feel as scared to recognize a problem and want to go after it and do something about it. The teacher leadership programs have given me the tools and the skills and the ability to do that." A number of teacher leaders said that they thought differently about their teaching/innovating/being creative, as a result of their involvement. Several Key BTs interviewed said that their participation made them want to apply for other teacher leadership programs (which is borne out in findings presented in *Section III. Teacher Retention* of this report).

As described in the *R3 Evaluation Framework Brief - August 2018*, the FT position resulted in a variety of outcomes for teachers and school communities. Survey data gathered by the Friday Institute for a state-level evaluation provide valuable insight. For example, nearly all of the FTs surveyed agreed that they improved their *ability to lead* and over three-quarters of CTs (77%) deemed the *leadership to be helpful* to them. FTs, CTs, and administrators believed that the *quality of instruction* has improved as a result of implementing the FT position at their school. Nearly all of FTs (96%) and two-thirds of CTs (65%) agreed that the *quality of their instruction* improved. Moreover, 61% of students agreed that they *learned more from their teachers* (who were FTs or CTs) this year compared to last year and 71% of students agreed that their FT and CT teachers *understood the best ways to teach them*.

The Key BT Program and TLI also had a positive impact on a variety of teacher and school community outcomes. **Figures 7** and **8** present data from an online survey that was administered to the program participants last fall/winter. Key findings are summarized below **Figure 8**.

Figure 7
Pipeline Program Impact on Schools
Key BT n=63, TLI n=34

■ Key BT%   ■ TLI %

Statement	Key BT%	TLI %
There are more opportunities for teachers to communicate and collaborate *across* schools in the district.	62%	70%
Teachers are more aware of teacher leaders with whom they can reach out to for support on best practices.	68%	67%
It has created genuine opportunities for teachers to become leaders in our school.	52%	65%
It has increased educator access to other leadership positions at the school or district level (e.g., Department/Grade Level Chair, School Improvement Chair, etc.).	37%	65%
It has kept good teachers in our schools.	37%	50%
Teachers and administrators are engaging in more meaningful and collaborative dialogue about teaching and student outcomes.	41%	48%
There is a deeper sense of purpose among teachers (e.g., working towards a common goal; working together to address issues and solve problems).	49%	46%
It has raised the level of teaching excellence among staff.	35%	41%
There is a genuine focus on supporting the growth of teacher leaders in our community.	56%	39%

Figure 8
Pipeline Program Impact on Teachers
Key BT n=63, TLI n=34

	Key BT%	TLI %
My communication is more effective with colleagues.	81%	96%
I am a more confident and capable leader.	71%	83%
My communication is more effective with students.	48%	74%
I collaborate more with my colleagues to have a greater impact on students.	68%	70%
I am more actively involved in problem-solving and addressing school-level issues.	40%	54%
I focus more on building students' leadership skills.	52%	50%
I am more motivated to remain teaching at my current school.	48%	48%
It influenced my decision to apply for the Facilitating Teacher position at my school.	15%	43%
I am collaborating more often with administrators.	42%	35%
It influenced my decision to apply for a leadership position in my school.	42%	30%
It influenced my decision to be a Collaborating Teacher.	21%	24%
It influenced my decision to apply for a leadership position elsewhere in the district.	8%	7%
It influenced my decision to apply for the Teacher Leadership Institute.	27%	n/a

Of note, over two-thirds of participants in both groups said that
▸ *Teachers are more aware of teacher leaders with whom they can reach out for support on best practices*.

About two-thirds or more of TLIers agreed that
▸ *There are more opportunities for teachers to communicate and collaborate across the schools in the district.*

- *It has created genuine opportunities for teachers to become leaders in our school,* and that *It has increased educator access to other leadership positions at the school or district level*.

Almost half of participants in each program said that

- *There was a deeper sense of purpose among teachers (e.g., working towards a common goal; working together to address issues and solve problems).*

And almost half (48%) of TLIers said that

- *Teachers and administrators are engaging in more meaningful and collaborative dialogue about teaching and student outcomes.*

The level of school-wide impact identified was noteworthy given the fact that these pipeline programs were not intended to have school-wide impacts.

In terms of the impact of Key BT and TLI *on themselves*, over three-quarters of participants in both programs agreed that

- *My communication is more effective with colleagues.*
- *I am a more confident and capable leader.*
- *I collaborate more with my colleagues to have a greater impact on students.*

About three-quarters of TLIers and half of Key BTs agreed that

- *My communication is more effective with students.*

About half of each group agreed with the following:

- *I focus more on building students' leadership skills.*
- *I am more motivated to remain teaching at my current school.*

Key BTs and TLIers were asked open-ended questions on the survey regarding the ways in which their leadership knowledge and skills were being utilized in their school. About half of the Key BTs (19 out of 37 comments) and 58% of TLIers (24 out of 41 comments) reported that they had assumed a wide variety of leadership roles—and often multiple leadership roles—that they had obtained (or in some cases already held) in their schools. Examples include: team leader; grade level chair; department chair; School Improvement Team member; Professional Learning Community Leader; mentor; FT; CT; and future MCT. Not surprisingly, only TLIers held some of the higher level positions such as MCT, department chair, lead mentor, and President, Pitt County Association of Educators.

Both the Key BT and TLI programs have a culminating experience—an advocacy trip for the Key BTs and a Capstone project for TLI. Key BTs were asked about the impact of their participation in the advocacy component of the Key BT Program. Many (13 out of 40 comments) were pleased that they had the opportunity to learn about advocacy and wanted to advocate for teachers, students, and themselves in the future. Some said they began to see themselves as leaders or felt they were in a position to help other BTs (8 comments). Some appreciated meeting and networking with other teachers across the district and felt supported through the network (6 comments). Several also specifically said that that Key BTs and BTs were learning

about educational law and issues affecting students (5 comments). Three praised meeting governmental representatives or looked forward to doing so.

Sample comments follow.

- *The advocacy component allows the Key BTs to have a voice and feel comfortable talking about educational issues.*
- *I feel the advocacy component of the Key BT Program is instrumental in focusing beginning teachers' attention on the issues of educational law within our state.*
- *I believe I am more of an advocate for BTs. I find myself checking in on them more often because I feel like I have been given the responsibility of keeping up with the BTs and helping them succeed.*
- *I met many other teachers that I formed friendships with. We remain in contact and are able to share/help one another.*
- *I feel that I was able to connect on a personal level with our legislators.*

In terms of the Capstone Project, 44 TLI participants addressed the impact of the project in their open-ended comments. Most comments described specific impacts at the school level (18 of 44 comments). Brief descriptions drawn from open-ended comments appear in **Table 2**. Six comments addressed impacts at the county level, all of which appear in the table. Eleven commented that impact had not yet been experienced.

<div align="center">

Table 2
Impact of TLI Capstone Project: Examples Cited in Comments

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School Level Impact
Our reading scores continue to increase in K-3.   *The Capstone Project allowed me and my colleague to dig deep into our guided reading data in our school.*   *My project has helped teachers on my grade level better understand how to assist their students with reading and reading comprehension.*   *My Capstone Project has empowered me to…step out of the ELA classroom and help non-ELA teachers incorporate literacy.*   *My project has produced a re-written English curriculum and a revised Civics curriculum designed to promote thinking instead of test-taking skills.*   *Our goal, under my leadership, was to vertically align 2-3 successful teaching strategies across grade levels.*   *I have really been using my TLI techniques to communicate (to the third grade team) the importance of following the curriculum and using Canvas.*   *My project has impacted the way my grade level communicates about student data during* Professional Learning Community.   *My Capstone Project created a* Professional Learning Community *…using Habits of Mind in the classroom to address student needs.*   *Our team has aligned our implementation of PBIS classroom economy (Phase 2) with Habits of Mind.*

School Level Impact
‣ *My project had an impact on sixth grade EC/inclusion teachers.*
‣ *The impact of my Capstone Project has been the need to increase technology in the classroom to meet the needs of the 21st Century child.*
‣ *I have seen my students become more self-directed.*
‣ *I have had opportunities to provide BTs with various strategies to be more focused leaders in their classrooms.*
‣ *My Capstone Project…impacted the beginning teachers because it allowed them to voice their needs at that particular time.*
‣ *My project has increased parent and community involvement in my school.*
‣ *I have enjoyed working with teachers to incorporate regular classroom curriculum into music.*

County Level Impact
‣ *I am working with 3 other 6th grade Social Studies teachers from different buildings to work on literacy and using primary sources in the classroom.*
‣ *My project was to provide a platform for resources for the music educators in our county through Canvas.*
‣ *My Capstone Project was focused on Teacher Advocacy…Seth allowed me to do a training session for Key BTs prior to the Advocacy Lobbying Day in Raleigh at the General Assembly.*
‣ *I saw an increase in dialogue between BTs and the support systems within their school.*
‣ *My Capstone Project was county-wide.*

Of note, four respondents indicated that the problem of practice they were addressing as an FT also served as their Capstone Project. Four other comments dealt with specific problems that had been confronted. These problems included a program being discontinued due to lack of staff, lack of school-level support, or problems transitioning to a new school.

Summary

Through their participation in the Career Pathways Model, teacher leaders collaborated with other teachers through CoPs, Professional Learning Communities, grade-level teams, School Improvement Teams, etc., which became mechanisms for change. They learned to use data, introduce innovation, risk failure, and regroup when necessary. The teacher leaders felt their school communities generally embraced the changes, even if they were specifically directed at a certain grade level, subject area, or problem of practice. While it is early in the *R3 Framework* implementation, many teacher leaders have already documented student successes (more of which is reported in the next section).

Teacher leaders across all categories were impacted themselves and saw a variety of impacts on their school culture. Teachers consistently said that their confidence had increased, they

had stepped out of their comfort zone, faced possible failure, and problem-solved with others. Most felt valued and that they were doing valuable work. Key BTs felt that learning to advocate for teachers, students, and themselves was a skill that would serve them throughout their careers.

Perhaps even more telling, teachers in Pitt County felt more trusted and acknowledged as educational leaders in 2018 than four years prior. Schools with more teacher leaders were less likely to plan to leave the field of education and more likely to say that teacher leadership affected their willingness to stay. These positive beliefs add to the mounting evidence that the *R3 Framework* is improving school climate and keeping good teachers in their schools and in the district.

V. Student Impact

The evaluation findings presented thus far provide evidence that the *R3 Framework* has already made positive strides toward retaining effective teachers and changing teaching outcomes and school communities by elevating the professionalism most deserved by the teaching profession. While it may be premature to draw concrete conclusions about the overall impact of the R3 Framework on student outcomes without full implementation of the Career Pathways Model, the evaluation did assess the initial impact of the newest teacher leadership position, the Facilitating Teacher (FT) and accompanying Collaborating Teacher (CT) position on student outcomes. The results are summarized in this section of the report.

Previously mentioned in the overview of the FT position (see page 6), FTs led a Community of Practice (CoP) with their group of CTs. At the end of the first year, they documented their process and progress in Live Binders,[9] which were available for public viewing, and presented a summary of their project and outcomes to their colleagues at their schools.

Out of the 51 CoP Live Binders available for viewing 27, or 53% reported various positive student outcomes after only one or two school quarters of implementation. Conversely, as few as eight FTs reported that their theory of action did not have a measurable impact on students, which prompted revisions to their approach and/or driving question. This is important to note because PCS did not have an explicit expectation that student outcomes would be experienced this early in the rollout of the positions. The remaining 16 projects were in various stages of the collaborative inquiry cycle so that impact data had not been collected by the end of the school year.

Table 3 presents a summary of positive student assessment outcomes for projects that focused on ELA, reading, and writing. The most common assessments used by FTs and CTs were Reading 3D and STAR, both of which provide three testing time points: beginning, middle, and end of the year. Other teachers used curriculum-based assessments such as Istation reports or developed their own assessments and scoring rubrics to measure the impact of their theory of action.

Several noteworthy findings can be gleaned from the summary table. One, some FTs utilized a comparison group in their study. In those projects, students who received the "treatment" outperformed or outgained their same-aged counterparts. Other FTs should be encouraged to make use of comparison groups so that the impact of their studies can be better understood.

Two, some FTs targeted students who were most in need of additional support or instruction to boost their achievement. In most of these cases, the FTs and their CTs were effective in closing

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[9] Live Binders is an online website that provides an "electronic binder" to organize projects that can be shared and presented.

the proficiency or achievement gaps in their schools. Further investigation to validate this assumption is strongly recommended because it will help to demonstrate the impact of the *R3 Framework* leadership positions.

Table 3
Summary of ELA/Reading Student Outcomes[10]

Outcome Measure	Impact
Reading 3D: TRC*	85% of *targeted* Kindergarten students were reading on grade level (D) or above by EOY.
	91% of Kindergarten students were proficiently reading on or above grade level by EOY. All students made growth.
	54% of *targeted* 1st grade students were proficient compared to 45% in the control group by EOY. There was also an increase in the percentage of students who were able to write a response, which increased from 8% to 75%.
	67% of *targeted* 2nd and 3rd grade students were proficient by EOY compared to only 25% for BOY. This group made greater growth than their same-aged counterparts across the school.
	60% of 2nd grade students were proficient by EOY compared to 44% at the BOY. On average, students grew 4.4 levels. Comparatively, over the past 2 years there was less growth at the 2nd grade and a lower percentage of proficient students (45% proficiency in 2016-17 and 55% proficiency in 2015-16).
Reading 3D: DORF**	2nd and 3rd grade students' EOY scores increased by 11.3 points from MOY. Of the 80 students who participated, 41 made gains of 10 points or more.
STAR: Vocabulary	4th grade vocabulary acquisition scores increased from 80.6 at the BOY to 89.2 by EOY.
STAR: Reading comprehension	3rd grade students gained 1.1 GE, 4th grade gained 0.9 GE and 5th grade gained 1.2 GE
Other assessments	72% of 6th through 8th grade students used reading strategies correctly at posttest as compared to only 28% at pretest using a common reading assessment.
	64% of 6th grade students improved writing strategies using a teacher-developed test. Growth from pretest to posttest was 10.9 points.
	The percentage of *targeted* 3rd to 5th grade students who were on or above grade level expectations (Tier 1) increased up to 16 percentage points from MOY to EOY on the Istation Reading Report. Conversely, the percentage of students who were deemed "severely" below grade level (Tier 3) decreased to less than 10% across grade levels.

* Text Reading and Comprehension
** DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency

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[10] The impact statements and data are reported by FTs in their Live Binder results.

Table 4 presents a summary of positive student assessment outcomes for projects that focused on math, science, and ACT. Most noteworthy in terms of impact are the ACT outcomes—it should be noted that both CoPs implemented the AVID program to teach students test-taking strategies.

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Table 4
Summary of Student Outcomes in Math, Science, and ACT[11]

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Outcome Measure	Impact
Math Marking Period assessment	70% of 2nd graders were proficient at solving math word problems after one marking period of implementing the new strategies as compared to only 55% who were proficient at pre-test (i.e., previous marking period).
Math 1 assessment	By EOC, the mean percentage of correct items improved by 5.2 points across all areas.
Math STAR	76% of 4th grade students made growth on math word problem skills and 36% made growth of at least one year or more.
Science	67% of 5th grade students were proficient by EOY compared to 63% across the district.
ACT	*Targeted* (i.e., bubble) 11th grade students gained 3 points on their ACT scores, which was higher than students who dropped out of the program for various reasons.
ACT	Growth from Pre-ACT proficiency to ACT proficiency went from 29% to 44%, a 15 point increase. This equated to roughly 55 more students being proficient on the ACT v. Pre-ACT test. Students' scale score growth was higher than the prior 3 year average.

In addition to the various student assessments, FTs and their CTs reported other improvements that were derived from teacher observations, student surveys, and student artifacts. These findings, which are bulleted below, could be deemed as important stepping stones that lead to improved assessment outcomes.

- Increased use of metacognition strategies for text comprehension.
- Improved writing responses. For example, in one project students' writing samples became longer, more detailed, and included the use of more vocabulary, structure, and transition words.
- Increased confidence in explaining their solutions to math problems and more details in their explanations.
- Increased student engagement and participation in classroom instruction.
- Higher expectations and interest in their performance. In other words, students took more ownership over their work and showed a strong desire to improve.

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[11] The impact statements and data are reported by FTs in their Live Binder results.

Summary

Within one year of implementation, over half of the CoPs led by Facilitating Teachers have demonstrated that their theory of action improved achievement in the areas of ELA, reading, writing, mathematics and ACT prep. Moreover, many were able to demonstrate improvements to students' confidence, engagement, and ownership for their success. That they were able to demonstrate various layers of impact after only one or two quarters of the school year is impressive.

Early outcomes such as those described in this section show how quickly some CoPs were able to absorb and use what they learned to have a positive impact on their classrooms. However, PCS recognizes that CoPs will internalize this work and create change in the classroom at varying paces due to a variety of factors. This is to be expected and, indeed, CoPs were provided with some flexibility to lay the groundwork that was needed to create a collaborative environment among their team. Armed with the confidence and initial successes of year one, it is realistic to expect that more FTs and CTs will have positive impacts on student outcomes in year two.

VI. Case Studies

This report concludes with case studies that depict two Communities of Practice (CoPs) lead by Facilitating Teachers, Kimberly Smith and Harry Claus.[12] Their stories illustrate different CoP configurations. On the one hand, Kimberly Smith is an FT who collaborated with 3 CTs from the same school to address a schoolwide problem of practice. On the other hand, Harry Claus is a multi-school FT who collaborated with 3 CTs from different schools to address a districtwide problem of practice. The case studies describe how both groups came together to develop a CoP and their experiences with the collaborative inquiry project. Despite the differences in their constitution and problems of practice, their stories resonate with similar themes of growth, empowerment, and collaboration towards achieving a common goal. Indeed, these themes could be found throughout all of the CoPs that embarked on this journey together.

Case Study 1: Kimberly Smith: 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade ELA CoP

Background/History

Kimberly Smith (a.k.a., Kim) is a 5th grade English/Language Arts (ELA) teacher at Creekside Elementary School. She has taught at Pitt County for 11 years and recently graduated from one of the *R3 Framework* Career Pathways pipeline programs, the Teacher Leadership Institute. Kim is classified as an "effective teacher" according to North Carolina's EVAAS teacher evaluation system and met the criteria for the Facilitating Teacher position. After learning that Creekside ES had 2 FT allotments, Kim decided to put her name "in the hat" and was selected for the position in the spring of 2017.

Joining Kim's CoP as CTs were her ELA colleagues, Betsy Register (3rd grade), Sarah Ruddock (4th grade), and Kenya Hardy (5th grade). These women were all motivated to join the CoP for the same reason to be a part of a collaborative group that would work together to find cross-grade solutions to improve students' reading. Put by Betsy, "I realized that we don't have time to meet and align our work and that is a problem. I knew that if we could come together and identify a starting place, we could increase reading scores. I wanted to be a part of that." Kenya added, "I've worked with groups of teachers in other schools and I missed that. I jumped at the opportunity. It got me outside of my 4 walls." Sarah agrees, "When Kim talked about it, I realized that I missed having a collaborative group."

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[12] They were selected to participate in the case study by the evaluation team, in consultation with DEEL staff because their CoPs showcased two different configurations. All members of their CoP agreed to participate and gave consent to use their real names.

Kim felt that her team was ahead of the game compared with other CoPs and was able to 'hit the ground running' at the beginning of the school year. She credits this to the collaborative and trusting relationships that she and her colleagues had built up over the year. She said, "I've known the teachers here for 11 years. I have at some point worked with all of them on some team. The trust that some FT's had to build with their teams was already in place with our team." Her CTs made similar comments such as, "It has been rewarding to collaborate with these teachers. They inspire me to be a better teacher."

Their CoP met 15 times throughout the school year, with near 100% attendance by the team members. Most of these meetings occurred after school, but two of the meetings were conducted off campus for a half-day, which was approved by their school administrator. The off-campus meetings were conducted in October and March. According to Kim, "What made it nice was that we were able to delve into collaborative inquiry cycle with the longer meeting...The time away from campus felt valued and honored. [In our minds] school [was] completely off our plate [during that time]." In other words, it allowed them to focus on their work without any distractions.

The Problem of Practice and Collaborative Inquiry Process

For Kim's team, the first few stages of the collaborative inquiry process that included refining their problem of practice, identifying a theory of causation, and a driving question (i.e., measurable research question), took approximately four months. Their original problem of practice focused on how to address students' low reading stamina and lack of motivation by providing high-interest books. However "As the team delved into the data (i.e., STAR and Imagination Station reports), we figured out that all fingers and the data suggested weak vocabulary. The data was screaming out at us once we were able to drill down tighter," said Kim. The CTs added, "We kept circling and realized that there were a lot of problems we couldn't fix. We kept focusing on the big stuff, like home life. Kim reminded us that we didn't have control over these things" and that "we needed to make a list of things that we could impact."

By January 2018 the team had whittled down the list and decided to focus on strategies to improve students' vocabulary. The group chose to implement guided small-group reading instruction utilizing lessons from the Imagination Station program. It is a program that includes instructional materials for each of the foundational components of reading, which was available and in use at the school but hadn't been tapped for vocabulary. They chose to use the teacher materials for guided reading with a targeted group of students who were in Tier 2 in vocabulary. These were students who were close to proficiency. According to Kim, the team liked the structured nature of the program: "Imagination Station materials are very good and lend themselves well to fidelity." They started with the vocabulary lessons but later included word analysis 3 to 5 times a week.

Reflecting back on the process, the team agreed that while they were anxious to quickly identify a theory of action, the time that was spent mining the data and reviewing the reading

research was not only important to find a viable solution to the problem of practice but was also important in building their confidence as a team. Their story can be echoed across many of the CoPs that also spent the first half of the school year or longer to collect data that would help them to refine their problem of practice and to develop a theory of action. Indeed, this process is meant to empower teachers by putting them in the driver's seat to work together and tackle common issues within their schools. "Many [of the teachers] are lifelong learners and want to know something new. The research piece has given them an avenue to problem-solve issues that they have seen that a system has tried to fix…it has given them a voice and ownership over their practice. It's not just empowerment that they get, it is transformative. They needed a vehicle and they needed the opportunity to address problems," said a Career Support Specialist who is a district-level coach to the FTs.

The evaluator observed the group in late April during a meeting to discuss recent data that had been collected after implementing their theory of action. Kim prepared for the meeting by displaying the 7 Norms of Collaboration, their working agreement, and the cycle of inquiry phases on poster board to serve as reminders to the group. The cycle of inquiry phases include the following.

- Activate and Engage: making predictions and assumptions about the data
- Explore and Discover: examining the data and looking for patterns
- Organize and Integrate: identifying causation and an action plan for moving forward given the new information

She opened the meeting with an activating strategy by asking the group to generate a keyword about the cycle of inquiry to help to bring back their knowledge of the cycle. After the group shared their strategy, they reviewed the 7 Norms of Collaboration and their working agreement to see if everyone was still on board. There was a strong affirmation from the group.

For this particular meeting, the group was making predictions and examining their February and May Istation and STAR data for their target groups. Kim asked if they wanted to make predictions on the data all at the same time or by grade. All agreed to a by-grade analysis. The team went through a cycle of making predictions, reviewing the actual data, and making statements about causation. Finally, each member identified a plan of action based on what she had learned and what they had discussed as a team. Overall, the group was pleased with their results. Throughout their discussion, they generated various questions for future consideration, which are bulleted below.

- Did exposure to vocabulary connect to fluency? The group wants to know if the increased focus on vocabulary has resulted in increased fluency. Early data seems to point in that direction.

- Can they loop students across grades to keep a target and control group? As students move on to the next grade, the team would like to see the target group stay together so

that they can track their progress over time. It will also permit them to tie outcomes to the theory of action.

▸ How should students be grouped for instruction? There were different ideas on the table which included ability-based grouping and personality-matching grouping.

▸ Should they consider a third data point (i.e., DRA)? The team contemplated the need for more data as they weren't sure if Istation and STAR were enough to get the best picture of student progress.

▸ How can they deliver a more balanced literacy approach? Ultimately, this process has taught the group that they need to include all components of foundational literacy skills into their instruction. They recognize that "we need to hit all of it. The way you teach it is not separate even though the data is separate."

Early Successes

Success for students was documented at all of the grade levels. The team was most pleased to have been able to move students out of Tier 3 (deemed severely below grade level) and increase the number of students in Tier 1 (on or above grade level). Specifically, the percentage of Tier 3 students decreased to less than 10% across the grade levels from February to April. In one grade, the percentage of Tier 3 students decreased from 32% to 9%. Conversely, the percentage of students who were on or above grade level expectations increased up to 16 percentage points across grades.

Moreover, the team believes that students took more ownership of their results. "The kids were cognizant that they weren't giving it their all. [We've] built up the culture by putting data into their hands and they take ownership," said one of the team members. Another added, "They [students] are reading the words and figuring out themselves and not relying on me. Now they know the strategies to attack and figure out the meaning of words." Finally, "The students ask, 'can I look at my data? Can I try again because I know that I can do better.' It's not me saying it, they are stepping up and taking ownership with what they are achieving."

It appears that the team has taken ownership of the results as well. This process has enabled them to experience success at professional and personal levels. For one, their views on using and interpreting data have grown in a positive direction, as demonstrated by the comments below.

▸ Betsy: We sit down and study the data and find new ways to use the data and how we are collecting it. It's deeper than the surface. I had never shared the data before. Sharing with my students helps them to take ownership. Taking the time to do that has helped them.

- Kenya: We all liked looking at the data but we didn't do it correctly. We didn't look at it in depth. I would run growth reports but I didn't dig deeper to see what was really going on.
- Sarah: Anytime that I looked at data, I always thought: what did I do wrong? With the cycle of inquiry, it took the emotion out. I could look at the data, identify an area, and come up with a solution...It took the guesswork out of the process.
- Kim: I learned in Cognitive Coaching that we always jump to the red and we really need to look at the positive. When we look at charts, let's look at the blue and not the red.

The initial results of their collaborative inquiry project have also empowered and inspired the team members to continue to try new instructional strategies. They believe that being on a team helps to keep them accountable to their goal of having a school-level impact, not just a classroom-level impact. Comments bulleted below provide supporting evidence for these themes.

- Kenya: This is a lot of what we implemented years before but we had moved away from it. I wanted to do it but I didn't want to be the only one doing more balanced literacy. But, now I feel more comfortable and I don't mind sharing my strategies with others.
- Betsy: I need to balance my instruction more and differentiate. I can't put them all in one mold.
- Kim: It changed my focus on teaching because I felt like I was teaching to the test which is comprehension. We need to teach the building blocks too because they impact comprehension….These ladies keep me accountable. You try a new strategy and it's easy to fall back on the old things. They inspire me to follow through.
- Sarah: Before this process, my brain moved too fast. I've learned to pause and paraphrase. For example, when a student is having a meltdown and then you paraphrase, it really calms them down. That's been powerful for me.

Summary

By all accounts, year one has been a success for Kim, Sarah, Kenya and Betsy. They cycled through all phases of the collaborative inquiry project and were proud to showcase positive student outcomes. Collectively, they look forward to starting fresh at beginning of the school year to see what they can accomplish in a full year as compared to only half a year. Armed with the successes of year one, the team moves into year two with more confidence and trust in the process. They are not looking for quick fixes. "We are trying to find a way to impact children. It's exhausting but a good tired," said Sarah.

Kenya adds, "I appreciate the opportunity to do something to have an impact outside my classroom without giving up my role as a teacher. Before, if you wanted to be a leader, you had to go back to school to be a principal. I'm a leader for teachers. This is where I belong."

Finally, Betsy closes out by saying, "Who do I say thank you to? This [has been] the highlight of my year. I feel that the more this takes off, it will really affect our culture."

Case Study 2: Harry Claus: Multi-school 6th Grade Social Studies

Background/History

Harry Claus is a 6th grade social studies teacher at EB Aycock Middle School. He was a Teacher Leadership Institute (TLI) participant and former Key BT who was a vocal advocate for middle school Social Studies in PCS. Seth Brown, Director of Educator Support and Leadership Development in the DEEL Office, heard about Claus's ideas and recruited him to be a Facilitating Teacher (FT) for a multi-school 6th grade social studies CoP.

Harry explained his perspective in his Live Binder[13], "Social Studies in the county, particularly at the middle school level, had no real consistency. There were no textbooks, no common resources other than a weekly newspaper." He believed that "Being a multi-school CoP would give us an opportunity to share our work in Social Studies in multiple buildings with multiple inputs from CoP members."

When Claus agreed to be an FT, however, he didn't know any prospective CTs among his colleagues at other schools. The three CTs that joined Claus in the CoP were either recruited by their principals or by the DEEL team. They represented three other PCS middle schools that varied in demographic and geographic indicators. The CTs are Jeffrey Bowman, Chicod Middle School; Lindsay Boylan, Hope Middle School; and Tonitia Langley, Wellcome Middle School. Per Harry, "Our passion for social studies keeps us focused." While all of the CTs said that the extra pay was an incentive for them to join the CoP, they were quick to add that they wanted to be involved in something that would positively affect change and/or that would allow them to connect with peers teaching social studies at other middle schools.

The CoP coalesced through its work over the course of the first year. The CoP members felt that they had developed a strong, respectful working group based on transparent communication and trust. Per Harry, "Part of what they talk about to FT members in our training for our CoP members is explaining the *why*. If you want buy-in, you have to explain why we are doing what we are doing. I tell them all the time; I try to be as transparent as possible. And, I try to let them know here is where it is coming from; here is the *why* we are going to do this."

It took some time to lay the groundwork for the problem of practice in order to create resources for middle school social studies teachers throughout the county. Harry described the first year in this way, "We are going slow to go fast. We have 3-4 more years. We haven't hit our goal but we are on the way." Other group members agreed that this "going slow to go fast" approach was effective.

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[13] Each CoP has a Live Binder where they keep an ongoing narrative of their work. Excerpts from the Live Binder may be edited for context and brevity.

The CoP met at least 14 times during the 2017-2018 school year, visiting each member's school at least once. Even though the CoP members came from geographically dispersed schools throughout the county, there was perfect attendance at every meeting.

The Problem of Practice and Collaborative Inquiry Process

The multi-school CoP members took some time to identify their own problem of practice: *Due to instructional gaps students are unmotivated to use informational text to construct sound arguments.* The problem of practice included a focus on literacy because, in Harry's words, "We talked about the huge impact that literacy has and that informational text is almost overload for a lot of these kids."

The group members felt very invested in the problem of practice they developed and didn't find that they needed to revise it, as was the case with some other CoPs in PCS. According to Lindsay, "I don't think our problem of practice has really changed that much because we really took a lot of time thinking about it and what we wanted it to be before we wrote it down." Tonitia put it this way, "We did take a long time to try to put our problem of practice together. It was very intentional; very deliberate."

Early in the school year and before looking at data, the group made predictions and assumptions that perhaps certain schools with traditionally higher test scores would be in a category all their own compared to schools with traditionally low test scores (per the CoP's live binder). After looking at the STAR Reading data and going through the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle, it was clear that although some schools had better data than others, all of the schools had students who could improve in reading and writing (School A had 20% less than proficient, School B had 45% less than proficient, School C had 22% less than proficient, and School D had 63% less than proficient).

The CoP members decided to collect samples of student written arguments to test their hypotheses. They experienced many obstacles to collecting student data. They were multi-school, they were all teaching different units, and they all went about presenting how to write arguments in a slightly different way. Because of these factors, they decided to create their own rubric to collect data on student responses, regardless of the content.

Each CoP member then had their students construct responses citing informational texts and primary sources. They brought these data back to the group and went through the Collaborative Inquiry Cycle again to analyze results. The data still showed that some students were unmotivated and did not turn in any work. But, for those that did turn in work, the group found that students simply needed more practice with writing and citing text.   Tonitia said, "Our whole process has been 'Let's try this, come back, what did we see? Let's make these changes and tack this on.'" Group discussions shifted to how lessons need to be built around how to cite, summarize, and elaborate on what was read while still holding an opinion or taking a side in argumentative writing.

Harry had received training in the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) the previous summer and believed that it might be a good framework for the curricular materials that the CoP wanted to create for middle school social studies. IDM is a C3 Teachers resource. According to its website (http://www.c3teachers.org/inquiry-design-model/), "IDM is a distinctive approach to creating curriculum and instructional materials that honors teachers' knowledge and expertise, avoids overprescription, and focuses on the main elements of the instructional design process as envisioned in the Inquiry Arc of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (2013). Unique to the IDM is the blueprint, a one-page representation of the questions, tasks, and sources that define a curricular inquiry."

Harry described the process of selecting IDM as the tool to address their action research question: **"**That is a strategy that I brought to the group that everyone seemed to be on board with, given our problem of practice looking at our data. We started out looking at reading levels of students and decided that we wanted something a little bit more. So, most of our work this year has dealt with dipping our feet in with IDM. At the end of the year, we decided on a specific one we could use at the beginning of the next year…I have been trying to do a mix of training them in IDM and also giving them examples as we go through."

Per the Live Binder, each CoP member designed an IDM Blueprint for planning lessons that poses a compelling question, complete with the Supporting Questions, Featured Sources, and Performance Tasks for each. At the following meeting, they completed a gallery walk to analyze each blueprint and used sticky tabs to advocate for what they felt were the strongest sources to address the compelling question. They compiled their findings into one blueprint by focusing on the sources/tasks that had the most sticky tabs on them.

By the end of the year, the CoP had created an easy to follow IDM blueprint entitled "Beginnings of Civilization". In order to share their work with other 6th grade social studies teachers, they adapted the IDM to include a Learning Focus Plan aligned with PCS requirements (e.g. "Compelling Questions" in IDM aligned with "Essential Questions" in Learning Focus). They introduced the resource at a district-wide special presentation at the end of the school year, which was well received. They hope to create several more IDMs in the 2018-2019 school year, including one focused on consistent annotation of non-fiction text.

The group also plans to continue to collect student data with this IDM blueprint in the 2018-2019 school year. Tonitia said, "The IDMs are kind of a quick snapshot for us to assess some data to what kinds of check-ins could we create. Hopefully, we will try it out with ourselves before we put it out there because we have got a state exam." Jeffrey offered, "We will still be collecting data and also going back and saying, 'What did this tell us about the process?' And if it is something constructive, you try to go from there and if it is not, then how would you change it to make it constructive?"

An evaluator observed the second to last meeting of the CoP for the 2017-2018 school year. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the final steps to completing the IDM before the

district-wide presentation and to reflect on the CoP's work in its initial year. Below is an overview of the meeting agenda.

- Review working agreements
- Inclusion activity: If you could have a superpower, what would it be?
- Updates/logistics/planning for presentation
- "Small fires" reflection activity on CoP work this year
- Closing activity: sentence scramble

The CoP's problem of practice, working agreements, and other group work were posted in the room. The group members agreed that no rules needed to be changed. They then proceeded to their inclusion activity. Harry asked the group what superpower they needed to be a good group member. CoP members responded that they needed to:

- see the future,
- be flexible ("We have done a lot of fixing."),
- turn back time (There are things that I would change, that is all part of reflection), and
- fly (because we are all at different schools).

The group discussed the logistics for their end-of-year presentation. They planned to spend more time on the actual presentation at their next and final group meeting for the school year, the following week.

The CoP members then sat in a circle, as if they were sitting around a small bonfire for their year-end reflection activity. Harry distributed a stack of 8 index cards with reflection questions handwritten on them. CoP members passed around the cards and answered the questions. As an example, Tonitia read the question "As you consider the close of the year, what successes have we had?" She answered, "You hit on it earlier, we are from 4 schools and at the end of day we have put aside aggravations in order to try to make 6th grade social studies better for the county. We keep it positive and keep it moving." After each question, Harry summarized the response before going on to the next group member.

As a summarizing activity, Harry asked each group member to "Write one word on a sticky note that you feel summarizes our work together this year." Each CoP member wrote a word and Harry asked the group to come up with a sentence using the words. The words group members came up with were: authentic, constructive, deliberate and holistic. The sentence the group created was, "Our group has been constructive in creating authentic and holistic resources to address our problem of practice; producing work that is authentic and identifying constructive strategies to address our problem of practice." The meeting then adjourned.

Unique Features

This CoP is unique because it is one of few multi-school CoPs. Furthermore, identifying their own problem of practice increased group members' investment in and understanding of the

problem. As previously indicated, the schools represented by CoP members are different geographically and demographically. But, members demonstrate their commitment to the work by showing up for each other every month. While they are aware of their differences, the data have shown them that their students share struggle in similar ways. Per Tonitia, "All of our schools are different…but for all of us to be experiencing the same thing was very unique so it all kind of goes back to literacy and trying to pull in those instructional gaps as best we could." Jeffrey said, "Although we had some differences, we tried to bring it together and say, 'Where can we try to create or do something from that point that would address all our issues and work for all of us?'" He added, "Coming from a multi-school perspective…I like it. And, I would encourage more of it—because it gives you the opportunity to see the challenges of other schools—to see the benefits or disadvantages that other schools have to deal with."

One CoP member felt that the work gained legitimacy because it was a collaborative effort across schools. Lindsay expressed it in this way, "Another thing that I really like, going back to our schools, we have got our CoP as our backup. It is like, we are not just trying this at this one school and it is 'sink or float' for this one school. Half the district is trying it."

Early Successes

The group members felt that the creation of an IDM was their chief early success, and one that could be built upon. For example, Lindsay said, "We are looking at how we are teaching the curriculum, too, and whether or not we want to move from timeline to more of a standard-based and conceptual model." Acknowledging that, "that would be down the line", she added, "We are hoping by the time we are finished, not only will we have a solid pacing guide and framework for teaching, but we will have resources that the teachers can use and we will have the data to back it up saying, 'This works.'" Harry noted that having research-based collaborative resources available will be helpful to new teachers; there is a lot of turnover among sixth grade social studies teachers.

As has been indicated throughout this case study, the CoP successfully brought together colleagues from different schools and laid the foundation for greater collaboration across schools, but, they were also reaching beyond social studies within the four middle schools. Three of the CoP members said that other teachers were showing interest in their work. Jeffrey said that he had created a dialogue with an ELA teacher at his school. "I shared some of the things the CoP was creating with him, like our argument response—the fact that we had a rubric…It was something he was doing with the writing portfolio…So it was not just something I was doing for social studies; it was addressing a bigger need." Harry said that not only had he shared what the CoP was doing with social studies colleagues that teach other grade levels in his school, but that FTs from other schools had also expressed interest in the work of this CoP. Tonitia even shared the problem of focus template and the IDM template with two university students that she was supervising, as a resource that they could use for planning lessons. Through this sharing, CoP members saw that their work had the potential for far greater impact throughout the county and even beyond. Lindsay summed it up in this way, "Hopefully it works

and it blossoms out and we get the district doing it. I know every district in the state has something going. But, if it is really successful, what is to stop it at the district level?"

Summary

After one year, the multi-school 6th grade social studies CoP had made considerable strides in becoming a cohesive group. CoP members participated in several cycles of collaborative inquiry to determine their problem of practice. They employed the Inquiry Design Model to create a resource for teachers across the district on the Beginnings of Civilization. They have plans to create several more IDMs in the 2018-2019 school year. At the same time, they will continue to collect data and revise the IDM blueprint they already created. The CoP members believe that these resources have potential applications across disciplines and district-wide.

VII. Year One Recommendations for PCSs' R3 Framework

Measurement Incorporated offers the following set of recommendations after reviewing the data collected during year one of the *R3 Framework* initiative. The recommendations are derived from findings that were presented in the quarterly briefs, annual report, and feedback provided by district and school staff who participated in the evaluation.

Grant-level Considerations

▸ Continue to utilize multiple methods/avenues for communicating the value and benefits of the teacher leadership pathways. This might require direct contact with teachers and/or more guidance provided to administrators on how to communicate the specific ways in which the pathways support teaching and learning in their schools.

▸ Leverage the expertise of FTs by providing district-wide opportunities for them to share and showcase their collaborative inquiry projects with other teachers. This could be provided through professional development sessions and/or creating a compendium of successful strategies in a publication, to name a few.

▸ Re-examine the stipend for Collaborating Teachers to ensure that the amount is commensurate with their level of involvement and contribution. This would slightly lessen the disparity between CT and FT compensation, while still acknowledging and rewarding the leadership role played by FTs.

▸ Continue to recognize that teacher leaders need a different skill set when leading adults than when leading students. Strong teachers may need support in non-instructional topics such as meeting facilitation, having difficult conversations, or providing feedback. Continue to provide support in these areas to ensure healthy and productive CoPs.

▸ Consider the role instructional coaches, APs, and other school-level leaders currently play or should play in working with CoPs and the *R3 Framework.* More clarity on roles and responsibilities will help to ensure copasetic relationships among the different leaders.

▸ While the DEEL Office should continue to honor some administrator autonomy for the level of oversight and support provided to the teacher leadership positions, more guidance and clearer expectations would ensure greater consistency to the model and better sustainability over time.

CoP Considerations

- Create a protocol or standard form for streamlining the data results to make aggregation across the CoPs easier; for the purposes of summarizing outcomes for the external evaluation.

- While some CoPs are using comparison groups already, encourage all CoPs to use a comparison group (e.g., school comparisons, norm-referenced comparisons, longitudinal data, control groups, etc.), where feasible, to make a stronger case for the effectiveness of the strategies implemented.

- Create a timeline for the anticipated completion of the collaborative action research project phases, using year one as a baseline, to monitor progress and identify groups that may be in need of more support and/or intervention.

- Provide opportunities for FTs who have similar problems of practice to meet and/or exchange ideas and strategies.

Appendix A

The evaluation of PCSs' *R3 Framework* is being conducted by MI's *Program Evaluation and School Improvement Services* division. The study uses a systems-based framework to guide the evaluation questions and methodology. It posits that the effectiveness of a given program is a function of how it is implemented and the resulting change in organizational and instructional practices. The model further assumes that both program implementation and impact are influenced by certain contextual factors, such as characteristics of schools and districts, as well as program-related factors. Quarterly reports submitted to PCS in January, April, and August provided an assessment of the *R3 Framework* implementation and contextual factors. The annual report focused on the initial outcomes of the initiative.

The data collection activities for the annual report included a complimentary blend of qualitative and quantitative strategies to increase the credibility of the findings.

Qualitative data collection activities used in year one are bulleted below.

- Site visits to four schools that included individual interviews with administrators (n=4) and focus groups with Career Pathways Model teacher participants (n=25). The schools were selected due to the relatively high number of Career Pathways Model teacher participants. Site visits were conducted in April and May of 2018.
- Individual interviews with 9 FTs that were conducted onsite in November 2017.
- Review of 51 "Live Binders", which included a repository of shared work in progress from the CoPs at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

Quantitative data collection activities that were conducted in year one are bulleted below.

- The North Carolina Working Conditions Survey: This survey is administered every two years to all teachers throughout the state. MI, in partnership with DEEL staff, requested and obtained the 2014 and 2018 datasets for PCS from the NC Department of Education in September 2018. The 2014 dataset included responses from 1,355 teachers at 35 schools. The 2018 dataset included responses from 1,724 teachers at 35 schools.
- Fall Teacher Leader Survey: The survey was administered to Key BT and TLI participants in the Fall/Winter of 2017. The survey was completed by 108 of 234 participants, yielding a 46% response rate.
- Friday Institute Surveys (Lead Teacher and Teacher Surveys): The surveys were administered in the spring of 2018 as part of a state-level evaluation of the Teacher Compensation Model grant. MI obtained data from the survey, with permission from the Friday Institute, in June 2018. The Lead Teacher Survey was completed by 57 FTs and the Teacher Survey was completed by 127 CTs.
- Teacher retention data was obtained from PCSs' Human Resources Department from March, 2014 through March, 2018.