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# A Study of Chicago New Teacher Center Induction Coaching in Chicago Public Schools: 2009-2010

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Conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research

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## Executive Summary

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Unlike practitioners in most other professions, first-year teachers are presented with the same responsibilities, expectations, and high standards as the 20-year veteran teacher next door. With no previous experience, novice teachers today are expected to help every student achieve the highest standards that policymakers have ever set, regardless of school resources, previous student experiences, and instructional support provided by principal and district leadership. To support new teachers during this challenging transition to the profession, schools and districts across the country often establish induction supports such as professional development, mentorship, and/or coaching.

This report describes the findings of a research study designed to examine how the Chicago implementation of the New Teacher Center (NTC) induction model supports teachers who are new to the profession. As part of this model, CNTC provides beginning teachers (BTs) in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) with an individual coach who acts as an expert colleague.<sup>1</sup> To support their work with BTs, coaches receive extensive professional development that focuses on developing productive and supportive relationships, understanding professional standards, collecting and analyzing observation data, using formative assessment strategies (including instructive, collaborative, and facilitative approaches), using student work and data to guide instruction, creating learning opportunities for adults, and building leadership capacity and skills.

Beyond the usual induction program goals of retention and increased teacher effectiveness, the NTC model emphasizes practices that help new teachers internalize habits of mind that include inquiry and reflection. Providing BTs with the tools, confidence, and experience necessary to enact this reflective inquiry-oriented approach without the support of a coach – as “autonomous professionals” – is therefore a key goal in the CNTC approach to supporting new teachers. By learning to work through the inquiry cycle with their coach, BTs not only improve their own instructional practice but also learn how to work, learn and reflect collaboratively, leading to improved student learning as well as improved professional environments.

The research study described here looked specifically at the ways in which coaches supported BTs toward becoming autonomous professionals, recognizing that this is an intermediate goal with respect to the larger goal of improving teacher practice and student learning. The study was designed as a formative evaluation to inform the organizational knowledge and decision making at the Chicago New Teacher Center, and as such, the findings are reflective and descriptive. Although the salient themes are

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<sup>1</sup> Eligibility for CNTC coaching was determined per CPS policy. As CPS’s lead induction provider at the time of this study, CNTC supported teachers who were new to the teaching profession and who were not supported by a pipeline partner (e.g., Teach for America, Chicago Teaching Fellows.) While this sometimes included teachers who were new to the district or school (e.g., a teacher who had 0.5 years of experience teaching in a suburban district was eligible for CNTC coaching), being new to the district or school did not automatically qualify a teacher for induction support. During the 2008-2009 school year, CNTC supported new teachers in two Areas of the CPS district. During the 2009-10 school year, CNTC scaled-up their induction services to support all eligible new teachers in the district.

drawn from the specific experiences of CNTC coaches and their BTs, they can provide insights to a larger coaching and induction audience.

Findings described in detail in the report are based on seven months of extensive data collection during the 2009-2010 school year, focusing on eight second- and third-year CNTC coaches and 16 of their first-year teachers. The research team conducted extended interviews with coaches twice during the year, with BTs once during the year, and observed three BT-coach interactions complete with debrief sessions with each participant (a total of 48 interactions across all 16 BT-coach dyads). In addition, the research team conducted a one-time observation of 29 classrooms taught by new teachers in spring 2010. In March 2010, researchers also reviewed records of the electronic logs that coaches used to document their meetings with BTs.

Three research questions guided the work and help to frame the findings.

### **1. What factors affect how coaches support beginning teachers?**

Coaching is complex and multi-faceted. Evidence from our data reveals that five interconnected factors are at play when working toward the goal of BTs becoming autonomous professionals: BT capacity, coach capacity, the BT-coach relationship, the focus of BT-coach interactions, and the larger contexts of school and program. The factors and how they relate to the goal of autonomy are described at length throughout the report.

### **2. How do coaches support the practice of beginning teachers?**

Coaches support new teachers through the *strategies* that they employ and the *relationships* that they build. We describe the strategies and relationships separately, but we also highlight that the two are complex and inter-related. For example, the strategy or approach that a coach chooses to support a BT reflects the current state of the BT-coach relationship, while at the same time this strategy has implications for the success of their future relationship.

Chapter 2 describes the Art of Coaching and provides examples of coaches implementing strategies that they deem will best meet the needs of the BTs, while also taking into account the larger context. We provide evidence that coaching a BT toward autonomy happens incrementally and that there can be ebb and flow in the BT progress. Sometimes BTs are moving toward autonomy, but sometimes they face stumbling blocks. The coach's job is to navigate this ebb and flow. Improving a BT's practices happens incrementally, sometimes in pieces and in spurts, or at times in more than one area simultaneously.

Consistent with the literature and our expectations, the data reveal overwhelming evidence that the BT-coach relationship is central. Within this general context, Chapter 3 identifies three interactive phases that help to articulate how the relationship supports or impedes a coach's efforts to move the BT toward autonomy: (1) establishing introductory relationships, (2) engaging in the coaching process, and (3) maintaining momentum through focus and consistency. Once again, the BTs capacity, the coach's capacity, and the context play a large role.

### **3. How are the goals and activities of CNTC coaches aligned with the needs of beginning teachers?**

Coaches in our sample used flexibility and differentiation to meet the needs of their BTs. Coaches adapted their support to the individual needs of BTs in a specific context at a specific time, taking into account both prior BT experience and introductory needs as well as what each BT needed to move forward over time. Our observations of 29 classrooms revealed a number of areas that beginning teachers struggle with, especially in areas of instructional practice; our observations of dyads revealed that coach-BT pairs addressed most of them. However, the BTs in our sample expressed and displayed needs that were quite individualized and specific, and coaches differentiated their support accordingly, often focusing on one or two of the most pressing needs, even if there were others that also needed attention. Chapter 4 describes these findings in more detail.

## Introduction

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The traditional “sink-or-swim” approach to new teacher induction has high costs for new teachers, their students and the school system by contributing to high levels of teacher attrition and lower levels of teacher effectiveness (NCTAF, 1996). Nearly half of all new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years and schools have had to bear both the financial burden of high teacher turnover and its negative impact on student learning (Ingersoll, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000). In urban school districts, where new teachers are disproportionately placed in poor and low-performing schools, this issue is compounded (DeAngelis & Pressley, 2007; Peske & Haycock, 2006; NCES, 2000). To solve this problem, new teacher mentoring and induction programs have been identified as critical means of supporting and retaining new teachers and have grown rapidly in the last two decades. More than 80 percent of new teachers participate in some kind of mentoring or induction program, up from 40 percent in 1990 (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). One induction program – the Chicago New Teacher Center (CNTC) – is the focus of this report.

CNTC is the Chicago office of the New Teacher Center (NTC), which began its work more than 20 years ago and is currently a national leader in the area of new teacher development. Following a belief that beginning teachers need mentors who are skilled in helping them develop and reflect on their practice, CNTC supports beginning teachers in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) by providing each beginning teacher (BT) with an individual coach who acts as an expert colleague, implementing a non-evaluative set of supports over the course of a two-year relationship. Coaches do not have classroom responsibilities of their own, so their primary focus can be supporting the work of new teachers.

This report presents the findings from a detailed examination of how the Chicago implementation of the NTC induction model supported beginning teachers during the 2009-10 school year. The research study described here looked specifically at the ways in which coaches supported BTs toward becoming autonomous professionals, recognizing that this is an intermediate goal with respect to the larger goal of improving teacher practice and student learning. We refer to the goal of creating autonomous professionals to convey the positive, self-sufficient, and continually developing aspects associated with autonomy. The study was designed as a formative evaluation to inform the organizational knowledge and decision making at the Chicago New Teacher Center, and as such, the findings are reflective and descriptive.

To facilitate progress toward the goal of BT autonomy, coaches receive extensive professional development over the course of their three-year service including three-day-long Mentor Academies (meeting four times each for two years), monthly Mentor Forums with fellow coaches and monthly Peer Coaching meetings with a partner coach. These trainings and supports focus on developing productive and supportive relationships, understanding professional standards, collecting and analyzing observation data, using student work and data to guide instruction, creating learning opportunities for adults, and building leadership capacity and skills. In addition, CNTC provides coaches with Lead Coaches who work with teams of coaches to focus on individual coach needs and development. CNTC also

provides resources to support the work of coaching. Throughout the course of the school year, coaches use carefully designed formative assessment tools to guide their mentoring and interactions with beginning teachers.

The NTC Formative Assessment System (FAS) is the foundation of the work of coaches and BTs and consists of three essential elements – standards, criteria, and evidence (NTC, 2006).

- The professional *standards* are based upon Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*,<sup>2</sup> which uses four domains and 22 components to describe performance across all aspects of teaching.
- The framework is used as the *criteria* by which a BT and coach can compare the BT’s practice to an agreed-upon rubric and set goals for improvement.
- The FAS Tools structure the *evidence* coaches collect about a BT’s developing skills, and the Formative Assessment Inquiry Cycle of plan-teach-reflect structures how coaches and BTs approach their work together.

CNTC coach trainings are based on the work of Costa and Garmston (1998) and their influence plays a large role in CNTC’s emphasis on independent learning. Following a meta-cognitive approach, coaches use questioning strategies to work through ideas by planning, reflecting, and problem-solving with their BTs. Coaches take an individualized approach to all BTs, incorporating knowledge about new teacher development, school and district context, relationship building strategies, accountability requirements, personality differences, and the constantly changing nature of teachers, students, families, schools, and neighborhoods.

Beyond the usual induction program goals of retention and increased teacher effectiveness, the NTC model emphasizes practices that help new teachers internalize “habits of mind that include inquiry and reflection.” This includes not explicitly directing BT improvement, but inquiring with them about their practice and modeling expertise to facilitate learning (Moir & Hanson, 2009). This inquiry-oriented learning approach cultivates BTs who are reflective practitioners and are able to continuously improve both their own practice and the practice of their larger school communities. By learning to work through the inquiry cycle with their coach, BTs not only improve their own instructional practice but also learn how to work, learn and reflect collaboratively, which in turn leads to improved student learning as well as improved professional environments.

CNTC’s formal partnership with CPS began in 2006, with coaches focusing their services in two areas of the district, and expanding slowly over time.<sup>3</sup> In the 2009-10 school year, CNTC went to scale in Chicago, hiring 36 first-year coaches to supplement the existing 26 second- and third-year coaches in order to provide coaching supports to 1,081 first- and second-year teachers across the city. Despite strong efforts to plan and begin at the start of the school year, coaching during the 2009-10 school year got off to a slow start. Hampered by the unavailability of information from CPS about where new teachers were

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<sup>2</sup> The Danielson framework was being piloted as the emerging framework for teacher evaluation in CPS during the time of the study.

<sup>3</sup> “Areas” in CPS are similar to sub-districts. Each has an Chief Area Officer (CAO) with a staff dedicated to the needs of that Area.



located in schools across the city, coaches went from school to school, introducing themselves to principals and offering services to BTs. As a result, coaching relationships began approximately six to eight weeks after the school year began (and even later for year-round “Track E” schools that begin classes in mid-August). Despite the challenges of scale up, Chicago coaches and BTs implemented the critical elements of the NTC model of comprehensive induction (carefully selected and trained full-time mentors, intensive and structured support for beginning teachers, a focus on instructive and FAS tools).

The goal of supporting BTs towards becoming autonomous professionals guides the following chapters. After first describing the research design and methodology, Chapter 1 further explores the definition of autonomous professional and identifies five key factors influencing how BTs progress towards becoming autonomous professionals. Chapter Two discusses the strategies and approaches coaches employ to support their BTs in internalizing the inquiry cycle. Chapter Three examines the complexities and importance of the BT-Coach relationship and its influence on BT autonomy. Chapter Four presents interview and observational data on BT performance. The final chapter summarizes the research findings on the Chicago implementation of the NTC model and presents implications and considerations for induction program implementation and design as well as areas for future research.

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## Box 1. Description of the Research Study

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The research study described here was designed to examine the coaching process from four diverse perspectives. First, coaches and BTs provided the research team with self-reported reflections about their experiences during the year through structured interviews. Next, observations of BT-coach meetings and subsequent debriefs revealed information about the interaction between coach and BT around specific topics. Reviewing coaching log records added a third dimension of understanding, and observations and rating BT practice according to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* revealed information about instructional practice (See Appendix A for more detailed information about the study methods). These information sources comprise the data used to answer the three research questions guiding this study:

1. How do coaches support beginning teachers?
2. How are the goals and activities of CNTC coaches aligned with the needs of beginning teachers?
3. What factors affect how coaches support beginning teachers?

Eight second- and third- year CNTC coaches were randomly selected from among a pool of 17 possible candidates to be part of this study. These eight coaches had all spent time as classroom teachers. Many had held other leadership positions as well, such as specialists, coaches, or other similar roles. In order to preserve the confidentiality of participants, further details will remain unpublished. For each coach that agreed to participate in the study, we selected two BTs teaching grades 2-8, for a total of 16 BTs. We refer to these BT-coach pairs as dyads.

The BT sample was fairly representative of the CPS district in both gender and race/ethnicity. As may be expected in elementary schools, most were female (88%). Slightly more than half were Caucasian (56%), nearly a third were African American (31%), and 13% were Latino. They were spread throughout the elementary grades. Three taught first or second grade, seven taught third through fifth grade, and six taught sixth through eighth grade. BTs taught in 15 different schools in 10 out of 18 district Areas across the city. Nine of the 15 schools had populations that were more than 90 percent African-American, one school was comprised of more than 90 percent Latino students, three had mixed-minority student populations, and two had a majority of white or Asian students. In all but one school, more than 86 percent of students were classified as low-income.

## Chapter 1. Supporting Beginning Teachers toward Becoming Autonomous Professionals

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In this chapter we describe how coaches in our sample supported beginning teachers toward becoming autonomous professionals who are reflective problem solvers. One coach summarized the role she played toward this end, saying:

*I think [my role is to] help them to understand how important it is for them to connect with their students, to connect with their families, so that they can get that support...understanding how to go about getting to know their students, and I think really trying to, as much as possible, to get them to understand what good lesson planning is, understanding what role assessments play, and then really just kind of trying to help them become autonomous, so that when we leave they understand how to solve problems, where to go to get help so that once we're gone... they know where to go to get professional development, they know who to go to in the building for help. And then they become problem solvers.*

This coach illustrates how being an autonomous professional means being able to independently engage in the professional reflection necessary to be an effective teacher.

In this report, we define an autonomous professional using six aspects that represent best practice for all teachers – beginning, intermediate, or veteran. An autonomous professional is a teacher who:

- (1) has embraced the cycle of inquiry (plan-teach-assess-reflect) as part of her regular instructional routine;
- (2) possesses and implements the pedagogical, management, and analytic skills that are at the core of teaching;
- (3) is constantly assessing and working to improve her own practice;
- (4) knows where to find resources and supports to solve problems;
- (5) connects with students and families; and
- (6) works to continually improve practice, both as an individual teacher and as part of a larger community of teaching professionals.

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### Autonomous Professional:

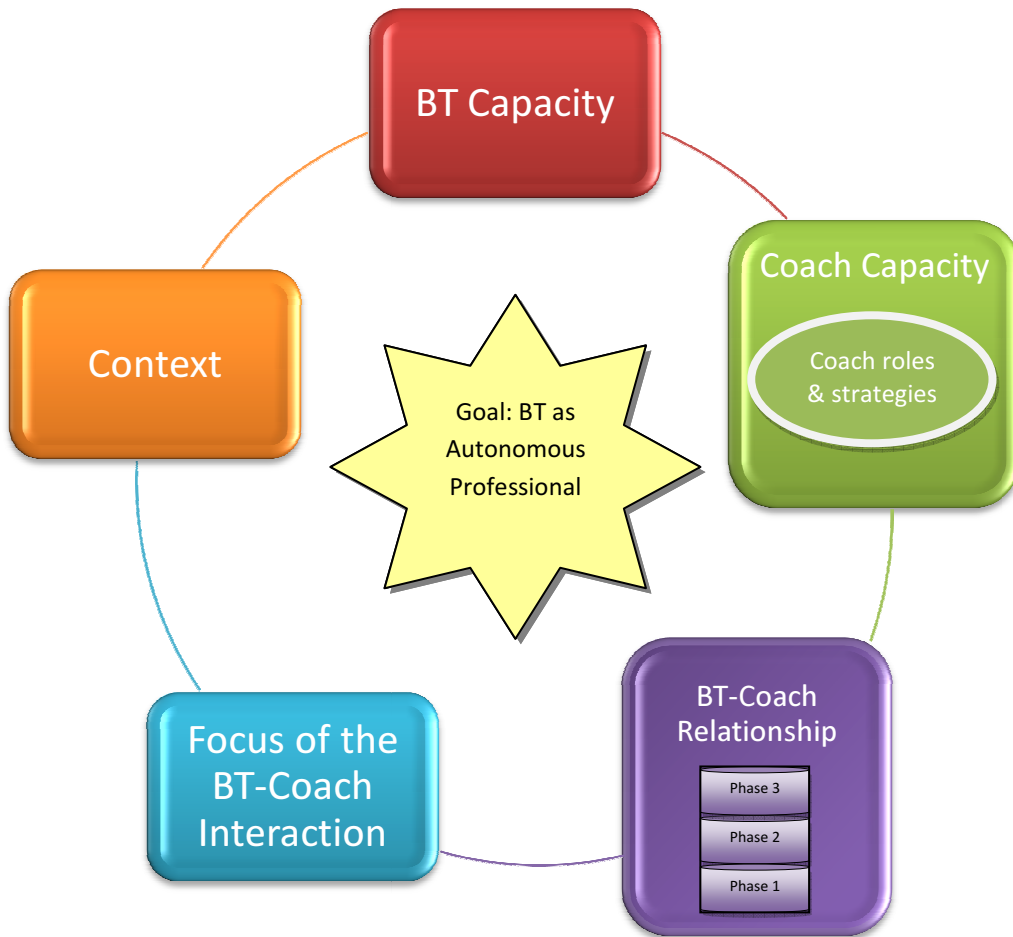
The ability to engage in the reflective cycle of inquiry (plan-teach-assess-reflect) toward self-improvement without the continual support of a coach.



The process by which a BT-coach dyad worked toward the goal of BT autonomy was different for every dyad in the study. Furthermore, progress was neither continuous nor linear: it occurred intermittently and unevenly across a number of different areas of professional practice. However, there were five common influential factors across all 16 dyads that can potentially be generalized to coaching beyond our sample. These five factors are: (1) BT capacity; (2) coach capacity; (3) the BT-coach relationship; (4) focus of the BT-coach interaction; and (5) the larger context in which the coaching takes place.

Each factor is described in more detail below and throughout this report. Figure 1 displays a static representation of the relationship between the factors, but in reality each component in the diagram below is constantly changing. As each factor changes, it influences, and is influenced by, all of the other components. Because of the many factors at play and their constantly shifting nature, it is not surprising that the coaching profession is quite complex—both for practitioners and for researchers.

Figure 1. Many factors are at play when working toward the goal of creating autonomous professionals



## BT Capacity

The characteristics and previous experiences of the BT are important factors affecting the BT's progress toward becoming an autonomous professional. Some BTs are more open to being coached while others are more resistant. Some BTs are still simply trying to "survive" each day, while others may be ready to be reflective about their teaching. We refer to this combination of characteristics as "BT capacity," with the recognition that this capacity represents only one moment in time, and can change throughout the day as well as over the course of the year (e.g., whether a teacher is frustrated or has just received good news will undoubtedly change the way in which she approaches her teaching practice at any given moment, just as changes in BT experience, knowledge, and confidence during the course of the year play a large role in the BT's approach).

BT capacity refers to both the technical skill associated with teaching—which can be enhanced by pre-service preparation, in-service experience, and professional development—and the mindset or willingness necessary to engage in the reflective cycle of inquiry. This mindset can be further described as a willingness and openness to examine one's own practice and is directly related to a BT's comfort in the classroom as well as her progress along the phases of the first year of teaching.<sup>4</sup>



### BT Capacity:

The technical skill associated with teaching and the mindset or willingness necessary to engage in the reflective cycle of inquiry.



## Coach Capacity

The second influential factor affecting the BT's progress toward autonomy is coach capacity. Much like BT capacity, coach capacity refers to both (1) the technical skill associated with coaching—including knowledge about teaching and coaching; expertise in diagnosing and supporting BT needs; understanding of responsibilities; and flexibly incorporating instructional, collaborative, and facilitative approaches to address BT needs—and (2) the mindset and confidence necessary to play a variety of roles in a variety of settings while working with BTs. As with the BTs, the influence of coach capacity on the overall goal of increased autonomy is always shifting. For example, throughout the year, as the coach gains experience, as BT needs change, as the topic of discussion changes, as the relationship changes, and as the context changes, the way in which a coach engages in coaching also changes.

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<sup>4</sup> NTC has identified phases of first-year teaching that many new teachers experience during their first year. They are anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection (NTC , 2006).

Coach capacity affects the goal of BT autonomy because coaches vary in the tools and techniques they bring to the table as well as in their ability to meet their BTs' needs. A coach's understanding of her responsibilities also influences coaching practice. Experienced coaches in our sample told us that their understanding of the coaching job changed and deepened over time, especially from their first to



### Coach Capacity:

The technical skill associated with coaching and the mindset and confidence necessary to play a variety of roles in a range of settings while working with BTs



second year of coaching. Nearly all of the coaches in our sample mentioned how their practice had improved as they gained knowledge and experience when asked about their current coaching approach. For example, coaches told us that their practice more closely reflected the inquiry circle and that they challenged BT thinking while also “filling in the holes,” and expected BTs to focus on instruction. One coach summarized this below:

*I think it's just gotten deeper ... I mean, I also have the responsibility to make [BTs] see things in a different light, to make them see their practice in a different light and to kind of fill in some of the holes. And it has changed because I think now I have a better understanding of that than I did. I think now I realize it's a little deeper role than I had originally thought. It isn't just helping out, but it is you know using tools to help them and help them see lesson planning is going to help you and analyzing student work is going to help you and reflection is going to help you.*

### Coaching Strategies

CNTC coaches often referred to the NTC conceptual framework that guided their coaching choices. This “Framework for Mentoring Strategies and Approaches” includes three types of approaches: instructive, collaborative, and facilitative. Generally speaking, *instructive* strategies or approaches refer to situations where the coach is in control of the interaction. Information flows from the coach to the BT, and the coach offers suggestions and solutions. In *collaborative* approaches, the coach guides the interaction without controlling it, and the coach and BT co-construct solutions and materials. Finally, in *facilitative* approaches, the BT actively directs the flow of information: the coach acts as a facilitator of the BT's thinking and problem solving, and the BT self-assesses and self-prescribes. According to NTC materials, effective coaches use what they know about the BT's development along with “in the moment” cues to shift the instructional approach from *instructive* to *collaborative* to *facilitative* or back. Within a single session, a coach is likely to employ many different strategies and approaches to build on and extend BT learning.

Coaches in our sample varied in their ability and willingness to flexibly shift from facilitative to instructive to collaborative approaches. This flexibility and range of strategies influenced a BT's progress towards autonomy because it influenced how coaches identified and met their BT's needs and encouraged them to engage in the cycle of inquiry.

Instructive, collaborative, and facilitative strategies employed by coaches in our sample are highlighted in the examples in Chapters 3 and Chapter 4, and generally included: using entry points<sup>5</sup> in terms of discussion topics, providing resources, or logistical suggestions; guiding BTs to discover and own their own solutions; giving BTs choices; addressing immediate needs; and providing direct suggestions.

## **BT-Coach Relationship**

A third important lever for moving toward BT autonomy is the relationship that developed between BTs and coaches. The BT-Coach relationship was a key influence on our coaches' work to help BT's progress towards becoming autonomous professionals because relationships were important aspects of engaging BTs in the coaching process. Relationships were often what coaches relied on to compel their BTs to meet with them consistently and follow through on next steps. Thus coaches worked hard to cultivate positive relationships with their BTs while also taking into account other factors such as school and program contexts, coach capacity, and BT capacity that also had strong impacts on the BT-coach relationship.

Our observations and debriefs of BT-coach interactions and interviews with coaches and BTs revealed three phases of the BT-coach relationship: (1) establishing introductory relationships, (2) engaging in the coaching process, and (3) maintaining momentum. These three phases as well as the BT-coach relationship are explored in detail in Chapter 4.

## **Focus of the BT-Coach Interaction**

A fourth important factor that influenced BT progress towards autonomy was the focus of the discussions between the BT-coach dyad. Coaches often had to juggle both meeting the immediate needs of a BT and a year-long goal for continued improvement in a specific area. Whether the focus was related to planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, assessment, content area, student needs, administrative concerns, a teacher's recent performance during an observation, student test data, or self-reflection, the choice of that focus area played a part in how the BTs moved toward autonomy.

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<sup>5</sup> An "entry point" is an opportunity to introduce new information, a support strategy, or a mentoring tool to a BT in a strategic way. BTs offer entry points intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly. The responsibility of the mentor is to identify and capitalize on the entry point such that the BT is able to make connections between what the mentor is sharing and *their* needs, interests, or desired outcomes (CNTC Mentor Academy 2 Materials).

## Context

Finally, the relationships formed between Coaches and BTs, the work they engaged in, and the successes and challenges they experienced all took place in – and were influenced by – the larger contexts. In this study, we focus specifically on the school and the implementation of CNTC as contextual factors.

School context refers to many aspects of the particular school environment in which the BT is teaching and can have an impact on the other four factors leading toward BT autonomy. In our data, school context played a particular role in three ways: principal relationships, existing supports for new teachers at the school level, and the presence or absence of an orderly and predictable school-wide environment. Chapter 4 provides examples of how the school context played a role in BT capacity, coach capacity, and the BT-coach relationship for dyads in our sample.

The Chicago implementation of the NTC model was the second contextual factor that played a role in the coaching relationship. Several aspects of scaling up the organization from a small, grass roots group serving specific Areas of the city to a larger, more dispersed organization serving a large and diverse district affected the coaching process. These included hiring and training many new coaches, locating new teachers across the district, and expansion into schools unfamiliar with the NTC model (see Box 2 for more information).



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## Box 2. The Specific Context of the Chicago Implementation of the NTC model

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In the course of five months, CNTC grew from 342 teachers served by 27 coaches in five Areas of CPS to 1,081 teachers served by 62 coaches city-wide. Implementation issues arose, in part due to sheer numbers and other challenges that came from being in new Areas of the district that were unfamiliar with CNTC. With greater numbers of BTs came greater numbers of new coaches and greater travel time in larger coach territories. In addition, to accommodate coaches across the city, more CNTC offices were opened. One main office was located just west of downtown, while two satellite offices also housed coaches and lead coaches. Each of these elements of scale-up impacted the coaching experience.

The addition of increased travel demands due to coaches covering larger territories made most coaches, even experienced ones, feel stretched. Given tight teacher schedules, efficient routes – such as scheduling teacher visits according to proximity – were not normally an option.

Time pressure, the increased caseload of lead coaches and the dispersion of coaches into different offices across the city contributed to coaches feeling they had less time for reflecting on their own practice and less opportunity to consult with their colleagues and lead coaches. Many coaches noted increased isolation since scale-up.

*It would be nice to have more team time and things, like connect together as a team. Because last year we had a lot of that and this year it just has been too difficult. So we did a lot of it at the beginning of the year and it's kind of, kind of dwindled.*

Given the dramatic growth, communication was a challenge between CNTC and their coaches as well as between CNTC and schools, principals and BTs. Coaches reported varying degrees of understanding regarding the number of required BT visits, what happens to coaches after their third year, and the appropriate content of the online logs that coaches used to record their interactions with BTs (See Appendix B for more information about the coaching logs). Without a wide-spread communication campaign as part of this scale-up, much of the work of explaining and selling CNTC's mission to BTs and principals fell to coaches. CNTC coaches also felt it was a significant part of their responsibilities to be ambassadors of CNTC to schools in their newly expanded territories, specifically winning over principals and building a positive reputation.

*The principals hadn't heard of CNTC this year because we're in totally new Areas. Nobody really knows who we are or what we do. So I think you really need that principal support and the principal to say, to make you feel like, yeah we're working together. And somehow this year I didn't feel that I had that.*

With the time crunch mentioned above, coaches also had less time to cultivate principal relationships by stopping in before or after teacher appointments. As one teacher describes, "this year, especially if I had one teacher and we met at a certain time, I would fly in meet with [her] and I would be flying out to meet with my next school because the schedule is so tight. So ... it was hard to develop those relationships with some administrators."

These specific context issues of the Chicago implementation of the NTC model were described by both coaches and BTs throughout the course of our study. BTs wished that they had met their coaches earlier in the school year and expressed some initial confusion about the CNTC program. Coaches expressed frustration and confusion over roles and expectations and general program communication. Though peripheral to the design of the induction program model, it is important to understand the specific Chicago implementation issues of the NTC model because to better understand its influence and impact on coach's practice and BT's engagement in the coaching process.

## Chapter 2. The Art of Coaching

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If BT capacity, Coach capacity, BT-coach relationships, the focus of the BT-coach interaction, and the larger context all influence BT progress toward autonomy, then coaches must be extremely strategic. They must be able to gauge when to offer resources, when to suggest ideas, and when to push the BT to generate her own answers. Using their content knowledge, coaching expertise, professional support system, and professional intuition, coaches in our sample engaged with BTs in interactions with the goal of helping teachers to become autonomous in their practice.

Data from this study reveal five main themes that exemplify the strategies by which experienced coaches supported BTs towards becoming autonomous professionals:

- (1) Providing BTs with strategies and resources for planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and assessment
- (2) Using a shared classroom experience for guided reflection
- (3) Focusing on students' many needs (e.g., learning needs, socio-emotional needs) to influence BT practice and change BT thinking
- (4) Helping BTs understand and connect with the school environment beyond their individual classrooms
- (5) Building BT confidence through motivation and encouragement

Our analysis suggests that it is impossible to separate the coach's efforts to build strong relationships with BTs from the coach's efforts to improve BT practice. Any BT-coach interaction (as well as the lack of interactions) has an impact on the relationship, just as the strength (or weakness) of the relationship has an impact on how the pair can work together to improve practice.

We separate the discussion into chapters for the sake of clarity, but refer back to Figure 1 in which the five influential factors are inextricably linked. Therefore, in this section we discuss confidence building as it relates to coaching strategies, and also in Chapter 4 as it relates to building relationships. Themes one through four also have implications for building strong BT-relationships, but do not overlap as much as the theme of building the confidence of a teacher new to the profession, so we treat them separately in this chapter.

### **(1) Providing strategies and resources for planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and assessment**

Most often the focus of the BT-coach dyad discussions that were observed by the research team was either planning and preparation (Danielson Domain 1) or professional responsibilities (Danielson Domain 4), particularly reflecting on teaching.<sup>6</sup> All BT-coach interactions covered more than one focus topic

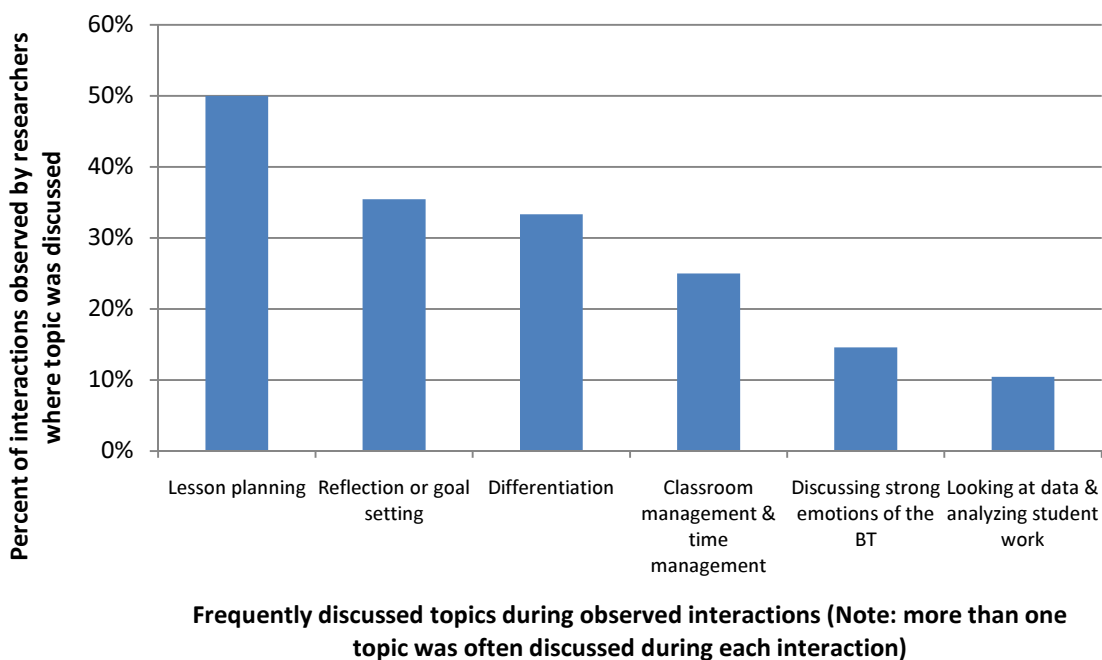
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<sup>6</sup> Consistent with CNTC's focus on the continuum of teacher performance, we use the four domains described by Charlotte Danielson (planning and preparation; classroom environment; instruction; and professional

during their meeting time. The results described here attempt to capture the main topics discussed during each interaction we observed. Therefore, the total of all focus topics does not add to 100 percent.

Figure 2 shows that half of the interactions we observed (24 of 48) included time spent on lesson planning (Domain 1). Similarly, more than one-third (17 of 48) devoted either part or all of the time to reflection (Domain 4), specifically using a CNTC reflection tool.<sup>7</sup> The next most common focus topics were differentiation (Domain 3, about 33 percent) and classroom management (about 25 percent), including behavior management, time management, establishing routines, and relating to students (Domain 2). In five of the 48 interactions, the emotional response of the BT to a particular situation (e.g., conflict with the principal or another teacher, student suspension, or neighborhood violence) was a notable portion of the conversation. Looking at data and analyzing student work occurred in only 10 percent of the interactions we observed, although both coaches and BTs talked about doing this activity much more often.

Figure 2. Lesson planning was the most common activity observed by researchers during the focus interactions




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responsibilities) in her *Framework for Teaching* to describe the topics of discussions observed by the research team.

<sup>7</sup> This may be inflated as a result of when the research team observed BT-coach interactions. Specifically, 12 of 16 dyads were completing the Professional Growth and Reflections tool when the research team completed the third observation.

In almost half of the interactions we observed, the coach and BT focused on lesson planning. For many dyads, this was a concrete activity focused on improving instructional practice that was quite valuable to BTs.

One interaction between Coach Sophia and BT Barbara that focused on lesson planning illustrates both the strategies and resources employed by a coach to support a BT towards autonomy as well as the interconnectedness of the five factors in Figure 1 and their influence on the strategies employed by the coach. Sophia is a second-year coach with experience teaching the middle grades. When describing her coaching style, she stated that she aimed to create a “*relationship where [the BTs] don’t feel that I’m there to judge them.*” Sophia likes to provide BTs with resources and choices to show her respect for their goals and needs. She uses what she calls a “*kill them with kindness approach*” to make her BTs feel comfortable, because she recognizes the emotional complexities and competing priorities new teachers face. Sophia describes this approach below:

*I guess I do a lot of listening. I try to kind of conform what I do to what they would like to go after—like whatever their goals are, I like to follow that. Like I said I just try to be very respectful of their priorities and what they’re going through and be cognizant of...the emotional part of teaching.*

Beyond making her BTs comfortable, Sophia stated that her “kill them with kindness” approach also helped her develop relationships with principals and BTs. Sophia worried that a more forceful approach might be met with resistance.

*We’re not necessarily in a position of authority where we can just say well, I need to be there and you [principals and BTs] don’t have a say over it .... It would damage the relationship if I was forcing myself on people, and then what happens is that person shuts down and the coaching becomes ineffective....so we have to kind of be really nice and sweet and explain our positions to the principals and you know I don’t think that ultimately they can really turn us away, but if you did get to the point where you had to bring in the CAO to force the coach into the building, then that’s not going to be a good relationship. So your hands are tied. You have to create a situation where people want help and actually that’s probably the biggest challenge is creating buy-in to the program. So ... that’s why killing them with kindness was my first strategy. I know that if I go the wrong way I’m just going to get a brick wall every time I try to go back.*

Barbara, one of Sophia’s BTs, was in her first full year of teaching but had experience managing and directing an arts school for children before returning to school to get her master’s degree in education. Prior to this position, she was a long-term substitute at another school for the spring semester. Barbara was hired a few weeks before school started to teach fifth grade reading, and a few days before school started, she found out she would also be teaching social studies to fifth-graders. She completed the necessary paperwork to receive her social studies endorsement but wasn’t quite sure how best to teach the subject to her students. Barbara stated that Sophia was able to give her direction and focus.

*One of the things that was really helpful about my coach at the beginning of the year was sort of figuring out, "Well what's the objective? What's the goal of teaching social studies?" It was like teaching reading strategies and stuff like that through social studies. So when I looked at it like that it was less overwhelming.*

Sophia and Barbara met regularly throughout the year, usually once a week for about an hour. Barbara had some issues with managing the behavior of a few students at the beginning of the year, so their conversations were more focused on strategies and how to help those students. As she became more comfortable, the dyad *"would just sit down and plan lessons,"* and sometimes Sophia would come and observe the lesson. Barbara stated that Sophia helped her identify best practices for her classroom:

*If I was struggling with something, for example I was doing writer's workshop and I was really comfortable with that, but I wasn't as comfortable with how to speak to the students, so one day [Sophia] came in when I was doing student conferencing and sort of just, you know listened in on conferences, and we talked about what worked and what didn't work.*

When Barbara told Sophia that she felt unsure about whether she was grading students' writing assignments in a way that would *"make the students better,"* the pair *"sat down together and graded a bunch of papers and then kind of divided the students into groups and then went from there on what was weak and what lesson I [BT] needed to do next."*

Around the middle of the year, Barbara reported that she felt much more confident in her classroom management. At that point, Barbara refers to a period when she and Sophia *"would just sit down and plan,"* and in this case, it was right before the ISAT testing time and Barbara wanted to focus on writing persuasive essays. She was looking for engaging ways to teach persuasive writing, and Sophia suggested doing a debate with the class. Barbara had no previous experience planning or facilitating a debate. Sophia saw lesson planning for a debate as an entry point for influencing Barbara's practice. Barbara liked the idea, so at the next interaction, Sophia brought some resources and presented Barbara with choices for how their lesson planning could proceed.

In the extended description presented below, Sophia employed a variety of strategies to support Barbara, ultimately guiding the interaction without controlling it. When Barbara asked a direct question, Sophia offered her opinion with rationale. Once Barbara started to become excited about the unit, Sophia provided her with positive feedback, asked questions to deepen and clarify her thinking, and inserted suggestions about things she already knew how to do (such as "think-alouds") as tools for effective instruction. Finally, after Barbara had successfully planned out the week but before the excitement had waned, Sophia asked her to step back and think about the overall objective of the unit, guiding her to use the larger objectives to frame her planning and assessment. The extended description appears in Box 3 below.

### Box 3. Coach Sophia and BT Barbara Engage in a Lesson Planning Activity

#### **Description and Dialogue**

*C: So let me just run some options by you. We can come up with one lesson, we can think about maybe three or four lessons that you could do in the next couple weeks, or we can just simply review the materials and talk about them if they're realistic. It's really what would be helpful to you.*

The BT considered the choices she was presented, and decided that she wanted to know more about all of the ideas before choosing one. The coach then briefly described all of the resources one at a time, showing them to the BT and giving them to her for her to keep. Throughout the conversation, the BT become more excited about the unit and more interested in the nuts and bolts of how to make it work.

Further discussion led the BT to consider what topic she might ask students to consider – and how those topics relate to the persuasive writing topics they might be asked on an assessment. One idea the BT suggested was whether or not there should be surveillance cameras in schools.

*BT: Do you think that would be a lot for them to chew? Twelve-year-olds?*

*C: Well I think that...that's the great thing - it can be a debate or it can be a discussion, it's just a shared experience... If you can hand them a whole bunch of ideas, then it takes away the whole problem of coming up with ideas and they can focus more on the structure and the quality of the writing ...It really helped out those kids that were always just racking their brain for one or two ideas.*

*C: I'm kind of intrigued by it already. And more so because I know they're doing that around Chicago. They're putting those up.*

*BT: Ok, so would I have them in the table groups? Would I start them on their own? You were saying in pairs?*

*C: That was just a suggestion...you could introduce the idea and then you put them in pairs and they started generating ideas and they start talking about it and maybe at the end of a five minute period they have to pick their side.*

*BT: And then you sort of try to equally divide the sides so, you know, I'm lucky I have a small group, so would I do 10 and 10?*

#### **Coaching Strategies**

*Coach gives BT choices*

*Coach provides resources and suggests possibilities for how BT could organize the debate (instructive strategies).*

*When BT asks direct question, coach offers opinion with rationale*

*Coach reflects BTs enthusiasm and makes real world connections that will engage students*

*BT asks coach specific questions about how to organize students*

C: Well you know it depends. You could do 10 and 10 or you can just do it how it breaks up naturally. So maybe you have six people over here and you have 20 over here. You can talk about the drawbacks of one form or the other.

BT: I guess the numbers doesn't matter. I'm just having a hard time visualizing how to get those 12 people to work together, or is that not a good idea? Should I have them work in fours or something?

C: Well I think that part comes down to what you're comfortable with in your classroom... there might be four versus four. Or you can do the same debate twice and that way you can manage the size of the groups....

BT: I really like that idea actually. Because then I think I could manipulate. I could make four groups of five maybe and manipulate who's in what group so there's some strength in every group ... So I could do four poster boards...what I would have at the end is the big bank of ideas and then from those ideas, we could do the mini-lesson in choosing the best reasons.

C: That may even be the next day....so I'll write Day 1 [Coach gets out Lesson Plan B form].

BT: Day 1 would probably only be introducing the idea, having them work in pairs, having them develop their ideas and pick a side. And then I could overnight, manipulate the groups.

C: That's good because otherwise you've gotta do it on the spot. That's tricky. So develop ideas, choose a side. Ok, and then Day 2.

BT: Then Day 2 would be putting them into their big groups and I could have them meet and share ideas first for a few minutes and then A go against B. They would love it. You know, you're challenging each other and they'll try and come up with good ideas in the middle....and then the next day I could do a mini lesson on choosing the best reasons and have them write their own thesis statements...and then maybe even do a draft and then I could do a mini-lesson. The last mini-lesson would be on audience.

C: And so how would you structure drafting the essay?

BT: At that point ...after I model the good paragraph, then I would give them time to write in class, but then the draft would be their work. Because they've already done two persuasive essays now. This is the third.

C: That's a good point. They should be in the swing of it.

BT: And then that's it. Conferencing and independent writing time.

C: And is there anything that would make sense to...

BT: Mini-lesson?

C: Like in the middle. Like you're gonna stop them in the middle or is there anything that

Coach provides many suggestions and highlights that it depends on BT comfort and classroom context

BT begins to take ownership of the ideas that coach has suggested as possibilities

Coach records BT's ideas as she gets on a roll.

Coach strategy becomes more collaborative as coach and BT co-develop the plan and problem solve issues of practice

Coach asks questions to deepen the teacher's thinking about her plan

BT has the answers to coach questions before the question is even asked. BT and coach co-planning effectively

After details are planned, coach asks

*you want to be pushing while you're doing your conferencing.*

*BT to reflect on the big objectives.*

This discussion continues a little while longer. When there is a break in the conversation, the Coach redirects the conversation by thinking about the objectives:

*C: Now let's do one more thing because we did a lot of plotting for the pacing. Let's just talk about what we want kids to walk away with so we're real clear with what the objective is. What do we want the kids to accomplish?*

At the end of the interaction, the pair decided that Sophia would observe Barbara during one of the days of the unit to continue their work together. Barbara had a lesson plan structure for the next week, and she felt relieved to have the lesson planned in advance and comfortable about enacting her plan.

*It's...amazing because I kind of feel like I have no idea what I'm doing, but once I plan the next week it's like oh my, I have no time to do anything and then it's the weekend and I'm going into the weekend and I have no idea what I'm doing again. So now I know what I'm doing for like two more weeks.*

This BT-coach interaction exemplifies the interconnectedness of the five factors in Figure 1 coming together to influence the art of coaching. First, the BT was receptive to the planning activity and discussion because she had expressed an interest in using creative ways for her students to improve their persuasive writing (*BT capacity*). Next the coach brought her knowledge, experience, and a range of instructive, collaborative and facilitative approaches to her “in-the-moment” decision making, capitalizing on an entry point the BT provided, and gauging when to give more information and when to step back (*coach capacity*). The *BT-coach relationship* represented an alliance between both the coach and the BT toward a common goal; the *focus* topic of the interaction was specific to the needs of the BT and her students; and finally, the *larger school context*—a focus on improving persuasive writing in preparation for the ISAT testing—also played a role.

## **(2) Using a shared classroom experience for guided reflection**

A second coaching strategy that was observed often was using a shared classroom experience to provide specific feedback and encourage BTs to reflect on instructional practice. Coaches built a shared classroom experience with their teachers by observing BTs, modeling lessons while BTs observed, or by co-teaching with their BTs. In this second example, a different coach and BT discussed a lesson the BT had taught to fourth-graders using a picture book to illustrate the concept of “thick” and “thin” questions.

This BT had identified two goals for improving her teaching in her fourth grade ELA classes: descriptive writing and comprehension. Prior to this interaction, the coach had modeled a lesson for the BT using a picture book to teach a comprehension strategy called “thick” and “thin” questions. “Thin” questions can be found in the text of the story. They are fairly direct questions such as who, what, and how.



“Thick” questions, on the other hand, require the reader to use her experience and thoughts to make interpretations, inferences, or conclusions. Examples of thick questions include: How would you feel if? What if...?, What might...?, etc.

After the coach read the book aloud, students were asked to write “thick” and “thin” questions about the story on a post-it note and place in on a poster under the heading “Thick” or “Thin.” The coach’s goal for this meeting was to discuss a lesson she had modeled and to help the BT see what standards could be covered with this type of exercise. In addition, the coach wanted the BT to see how materials like charts support student learning and how they can be extended. The coach told us:

*My goal for today was to debrief the lesson and also to bring it back around to the standard. I wanted her to see how the different parts of the lesson went and how the material supported the student learning. Like...the charts supported the teaching about thick and thin questions. And then the act of engagement was the children having an activity to do to stop and jot. And then, the actual engagement wasn’t the hard thing-- that was more like an extension. So just breaking it down and making sure, you know, that she understands about planning, and we’ll probably talk about that again. But mostly to then bring it around to show her that there is a standard with that little lesson that we hit on a lot, you know, maybe nine or 10 different performance descriptors with that one thing. And where we can take it if we extended it further with an author study.*

At the beginning of the conversation, the BT said that she thought that students did not understand the concept, and she provided two other examples of how student comprehension did not meet her expectations. The coach discussed these topics with her, and then directed her back to the specific lesson, offering a contrary opinion that students did seem to understand the “thick” and “thin” questions based on their responses on the post-it notes. Through this conversation, the coach was able to challenge the BT’s thinking that all students do not understand. The BT comes to the conclusion that only a particular group of students does not understand. The coach and BT discuss why those students may be struggling, and the coach builds BT confidence by suggesting that her classroom is the place where students can build the skills necessary to engage in higher-order comprehension and thinking. Their interaction and the corresponding strategies employed by the coach appear in Box 4 below.

## Box 4. Discussing a Shared Classroom Teaching Experience

After looking at student post-its on the posters, the coach asked the BT a reflective question.

*C: So looking at the post-its, did you get the feeling that your students understood the strategy?*

*BT: I think they do understand it, I'm not sure if they can apply it. That's the question.*

*C: And what's makes you think that?*

BT gives an example from today's activity on patterns and how students struggled to follow directions that were very similar to the *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* lesson.

*C: Hmm... I thought they did pretty well with the thin and thick questions. When I took a look at even how they had posted up I would say the vast majority of them were on the right poster and they- yes they did follow the format and they used the card or they used those stems to do it, but the questions seemed appropriate that I looked at.*

*BT: For the most part I looked at most of them. A lot of them are appropriate. A lot of them though, even though since they kind of- they will- some of them will, some of them won't, but for the most part, if you give it to them a certain way, they'll give you back the exact same thing, but they don't necessarily understand it.*

*C: So they're not thinking for themselves. They're just applying that well-worn formula that they know. Do you think it's developmental?*

*BT: No - I don't know what's wrong with them. Like I really don't. Some of it I think is just, some of it I think is just like lack of exposure. Lack of ... really having to talk and have those, how do you say it, the meaningful conversations at the dinner table. I think it's like they don't have those conversations so they really don't know how to think outside the box and think about things that really matter in life.*

*C: I think your classroom is a really important place to do that.*

*C: ...do you think that they understood that the pebble was magic and...*

*BT: I think they understood that part. I think they get that the pebble was magic. They know why the pebble was magic.*

*C: And he couldn't turn back until it was touching him.*

*BT: Some of them may have gotten that, some of them may have not.*

*Coach asks BT to reflect on the lesson – did students understand?*

*Probing question to encourage BT to explore why she thinks students didn't understand.*

*Coach suggests that students did seem to understand the "thick" and "thin" questions (contrary to BT's opinion above).*

*BT is focusing on particular group of students who do not understand. Coach suggests possible explanations, then supports BT reflections and builds confidence that BT's classroom is the place where students can think more critically.*

At the end of the discussion, the BT expressed enthusiasm and ownership of the lesson and how she might apply it herself. As they were concluding, the BT asked about whether she could combine thick and thin questions with other skills she's working on with students like simile, metaphor, and onomatopoeia.

*Quick question, do you think it would be too much for me to do? Because I want to use the thick and thin questions, but I don't know if it would be too much to do all of this in one lesson. I wanted to do the thick and thin questions, but I wanted them to pick out, since we went over simile/metaphor and onomatopoeia I wanted them to like jot down every time you hear a metaphor, write it down. Every time you hear a simile, write it down. But do you think that'd be too much to put into one lesson? I should do it separately, read it one time, and maybe we look for the metaphor and simile?*

The coach appreciated her enthusiasm and offered suggestions with rationale. She told the BT that she could go back into the book and read it a second time, directing students to listen for a different thing. And even a third and fourth time, listening for different things each time. "The idea is to layer it on," the coach told her, "to scaffold your instruction so that the concepts don't get jumbled up."

Because the coach and BT had a shared experience of the modeled lesson, the coach and BT could deeply reflect and discuss the success of the lesson—with concrete examples from both the coach and BT perspectives.

### **(3) Focusing on/advocating for students**

A third way in which coaches supported beginning teachers was by focusing on and advocating for students. Some coaches were very intentional about their focus on students. Many of our coaches told us that as they became more experienced coaches, their focus shifted from the teachers to the students:

*I think my first year, I was focused on the teachers. I thought, 'I'm here for the teachers. My job is to go in there and support the teachers.' Now, I'm realizing that my job is to go in there and make sure the kids are learning and that they're being exposed to good instruction and have the opportunity...to experience different things at school. Not just sitting in their seats and being quiet, you know. It's not all about this new teacher who has their own set of needs...the kids shouldn't suffer because the teacher does not know what's going on.*

Other coaches talked about the importance of BT relationships with students and making sure that BTs were engaging students in meaningful activities with the end goal of student learning in mind:

*I mean I think that I've got a couple teachers this year and this goes for all three years who I think by the end of the year still don't know the kids, not well, not in the way they should, especially with middle school teachers...a lot of times they're just doing stuff to*

*do it, to cover...but is what you're doing worthwhile? Is it helpful to you in teaching your students? Is it helpful for the students? Or, is it just work?*

Another coach told us about a BT not in our sample that needed to think about how she would feel if her son's teacher had "winged" a lesson just like she had:

*Last year I did ask a teacher who would not be prepared, she was winging it and I had built up this relationship with her so I asked, 'Did you wing that lesson today? Let me ask you this, would you want your son to be in your classroom?' She told me no, but it changed her attitude about planning. I'm not so sure I would take such bold approach with another teacher, but I had built a relationship with her and I knew how much she loved and valued all of that and you know – would you do this, would you want him in your classroom? She said no. And then [as a result], she had spent all this time on the weekend working on her planning and it made a difference when she taught.*

And yet another described how the Analyzing Student Work (ASW) tool allowed her to change BT thinking about student understanding:

*When I did ASW, I felt that helped them look at their students. 'Cause a lot of teachers say...'I did that lesson and nobody got it.' And then...we look at it and see that these kids got it, these kids almost got it, and just this little group here did not get it...That was kind of an eye opener for a couple of teachers.*

Focusing on student learning as a common goal of both BTs and coaches was an effective strategy for changing BT thinking and behavior for some coaches in our sample.

#### **(4) Helping BTs understand and connect with the school environment beyond their individual classrooms**

Another way in which coaches pushed BTs to become autonomous practitioners was to help teachers understand and effectively participate in the larger school environment.

One coach told us about a particular school setting where school-wide student behavior was not well managed. In describing the situation, she stated, *"the kids run wild. It is a very difficult situation. Most of the students are getting Fs."* The coach began to tackle the issue of student failures by using movement and seating charts to track where the teacher is and where the students are in the classroom so that BTs could see how much movement was going on in the classroom and how that interrupted learning. After doing that a few times with different classes to illustrate what was happening in the BTs' classrooms, the coach told us how she encouraged BTs to play a larger role in the overall school setting:

*I met with...teachers during a grade-level team meeting, and they all were very frustrated about this. So I encouraged them to invite their principal to their meeting and tackle this discipline issue, because nothing's going to happen unless everybody's on board. So the*

*principal and the disciplinarian came in and as we brainstormed prior to the meeting I was able to send them [the BTs] in with a list of possibilities of different ways they could approach this problem – with support from administration and as a unified team who very clearly have taken back control of their wing. So I kind of got that ball rolling with them and so we continued to work on that.*

Another coach suggested to a middle school ELA teacher having trouble with students completing homework assignments on time to reach out to the other middle school teachers to tackle the problem together. She first asked, “*when you meet as a team, is the social studies teacher (another BT) experiencing this? How about the math and science teacher?*” The coach encouraged the BT to work with her colleagues to put some shared accountability measures and expectations in place around homework.

Another coach told us that one of her responsibilities is to support BTs in the ways in which they present themselves to the principal and the rest of the school community. She emphasized the importance of BTs positioning themselves well both in the present and for future opportunities:

*I think that it’s also really important...to help them understand what their professional responsibilities are to themselves and also...to their school and be able to teach them how to position themselves in a way that will be beneficial for them not only this year, but in future years. So if you make this decision, how can that help you? ... or, let’s think about how we want to reframe that or how I want to say that in a way that your principal can hear it...and how you’re going to make it so he or she cannot afford to lose you.*

Adjusting to the individual needs of BTs and the varying contexts in which they find themselves, coaches supported BTs moving toward autonomy by encouraging and supporting participation in the larger school-wide community. We also observed coaches suggesting possible next steps outside the school context for professional development and growth, including acquiring additional certifications, course taking, communicating with CAOs, and professional reading.

## **(5) Confidence Building**

Finally, building BT confidence through encouragement and specific feedback was observed in all of the interactions that were part of this research study. For example, when a BT was feeling frustrated, one coach told her “*don’t be down on yourself*”:

*Don’t be down on yourself...most first-year teachers don’t even feel confident enough to sit down [and work with a guided reading group while other students are working independently]. Seriously, like we were talking about earlier, you’ve got the management and the structure...everything in your room is ready to go. You just need to start trying. So your first step is to just start doing.*

For BTs who did not feel down or frustrated, coaches were still providing specific positive feedback about what they had accomplished in the classroom. For example:

*I noticed that you are doing the math, the guided math, and you made time for the people who weren't finished to come back there so you could give them individual help. How did you come up with that? You went a step beyond what we ever talked about.*

Furthermore, in the first extended example presented in Box 3, Sophia did not have to spend a large amount of time building Barbara's confidence, probably because she was enthusiastic and engaged about the planning activity and feeling good about her progress. At the end, however, Sophia inserted a small comment, saying to Barbara "you probably feel good about what you planned because you're basing it on exactly what your kids need." Barbara agreed, both verbally as well as by smiling broadly. During the debrief after the interaction, Barbara explained that she appreciated Sophia's affirmation and feedback:

*So, it's really helpful for me, for reassurance, and direction. I guess. And, just saying, like, you know, this is a simple way of putting it but, "is this a good idea, is that a good idea? I thought it was, but I just wanted to make sure it was." Ok, you know, let's move on. Or some things that I know are a good idea but I can't really visualize how to play them out, literally, like in the room. And, so, if you can kind of get me going on that, like, today, with the debate, it's ok, oh, that makes total sense, now I know where to go with it.*

BTs told us that they appreciated this positive feedback and confidence building and that they viewed their coaches as encouraging and reassuring.

*I mean, she always gives me input, always encouraging...you want a pat on the back, you want some encouragement, you want some guidance, you know. You want something other than paperwork, you know. And she gives that, I appreciate that.*

BTs stated that they felt comfortable sharing ideas with their coaches because coaches listened, gave input, and "never...put down things that I decided for my class or anything like that." BTs said they needed their coaches to help them see their strengths and accomplishments.

*Sometimes I think that as a new teacher, you start to get down on yourself and feel like, "Oh my god, I've done such a terrible job. I'm not, you know, I'm not keeping it together well enough or I'm not doing this or that." And so it's nice to have somebody come in and say, "OK, these were the things that you dealt with, specifically look at how you achieved some of these things and really what progress you did make." And so I think that was just-like you said, that was just a very encouraging meeting for me.*

Coaches in our sample used confidence builders for two purposes: as strategies for providing specific feedback and encouragement and to strengthen their relationship with the BT. In this chapter, we have described confidence building as it relates to coaching strategies, but the strategies that coaches employ have implications for the relationships they are able to create with their BTs. Depending on the BT's

capacity, coach's capacity, BT-coach relationship, topic of the conversation, and school context, it can be easier or harder to implement certain strategies. And at the same time, the choices of strategies have ramifications for the resulting relationship. In the next chapter, we address the importance of the BT-coach relationship directly.

## Chapter 3. Relationship is Key

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In this chapter we explore in detail the BT-coach relationship, one of the five influential factors in supporting beginning teachers on the path toward becoming autonomous professionals. Three distinct but interactive phases of the BT-coach relationship emerged from our data and are depicted in Figure 3. In phase one, “establishing introductory relationships,” coaches have their foot in the door and are able to contact and meet with their BTs. BTs are willing to talk with coaches, although discussions may be general and not specific to the BT’s practice. In our sample we found that some introductory relationships were hindered by the contextual challenges described in Chapter 1. These challenges included confusion about the purpose of CNTC and delays in identifying the new teachers in CPS that would receive CNTC services. Despite some initial resistance and confusion, all of the dyads in this study moved beyond this introductory phase.

In phase two, “engaging in the coaching process,” coaches identified BT needs, capacity, and the approaches they would take to best meet those needs. At the same time, BTs made decisions about how much they would value and how actively they would participate in the coaching process.<sup>8</sup> Engagement in the coaching process not only varied by BT (e.g., some did not participate in the process, others passively participated, and still others were highly active participants) but also fluctuated with time (e.g., some BTs were more active in the beginning of the year, while others were more active at the end).

In phase three, consistency and focus were key to “maintaining the momentum” needed to support BTs as they moved toward autonomous implementation of the inquiry cycle. Throughout the year, coaches needed to be flexible, available, and able to constantly assess their BTs’ fluctuating needs and skills to maintain this momentum. Momentum was easily derailed by scheduling conflicts, school contexts, a BT’s lack of participation in the process, and/or a BT’s immediate needs or personal circumstances. In this sample, BTs with strong relationships with their coaches seemed to feel more accountable to participate actively in the coaching process.

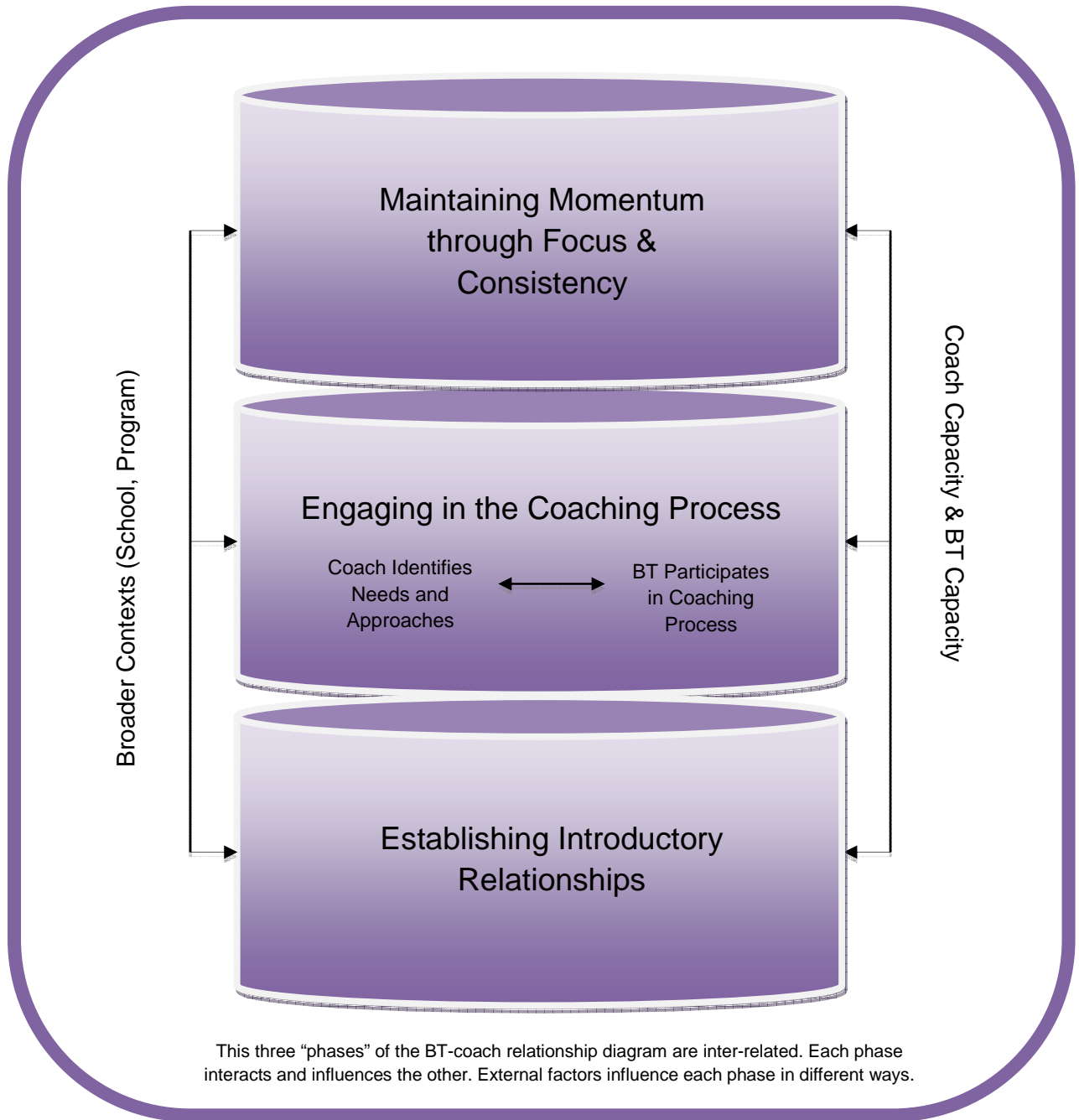
Coach capacity, BT capacity, and school and program contexts influenced each phase of the BT-coach relationship and could either support or disrupt the relationship. In Figure 1, this is represented by the five influential factors all playing a role in supporting BTs toward autonomous practice, and in Figure 3, these influential factors are represented by arrows influencing each of the three phases of the BT-coach relationship.

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<sup>8</sup> This phase is iterative and interactive; coach actions affect BT actions and vice versa.



Figure 3. The BT-coach relationship is built in inter-connected phases



## Phase One: Establishing Introductory Relationships

Beginning teachers recalled being introduced to their coaches in late September or early October. For some BTs, these introductions did not occur until November due to district issues with identifying BTs or changes in coaching assignments. A few reported informally meeting their coaches at a CNTC New Teachers Summer Academy prior to being matched.

About half of our beginning teachers stated that their relationships with their coaches were comfortable and easy from the start, saying *“we just clicked right off the bat.”* One BT stated that meeting her coach informally at the CNTC summer academy helped her feel less intimidated. Other BTs, however, were initially confused about the purpose of the coaching visits. These BTs were overwhelmed by observations from their principals, Area office staff and others and reported that they were uncertain whether their coaches were volunteers, evaluators, or mentors. This BT describes her confusion and explains that more information and clarification about the program from the onset would have been helpful.

*I guess I didn't really understand what it was at first. I didn't understand, I mean I obviously understand Chicago New Teacher, you know, and that somebody was coming out, but I didn't know if this was something that was required.... I think, I think what would have helped me is maybe even if she would have said 'I know that this is a very overwhelming time of year for you... and I know you're just getting started, this is—this is us coming up to help you. So here, I'd like you to take this and read it, and—and then I'll be coming around again.' And then maybe the printout would say just a little bit more. You know, explaining what the program was and how it could be beneficial to a first year teacher, and things like that, perhaps.*

Because of this confusion about the CNTC program and the coaches, some BTs were resistant to their coaches at first, viewing them as *“just one more person (who) made me nervous...I didn't realize she's there to help me, she's not there to judge me.”*

Coaches described working hard to clarify their purpose and open the door to form initial relationships with their beginning teachers. Coaches stated that it was especially difficult to start in new Areas where Area officers and principals were not familiar with their work. In these new Areas, coaches acted as marketers, salespeople, or public relations workers introducing and offering their services to principals, schools, and teachers.

*OK, so the first couple months of your coaching you're basically selling yourself and the program, most of it is just like PR, so I think that's a challenge.*

All of the BT-coach dyads in the research sample moved beyond this introductory phase. BTs who initially resisted described overcoming this resistance once the purpose of CNTC and their coaches were clarified and they realized that their coaches were there to support them as teachers and not evaluate them. One coach described difficulties with one of her second year teachers (not in this sample), who resisted because she had a different coach last year and thus *“never really really accepted me.”* Because our BT sample was all new to CNTC, this was not an issue this year; however many of our BTs stated in

our spring interviews that they would only want to continue coaching if they continued with their current coach, so it may emerge as an issue going forward.

## **Phase Two: Engaging in the Coaching Process**

After establishing introductory relationships, coaches and BTs moved into the second phase depicted by the second tier in Figure 3: engaging in the coaching process. In this phase, coaches ascertained their BT's needs and capacity as well as approaches to further develop the relationship, while BTs determined how actively they would participate in the coaching process. It is important to note the interactive and iterative nature of the coaches' approach to the relationship and the BT's participation in the process; the approach taken by the coach influenced how actively the BTs participated and vice versa. Furthermore, this process was continuous throughout the year. Here we discuss this second phase of the BT-coach relationship and examine (1) coach identification of BT needs and approaches, (2) BT level of participation in the coaching process, and (3) the many external influences affecting this phase.

### ***Coaches Identify Needs & Approaches***

Coaches in the research sample took varied approaches to the relationship depending on their own capacity and experience, the BT's capacity and developmental stage, and perhaps most importantly, the BTs receptivity to the coaching process. As mentioned previously, BT capacity refers to both the technical skill associated with teaching and the mindset necessary to engage in the reflective cycle of inquiry. This mindset can be further described as a willingness and openness to examine one's own practice. The BTs in our sample were diverse in age, past experiences, pre-service training, personality and the contexts of their schools and, thus, their needs and capacities were distinct and unique.

Coaches stated they wanted their BTs to identify their own needs and areas of focus *"to make sure that I'm doing what they want me to do, I'm helping them with what they want me to."* Some coaches directly asked the BTs what their needs were, while others utilized the goal setting process to determine those needs: *"it's your goal setting time to get to know them, get them comfortable with you, so that you can start pushing them professionally."*

Most coaches seemed to prefer less assertive approaches with their beginning teachers because it gave them more subtle entry points to establish introductory relationships. They worried that using an assertive approach would seem too controlling and destroy the sometimes-tenuous introductory relationships. However, a few coaches stated that in general they were being more assertive and *"a little bit more businesslike"* because in their first year as coaches, their BTs viewed them as friends or aides rather than professional mentors.

Coaches described struggling to find just the right balance with each of their BTs to guide interactions, but not control them, a hallmark of the collaborative approach to coaching as described in Chapter 1. Using this approach, coaches recognize the importance of BT independence and control of their classrooms, and want BTs to drive the decisions and the focus of their interactions. One coach articulated this BT-driven approach well, saying, *"I don't want it to be me making the decisions; I want it*

*to be them making the decisions because they know their kids best.” In short, as part of the process of moving BTs toward independently enacting the cycle of inquiry as autonomous professionals, coaches supported BTs in their efforts to develop and find their own solutions rather than just giving them the answers. At the same time, the coach was an integral part of the process as a partner: “I’m not doing it by myself, but like we’re kind of doing it together and we’re thinking about this together so I’m taking some ownership, but you know there’s a partnership involved.”*

However, coaches acknowledged that some of their BTs were unable to identify their needs – either because they were too overwhelmed to see past the day-to-day challenges or because they were unable to ask for help.

*Sometimes they don’t realize they’re drowning...They think that they’re going along doing this, doing that and they don’t realize that until it’s too late, and I think it’s really hard for teachers to ask for help.*

Coaches had to decide whether their BTs were ready to drive and control the interaction, or were still too overwhelmed to reflect on their own performance, needs, and strengths. Looking back on their relationships with BTs, coaches told us at the end of the year that they felt that they had utilized the right approach at the right time with most of their BTs. One coach credited an initial assertive approach for successfully breaking through one of her BT’s initial resistance and allowing their relationship to flourish, saying, “She was extremely resistant when I first met her so I thought I needed to assert myself with her, kind of being mean a little bit and much more directive. Like, ‘Well, you don’t have a choice. So you’re going to have to do it.’” By June, the coach described this same relationship as one in which she only had to facilitate – the BT was able to initiate and implement many of her own ideas and projects and utilized the coach as a sounding board and advisor.

With a few BTs, coaches felt they had utilized the wrong approach at the wrong time. One coach stated that she gave one of her BTs “a lot of choice” throughout their first few interactions. Later in the year this particular BT was resistant when the coach pushed her to lesson plan. The coach stated that she regretted giving her too much choice too early on, because “she felt like she could say no later” and “if I had started with that she would have just been like, ‘Oh, OK this is what we do together.’ And she would have accepted it.”

Coaches stated that the approaches taken in the first few weeks often defined the pattern of their future interactions with their BTs. In retrospect, some coaches felt that clarifying and defining expectations and defining focus from the onset might have made their BTs more accountable to the process.

*One thing I would have done differently is to just have a more clear-cut focus from the beginning and kind of continue to revisit that as opposed to kind of bouncing around wherever she [BT] wanted to go.*

Another coach stated that she wished she had started the year by presenting a syllabus or road-map to the BT to clarify the expectations, the coach’s role, and lay the groundwork for the BT-coach

relationship. The coach wished she had said to the BT that “*there are going to be certain things that need to get accomplished, certain things you need to look at*” in order to “*give a really clear idea of what our relationship’s going to look like... I’m not just your friend, I’m here to accomplish all these things.*”

As stated earlier, the approach taken by coaches was dependent on how engaged and active their BTs were in the process. As BTs’ needs and capacity fluctuated throughout the year, these approaches needed to adjust and fluctuate as well. For each BT, coaches needed to constantly assess their needs, modify approaches and balance how to guide interactions without controlling them. How successful coaches were in this phase depended in part on how actively their BTs participated in the coaching process.

### **BT Participation in the Coaching Process**

In the second phase of Figure 3, the development of the BT-coach relationship depended on how actively BTs participated in the coaching process. How actively BTs participated, in turn, depended on how much BTs valued the coaching process. Here we distinguish liking the coach from valuing the coaching process, because the degree to which BTs valued their coach was not necessarily correlated with the degree to which they valued the coaching process. All of the BTs in the sample expressed liking their coach; however, valuing the process was a different story.

Valuing the coaching process is defined as the ability to move beyond the introductory relationship, and perceive coaches not just as friends or resource-providers, but as professional mentors whose feedback, suggestions, and support are critical to their success. BTs signaled their value of the coaching process through their level of engagement with the process. BTs who valued the coaching process responded quickly to their coach’s emails, remembered and prepared for their coach’s visits, brought notebooks and jotted down suggestions and ideas from their interactions. Coaches who valued the coaching process maximized the support and guidance their coach offered by actively seeking their coach’s help and advice. As one engaged BT stated:

*Some people can use their coach to the fullest but some people just don’t choose to, some people are more hands off than I want to be. I think your responsibility is to be open-minded and to see how this person can help you. But it’s like one of those things where they can’t enforce that, they can say you’re a probationary teacher you need a mentor for two years. But they can’t really force like, “Use this person because you’re going to be sad when they’re gone.”*

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**Valuing the Coaching Process:** A BT’s ability to move beyond the introductory relationship to perceive coaches not just as friends or resource-providers, but as professional mentors whose feedback, suggestions, and support are critical to their success.

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Not surprisingly, coaches also stated that they were more engaged with their BTs if their BTs actively valued the coaching process.

*The [BT] I spent the most time with and visited the most times is the person who calls me, who says, "When am I going to see you this week?" who calls me on the weekend, when she's lesson planning; who calls me to set up... time to work during Christmas break. She wanted this time. And I never said no. She's willing to do it, I am too.*

BTs who were highly active participants ranged from those who were active partners with their coaches in the process to those who were able to lead the interactions. One coach described this kind of BT as somebody who is "doing the whole thing" and just wants to "run ideas" by the coach to see what she thinks. Passive participants ranged from those who needed the coach to direct the interaction to those who resisted.

BT capacity, coach capacity and school contexts were among the factors affecting how actively BTs participated in the coaching process. If BTs were in survival mode, they were often too overwhelmed to participate in the coaching process because they were, as one coach stated, "too stressed to find time to see my value." Some beginning teachers had the instructional capacity to move beyond survival mode, but not the mindset necessary to reflect or receive feedback as part of the inquiry cycle and thus were resistant to feedback and/or had difficulties reflecting about their practice.

School context was another major factor in BT participation in the coaching process. The amount of existing school-level supports for teachers influenced the coaching experience. In extremely unsupportive schools, some BTs were often too overwhelmed to be active and reflective participants in the coaching process, while others were excited to have the support and structure provided by a CNTC coach. In this example, the coach describes how helpful the coaching structure was for BTs in a school with little support:

*... I feel like in schools ...where you're not supported it's really easy, to me as a coach, much easier to place demands on them because no one's giving them any structure and they need it. So, it's helpful for them to [say], "Well this is what we're going to do." ... And figure out a game plan. Whereas the teachers in the other schools, they have the game plan. They were given the game plan.*

On the other hand, BTs who received direction from the school in terms of prescribed lesson plans and testing structures "did not have a lot of freedom to design their own curriculum in their classroom," which affected the extent to which the coach could influence the BTs' practice. In some ways, the coach found this limiting:

*[Teachers in this school] don't even make their own assessments. At the end of each week they're given the assessments to give to their kids and they don't know what's on it until they see it on the day that they're giving it to their kids. So, it's kind of hard to coach teachers into differentiated instruction or using the standards when they're not able to*

*design assessments or have freedom with the curriculum. So it can be a little bit tricky to coach around that... The school culture does play a lot into it.*

In extremely supportive schools, BTs often had in-school supports and sometimes even Area or in-school coaches and thus felt an additional CNTC coach to be redundant.

School-based pressure or expectations was another area where school context influenced the coaching experience. In these settings, coaching was sometimes viewed not as an added benefit, but rather as an additional requirement in an already busy schedule.

*They had so many demands placed on them. There is so much pressure ... it's crazy. I know that I see the benefit in it, but I almost was like I would shut down too. Like, "You're another person in here looking at me."*

Coaches' ability to meet the diverse needs of their beginning teachers was a critical factor in how engaged BTs were in the coaching process. Most coaches in our sample were capable of being flexible in their use of both CNTC tools and their time. These coaches were able to address the beginning teacher's immediate needs but not lose focus on the beginning teacher's identified goal.

Scheduling threatened to be a challenge to coach flexibility. Some coaches had longer distances to travel and thus had less room in their schedule to be flexible with their time. To compensate, most of the coaches in our sample worked hard to make more time for BTs. Coaches made themselves available before school, in the evenings, on the weekends, and on breaks. One coach met one of her BTs every Sunday and would spend hours lesson planning. Another coach drove to her BT's home in the evening so they could meet without being interrupted. Almost all coaches constantly reminded their beginning teachers to email or call them if they needed anything.

### ***Using the BT-Coach Relationship to Encourage BT Participation***

The coaches in our sample always maintained pleasant and comfortable tones in the interactions we observed. Like Sophia in our earlier example, many described utilizing a "kill them with kindness" technique to help maintain the BT-coach bond and provide an incentive to BTs to be active participants in the coaching process. One explanation for why coaches were so careful with the BT-coach relationship was because coaches had little authority over BTs to ensure compliance with the coaching process. In this quote, the coach highlights that coaches were not supervisors or evaluators, and that this structure was by design.

*We're dealing with adults and not kids so adults ultimately make their own decisions and so you can come in and you can support them in certain ways, but they're not accountable to us....We are not involved in the hiring process, obviously, and then we're not involved in evaluating. So, we are literally just there for the teacher and whatever the teacher says goes, they're not accountable to us at all.*

Therefore, many coaches leveraged their relationships with BTs as an incentive for active participation. This was often a difficult and delicate balance. Coaches had to support their BTs and meet their needs while simultaneously developing the relationship and pushing BTs to think more critically about their practice.

When BTs did not value the coaching process, they resisted and were more passive participants in the coaching process. For four of our BTs in particular, this resistance often manifested itself through cancellations, lack of follow-through and disinterest.

*I've never really had people who are openly resistant, but I've had people who are less interested in my help. You know, they were only OK meeting for 40 minutes to discuss what was going well and what wasn't going well.*

All of our coaches experienced BTs canceling sessions at some point in the year. Some of these cancellations were most likely legitimate scheduling issues, but others seemed to be passive resistance. One coach stated that her beginning teacher cancelled five consecutive meetings. Another described a beginning teacher who often cancelled via text message at the last minute. One BT reported that she wasn't benefiting from CNTC and that she felt that her time would be better spent planning and learning from her students rather than meeting with her coach and filling out "worksheets." One coach felt she could only meet her teachers so far in the process and that it was up to her BTs to actively engage in the process.

*I'm not going to force teachers to do it when they don't want to do it; then it becomes my show and not theirs...it's like I can model I can do all these things, but you know it's up to them and they either will take it or they won't.*

Some BTs stated that they would have liked more structure from their coaches. Some stated that they were unsure how to answer when asked what they wanted to do or when given too many choices. As one beginning teacher stated:

### *A few BTs resisted passively*

Jennifer described clicking with her coach, Julie, right away when they first met. Jennifer enjoyed chatting with Julie, they were the same age and had similar interests. As Jennifer stated, "I really like her a lot, just as a person, in fact I was new to the city and I'm like, 'Oh do you want to just be my friend?'" However, Jennifer was resistant to the coaching process. Jennifer often canceled her meetings and told Julie to go spend her time with another beginning teacher upstairs, "who needs you more."

Jennifer would only meet with Julie during her prep period and never allowed Julie to observe her. During interactions, Jennifer's answers to Julie's questions were often short, thoughtless affirmations (yeah, OK, sure) or she would attempt to change the subject. Jennifer would glance at the clock often and at exactly 11:25 would ask, "Are we done here?" and stand up even though Jennifer had lunch and her students did not return to class until 11:50.



*Well I guess one of the things that's most hard for me is when she asks me, "So what do you want to do next? How can I help you next?" 'Cause sometimes you just don't [know], like, "I have no idea, you tell me."*

Another BT found the resources her coach provided useful, but did not feel that she and her coach were on the same page in terms of her needs.

*I really feel like I didn't really get much out of the New Teacher Center. I mean, I got when I would go to the seminar or to the workshops you know I would get stuff, but as far as having a coach, I really didn't get much. What I got was a lot of resources, so like my coach was really good with giving me resources and telling and giving me ideas about like center ideas and that's fine and dandy, I'm a creative person, I mean I have a bazillion ideas for centers or whatever, but you know centers was like the last thing I needed to focus on because I couldn't, I could barely do whole group instruction.*

Other forms of passive resistance included consistently forgetting about meeting times, and not following through or implementing ideas or solutions talked about during interactions. Some BTs refused to talk about planned topics or implement coach's suggestions.

Overall, however, the majority of our BTs valued the coaching process and actively participated. As one coach stated:

*I have more people who are more invested in it. I think I felt like I had good relationships with everybody...I had a group of people who were respectful, and they were—and they were, you know, participating. I had a couple people who, well, I felt more like they were more like refusing, like yeah, "I know that she has to be here, I'm just going to make it easy and go along." But I think that they truly were OK without me. You know, they truly*

### *Some BTs Actively Engaged in the Coaching Process*

Lucia was a beginning teacher who was at first resistant to her coach. She thought her coach was there to evaluate her and felt too overwhelmed to participate in the coaching process, *"I was crazy ... I was a nut for the first like two months..."* Lisa, her coach, concurred that the relationship was rocky at the onset, *"She was...not a nice person to deal with....And she definitely told me that she ...didn't want me being her coach."* Lisa took an assertive approach to this resistance, continuing to meet with Lucia and assert suggestions in a directive manner. Lucia stated that she became less resistant one day in November after Lisa suggested they get coffee and "just talk." Over coffee they discovered many shared interests and classroom philosophies.

After this, Lucia became a more active participant in the coaching process. She started by calling Lisa in the evening to run ideas by her. This eventually progressed into Saturday morning meetings. Lisa stated that Lucia was a high-capacity BT, who could take an idea and just run with it and also take feedback, brush it off and change her classroom practices based on that feedback.

Lisa felt that by winter, Lucia was able to take the lead in the relationship, saying *"she has become the expert"* and that her role was one of facilitator – listening to Lucia's ideas and giving feedback--and collaborator - creating lessons together.

were. But in general, more people were invested and they appreciated it, and they would ask for specific support.

### Phase Three: Maintaining Momentum Through Consistency and Focus

The third and highest phase of the BT-coach relationship as depicted in Figure 3 is maintaining momentum.<sup>9</sup> Beyond identifying needs and approaches and BT participation in the coaching process, coaches and BTs need to maintain momentum in order to make progress toward becoming an autonomous professional. Data from this study reveal that consistency and focus were important aspects of building momentum toward BT autonomy. However, this momentum was often derailed by lack of consistent meetings, lack of focus, or a BT's immediate needs.

Most coaches in our sample asked their BTs to identify a focus area or topic of interest to them, such as guided reading, centers, or integrated projects. However, coaches reported feeling frustrated by how difficult it was to maintain consistency when working on that focus topic. In addition to the obvious challenge of cancelled meetings, even when meetings took place, the planned topics, activities, and discussions could easily be interrupted by discussions about the immediate needs of the BT. Although this is part of the BT experience and certainly an area where coaching can provide support, it is also a challenge in terms of maintaining momentum, consistency and focus.

*Because there's always—there's just constantly something—you would just think that you would just go from one meeting to the next, but there's always 10 things that happen in each meeting that get in the way. Or there's always another focus that's being put on the teachers, and so that gets in the way. Getting the actual moving of practice is a challenge. It's just a challenge.*

Momentum was also derailed when BTs became distracted by personal issues or events. For example, a coach reported that her work with her BT was “going along [well] before that wedding and then when that wedding came it was like a screeching halt...I could never get the momentum back.”

Coaches displayed flexibility when changing their plans to help BTs with immediate needs in their classroom or school, such as giving advice and strategies on how to handle individual students' behavior issues (suspensions, bullying) and how to navigate the politics of their school. Illustrating the balancing act that coaches engaged in every day, many of our coaches stated that they would work to address both the issue and the planned focus, and some told us that when coaching expectations were clearly established at the beginning of the year, addressing a BT's immediate needs did not necessarily halt their momentum. This coach describes the importance of balancing the two:

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<sup>9</sup> Here, again, we note that Figure 3 is not a unidirectional and that each phase interacts with the other. If BTs do not actively participate in the process, it is difficult to build momentum; if there is no momentum, BTs may not value the process.

*Well, I always you know allow them talk, to vent, but then eventually I always kind of move into what we can do about it... So, let's look at something that we do have control over. But, I would never say oh no, we don't, I don't have time to hear that, you know, I got to fill out this [reflection worksheet]. Because I know as a teacher how at the end of the day you just vent or talk about [the] day and then we would get down to planning or whatever we need to do for the next day.*

In a few dyads, violence and tragedy at the school and community changed the coach's role and the focus of the support. When this occurred, coaches recognized that their roles had to become one of support, both supporting the BT emotionally and also helping BTs support their students. One coach who experienced this with the BTs we observed told us that putting aside her agenda and simply supporting the BT became her work, *"supporting that teacher through what are the most difficult episodes of being a teacher."*

For some dyads, gaining momentum at the end of the year – for only a month or two of consistent meetings and focus – was sufficient to positively influence the BT's practice. For example, one BT-coach dyad in our study gained momentum at the very end of their year together. Throughout the year, the pair had been working on establishing guided reading groups, planning mini-lessons for struggling readers, and improving fluency and comprehension. Their work had focus and was relatively consistent, except for a few cancellations, missed meetings, and rescheduling by both the coach and BT. At the end of the year, however, the pair really gained momentum. Both the BT and coach realized that independent reading was not yet a meaningful part of the fifth grade reading experience in the BT's language arts class. With six weeks left in the school year, and the BT acknowledging she would be losing her job at the end of the year due to budget cuts, both the BT and the coach committed to establishing routines and structures for independent reading, to regular classroom observations and feedback by the coach, and to discussing how to use the experience of this year to start off next year – regardless of where the BT ended up teaching.

Focusing on specific areas of a BT's practice also helped to maintain momentum. One coach stated that she chose to focus on her BT's relationship with her students because at the beginning of the year, *"she had a really hard time connecting with her class 'cause they didn't take her seriously, and she just didn't know—she didn't know what to do about it."* Throughout the school year, the coach consistently focused on turning her BT's attention to her relationship with students.

*When we got down to just looking at individual students, and what they were dealing with outside of school, what strengths they did bring to the table, I think she was able to see like, 'OK, if I change what I'm doing, then the kids will change what they're doing, you know.' I think she was used to thinking, 'If I say so, then they should do what I say, you know. They should change their behavior, because this is what I say.' And I think I—through our conversations, I was able to think about her impact, you know, and what her role in the success of this classroom was."*

By the end of the year, the BT had improved her relationship with her students and truly cared about them as individuals. She told her coach that she started spending time with them before school while they were on the playground. These conversations led to the BT learning more about her students' lives outside of the classroom. The BT stated that as a result of improving her relationships with students, she was able to better engage them in the classroom, saying, *"I notice with the kids in the last several weeks, especially with the younger kids, sixth- and seventh-graders, how—how much more I'm able to get them engaged in the class."*

In sum, the strength of the BT-coach relationship (as conceptualized by the three-interconnected phases presented in this chapter) is an important factor in how influential the coaching process will be on helping BTs become autonomous professionals; that is, to independently enact the cycle of inquiry with a goal toward continual improvement throughout the year. Simply put, BTs with strong relationships with their coaches in our study seemed to be more willing to actively participate in the coaching process. In this study, we observed that BT-coach relationships start with introductions and develop as coaches identify BT needs and utilize strategies to meet those needs. In order to further develop relationships, BTs must also be partners in the relationship – actively participating in the coaching process. Finally, consistency and focus is needed to maintain the momentum necessary for BT progress and ultimately BT autonomy. External influences such as school context and BT and coach capacity can either support or derail any of these key phases in the relationship.

## Chapter 4. Beginning Teachers: Growing Toward Becoming Autonomous Professionals?

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In Chapter 1, five influential factors were identified as being intimately and reciprocally related to an overall goal of moving BTs toward becoming autonomous professionals, or able to independently enact the cycle of inquiry and work toward continued improvement. To recount, these factors were: the BT's own characteristics and current capacities; the characteristics, strategies, and strengths of the coach; the nature of the relationship between the BT and coach; the focus of their interactions; and the school and district context in which the BT is situated. Regardless of how these multiple factors interact, it is important to get a sense of how the BTs in our sample have progressed toward autonomy and their perceived needs at the end of the year, as well as a glimpse of classroom practice of a sample of CPS beginning teachers.

In this chapter we discuss BT and coach perceptions of the progress of BTs during the year; areas where they still struggle; and some ideas of how this year's experience has informed what they will do next year. We rely on a mixture of coach and BT interviews for these assessments. We also describe BT practice based on a small sample of 29 classrooms at one time point in the spring. Finally, we end the chapter with how coaches gauge their own effectiveness in moving their BTs toward becoming autonomous professionals.

### Beginning Teacher Progress

Based on a range of answers from coaches and BTs, we classified areas of progress as being related to attitudes and habits of mind or to specific pieces of practice. We discuss coach responses first, followed by BT responses.

#### Growth in attitudes and habits of mind

##### Coach reflections

We asked all eight coaches in this study, "In what areas do you think you have influenced this BT's practice?" Most of them gave responses related to changes in BT attitudes and habits of mind. The most prevalent areas of growth were in reflection/professionalism (six coaches) and in confidence/being aware of success (five coaches). One coach quoted what a BT told her, saying that "*the one thing you gave me this year is you taught me how to reflect 'cause I was so busy just doing, doing, doing, and doing and I had to do everything; I never took time.*" The coach agreed with the BT's self assessment, noting that focusing on the BTs strengths was an important first step when reflecting and working toward improvement.

*I think that she has grown a lot in looking at the positives and starting with that first, thinking about what's working first before we get into challenges.*

Another coach pointed out that when BTs begin looking toward next year and ways they plan to improve, that signifies that the coach has successfully influenced that BTs' practice. She told us she enjoys:

*...seeing the teachers so proud of what they've accomplished, taking ownership, collaborating, planning ahead, already talking about ...how they're going to be next year, but now, "Next year when I do this," that's the best. That's the best because that shows-- just that comment, "when I do this next year, I'm going to"-- that shows that they're invested, they will come back. It shows that they're reflecting, analyzing, and preparing always to take it to the next level. And that's pretty good. Instead of being on their hands and knees at the end of the year, um, just trying to make it to summer by whatever means necessary.*

An additional frequently mentioned growth category was related to a change in the BTs' attitudes toward students. Half of the coaches in our sample specifically mentioned this as an important dimension. Two examples of coach's reflections on BT progress toward understanding their students appear below:

*I think early on there was a lot of blame on the kids, the parents, the school, the school counselor, the neighborhood...I think I've just gotten the BT to really think about what she can do to make her classroom better for kids.*

*I think she was surprised to learn how deeply she could care about so many kids. 'Cause she's kind of a, button-down, all-business kind of person, but I think her heart grew this year.*

Coaches also mentioned that they felt their BTs had changed their self-perception and had learned how to take suggestions and run with them, then modify them based on critique, all key components of the reflective cycle of inquiry.

### BT reflections

Beginning teachers reported that coaches were valuable in helping them become more reflective practitioners – to independently identify what things to work on, how to think about the larger picture of the goal or objective for students, and how to self-assess, revise, and move forward. Three quotes from BTs illustrate each of these areas, and indicate that these BTs are exhibiting characteristics of autonomous professionals.

*[My coach helped me this year by] just helping me figure out what things I need to work on. How I can get to where I want to be. A lot of reflecting on my teaching techniques. Because you have to know what you're dealing with before you try to change anything.*

*I think in your first year of teaching, where you're on a weekly basis staring into the abyss. ...you have to keep reminding yourself, "But OK what's my goal? I guess I can move on to the next chapter but is that really effective?"*

*I like her feedback. And the feedback actually helps me out a lot because now I know what to do and improve and I myself, catch myself doing those mistakes, I point those out [to myself].*

### **Growth in specific areas of practice**

Both coaches and BTs were able to name specific areas or instances of practice that had changed over the course of the year. Coaches noted improvement in differentiation, planning, and student engagement. BTs primarily focused on how they had become better classroom managers.

#### Coach reflections

Six of eight coaches commented favorably on their beginning teachers' progress in being able to differentiate their practice.

*She now understands that differentiation doesn't have to be massively painful; it doesn't have to be rocket science. Like, if she wants to do book club units, they can pick a different book.*

*We talked today about using assessment to keep tabs on her differentiation, but also to inform who she does what with next. She really took care of that piece of that, very, very, nicely.*

In addition, coaches talked about teacher growth in planning, in managing a classroom of engaged, self-directed students, and in providing students with guided and independent practice when learning new concepts. For example,

*I think [BT] realized how important it is to actually use the planning and setting the outcomes before you actually decide on what the activity is that you want the kids to do.*

*I just stood back and observed that everybody was busy. And even though there was talking, it wasn't shouting, and that they were talking, but they were talking about their work as they created these posters. It was very managed. But they were very self-directed.*

*[BT] had assumed that, "Oh, you know, I'm just gonna say this one time and they'll get it." But she learned over time that, "oh, I have to model, I have to give them guided practice and then also allow them to have independent practice as well".*

Other specific areas of practice where coaches noted growth included using data and implementing writer's workshop and literature circles.

#### BT reflections

While coaches listed differentiation and planning as areas of growth, the BTs themselves were more likely to comment on what they had learned about classroom management. Over half of them said that

they had developed more classroom management strategies. One teacher commented on how she had learned to be more effective at dismissing her students; another said she had learned to involve parents sooner. Another referenced the coach's advice to use a model table to show students what behaviors are expected in the classroom:

*Just little chestnuts of wisdom, you know, where [the coach will] be like, "Ok- this is a great thing. Use a table as the model table." So everybody watches how [that table is] acting and they're supposed to do this.*

Some BTs did talk about planning, and others talked at length about the process of knowledge and growth that took place throughout the year.

*[I learned] not to get overwhelmed by a big clunky teacher's manual. [Coach said], "let's pick something out of there that we think that we could develop for them and get them really excited about it."*

*We've done several different things this year. At the beginning of the year, I was struggling a little bit with management with a couple kids, so we would just talk about some strategies and help with that. After I felt like I got that really well under control, we did some planning, and then she would come in and observe the lesson. For example, I was doing writer's workshop and I was really comfortable with that, but I wasn't as comfortable with how to speak with the students, so one day she came in when I was doing student conferencing and sort of just listened in on conferences and we talked about what worked and what didn't work. And she would [watch a lesson and] would tell me how many people were off-task and how well I was keeping their attention. That was really helpful because it was a positive thing because most of them were pretty well on-task even though what I was doing was maybe not traditionally a fun activity.*

### **BTs plan to do things differently in their second year**

When asked what they planned to do differently next year, BTs gave a variety of answers. The responses varied from commenting on specific content strategies, to spending more time on planning, to making their classroom management expectations clear from the beginning.

Four BTs commented that they had learned that they needed to make their management expectations clear early and to enforce them consistently.

*I think that I came in with not as much structure as I needed. I didn't come in kind of realizing that you really need to have a plan and you need to stick to the plan.*

*At the beginning of the year, I told them what my expectations were and they were just up there. When somebody did something that wasn't in my expectation, I never went back and pointed that out. And maybe I should have done that, you know? And hopefully [for next year] that's changed.*



Others talked about specific curricular changes they will make:

*Just the questioning itself, like what kind of question is this, is it a cause and effect question, is it going to be thin question or is it going to be a thick question? Using that strategy to help their comprehension and like starting it day one, so by the end of the year it's almost like something that they live, you know when they're reading and when they're answering questions.*

A couple of teachers and coaches commented that the coaching process resulted in little or no BT progress. One teacher commented that what she had gotten out of the year was learning how to use Donor's Choose website. Her coach said:

*And then there are others who, you know, you give them an idea, but you come back and it's just sort of withering on the vine or, you know, it's just hasn't gone anywhere. It just kind of falls flat.*

### **Coaches' Self-Assessment of Effectiveness**

Throughout this report, we have described the many ways in which coaches support BTs toward becoming autonomous professionals who can engage in the cycle of inquiry to improve their own practice and improve student learning. At the end of two or three years of coaching, we wondered how coaches judged their own effectiveness toward this goal. We asked coaches about their practice in general: "How do you know you are effective as a coach?" Coaches indicated that they generally measured this effectiveness through classroom observations, noting both BT practice and the degree to which BTs implement some of the techniques they had worked on with their coach. Others listed additional markers of both their effectiveness and BT growth. For example, one coach told us how she measures both BT growth and her effectiveness according to her BTs' teaching practice:

*When you're observing them, are they practicing the things that you worked on? As the year goes on, the other thing you notice is the level of questioning that they have. Their questions become more concise and specific. At the beginning of the relationship, the questions are sometimes all over the place because they don't know what they need. But as you work with them, they start knowing what it is they want to work on, and they develop their own questions. You see them doing the things that you worked on them with and them wanting to know more.*

Another coach also talked not just about growth in practice, but also about growth in BT autonomy.

*I feel effective when they're implementing some things we've talked about and that they're doing it on their own... It's like, "OK, I started it and then you continue it when I'm not there."*

And others celebrated specific places where they saw their efforts bear fruit:

*One teacher had talked about how her kids weren't doing very well on their vocabulary assessment...So we talked about...other things that she can do to teach them the vocabulary lessons. And so the other day when I went in her classroom to do an observation she had all these different words with different vocabulary games that the kids were doing. It was just like she got it...I can't wait for her to give the kids the assessment.*

We also asked coaches to comment specifically on where they felt they had had the most influence on the BTs in our sample. In four of the 16 dyads in this sample, the coaches felt that had not been able to exert much influence. In all of these cases the reason seemed to include BT capacity and/or the BT-coach relationship. For example, in one case the coach was not able to influence practice—she was only able to provide support, as she said there was “*no teaching going on.*” In another case the BT seemed to have embraced the idea of differentiation and using differentiated groups for independent reading. Yet she never got around to actually doing it. In a third case the coach described the BT as “*struggling,*” but also commented that they had an “*up and down*” relationship. In the fourth case the coach said, “*I didn't do it [influence her] because I didn't have the skills, I didn't know how to do it.*”

In the other 12 cases, coaches provided us with specific areas where they felt they had been influential. The most frequent area where they felt they had been influential was the area of planning, specifically in terms of differentiation.

*In the beginning she was doing a lot of work sheets, and there was no differentiation at all. And when we started planning, we talked about like how you set outcomes and then based on those outcomes, what activities do you want the students to be able to do?*

## **The Classroom Practice of Beginning Teachers**

Even though we do not describe teaching practice or growth in practice on an individual level, we do have a snapshot in time of BT practice in CPS. This aggregate picture serves to put what we have heard about teaching practice from the coaches and BTs in our sample into a larger context.

We visited 29 classrooms in spring 2010 to gain an understanding of average teaching practice at the end of the year among first-year teachers who were supported by CNTC coaches. Unlike the sample of 16 BTs who were part of the year-long study and were randomly selected from among all first-year teachers receiving support from experienced CNTC coaches, it is likely that the observation sample is not representative of the same larger group of first-year teachers.

The population selected for observation included all first-year teachers who were teaching regular education students in any core subject area in grades 2-8, were not already in our dyad sample, and were supported by CNTC coaches. In all, approximately 100 teachers received recruitment materials from both CCSR and CNTC, explaining that their participation would be anonymous, carried no risk to them, and could benefit subsequent cohorts of BTs, CNTC, and CPS in general. Twenty-nine teachers agreed to participate in the study and allowed a member of the research team to visit their classroom in May 2010.

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## Box 5. Levels of Performance on the Danielson Framework

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Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* divides the complex activity of teaching into four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Through these four domains the Framework "aims to describe all of teaching in all its complexity," while also providing a pathway to improved instructional practice. Observers can use the framework to assign ratings that are a measure of teaching performance across 76 components in all of the domains. In increasing order, the levels of performance are unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. Higher levels of performance generally represent both greater experience and increased expertise, although the ratings represent levels of performance of *teaching*, not of *teachers*. Danielson points out this important distinction, noting that performance is highly variable. There are general patterns of performance, but "any individual lesson may be highly successful or it may fall apart."

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**Unsatisfactory** At this level, the teacher does not yet appear to understand the concepts underlying the component. In some areas of practice, performance represents teaching that is below the standard of "do no harm."

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**Basic** At the Basic level, the teacher appears to understand the concepts underlying the component and attempts to implement the elements. However, implementation is sporadic, intermittent, or otherwise not successful. Performance at this level is characteristic of novice teachers, or when more experienced teachers are trying a new activity. This level is considered minimally competent for novice teachers, with experience likely to improve performance.

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**Proficient** The teacher at this level clearly understands the concepts underlying the component and implements them well. In their teaching practice, many routines and decisions are automatic. Teachers at the Proficient level know the content and students, and have a broad repertoire of strategies and activities from which to choose. In addition, they often serve as resources to one another as they participate in a professional community.

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**Distinguished** Teachers at the Distinguished level are master teachers. Classrooms functioning at this level seem to be running themselves. Students comprise a community of learners: they know what to do, are highly motivated and engaged, and assume responsibility for their own learning. Some teachers – particularly with some groups of students – may never consistently attain this level, but it remains a goal for all teachers, regardless of how challenging any particular set of circumstances may be.

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Using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, six trained observers visited classrooms, took detailed field notes, and used evidence to assign one of four ratings (unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or distinguished) to each of 10 components in Classroom Environment (Domain 2) and Instruction (Domain 3). Each component has a specific description of what each rating means for that component; although there is a more specific rubric for each of the 10 components, Box 5 provides a brief overview of the generic description of each rating.

We made a total of 280 ratings.<sup>10</sup> Figure 4 shows the distribution of Framework ratings—across all components, across Domain 2 (Classroom Environment) components, and across Domain 3 (Instruction) components. The data show that, overall, more than half of ratings were proficient or distinguished (light blue and dark blue parts of the first vertical bar). However, when we look at the data more closely, we find that 70 percent of classroom environment ratings were proficient or distinguished compared to only one-third of the instruction ratings. Most ratings were either basic or proficient in both domains, but a greater proportion of ratings were proficient or higher in classroom environment as compared to the distribution of ratings in instruction. In other words, it was harder for beginning teachers to receive a proficient rating on the instructional components of the Framework.



## The Observation Sample

The 29 classroom observations took place in 29 different schools in 11 different Areas. One-third (10) of these schools had student populations that were more than 85 percent Latino. Five schools were more than 85 percent African American, eight were predominantly minority (less than 30 percent white or Asian), and six had smaller minority populations (more than 30 percent white/Asian). Classrooms were spread across elementary grades (2-8). Nine were in primary grades (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>), 10 were in middle grades (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) and 10 were in upper grades (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>). Most primary and middle grade teachers taught in self-contained classrooms, while all but one of the upper grade teachers were departmentalized. Of these, four taught English/reading, two taught math, and three taught science. The schools ranged from 20 percent to 99 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Three-quarters of schools had at least 84 percent of students qualified as low-income.



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<sup>10</sup> If we had rated 10 components in each classroom we would have had 290 ratings. However, sometimes an observer did not have enough evidence to make a rating on a particular component. This was most likely to happen in component 3E, flexibility and responsiveness, since this may be difficult to observe without having had a pre-observation conference with the teacher.

Figure 4. More teachers received proficient and distinguished ratings on Domain 2 (Classroom Environment) than Domain 3 (Instruction)

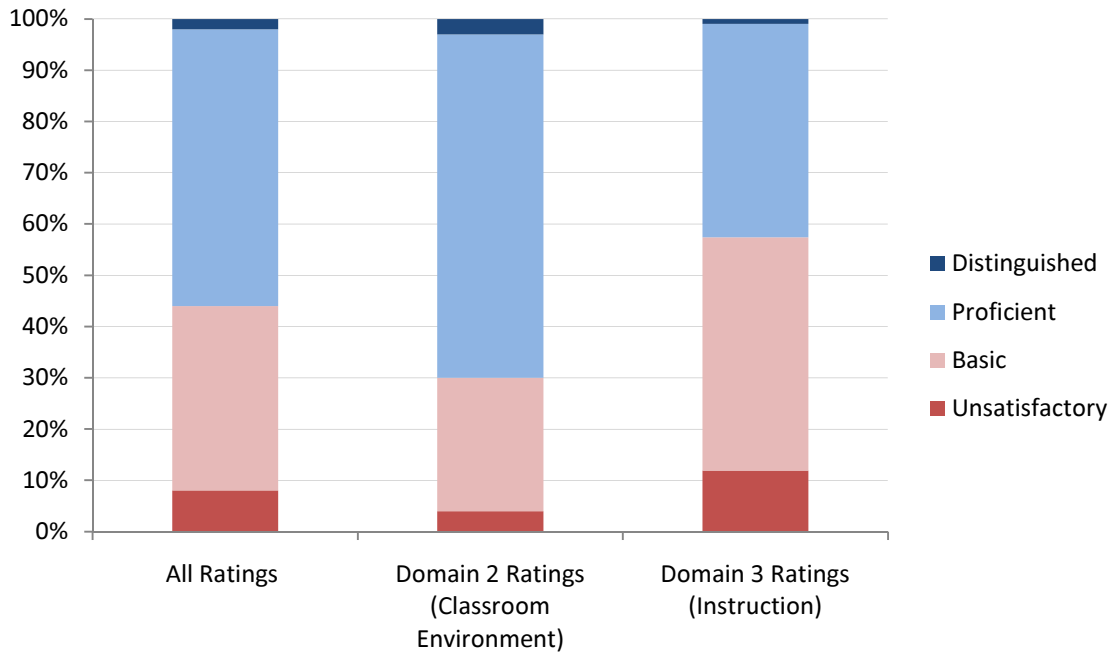
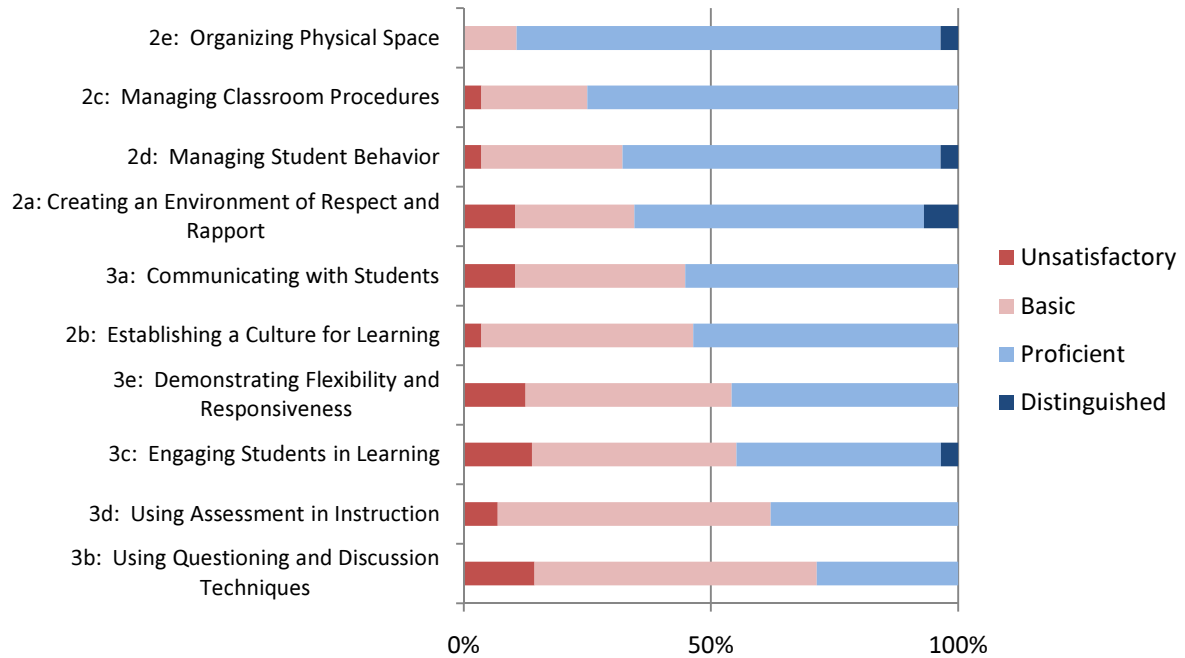


Figure 5 presents the distribution of classroom ratings by each of the 10 components. The light blue and dark blue parts of each bar represent proficient and distinguished ratings, respectively, while the red and pink represent unsatisfactory and basic ratings. The components are ordered from easiest to hardest, as determined by the proportion of teachers receiving proficient and distinguished ratings. Components at the top of the figure were primarily classroom environment (Domain 2) components. More than half to three-quarters of teachers received ratings of proficient or above. At the bottom of the figure, fewer teachers in our sample demonstrated proficient levels according to the Framework definitions. This information can be used to determine where BTs – on average – still need support from coaches at the end of the first year. In this sample, the three hardest components were engaging students in learning, using assessment in instruction, and using questioning and discussion techniques.

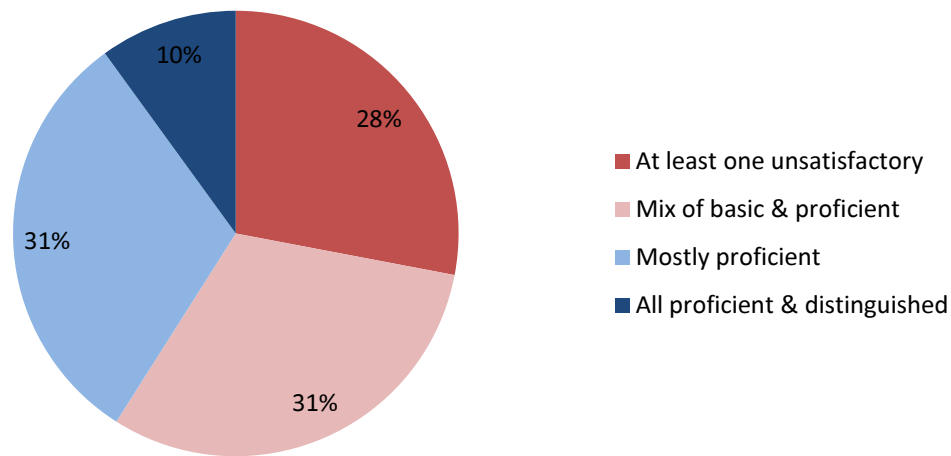
Figure 5. New teachers received higher ratings in Classroom Environment (Domain 2) than Instruction (Domain 3). The hardest component for teachers in our sample was using questioning and discussion techniques.



Figures 4 and 5 present overall ratings across the sample of 29 teachers and across all components. We also looked within individual teachers to explore whether teachers tended to receive the same ratings regardless of component, or whether individual teachers received high ratings on some components and low ratings on others. Figure 6 shows how teachers fell into four categories based on the 10 Framework ratings they received.<sup>11</sup> Once again, we note that the observation sample only includes 29 teachers and may not be representative of the population of first-year teachers in CPS.

<sup>11</sup> This categorization scheme mirrors the one used in CCSR’s teacher evaluation work (Sartain, Stoelinga, & Krone, 2010). The teacher evaluation study uses ratings given by external observers and principals.

Figure 6. Four categories of teachers in our sample (n=29)



While most teachers received a mix of basic, proficient, and distinguished ratings, over one-quarter of the teachers received at least one unsatisfactory rating.

### Applying These Findings

While our observation data is limited—having occurred at one point in time at the end of the school year—the data do provide an overview of the state of BT practice at the end of their first year in the classroom. We find that BTs struggle more with components related to Instruction than with those related to Classroom Environment; in fact, the Domain 2 component that is the “hardest” is the component that is most related to instruction. This finding is paralleled in related work CCSR has done using the Danielson Framework to understand teaching practice, and provides insights into areas where CNTC and other coaches can focus their future efforts on improving BT practice.

Another limitation of observational data is that observers cannot see the “behind the scenes” work of planning, reflecting, and assessing that teachers engage in as autonomous professionals enacting the reflective cycle of inquiry. Although the classroom may be where all of the different aspects of teaching come together in an observable way, the aspects of teaching that coaches and BTs address such as planning, assessing, and reflecting are not directly observable during a single classroom instructional observation.

As the interview responses above indicate, defining “progress” or growth or even performance as a teacher—all components of becoming an autonomous professional—is a complex undertaking. Unfortunately, we do not have enough data to make external assessments about the degree to which the BTs in our study are becoming autonomous professionals. Nor do we have the kind of data that

would allow us to assess their teaching practice. However, even though we do not describe teaching practice or growth in practice on an individual level, we do have a snapshot in time of BT practice in CPS. This aggregate picture serves to put what we have heard about teaching practice from the coaches and BTs in our sample into a larger context. And our interview and interaction protocols suggest that the coaching practice that may have fed the teacher practice we observed on that one occasion was informed by an understanding about the needs of BTs in general and, perhaps more importantly, by an understanding about the particular needs of that particular BT over time.



## Chapter 5. Summary and Considerations

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The research described in this report used data collected from interviews and observations of the interactions between eight second-year and third-year CNTC coaches and 16 of their beginning teachers – two dyads per coach. The study was designed as a formative evaluation to inform the organizational knowledge and decision making at the Chicago New Teacher Center, and as such, the findings are reflective and descriptive.

At a very general level, we investigated how the coaching experience affected coaches and beginning teachers. We developed an understanding of the complex and dynamic relationship between the two as they worked together toward achieving the goal of BT as autonomous professional. Observationally, we witnessed expert coaches successfully support teachers in a wide variety of circumstances with ever-changing needs and challenges. The design of this study cannot tell us if the BTs would have improved in the same way without a supportive coach, but our data do show that coaches provided teachers with support that influenced teacher practice. For example, when Coach Sophia and BT Barbara in Chapter 2 focused on lesson planning, it allowed Barbara to be prepared for the class for the week, and to be able to focus more on other challenges, such as successful classroom management. Or alternatively, with routines in place for working in groups, another BT could focus on more challenging instructional arrangements, such as differentiating her guided reading instruction, or supporting students in making independent book choices.

More specifically, evidence from this research study was used to answer three main research questions: (1) What affects how coaches support beginning teachers? (2) How do coaches support the practice of beginning teachers? and (3) How are the goals and activities of CNTC coaches aligned with the needs of beginning teachers?

We began by describing the goal of coaching as examined in this study to be one of moving BTs toward becoming “autonomous professionals,” not to convey that the teacher works in isolation, but rather that she is able to engage in professional reflection and participate in a professional community in an effective way. Specifically, we defined an “autonomous professional” as a teacher who (1) has embraced the cycle of inquiry (plan-teach-assess-reflect) as part of her regular instructional routine; (2) possesses and implements the pedagogical, management, and analytic skills that are at the core of teaching; (3) is constantly assessing and working to improve her own practice; (4) knows where to find resources and supports to solve problems when needed; (5) connects with students and families; and (6) works to continually improve practice, both as an individual teacher and as part of a larger community of teaching professionals. These characteristics are familiar components of best practice approaches to teaching, and even experienced teachers use these guiding characteristics to work toward continual improvement. In this way, achieving autonomy is not a final goal, but rather the ability to engage in an ongoing reflective process of continual improvement. Taking the five influential factors described in Chapter 1 (BT capacity, coach capacity, the BT-coach relationship, the focus of the BT-coach interaction, and the larger context) into account when supporting beginning teachers may be a useful organizing framework for both coaches and teachers engaging in the coaching process.

Chapter 2 used examples to paint a portrait of coaching, addressing the second research question and highlighting how coaching decisions and strategies take into account the focus topic and context in implicit ways, and how both depend on and develop the BT-coach relationship. The extended example of Sophia and Barbara illustrated how coaching strategies are situational. Other examples showed that moving a BT toward becoming autonomous does not happen as a whole entity, nor in a linear direction, but rather incrementally. In such a complex endeavor, growth and progress occurs in pieces, in spurts, in more than one area at a time, and not always completely, cycling back to previous knowledge and building upon it for future decision making.

Chapter 3 addressed the other aspect of the second research question -- the importance of the BT-coach relationship. Consistent with the literature and our expectations, the data revealed overwhelming evidence that the BT-coach relationship was central. Within this broader context, we identified three phases that help to articulate how the relationship supported or impeded a coach's efforts to move the BT toward autonomy. Once again, the BT's capacity, the coach's capacity, and the context played a large role. Chapter 3 also addressed a key piece of the first research question, showing that in situations where there was limited momentum in terms of focus or consistency of the coach and BT's work, it may have been because of a lack of accountability the BT felt toward the coach and/or the CNTC model. Given the larger context, the only accountability tool coaches were able to leverage was the personal relationship they built with the BT. Limited progress toward autonomy may also have been the result of the BT choosing not to actively engage in the coaching process. In the successful coaching relationships we observed, both the BT and the Coach were independently engaged as well as engaged as a dyad in moving practice forward.

In Chapter 4, data from observations of BT practice revealed that BTs demonstrate higher ratings in areas of classroom environment than in areas of instruction. In many of the dyads in this study, instructional topics were discussed, highlighting that coaches were working on improving this specific area of teacher practice. However, more interestingly, observations of BT-coach interactions, BT interviews, and coach interviews revealed that coaches tailor their support to BTs in individual ways. Therefore, although there are some similarities across BTs in terms of areas for improvement, coaches differentiated their support for individual BTs, taking into account the BTs capacity, carefully choosing a strategy and topic of conversation, and taking into account the BT's school context and immediate needs.

## Considerations

Four main considerations emerged from the findings presented above. First, the five factors that influence a BT's progress toward becoming an autonomous professional who engages in the cycle of inquiry can be used as an overarching framework for coaches, teachers, and administrators to consider when engaging in the coaching process. Working to explicitly address and improve each factor separately may help improve the interconnected experience of the five factors working together.

- **Coach Capacity:** For example, CNTC directs a great deal of attention to the "Coach Capacity" factor. It selects high-quality candidates to be coaches and provides them with extensive professional development experiences to improve their knowledge, decision making, and

available strategies for supporting teachers. It provides tools, establishes guidelines, and implements support structures (such as lead coaches, resources, and peer coach discussions) to increase each coach's capacity to best meet the needs of BTs. Based on our evidence it might also be productive for CNTC to pay attention to caseload-to-geography ratios; work to provide more structured opportunities for coaches to interact with each other around their practice; and work even more carefully at backward planning to ensure that coaches can be in their schools closer to the start of the school year—for schools on the regular calendar and for those on alternative schedules, such as those on Track E.

- **BT Capacity:** CNTC was not able to select the BTs that coaches supported during the 2009-2010 school year, but did make efforts to increase BT capacity through district-wide professional development opportunities and through the intensive efforts of coaches. It might also be productive for CNTC to envision ways in which BTs are selected to receive or continue to receive coaching services. While having this discussion may run counter to a culture that values continual opportunities to improve, it may also help identify situations where coach time and energy might be better allocated.
- **BT-Coach relationships:** As we detailed in Chapter 2, this is an extremely important factor influencing BT growth. However, there are some areas where a stronger framework might help enhance these relationships. Coaches could be more explicit about expectations for the relationship, about the importance of communication, and about how the relationship itself will influence – and be influenced by – the work that BTs and coaches engage in together. This might help BTs and coaches move through the phases of the relationship more quickly in an effort to establish and maintain momentum earlier in the school year.
- **Focus of the BT-coach interaction:** We chronicled the degree to which coaches were able to differentiate their strategies and to focus their efforts on individual BT needs. It was clear to the researchers that, in general, coaches had an individualized plan for each BT. However, in this area too, explicit communication might improve the coaching process. It may be beneficial to coaches to be more explicit about the focus of the discussion– whether it is specific content area focus, pedagogic strategy, classroom management technique, immediate reaction to what happened during the last period class – or any combination of these. This may help balance the focus on long term goals and ongoing needs with immediate concerns, while also modeling how to engage in the inquiry cycle as an autonomous professional.
- **Context:** Obviously, many contexts influence the BT's practice and experience – the classroom context, grade level context, school context, and the larger district context (and in this case a looming budget crisis that resulted in layoffs of many beginning teachers). Many (or most) of these are outside of CNTC's control. However, it might be worth discussing whether CNTC should offer coaching services to schools or Areas that already have a coaching structure in place, even if the CNTC model might be more effective. In addition, the school environment, instructional leadership, available resources, and the proximity of other BTs could also be important considerations when matching coaches to BTs.

Second, we devoted an entire chapter to the BT-coach relationship because of its central importance to the coaching experience. Although we expected to see a distinction between the relationship-building aspects of coaching and efforts to move practice forward, we found that the two were inseparable. The relationships between coaches and BTs were influenced by the work they did together, while at the same time the relationships contributed to the kind of work that could be accomplished by the dyad. We encountered some instances of coaches providing emotional support for overwhelmed BTs, but the majority of emotional support that we observed coaches providing to BTs had direct connections to students, to classroom practice, and to the school context. Our analysis revealed that pushing practice and relationship building rarely happen separately during the coaching experience.

Third, BTs who were satisfied with the coaching experience explained that they appreciated the individual approach, and coaches said they measured their effectiveness by the extent to which BTs were able to apply the individualized changes they had discussed. Given that coaches feel most successful when they can tailor their support to BTs in very individualized ways, providing flexible structures for coaches and for BTs that allow for differentiation is key. Whether those flexible structures translate into allowing coaches more professional discretion about the number of times or number of visits or nature of the visits could be a productive discussion.

Finally, evidence from this research study provides thoughts about future research on the impact of coaching.

- First, given the active participation and passive resistance of BTs in our sample, we believe that future studies that explore the impact of coaching must also measure BT participation – not just in terms of the quantity of participation, but also the quality of the participation in terms of the BTs’ engagement in the process.
- Second, given the amount of future planning taking place at the end of the first year of coaching, we think that the impact of coaching on BTs will not be realized until a few years down the road. The support that a coach provides teachers new to the profession helps them set up their class the following year, and provides the foundation for how to plan, teach, assess and reflect over time toward continued improvement as an autonomous professional. Although it is difficult to measure the impact of a coach on a BTs practice at any time, we think that it is more difficult to make a conjecture of impact after only one year in the profession. And it is even harder still to hypothesize about the degree to which that teacher could have developed as an autonomous and reflective professional without having had a coach to model the process.

The processes of teaching, learning and coaching are all complex endeavors and there are many individual and contextual factors influencing a beginning teacher's path towards becoming a reflective practitioner. This study utilized the specific context of the Chicago implementation of the New Teacher Center induction model to gain insight into the coaching experience from the perspectives of both beginning teachers and coaches. We are hopeful that future work can build on the findings described here.

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## Appendix A: Sample, Data Collection, and Analytic Methods

### *BT-Coach Dyads*

Eight focus coaches were randomly selected from a pool of all second- and third-year CNTC coaches.<sup>12</sup> First-year coaches were excluded from the sample because of the steep learning curve that coaches experience during their first year. Two BTs were selected for each of the coaches for a total of 16 BTs and 16 Coach-BT dyads. We followed these 16 dyads throughout the year, observing three interactions for each dyad and conducting follow-up debrief interviews with both coach and BT. We also interviewed the 16 BTs once and the eight coaches twice. These dyads provided the majority of the data used to answer all three guiding research questions. Data collected from the BT-coach dyads is described in Table A1.

Table A1. Data collected from BT-coach dyads

Data Source	Description	N
Observation of BT-coach meetings (interactions) (Time varied: 20-80 minutes)	Each of the 16 BT-coach dyads were observed three times between January and June. Researchers audio-taped the interaction and took detailed field notes during the observation. Audiotapes were transcribed and analyzed.	48
BT and coach debriefs (5-15 minutes each)	BTs and coaches were interviewed briefly after every interaction to get their impressions on what took place. While we asked some broader questions, the goal was to get them to reflect on that day's interaction.	47 coach debriefs 43 BT debriefs <sup>13</sup>
Coach interviews (45-60 minutes)	Coaches were interviewed at the beginning and end of the study to understand more about their experiences as CNTC coaches, perceptions of beginning teachers' needs and progress, and the support they received from the organization.	16
BT interviews (30-45 minutes)	BTs were interviewed once at the end of the year to learn about their needs and progress, their experience with the coach, and future plans.	15 <sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Of the eight coaches that were initially randomly selected, one chose not to participate in the study. In this case, we selected a replacement coach. Of the 16 BTs initially selected to be part of this study, four chose not to participate and replacements were selected.

<sup>13</sup> Scheduling constraints and willingness to return phone calls contributed to some missing debriefs during the course of the study.

<sup>14</sup> Only one of the dyad BTs declined to be interviewed at the end of the year.

### ***Classroom Observation Data***

To understand more about the needs of all BTs beyond those in our sample, including areas of instructional practice that are difficult for BTs to master and where they are doing relatively well in the classroom, researchers observed a lesson in 12 BTs classrooms in December 2009 and 29 BT classrooms in Spring 2010. In concordance with the CNTC continuum of teacher practice, researchers used the Charlotte Danielson “Framework for Teaching” to structure classroom observation data. Researchers took ethnographic field notes, documenting teacher and student actions and interactions. We then aligned our scripted notes with the 10 Danielson Framework components in Domain 2 (The Classroom Environment) and Domain 3 (Instruction) in order to assign a level of performance (unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or distinguished) to each of the 10 components. These 10 ratings provided a description of the quality of the observed lesson. These data also help to define areas where beginning teachers struggle and need support.

To increase inter-rater reliability across researchers on the team, a pilot application of using the Danielson Framework to observe and rate classrooms was conducted in 12 classrooms in December 2009. These observations were generally conducted in pairs so that researchers could meet as a team to discuss and norm ratings. The classroom observations described in this report are from the 29 classrooms observed in late spring 2010.

### ***Log Data***

In order to learn about CNTC coach responsibilities, we analyzed the log data that CNTC requires coaches to complete after each meeting with a BT. This analysis focused specifically on 266 entries completed by the eight coaches in the sample and how they used the logs to report information about BTs. A summary of the log analysis appears in Appendix B.

### **Data Analysis**

*Dyad data.* Interviews and debriefs were transcribed verbatim and codes were generated using a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. Deductively, a set of initial codes were created to mirror the interview and debrief protocols. The coding scheme was tested and used to generate additional codes for themes that emerged in the data there were not captured by the draft codes. Each researcher was responsible for the codes that fell in a particular category or theme. For example, we coded the coach interviews for broad themes (and more narrow concepts within those themes) like coach strategy, coach development, focus topic, and implementation challenges.

Each of the interview and debrief codes was analyzed across coaches and beginning teachers. Summary reports were run on each code such that all sections of the interview assigned to each code were put together in a single report. For example, we have a summary report for coach challenges, BT progress, data use, etc. From the summary reports, we wrote descriptive summaries to provide rich description of BT and coach insights.

Interactions were also transcribed and supplemented with field notes from the researcher, which denoted tone, body language, and other relational aspects that cannot be picked up on a recorder.

*Classroom observation data.* Ratings from observational data were compiled into a spreadsheet in order to analyze the ratings across components and domains. Simple descriptive statistics were used to determine patterns across classrooms. Qualitative field notes were used to provide contextual information about the ratings, and to inform interview questions and other qualitative analyses.

*Log data.* To provide CNTC with feedback about how coaches use the logs, we looked at log data taken from a one-time pull in March 2010. We analyzed the logs for the 16 beginning teachers of the eight dyad coaches, which amounted to 266 log entries (or 16.6 logs/beginning teacher). The logs consist of a quantitative section where coaches can choose from a variety of options about how they allocated their time with teachers. Coaches also have a notes section where they can record any other information about the meeting. We used an inductive and deductive approach in our analysis, described further in Appendix B.



## Appendix B: Summary of the Coaching Log Analysis

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Coach logs are an electronic record of the work that a coach and BT engage in together. Completed weekly by coaches, the log is a place to document the time spent, topics covered, and next steps a coach might take in working with a BT. Lead coaches are also able to monitor coach activities by viewing their weekly electronic log records.

The format of the log database was a work-in-progress when we first examined the logs in March 2010. Therefore, our intention in looking at the log data was non-evaluative. Rather, we sought to learn about coaching from another perspective, using another source of data. The findings – which were shared in a presentation to CNTC leaders in June 2010 and summarized here – are intended to provide insights to CNTC staff about how the logs seem to be used by coaches, what kinds of data can be gleaned from the log reports, and ways in which the logs could be changed to best suit the purposes of all of the log users. As part of this analysis, we examined the logs of the eight focus coaches and 16 focus BTs in the larger research study in March 2010.<sup>15</sup>

### Quantitative Findings

In March 2010, the average number of logs recorded for the 16 BTs served by the eight focus coaches in this study was 16.6. However, the number of logs varied both between and within coaches. On average, some coaches recorded more logs than others, and for each coach, there was a range of logged meetings depending on the BT, suggesting that coaches were differentiating the amount of time spent with their BTs. Cancellations, interaction preparation and email/phone activity were all logged and the Collaborative Assessment Log was the most often checked tool.

### Checkbox Choices

It was difficult to discern exactly what the checkboxes were capturing or whether coaches were choosing checkboxes in a haphazard fashion. For example, a closer inspection of the Danielson domains seemed to indicate that the checkboxes were not capturing the fluidity that was observed during our other BT-coach interactions. During many interactions, the research team observed coaches addressing aspects of all four domains in a short time period. These findings lead us to wonder whether the coaches thought the checkboxes were mutually exclusive, and that they were only able to choose one box. Conversely, perhaps the number of checkbox options led to “checkbox fatigue” -- the Danielson domains were four of 34 checkbox choices. It was also unclear whether coaches were supposed to check these boxes when they explicitly talk about the Danielson domain or use the

Danielson Domains	Average per BT
Domain 1	2.74
Domain 2	1.89
Domain 3	3.36
Domain 4	1.27

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<sup>15</sup> The log data was reviewed at one point in time - March 2010. Therefore, the summary presented here only includes documented BT and coach activities and reflections from September 2010 through March 2010.

Danielson Continuum or whether they should be recording which domains are implicitly discussed during each meeting.

### Qualitative Data

Qualitative data used in this analysis came from the notes section of the logs, an open-ended unstructured area to enter text however the coach preferred. Although the notes proved to be a rich source of qualitative data, it was also extremely difficult to aggregate due to the amount of variability among and within coaches both in length and structure. In other words, coaches were *different from each other* in what they wrote *and* they were *different from themselves* depending on which BT was the focus of their documentation.

About half of the coaches in the log analysis used a structured format similar to the collaborative assessment log (CAL) tool including such elements as the Danielson domain, component, focus of the visit, next steps and reflections. Unstructured logs had no set format and varied from a list of activities to descriptive paragraphs. Three patterns emerged from the notes recorded by coaches: (1) activities of coaches and BTs (either from a coach-focused or BT-focused perspective), (2) challenges, and (3) documenting BT progress.

### ***Coach-focused versus BT- focused log notes***

The notes section of the coach logs captured two perspectives: one focused on coach activities and another focused on BT activities. Logs sometimes focused entirely on coach actions or entirely on BT actions, and sometimes included both BT and coach perspectives. Table B2 highlights the two perspectives captured by the notes section.

Table B2: Perspectives Captured by Notes Section

BT Perspective Examples	Coach Perspective Examples
<i>BT models lesson on overhead.</i>	<i>I spent time gathering resources to assist in preparing students for the ISAT.</i>
<i>BT is attempting to address apathy and help students express own thoughts in writing.</i>	<i>Coach reviewed data to plan next steps.</i>
<i>Teacher was teaching a math lesson using whole group instruction</i>	<i>I monitored the other students while they were in groups.</i>
<i>BT requested resources for test prep.</i>	<i>I helped out at a center making cards.</i>

## Challenges

Coaches also recorded challenges in the notes section of the log data. Notes focused on the coach's perspective and captured challenges the coach was having with the BT. For example, one coach wrote, *"I found that none of the strategies discussed previously had been implemented."* Notes focused on the BT's perspective also captured challenges the BT was having. For example, another coach wrote, *"BT is struggling with students talking during instruction and transitions."*

Similar to the findings described at length in Chapter 3, coach logs revealed the integrated and ongoing presence of addressing a BT's immediate and emotional needs while simultaneously moving toward improved instructional practice. Log data reflects a year-long dual focus on both the BT-coach relationship and efforts to support the BT toward becoming an autonomous professional.

## Documenting BT Progress – Capturing versus Tracking

The notes section was an area where BT progress was captured but not necessarily tracked. We define "capturing progress" as snapshots of BT improvement and strengths. For example, one coach wrote, *"the students know the routines. Her classroom management is going well, and she is able to focus on instruction."*

"Tracking progress" is defined as documenting improvement across time. Coaches often captured progress often in the logs; however tracking progress occurred much less, and it was often difficult to discern how coaches were tracking progress unless a specific skill was tracked through time. The

DATE	TRACKING PROGRESS
10/27	BT often forgets that she has to model everything for them.
11/2	BT did model how to do one problem but she needed to model more...
11/9	BT is starting to model for the students...
11/16	BT is starting to model more during her lessons.
12/14	BT is making sure that she models as well as includes guided practice with the students.

table to the right illustrates one coach's tracking of her BT's progress on a specific skill.

## Future considerations

Overall, the results of the log data analysis were shared with CNTC to stimulate further conversation about the best use of the logs moving forward. Questions discussed by the group included: (1) What added benefit is gained from the logs? For whom? (2) Can existing tools be used help standardize the notes section across coaches? and (3) What is gained from standardizing? What is lost?