

R3 Framework Evaluation Brief



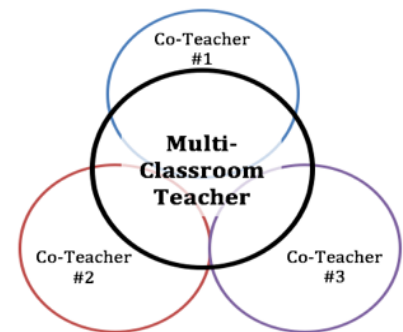
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In the fall of 2018, Pitt County Schools launched the last of the teacher leadership positions under the R3 Framework, the Multi-Classroom Teacher (MCT). MCTs are defined as master teachers¹, as evidenced by classroom observation and student performance data, who

If I do the best job that I can to really be a mentor, then I am ultimately helping more students...I am helping the other classes that the Co-T teaches, too—and her. And I am helping all of the students that she is going to impact later... This job is not just helping kids, this job is teaching grownups. –MCT

co-teach across multiple classrooms with other teachers (a.k.a. Co-Teachers) and apprentice them in the art and science of highly effective instruction. MCTs are able to extend their expertise and influence to benefit more students beyond the walls of a single classroom by focusing on two to three teachers and working in depth with them on a daily basis through modeling, co-teaching, and reflection. The position is filled for a three-year period.

This edition of the *R3 Framework Evaluation Brief* summarizes information gathered from interviews and focus group discussions with a sample of MCT and Co-T participants at schools selected by DEEL staff. These descriptive, qualitative data were collected over the course of three days in mid-December 2018. As shown in **Table 1** (following page), a total of 26 participants – 24 instructional staff and two principals – from seven schools contributed information, in either a one-on-one interview format or facilitated focus group discussions.



The *R3 Framework Evaluation Brief* is designed to provide Pitt County Schools (PCS) with “real-time” data that is collected as part of Measurement Incorporated’s external evaluation of the R3 Framework. The reports present key findings on the development, rollout, and implementation of the various elements of the R3 Framework for the purpose of informing continuous improvement efforts. Outcome findings are summarized in annual end-of-year reports, which also include a comprehensive set of data findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

¹ As described on the DEEL website (<https://successforeverychild.com/multi-classroom-teachers>)

Of the eight MCT groups interviewed (two groups were at one school), five focused on ELA and three on Math. Three of the groups were at elementary schools; three at middle schools, one at a high school, and one group included a middle school and a high school.

Table 1
Interview Participants

		N
Multi-Classroom Teachers (MCTs)		8
Co-Teachers (Co-Ts)		16
Principals		2
<i>Subject Area</i>	English Language Arts (ELA)	5
	Math	3
<i>School Level</i>	Elementary School (ES)	3
	Middle School (MS)	3
	High School (HS)	1
	Mixed MS & HS	1

Findings

Qualitative analyses were conducted on the interview and focus group data to identify common themes around six areas of focus. The areas of focus include:

- Participant Identification
- Professional Development and Planning Time
- Coaching/Shared Leadership
- Instruction
- Teacher Retention
- Ongoing Support for MCTs/Co-Ts

For each of the six areas the following is provided; a description of what is working, lessons learned/areas for improvement, and a recommendation for the future.

Participant Identification

In the spring of 2018, school administrators, along with School Improvement Teams, submitted requests to the Division of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership (DEEL) Office to fill an MCT position(s) in their schools based on content area(s) of need. After receiving approval, schools solicited potential participants. While teachers could apply to be an MCT on their own, administrators also encouraged qualified teachers to apply. Around the same time, administrators identified Co-Ts who would team up with the MCT(s). DEEL reviewed applications and forwarded those who were initially qualified to principals, then school-level teams, comprised of (at minimum) the principal and all Co-Ts, who conducted interviews and selected a final candidate to recommend to DEEL. Upon verification that the candidate met all

qualification criteria, and verification that all Co-Ts had signed a statement indicating they had both participated in the interview and were willing to work with the MCT, the candidate was approved for hiring.

What is working

Co-Ts who had prior knowledge of, or a hand in the selection of the MCT, demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the process. As one said, “I would have to share a classroom with this person. I wanted to make sure that I knew the person and that our personalities would work.” Another Co-T described the selection process this way, “We said that we were interested if [the MCT selected] would do it.” The MCT added, “I was interested but didn’t want to go forward with it until we all agreed as a group.” Co-Ts at another school described the interview process as fun. “We were able to be more open about it because [the prospective MCT] was from our school so we could ask questions that were more school-related and (discuss) some of the problems that we’ve seen. [The prospective MCT] was able to give us an answer...That helped a lot with the uncertainty and how this was going to work with co-teaching.”

Lessons learned/Areas for improvement

Some of the schools experienced fluctuations in teaching staff in the late spring/early summer, which is not uncommon. Consequently, some Co-Ts were in place when PD and planning time were offered to MCT groups in June, while others received notice over the summer or when they signed their contract papers at the beginning of the school year. Co-T(s) who joined after the summer had to catch up on important early steps in the process that they had missed.

Recommendation

Ensure that MCTs (and/or their coaches or the DEEL Office as necessary) support Co-Ts that missed early PD and planning time.

Professional Development and Planning Time

Three days of Professional Development (PD) were offered to MCTs and Co-Ts in June 2018, which included an overview of the roles and responsibilities of each position as well as co-planning and co-teaching strategies and approaches. MCTs also received ongoing PD over the course of the school year in Cognitive CoachingSM, Situational Leadership and coach skill refinement.

The PD was followed by 40 hours of paid, collaborative planning time prior to the start of the school year. The teams could use common planning time during the school year when it didn’t conflict with other tasks.

What is working

Participants generally felt pleased with the PD that they received and agreed that it prepared them for their roles. At least one group of Co-Ts who missed initial training said that they benefited from the make-up PD session provided by the DEEL Office. Moreover, participants felt that the initial planning time was invaluable and helped them get off to a good start in the fall. One Co-T put it this way, “It was great and it was a huge incentive for us to actually plan. We got a lot done this summer.” Another said, “During the summer planning, we pounded it out. We had great conversations and we shared resources and ideas.”

Lessons learned/Areas for improvement

While valuable, PD for MCTs in this initial year was time consuming and at times disrupted the flow of co-teaching. For their part, Co-Ts generally felt prepared to co-teach, but some wanted a refresher later in the year. MCTs were in favor of providing Co-Ts with more PD.

Lack of sufficient, dedicated planning time during the school year was by far the most common concern voiced by MCTs and Co-Ts. In general, MCTs who worked with Co-Ts across grades did not share planning time. For the groups that did have common planning time, however, time was often spent on other things such as PBIS or grade-level PLCs. In other words, there were other priorities during their planning time. In addition to the lack of dedicated planning time for their team, in particular, what little time they did have was often spent doing other tasks such as arrival/dismissal duty, other meetings (SIT), etc. Furthermore, in some schools there wasn't a place for the group to meet. Instead, participants said planning occurred when they caught each other in the hallway, after school, via text or on a shared Google doc. One put it this way, “Planning time together is hard. We try to do it two times a week. We do a lot of meeting in the hallways or text messages.” An MCT said it would be useful to have one day of dedicated planning once a month.

Recommendations

The investment in extensive PD for MCTs in this initial year should pay off in future years when less PD will be needed. Consider whether a brief refresher PD course would benefit Co-Ts.

Acknowledging the many factors that go into creating a schedule, MCTs and Co-Ts would benefit from more time for their group to plan, share, and reflect on their co-teaching strategies and lessons. For example, dedicated mid-year planning time would allow MCTs and their Co-Ts to focus on the second half of the school year by examining student data and making mid-course corrections as needed. Administrators could be encouraged to protect planning time and minimize disruptions to the extent possible.

Coaching/Shared Leadership

A primary goal of the MCT position is to enable master teachers to coach other teachers and improve those teachers' skill level. First and foremost, the MCT must enter the relationship with a Co-T with respect and humility in order to foster a productive environment. Pairs must learn to share classroom leadership, acknowledge room for personal growth, and use reflection as a tool for instructional growth.

What is working

Across the board, the MCTs and Co-Ts interviewed showed mutual respect for each other. MCTs, through their training and perhaps their own intuition, knew that they would not be accepted if they did not lead with respect. One said, "I purposely communicate that [the Co-Ts] are the boss and I'm more like the step-parent. I don't want to take over their idea of how they want to teach. I try to mold what I do to how they want to do it." Mutual respect is the cornerstone of successful pairings.

In terms of leading the classroom, MCT/Co-T teams often described an easy "back and forth flow" between them. For example, one MCT said this of a Co-T, "We have a natural flow. We found some things to work on and we constantly reflect. We talk about what is working and not working and we tweak." MCTs/Co-Ts also spoke of the collaborative approach they used, beginning with planning the lesson and carrying over into its delivery. "[The Co-T] and I start by writing the lessons, we pick the parts and identify who is doing what. For example, one of us will do the activating strategy and the other will do the content. If I go over the instructional passage one week then she will do it next week."

Across schools visited, many Co-Ts talked about their professional growth over the first few months of this school year. One said, "Just having another adult in the room, most of the time will make you stand up straight and be more aware, but definitely someone who is a better teacher, who has great scores, ideas and stuff to offer me—that makes me even want more and want to do more and show her more. It makes me prepare—it keeps me on my toes."

At the same time, MCTs were clearly expanding their teaching skills as well. In addition to developing their leadership and coaching skills, they felt that they were becoming better teachers. One MCT said, "The Co-T brings a whole lot more to the table. I was stuck in a rut." Another said, "The [Co-Ts] are two very different types of teachers. It's been interesting for me to figure out how to blend my style with their styles. They also know about resources that I don't know about."

Reflection is central to the teacher growth process. While MCT/Co-T pairs often struggled to find time for reflection, when they did, the payoffs were substantial. As described by one MCT, "I think we might have had an 'aha' moment last week when I was trying to practice my coaching and I asked a question, 'What kind of teacher do you want to be? Do you want to be the teacher that just teaches to *those* kids or do you want to be the teacher who makes *that* kid comfortable enough that he feels like he can grow?' I was like, 'There is not a wrong answer;

but who do you want to be?' ...She really sat there for a minute and I could tell that she was thinking. And she was like, 'I want to be the teacher that helps him grow.'"

Lessons learned/Areas for improvement

Great strides have been made in a short time and successful coaching is already in place in many schools visited. At the same time, these coaching relationships are a work in progress and are dependent on a variety of factors; therefore, they need ongoing monitoring and support.

Recommendation

Continue to mentor MCTs in coaching and provide a sounding board for them. The DEEL Office should keep an open door of communication with both MCTs and Co-Ts and troubleshoot if any problems crop up.

Instruction

Improved instruction is a major secondary goal of the MCT position. Co-teaching is intended to strengthen Co-Ts' ability to better differentiate instruction, provide more individualized attention in the classroom, and use student data more effectively to produce better lessons for students. This will help Co-Ts master the skills that are expected of all teachers in PCS.

What is working

Increased instructional differentiation - Several of those interviewed spoke about specific instances when they were better able to differentiate instruction for students because there were two teachers in the classroom. For example, one MCT said, "There are times when our lower (level), more interactive kids are really trying to struggle to work a problem out and [the Co-T] is so focused on them and they are starting to make all of these connections and I can look and see the other kids that are like, 'I understood it ten minutes ago!' So I go over to them and I am like, 'Skip on down to this part. Knock these out—how fast can you do it? I will check your work.' Or 'Let's do this in your head.' Because I know what kind of thinker they are so I can kind of challenge them in a different way. But we are meeting the needs of all kinds of kids so much more."

Individualized student attention - The Co-T in the scenario above described the way this work allowed for individual attention to be directed at those most in need, "I have a really big heart for kids who are at the very, very bottom. And what I found is [the MCT] has an extreme talent for watering plants—in other words, kids that already have something to work with, ... and bringing it to the next level (with them)...I have been able to 'pour into' the kids who have nothing at the moment and I have been able to bring them to a middle ground."

Expanded repertoire of instructional strategies and techniques - Co-Ts were expanding their skill set of instructional strategies and techniques as a result of their experiences with the MCT. For

example, one MCT spoke about a Co-T using the game-based learning platform *Kahoot!* for the first time to create a quiz for the class.

Focused use of student data - Several MCTs were examining student data with their Co-Ts to help them better understand individual students' needs and to tailor instruction. According to one MCT, "With the freshmen we did a lot with their EVAAS data and their projected scores, because we have the exams coming up. So we did individual conferences with them—where they were and where they are going, if they can get there. So we have looked at their data quite a bit."

In fact, while MCTs and Co-Ts appreciated the opportunity to show student growth over the course of three years, some were confident that measurable student growth would be demonstrated at the end of the very first semester. In one MCT's words, "I feel very confident that if we are strategic about it, that all of us will see *green* if not higher growth. Granted, I have been told that it is a three-year process and we are not expecting to see results right away, but we are math teachers, we are results-oriented people. Results drive our decision-making, so if we put in a really good-hearted effort and it doesn't work, I want to know to do something different next semester, I don't want to wait to try something new."

Refined delivery of lessons - Finally, Co-Ts were able to refine a lesson after the first time it was co-taught and before teaching it to subsequent classes. For example, one Co-T said, "I have [the MCT] at the end of the day and because we all teach the same lesson, the MCT has seen it twice before coming to me—he has already seen it play out and how it was received by the other students. So he can talk with me about how we can beat it so that they don't have that misconception first. How can we say it in a different way or present it in a different order so that the students don't get lost?"

Lessons learned/Areas for improvement

While some MCTs reported that they are examining student data with their Co-Ts, some MCTs feel that the lack of time and/or Co-Ts' inexperience with the data prevents them from using it to better inform instruction. In addition, students in co-taught classrooms sometimes attempt to play one teacher off of the other. However, the MCTs/Co-Ts quickly learned how to manage this student behavior.

Recommendation

Acknowledge that big strides have already been made in instructional practice in some co-teaching partnerships. Encourage MCTs and Co-Ts to use mid-year student data for planning instruction for the second half of the year. Look for ways to share the instructional gains being made in some partnerships, or otherwise shore up support for those who are struggling.

Teacher Retention

The ultimate goal of the teacher leadership initiatives that comprise the R3 Framework is to increase teacher retention and thereby improve student instruction and performance. The MCT initiative has the potential to retain teachers at both ends of the career spectrum from first year BTs to seasoned professionals.

What is working

Some MCTs were paired with Beginning Teachers (BTs) who were in their first few years of teaching. MCTs saw great potential to positively influence early career teachers through co-teaching, thus ultimately retaining these newer teachers.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were MCTs and Co-Ts who felt that this initiative was a welcome change of pace and a career lifeline. Several late career teachers were actively considering retirement when this opportunity arose. One MCT said, “I had the paperwork to retire.” and added that, “The new leadership position has kept three MCTs who would have retired. There is not much out there for you to do in education after you get to a certain point.” An experienced Co-T said, “If I had not had [the MCT in my class] this year...I probably would have looked for a way out already. [The MCT] has been my saving grace. She has made me care enough about staying even though we have got to push the test—she understands the other side of what I do and what I care about is just as important.”

Lessons learned/Areas for improvement

The MCT model has benefits for early and late career teachers. These partnerships have applications that can eventually reach more classrooms district-wide. Furthermore, according to those interviewed, the MCT initiative has already increased teacher retention in PCS.

Recommendations

Continue to support existing MCT pairs and allow these growth opportunities to challenge teachers to grow regardless of the stage of their career.

Ongoing Support for MCTs/Co-Ts

While MCT groups have been set up for success, ongoing support is crucial to sustain that success. This support may come from a variety of sources including school administration, peers and the DEEL Office.

What is working

Administrators played a key role in identifying the right people to be MCTs and Co-Ts in most schools. Supportive administrators seemed to be knowledgeable and accessible and at the same time hands-off. One Co-T quoted the principal as saying, “I am going to introduce [the Co-

T position] to you and then I am going to let you think about it and then I am going to tell you more.’ That is how [the principal] handled it with us.” This gradual introduction improved the Co-T’s level of buy-in for the role.

Peer support is important as well. One MCT reported that he had initiated an informal group for MCTs to support one another. The group had already met a couple of times to discuss their work. According to the MCT, “It’s been great to learn from one another.” MCTs also experienced support from each other—formally and informally—at PD events throughout the school year.

As with other R3 Framework initiatives, most participants felt well supported by the DEEL office. In addition to offering PD and resources, DEEL Career Pathway Specialists (CPSs) served as coaches for MCTs. One Co-T said, “Once we were in touch with the DEEL office and they were sending us stuff and we were going to meetings and workshops this summer, the communication has been great. They sent us, ‘How are you doing? Do you need anything?’ We each have our own assigned person there that we can talk to.”

Lessons learned/Areas for improvement

Co-Ts need more opportunities to connect with each other. When asked what additional support was needed, one Co-T said, “The only thing would be to have that time with Co-Ts when we are all supposed to be there and we are all supposed to do something—whether it be filling out a survey (or something else), then talk about it.” The Co-T described options to meet off campus in more relaxed settings. Another said, “The Co-Teacher position is such a new role for most of us to play, that I do think it would be beneficial for us to have something just for us.”

Recommendation

Facilitate networking and/or social events where Co-Ts can connect with each other. Online sharing could supplement, but not replace actual events. Consider if these events could piggyback on dedicated planning or PD time.

Conclusion

Overall, the interviews conducted in December indicated that the MCT teacher leadership position is off to an excellent start. MCT/Co-T pairings are already improving instructional practice in classrooms throughout the district. Virtually all participants interviewed felt like they were growing as professionals, learning new techniques, and finding ways to share a classroom with another teacher. Several teacher participants said that they, and/or other participants they knew, did not retire or leave the district because of this initiative, suggesting that teacher retention is already improving.

When teachers’ skill level is increased, there is a huge potential payoff in terms of student growth. It may take time for this growth to be evidenced in improved test scores, which is why

the three-year time frame is appropriate. However, some participants voiced expectations that they would see student success as early as the end of the first semester of this school year.

Struggle is part of the growth process. Virtually all MCT pairings struggled to find enough planning time. MCT groups at two schools didn't feel that the model represented an authentic co-teaching model. A number of participants said that they want (or in the case of one MCT, had already created) opportunities to network with others who were in the same role (MCTs or Co-Ts) across the district.

Continued monitoring, support and minor tweaks should assure that participants feel well supported and maximize their chances for success. In a short time, this initiative has already come a long way in supporting and growing both teachers and teacher leaders in Pitt County. Combined with other R3 Framework initiatives, it represents a big step forward in terms of keeping good teachers in classrooms in Pitt County Schools.

Measurement Incorporated was contracted by Pitt County Schools to conduct a 5-year, independent evaluation of the R3 Framework. For further information about this brief or about the evaluation, please contact Dr. Shelly Menendez at (630) 857-9592 or smenendez@measinc.com.