MEMO

Year I of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Boston Public Schools: Accounts from the Schools

Written By

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During March, April, and May 2003, Education Matters' researchers interviewed thirty-eight teachers, principals and coaches in four schools (three elementary and one middle) that were implementing some aspects of CCL during the 2002-2003 school year.[1] The schools were chosen with input from the BPS and BPE. Two of them had been involved in Education Matters' study of whole-school improvement in the BPS prior to the 2002-2003 school year, while two were new to us.[2] Our purpose in conducting these interviews was to learn about the schools' experiences with CCL in order to inform the BPS about the progress of its scale-up efforts and identify areas that might need attention during the 2003-2004 school year when all schools would be required to implement this coaching model.

In presenting our findings, we have kept in mind a) the issues related to scale-up that we raised in *Using What We Know: Implications for Scaling-Up Implementation of the CCL Model* (January 2002), b) the experiences of the EP schools as they implemented CCL for the first time in the 2001-2002 school year as we reported in *Off to a Good Start: Year I of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools* (2002)[3], and c) the changes that occurred in the implementation of CCL in the 2002-2003 school year: *Year II of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools: Expanding the Work* (2003). The experiences of the EP schools provide us with a baseline idea of what one might expect during the early phase of implementation in schools that had established the conditions that gained them EP status. By considering the experiences of the four non-EP schools in light of what we learned from the EP schools, we have the opportunity to consider the extent to which the characteristics of the EP schools were important in their scale-up experiences. And, we have the opportunity to determine whether other factors, perhaps not present in the EP schools, either facilitated or hampered implementation of CCL for the first time during the 2002-2003 school year.

We have organized the presentation of our findings for Year I of CCL in this set of schools into three main sections: 1. Implementation; 2. Impact; and 3. Factors that Matter/Challenges. The implementation section focuses attention on the components of CCL as defined in the document *Introduction to CCL: Collaborative Coaching and Learning* (BPE September 2002). Using these three categories for the presentation, what did we find?

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[1]This memo is the fourth in a series of reports and memos that focuses on the implementation of Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). For a complete description of CCL, see *Getting Started with CCL*, available at the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) website: www.bpe.org. Earlier Education Matters' reports are available at: www.edmatters.org.

[2]We had intended to include a fifth school, however our interview with the principal and coach revealed that no CCL work had taken place or was planned for the 2002-2003 school year.

[3] The Effective Practice (EP)schools are 26 Boston Public Schools that have demonstrated a) high levels of implementation of some of the Essentials of whole-school improvement, b) and strong principal leadership for instruction. These schools were recognized for their accomplishments in a public ceremony at the end of the 2000-2001 school year. They had in place conditions conducive to taking the step of testing a more collaborative, focused, and intense approach to coaching.

- **With respect to implementation**, we found that these four schools varied considerably in a) how they organized to implement CCL, and b) which components of the model they implemented. They also varied with respect to the quality of their implementation, regardless of the variations. As a result, teachers who participated in CCL cycles had very different experiences with CCL as a professional development strategy.

- **The impact of CCL** was linked to the variations in implementation, however, most teachers reported positively on their opportunities to observe each other or the coach teaching, *when that was part of their school's CCL implementation plan*. Some teachers reported that they learned meaningful teaching strategies and saw lessons that were worth using with their students. Others were not yet convinced of the value of what they were learning in this professional development. No one involved in this first year of CCL suggested they would refuse to participate in the coming year. However, some of these teachers had participated in adaptations of CCL or its components that did not accurately reflect the coaching model as it was originally designed.

- **Several school-based factors** were associated with the quality and impact of implementation. Most significant, principal leadership played a central role in the quality of implementation as did the knowledge and skill of the literacy coaches. The principals' ability to develop and support a workable schedule was both a challenge and a condition requisite for implementation. And, the schools' experience with collaboration around instruction and other whole-school improvement Essentials influenced the design of CCL as well as its first-year impact. Not surprisingly, schools with strong principal leadership for CCL and a reasonably well-established collaborative culture reported greater degrees of CCL implementation and impact.

In the remainder of this memo, we elaborate these findings and suggest their implications for further scale-up of CCL during the 2003-2004 school year.

As we write this memo, we know that the BPS has been collecting its own information about CCL during this school year and is, therefore, aware of the ways in which CCL was implemented in a broad number of schools. We present our findings and analysis based on data from four schools to contribute to the district's knowledge base and its efforts to strengthen the work that coaches, principals and teachers do to implement CCL effectively in all BPS schools. To that end, we turn next to a description and analysis of the implementation of CCL.

Implementation. Across the 2002-2003 school year, these four schools conducted a total of 16 cycles. However, not all of these cycles included all of the components of CCL and not all of them were implemented as designed by the BPE and BPS. For example, one school involved the same group of teachers in cycles throughout the year, but the cycles consisted of inquiry primarily. In another school, teachers in the CCL group, with a few exceptions, did not demonstrate teaching. Rather, that task was given to teachers who were not participating in a cycle and to the coach. These kinds of variations were not surprising given that the BPS did not require schools to fully implement CCL during the 2002-2003 school year. Rather, as we

understand it, schools were asked to try the complete CCL model or some components of it in order to gain experience with this form of professional development before it was required of all schools in the 2003-2004 school year.

In order to ground our key findings about implementation in the context of the work that went on at these schools, we begin this section with descriptions of two cycles that were implemented in two different schools.[4] Teachers, principals and coaches in these schools wanted to implement all components of CCL in order to experience the whole model rather than just one or two pieces of it. However, what they did, how they did it, and what happened as a result are quite different. Understanding what happened at these two schools, and why implementation happened in this way, informs our analysis of implementation efforts at the other two schools. It also informs our later discussion of the impact of CCL in Year I in these schools and our discussion of the factors that matter for successful implementation as well as the challenges that lie ahead for these schools and for the district as it continues to scale-up CCL.

The first example, from a school we call Baker Elementary,[5] demonstrates a cycle in which full implementation engaged teachers in focused professional development that had an impact on their knowledge and skill with respect to a) Workshop instruction, and b) participation in CCL as a form of professional development. In reading this description, we point readers to the active role the coach took in bringing more information about CCL to the school, the careful planning done by the principal and coach, and the importance to the school of having a knowledgeable, interested group of teachers willing to actively engage themselves in CCL at the outset.

> Teachers at Baker began discussing the CCL at ILT meetings in the spring of the 2001-2002 school year, long before the district would mandate schools to implement the new coaching model. When the principal and coach first introduced CCL to teachers they met with substantial resistance; teachers kept their arms folded and made several negative, skeptical comments according to the coach. In effect, they refused to participate. The coach persisted, however, and invited Rachel Curtis to visit the school and explain the district's decision to support CCL. Her visit was successful in that, after the meeting, several teachers from one grade-level team approached the coach and asked if they could participate in the first cycle at the start of the 2002-2003 school year.
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> The coach was pleased with this outcome, but was still concerned that teachers from other grades would continue to resist. Therefore, the coach and principal planned carefully to ensure a successful first cycle, knowing that word of mouth about a good CCL experience might persuade other teachers to participate. They made sure that the scheduling and coverage was in place for the teachers who had agreed to participate in the first cycle and that, as the coach put it, "No matter what comes down in the building on a given day, if we have six teachers out sick, the principal still holds CCL sacred. I know that the principal is fully committed to CCL and that she

[4]The summaries of the two cycles are based on interviews with teachers, coaches and principals. We did not observe CCL in these four schools.

[5]We have given each school in the sample a fictitious name that in no way resembles the actual name of the school.

will move mountains to make sure that [full implementation] happens next year."

The teachers in the first cycle were relatively new to the profession with an average of four to five years of teaching experience each. They had some experience teaching Readers' and Writers' Workshop and several had recently completed graduate programs. These teachers were enthusiastic about Workshop instruction as well as research-based professional development. In the first week of the cycle, they identified a research question for their course of study and inquiry: What strategies can help students make inferences in Readers' Workshop? They selected this topic because they wanted to improve their students' reading comprehension skills and because they wanted to focus on their Readers' Workshop instruction.

Then, the teachers selected the text they would read during their inquiry time and agreed to meet after school.[6] They also identified personal, professional goals for the cycle. These goals were recorded by the coach and shared with the principal. Teachers revisited these goals throughout the cycle. Each teacher agreed to host a demonstration lesson with her own students and the group set up a rotating schedule for hosting lab-sites. Then, the teachers planned each demonstration lesson together. In other words, every teacher in the group, as well as the coach, was intimately involved in the planning process. The coach was also available for last minute consultations leading up to the lab-site. Because the teachers planned the demonstration lessons collaboratively, they were deeply invested in their outcomes. They measured their success by assessing whether students understood the purpose of the lesson and were quick to identify lessons that "failed" during their debriefing discussions in order to plan better for next time.

The collective development of lessons meant that all teachers felt responsible for the host teacher's success or struggles. And, the collective responsibility seems to have helped teachers engage in serious debriefs of the lessons without feeling that they were evaluating or criticizing an individual teacher. The work they were debriefing, was the work of the entire group.

The coach guided the teachers throughout the cycle, facilitating debriefing discussions, offering resource materials and acting as a "sounding board" for teachers' ideas and questions. Teachers appreciated the support they received from the coach, noting her constant availability and keen focus on the cycle's objectives. They also remarked positively about the principal's involvement in providing coverage for lab-sites, scheduling common planning time, and later in the year, even participating directly in a cycle and hosting one demonstration lesson.

Once the first group of teachers completed their cycle, other grade level teams agreed to participate. While not all of the groups that followed were as experienced with Readers' and Writers' Workshop or as open to the idea of demonstrating in front of their colleagues, the coach was able to meet teachers' varied needs. In one cycle, the coach led a group through an entire six weeks of inquiry around Readers' Workshop before introducing the concept of demonstration lessons; and even then, the coach agreed to do the first several demonstration lessons herself. The coach and principal attributed the success of their school's first year with CCL to the success of that very first cycle and the first group's vocal enthusiasm about the benefits of CCL.

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[6]The principal allowed teachers' after school inquiry sessions to count toward their 18 hours of mandatory professional development time. Teachers did their inquiry reading at home, on their own time.

> Teachers who participated in one or more cycles spoke positively about their experiences. They were grateful for the feedback they received from colleagues and believed their instruction was the better for it. These teachers continued to meet during the off cycle, arranged peer observations during common planning time, shared resource materials and discussed professional texts as often as once a week. Teachers appeared to be developing substantial ownership of their CCL work and the coach was optimistic about the impact CCL was already having in the school.
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> Although some grade-level teams declined to participate in CCL, the principal clearly stated her expectations for the 2003-2004 school year: teachers who did not participate during the 2002-2003 school year would participate in CCL at the start of the new school year. In the mean time, the coach offered one-on-one support to these teachers whenever she was not engaged in CCL implementation.

This example demonstrates the importance of setting the stage for the implementation of CCL by creating opportunities in which teachers can learn what the coaching model is and how it might help them. It demonstrates the important work that the coach and principal must do to create a school context – the schedule and supports for the teachers' work – so that CCL is a priority. And, it demonstrates the need to have some teachers/teacher leaders in a school who can understand the value of this work, give it a try, and convince their peers that this form of professional learning is quite valuable. Finally, we note that the teachers who stepped forward to implement the first CCL cycle were teachers who were already familiar with Workshop strategies.[7]

The second example describes Manchester Middle, a school that also chose to implement all of the components of the CCL model. But, in contrast to Baker, this school did not have a group of teachers who stepped forward to try out the coaching model, nor did it have a principal who made sure that the organizational supports were in place so that teachers could have a positive CCL experience. In particular, the organization of Manchester mitigated against CCL implementation and, although everyone in the school knew the source of the problem, no one suggested making changes in the organization and/or schedule that would facilitate implementation. Rather, the principal and coach tried, unsuccessfully, to work around them. As a result, no one at Manchester suggests that CCL implementation had a significant impact on teachers.

> Manchester Middle School is a large school that is organized into clusters, some of which are cross-grade and cross-content. Teachers across clusters have little formal contact with one another. The coach and principal decided to begin CCL by implementing two cycles during the 2002-2003 school year. Although each cycle had a broad purpose – helping teachers gain more knowledge and acceptance of Writers' Workshop for the first cycle, and helping students improve their answers to MCAS open-response questions for the second cycle – the cycles did not have a specific focus or research question that teachers were attempting to answer. During the first cycle, teachers identified teaching points that they wanted to observe and the host teacher

[7] In Education Matters report, *Year II of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools: Expanding the Work* (July 2003), we discuss the links between teachers' knowledge of Workshop and their willingness and ability to participate in the CCL model of coaching.

demonstrated them. The specific teaching points often changed from week to week without a clear connection to the cycle's overall purpose. As a result of this ad hoc approach to demonstrations, teachers did not build a body of knowledge or deepen their knowledge about a specific instructional strategy as a result of CCL. During the second cycle, as a result of scheduling problems and general resistance to CCL, teachers stopped coming to the lab-sites.

Manchester's principal and coach, like their counterparts at Baker, knew that it was important to have a successful cycle, and, therefore created a CCL group from English Language Arts (ELA) and special education teachers who a) had the same planning period so that no scheduling changes would be necessary, and b) were willing to try the new coaching model. This decision meant that CCL groups were formed on the basis of cluster membership since teachers in a cluster have the same planning period. But, using cluster membership and common planning time as the rationale for CCL scheduling did not create groups of ELA and special education teachers who necessarily shared common learning interests.

Furthermore, creating CCL groups during teachers' planning periods meant that those teachers did not have students to teach during lab-site time. [8] To rectify the absence of host classrooms from within the CCL group, a teacher not involved in the cycle agreed to host demonstrations with her students for the CCL group. This use of a host teacher from outside of the CCL group solved one problem, but created another: the host teacher taught one grade level while the observing teachers were from all three grades; the host teacher demonstrated using a genre that was not taught in those upper grades; and, no one helped the teachers distill what they could be learning about Workshop instruction more broadly than the teaching of a specific lesson. A few teachers said that, on their own, they were able to extrapolate general Workshop principles from the observations but others found the lessons interesting but not applicable to their classrooms because of the difference in grade-level and genre focus. As a result, they reported that CCL as professional development was not meeting their needs.[9]

The organization of CCL groups also led to problems with implementation of the debrief component of CCL. While the observing teachers met with the coach and host teacher immediately after the lab-site, these meetings were extremely brief and took place in the back of the host teacher's classroom with her students still present. Teachers participated in a more formal debrief session later the same day, but the host teacher could not join them because she still had students to teach and no one to cover her class. During the debrief, teachers reviewed what they saw in the demonstration with an eye toward how they would use that lesson in their own class before their next inquiry group meeting, Then, during inquiry, they would meet with the host teacher to discuss "how it went."

Because everyone agreed that the schedule made CCL difficult to implement, the coach, principal and teachers made some efforts to adjust it during the next cycle so that teachers would be able to host lessons with their own students. However, the strategy was fraught with problems and, for a

[8]The school did not want to use substitutes to cover classes for teachers involved in CCL because it felt that it could not count on the reliability of substitute coverage. And, the principal did not consider it feasible to redeploy staff to cover teachers' classes during lab-site time.

[9]We are aware of cross-grade lab-sites that have proven successful at other schools. However, it appears as though a number of school-based factors hindered the value of cross-grade lab-sites at Manchester.

number of unspecified reasons, teachers began to be absent from their cycle's lab-site work although they continued to attend inquiry which was organized as part of their required professional development time. Since participation in CCL, particularly in the lab-site and debrief components, was not required, and teachers did not hold one another accountable for participating, this second cycle was less effective than the first.

The coach, principal and teachers at Manchester reported little impact from CCL. Some teachers who were resistant at the outset remained resistant to the Workshop strategies as well as to having any involvement with the coach. While some teachers enjoyed the opportunity to talk with colleagues about their work, there was no evidence in our interviews that a collaborative culture was developing.

Manchester spent the 2002-2003 school year trying to implement CCL into the school's existing organizational structure without making any substantial changes or adjustments despite overall agreement that the structure interfered with implementation. At the end of the year, neither the principal, coach nor teachers, to the best of our knowledge, was considering taking on the significant challenge of changing the organizational structure and schedule of Manchester in order to create CCL cycles that provided teachers with more opportunities to learn by demonstrating instruction, observing their colleagues, and reflecting on practice. Nor had anyone considered how to form the CCL groups so that the teachers involved shared a common interest in a particular topic. Instead, the proposals under discussion were designed to alter CCL so that it could be implemented without any schedule changes. To this end, the coach was planning to have teachers in a cycle observe a series of videotaped lessons as the core of their "lab-site" work.[10]

While Manchester voluntarily took on the challenge of implementing CCL during the 2002-2003 school year, its approach to organizing and implementing CCL meant that key components of CCL – the demonstration lesson and the debrief – while present in theory, were distorted in the process of implementation. Manchester's principal attempted to implement CCL without making significant changes in the school's organization or schedule, without providing, in other words, sufficient support to teachers who chose to participate in each of the cycles. When the coach realized that CCL could not be implemented if the organization and schedule of the school remained the same, she, with the principal's agreement, decided to significantly alter CCL. We doubt that this school's approach to implementation in Year I will lead to improved implementation in Year II.

The other two schools in our sample, Carver and Elmwood, also varied in how they implemented CCL. Carver implemented a year-long, cross-grade CCL inquiry group that included one or two coach demonstrations in each cycle. Teachers in the primary grades were unable to participate in any component of CCL because all of their professional development time was spent in LC

[10]While there is merit in using videotapes for some professional development purposes, replacing live, lab-site demonstrations with videotaped lessons from a demonstration classroom, in our view, considerably weakens CCL implementation. Among other things, it minimizes the links among the components of the coaching model - the inquiry, pre-conference, lab-site, and debrief - as well as teachers' opportunities to host, observe and conference with their colleagues.

training. Teachers at Elmwood were also involved in LC training during the 2002-2003 school year. Many of them, however, participated in a CCL cycle. Although, at times, teachers and coaches were challenged and confused by the differing orientations of LC and Workshop, with strong principal and coach support, teachers at Elmwood had reasonably positive experiences with CCL during the first year of its implementation in the school. Elmwood, like Baker and Manchester, implemented all components of CCL.

We turn next to what we learned about first-year CCL implementation across the schools from interviews with teachers, coaches and principals. Many of these findings parallel those we described in our report on Year I implementation of CCL in the EP schools. However, there are some significant differences which we will highlight in this discussion.

- ***Principals varied in the extent to which they were able to create a schedule and coverage that supported CCL implementation.*** Early into Year I implementation of CCL in the EP schools, principals realized either that the schedules and coverage they had arranged was working or that they were in need of revision. By mid-year, we stopped hearing about scheduling problems in these schools. In the sample of four schools that were implementing CCL for the first time in 2002-2003, two principals created workable schedules and two of them did not. When the schedule did not support implementation, needless to say, implementation was stymied.

  What did principals do to support implementation? Most importantly, they demonstrated their commitment to CCL by making sure that the time set aside for this work was, as one coach put it, "sacred." In contrast, principals who did not hold this time sacred failed to provide needed coverage for teachers during lab-site times, or asked teachers to take on other tasks during their inquiry groups, for example. In taking this stance toward the time set aside for CCL, principals weakened its implementation.

  Sometimes principals had to make real adjustments in their schedules in order to accommodate CCL. For example, one principal enabled teachers to host lessons with their students during lab-site time by agreeing to have students spend half a period with a specialist once in a while so that their teacher could work with them. Although there were some challenges to making this schedule change, by and large, teachers reported that it was effective. This kind of principal ingenuity and leadership was not part of implementation at all of the schools and its absence seriously limited the effectiveness of the cycles.

- ***Courses of study and the focus of inquiry groups*** were often selected by principals and/or coaches with teachers' knowledge and skill in mind. In this respect, these schools took a similar approach to getting started with CCL as did the EP schools. However, one school in our sample was quick to turn responsibility for determining the course of study over to teachers who were eager to define their own professional development focus. As in the EP schools, the coach continued to guide the teachers' in their decision making. She did not, however, dictate the focus of the cycle.

In some cycles, inquiry topics were not tightly tied to the focus of teachers' lab-site work. When this was the case, teachers reported that their inquiry readings, while interesting, were not relevant to the work they were doing in the lab-sites or their own classrooms. As their colleagues in EP schools reported, these teachers noted that the inquiry sessions would have been more helpful if they were more tightly linked to the lab-site focus.

Finally, sometimes in an effort to engage teachers in choosing what they would like to learn in CCL, each teacher in the group was given the chance to identify something she would like to see demonstrated in a lab-site. This approach to organizing the work of a cycle might have enabled teachers to get a better idea of what different components of Workshop look like. But it did not result in collaborative learning with respect to a common focus related to Workshop. Teachers in the EP schools who tried this approach in their first year of implementation also reported that, while it responded to their specific, individual needs, it fragmented their overall, joint opportunity to learn.

- ***Demonstration lessons were an ongoing component of three of the schools' cycles.*** Because teachers at Carver implemented primarily the inquiry component of CCL, demonstrations were not integral to their work. When considering the extent to which demonstrations were part of implementation at the other three schools, it is important to keep in mind that one of the goals of Year I implementation of CCL in the EP schools was to get all of the components established. Thus, it was important to have some teachers begin to demonstrate by the end of a cycle; it was not critical that teachers demonstrate from the beginning or in each week of a cycle. Indeed, coaches in EP schools tended to demonstrate at the beginning of a cycle persuading teachers gradually and over time to take on the role of hosting a lab-site. BPS expectations around demonstration lessons for schools attempting CCL for the first time during the 2002-2003 school year were not explicit on this point.

  Teachers at Carver, on occasion hosted lessons for their colleagues. Teachers at Baker, Manchester, and Elmwood, as noted in the introduction to this section of the report, varied in the extent to which they and/or coaches demonstrated the teaching strategies that were the focus of the cycles' inquiry. In Baker and Elmwood, teachers hosted most of the lab-sites. In contrast, at Manchester, with several exceptions, teachers who were not participating in the cycle hosted the lab-sites. Thus, the experience of preparing for a demonstration lesson, hosting a lab-site, and then participating in the debrief varied for the teachers in these schools.

- ***Debriefs*** were challenging in some of the cycles for a number of familiar reasons. As in the EP schools, teachers, coaches and administrators hesitated to offer critical feedback to their colleagues. Some reported that they did not know how to have or lead those kinds of "tough conversations." Debriefs resembled those held in the EP schools during both

Years I and II. [7] In cycles where the demonstrating teacher was not part of the CCL cycle or the full debrief, as at Manchester, teachers discussed the observed lesson in order to figure out how they would use it in their own classes prior to sharing their experiences in using the lesson with the coach and the host teacher. This approach to the debrief did not include an opportunity for teachers and coaches to reflect on the observed teaching, the rationale/purpose for why the lesson was designed as it was, the quality of implementation, nor its impact on students prior to trying it themselves

In contrast, teachers at Baker had debrief conversations in which they carefully considered the effectiveness of the host teacher's lesson and were able to do this without feeling that they were evaluating the teacher because, as we described in the example above, all teachers in the cycle helped shape the lesson. It belonged to all of them, in other words, and by having an investment in it, they felt no qualms about discussing what they might have done differently as well as what went well.

What have we learned about implementing CCL from considering how it was done at these four schools?[8] We have learned that implementation varied as a result of a) the district's directions to the schools to implement either part or all of the coaching model, as they preferred, and b) the ability of the principal to create conditions that encouraged and then supported implementation. Principal commitment to and support for CCL implementation, whether for all or only some of its components, in our view is the key variable in explaining the outcomes of the work at these four schools. Although, without question, school-based factors played into the ways in which implementation occurred, principals shaped the fortunes of implementation whatever those school-based factors. For example at Carver, the principal's tendency to schedule other work for teachers to do during inquiry time, as well as her decision to schedule CCL at a time when she was out of the building, weakened implementation of even one component of the coaching model. In contrast, at Elmwood, even though teachers were not eager to implement CCL and were engaged simultaneously in the implementation of LC and Workshop, the principal's commitment to CCL and support for teachers who participated in the model, made effective CCL implementation possible, despite a number of extenuating school-based factors.

Impact

When Education Matters considered the impact of CCL in Year I in the EP schools, we focused on what teachers, principals and coaches said about the benefits of the new model of coaching. We did not expect that there would be significant impacts on teaching or even on teachers'

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[7]For further information about the challenges that debriefs posed to coaches and teachers in the EP schools, see Neufeld. B. and Roper, D. *Off to a Good Start: Year I of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools* (July 2002) and *Year II of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools: Expanding the Work* (July 2003). Both reports are available at www.edmatters.org.

[8]We want to remind readers that our analysis of implementation rests on interview data. We did not observe CCL at these four schools.

knowledge and skill with respect to Workshop instruction at the end of one year of CCL. Rather, the question for the pilot year of CCL in the EP schools was whether the model could be implemented and would be seen as effective by teachers, coaches, principals and the BPS and BPE. By the middle of the first year of EP implementation, the verdict was that CCL was effective professional development.

When the BPS schools in our sample began their work with CCL in the 2002-2003 school year, our focus was on the issues that arose in implementing CCL in schools with a wider range of characteristics than those that had achieved EP status. We wanted to know whether the first year impacts of this coaching model mirrored what we called "benefits of CCL" in Year I in the EP schools. To answer this question, we asked teachers, principals and coaches to describe the impacts that they considered to result from CCL. We expected the impacts to vary, of course, with the extent of implementation that a school had attempted. As a result, we expected more limited impact at Carver, which implemented only inquiry, than we expected at the other three schools.

We want to begin the discussion of impact by noting that, significantly, none of the teachers we interviewed who participated in the CCL during the 2002-2003 school year said they would refuse to participate in future cycles. Even teachers who were not completely satisfied with the cycle in which they participated, reported that they saw the value of this coaching model and expected that, with some changes, future cycles would be far more valuable to them.[9]

In discussing the impact of CCL, we divide our findings into two separate categories. The first set of impact findings pertains to schools and cycles in which a) most of the CCL components were in place, b) teachers were actively engaged in the work, and c) lab-sites happened on a consistent basis, with regular participation from teachers, coaches, and occasionally, principals. Impact was greatest under these conditions and we call schools in which these conditions were obtained "high-implementing schools."

By contrast, the second set of impact findings pertains to schools in which there was a low degree of implementation of either one or more of the CCL components. We separate the impact findings in order to highlight the differences which, our data lead us to conclude, are associated with school-based factors. By delineating impact in this way, we set the stage for the analysis we present in the "Factors that Matter" section of this memo.

Impact in High-Implementing Schools. In schools that were able to implement CCL with high degrees of fidelity to the coaching model:

- Teachers reported a) increased opportunities to collaborate with one another around instruction, b) greater exposure to one another's practice and to Workshop instruction in

[9]In presenting this impact, we need to note that we are representing those teachers who volunteered to participate in what was, in effect, the pilot year of CCL in their schools and not those who refused to participate. Teachers who refused to participate were not in our sample.

general, and, in some cycles, c) continuing conversation around instruction even after the cycle was finished.

- Teachers reported taking at least partial responsibility/ownership for their cycle work. In some instances this meant that they selected their own course of study and/or inquiry focus and may have contributed professional readings or resource materials to the group. In such schools, when the coach (and sometimes the principal) decided on the focus for the cycle, teachers agreed with the focus and engaged in the work.

- Workshop became more fully established as the instructional approach in use in the schools among participating teachers. And, teachers, together with the coach, began to set some instructional goals around Readers' and Writers' Workshop. These goals might pertain to individual teachers or to the CCL group as a whole. Either way, they helped to focus teachers' attention on particular instructional strategies as well as on students' responses to the lab-site instruction.

- In these high implementing schools, some teachers initiated peer observations after finishing the cycle. In addition, teachers' reported an increased willingness to share resource materials, lesson plans, and instructional strategies with their colleagues.

- These schools began to take a closer look at their data to see where and how to target their CCL cycles. Data analysis such as this often took place during ILT meetings, but also occurred during LASW sessions or within grade-level team meetings. Coaches and principals frequently helped to lead this work. Their knowledge of the schools' WSIPs helped them to embed the CCL cycles within the schools' existing professional development plans as they planned for future cycles.

Impact in Low-Implementing Schools. The schools in our sample that had limited success in implementing CCL, recognized the limited impact of the model and attributed it to conditions at their school. At the same time, however, they, like their colleagues in higher-implementing schools, were able to point to some positive aspects of CCL as professional development. We turn now to the positive impact of CCL in these schools, drawing attention to the absence of impact in specific areas.

- Teachers valued the formal, set-aside time they had to talk with other teachers. In larger schools, depending on the school's organization, teachers reported that they might never have had an opportunity, for example, to meet with teachers from the same content area who taught in a different cluster. The conversations teachers described focused on comparing their practices and sharing lessons, for example. Because teachers were brought together by the occasion of a cycle, the factors that kept them apart prior to the cycle meant that their conversations tended to end with the end of a cycle.

- Although many teachers in these schools remained resistant to Workshop, principals,

coaches, and teachers reported that they had a better idea of what Workshop looked like in practice as a result of observing a teacher or the coach demonstrate key components of this approach to instruction.

- Workshop did not appear to be well-established as the approach to literacy instruction in these schools. Some teachers reported that they expanded their use of Workshop strategies as a result of observing and then using several mini-lessons that had been implemented by the coach and/or host teacher. But, principals and coaches reported that teachers who were resistant to Readers' and Writers' Workshop remained resistant.

- Our data from these schools suggest mixed impact with respect to teachers' opportunity to learn how to reflect on practice and consider what they were learning for next steps in their CCL work or in their own classrooms. For the most part, teachers who participated in weak implementations of CCL did not have many opportunities to reflect on teaching, which we distinguish from "reviewing" the lesson that they saw in order to try it out in their classes. Under these conditions, teachers did not, to our knowledge, decide what they would like to focus on in another cycle. Rather, the cycle was an eight week "event" which was finished after that time. However, in one school, teachers' inquiry did lead them to determine the focus of future inquiry topics and they reflected on the few demonstration lessons that they observed with an eye for what such teaching meant for them and their students.

Summary: Impact. The BPS offered schools the opportunity to try implementing all or part of CCL during the 2002-2003 school year with the expectation that the impact of experimenting with CCL before it was required would help schools prepare for full, required CCL implementation at the start of the 2003-2004 school year. We cannot know what impact the experiences of these four schools will be on their CCL scale-up in the fall of 2003, but we speculate that the impact will be mixed. The schools that had strong implementation and impact, as we have described it, may well be in a good position to begin full-implementation.

However, we are concerned that the staffs at the schools with weak implementation and impact may have developed less of a taste for CCL as a result of participation during the 2002-2003 school year than had they abstained from any implementation at all. We think this is a possibility because implementation was weak and the challenges that led to weak implementation and impact were well-known, frustrating, but never completely resolved. Teachers may believe that full implementation will similarly be fraught with problems but little benefit. We do not know, but it remains an open question as to whether these schools were helped toward full CCL implementation by their work in the 2002-2003 school year or whether, instead, further implementation was set back as a result of schools' initial, weak implementation and the absence of sufficient positive impacts.

In raising this concern, we are not suggesting that the district was wrong in giving schools an option with respect to implementing CCL in the 2002-2003 school year. It was reasonable to suggest that gradual exposure to and experience with CCL would help teachers a) become

familiar with the coaching model, b) reduce their anxiety about this form of professional development, and c) enable them to use what they learned to more adequately plan for full implementation. However, given the variation in impact that occurred in this small set of schools, and likely occurred in schools other than those portrayed in this memo, it may be useful for the BPS to consider how to begin what will be Year II of CCL in light of this variation and to consider, in particular, how coaches may need to be supported so that the effectiveness of their work is maximized.

Factors That Matter/Challenges

As we considered the factors that seemed to be associated with variation in CCL implementation and effectiveness in these four schools, we realized that the findings paralleled what we had reported in *Taking Stock*: *The Status of Implementation and the Need for Further Support in the BPE-BAC Cohort I and II Schools* (July 2000). In that report, Education Matters noted that half of the schools in our sample of twelve elementary, K-8, and middle schools had established collegial, collaborative, instructionally focused cultures and, as a result, were in a good position to take on the next step of reform which was, at that time, implementation of the district's performance standards. Schools that had established such cultures had also developed teacher leaders who supported and contributed to implementation of the Essentials. In contrast, the schools in our sample that had not developed such a culture, were unable to reasonably implement performance standards.

We wrote that several common factors seemed to account for the differences in the schools. These common factors included a) the quality of principal leadership which was related to the principal's understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of the reform and the links among the Essentials, b) the social context of the school – the willingness and ability of teachers to work with one another and with the principal, as well as the willingness of a cadre of teachers to take on the initial instructional leadership work; and, c) the interaction of the principal's approach to leadership and the school's social context. We also noted that individuals or groups of teachers could stand in the way of their schools making progress but that principals in schools that had made progress with the Essentials were better able to minimize the impact of such teachers. Finally, we concluded that even in schools that had developed a strong, collaborative, instructionally focused culture, taking the next steps in Boston's reform posed challenges because the work was difficult.[10]

Our analysis of implementation in Baker, Manchester, Carver and Elmwood reveal that these same factors are associated with high and low quality implementation of CCL whether the school chose to implement the entire CCL model or just one or two components. We consider this finding significant because it indicates the strength of these factors when they were present

[10]One year later, in an assessment that did not involve any Education Matters' staff, all of the schools in our sample that we had placed anonymously in the high-implementing groups for our *Taking Stock* report were named as Effective Practice Schools. None of the schools in the low-implementing group of the same sample were named Effective Practice.

in schools three years ago as well as now. And, we consider the finding significant because it provides guidance to the district with respect to what low-implementing schools need help to establish if they are to successfully implement Boston's whole-school improvement agenda and not only the CCL component of it.

With this introduction in place, we turn to a discussion of the factors that matter for the implementation of CCL and the challenges that lie ahead for the schools, the BPS and the BPE.

Principal Leadership. As we noted in the CCL Scale-up paper and in both the Year I and Year II reports on the implementation of CCL in the EP schools, successful implementation of this kind of intense, instructionally focused coaching model depends on effective principal leadership. Coherent, instructionally focused principal leadership was present and obvious in the high-implementing schools and not apparent in those we described as low-implementing with respect to CCL. What did principals do that mattered?

- **Principals (and coaches) in schools with high implementation of CCL made important decisions around their school's scheduling and organizational structure in order to allow CCL to take hold in Year I.** Principals and coaches made ongoing assessments of the progress of the cycles and adapted to problems or challenges as they arose. These principals learned from the successes and challenges of their schools' first cycles, and improved implementation in subsequent cycles. They also engaged in a great deal of planning for the 2003-2004 school year so that CCL would fit seamlessly into their schools' existing professional development plans. By their actions, principals made it clear that CCL was important professional development.

  In contrast, the principals of low-implementing schools did not establish schedules that supported CCL and one, by her own admission, required teachers to do non-CCL work during the time set aside for inquiry. For example, in one school the two hour blocks of time set aside for CCL, became a "catch-all" time that the principal used to have teachers conduct LASW groups, participate in math professional development and complete administrative work. The principal reported that she knew about the challenges that were interfering with implementation, but she did not make changes in her demands on teachers that improved the prospects of CCL implementation.[11] By failing to provide adequate, uninterrupted time for lab-sites, debriefs and inquiry sessions, principals sent a message that signaled "CCL was not a top priority." Thus, these logistical problems did more than just inconvenience teachers and coaches, in our view, they inhibited the development of teacher ownership and teacher leadership around CCL.

[11]When schools in Cohorts I and II failed to establish strong ILTs and LASW groups, principals reported, quite often, that their own behaviors stood in the way of the development of these Essentials. In quite the same way, one of the principals of a low-implementing school in our sample described the ways in which she thwarted implementation of CCL.

- **Principals (and coaches) of high implementing schools made sure that their teachers understood the purpose of the CCL as a form of collaborative, non-evaluative, school-based, teacher-driven professional development before the first cycle.** Better understanding enabled more teachers to consider the potential benefits of the coaching model and, in some schools, led to volunteers among formerly resistant staff members. For example, as we described above, after Rachel Curtis described CCL to the teachers at Baker, a group of teachers stepped forward and volunteered for the first cycle. When teachers were unclear or mistaken about CCL, they were more likely to resist participating or participate out of a perceived desire to comply with their principal's request. When compliance was coupled with an unworkable schedule, low-implementation followed.

- In a context in which participation in CCL was voluntary, **principals of high-implementing schools succeeded in encouraging teachers to participate in CCL and/or do demonstration lessons in front of their colleagues.** Their efforts helped foster successful cycles in which teachers a) said they felt good about sharing their instruction with colleagues, b) believed that their ideas were valued by the other participants, c) reported that their experience in the cycle was a worthwhile learning opportunity and finally d) said they were willing, and in some cases, even eager to participate in additional cycles.

- **When necessary, principals removed teachers from the cycles when their resistance to either Workshop or CCL itself interfered with the progress of the cycle.**[12] Although this situation rarely arose, when it did and when principals acted, *remaining* teachers and coaches reported a sense of relief and a greater ability to focus on their work. Principals reported that they made these difficult decisions because they understood that the CCL group's collaborative efforts were important and should not be thwarted by individuals. Principals who removed teachers from the CCL groups were clear that such teachers would remain responsible for implementing Readers' and Writers' Workshop and that their removal from the cycle would not excuse them from other professional development responsibilities. In taking these actions, the principals of these schools were similar to those of the EP schools that we studied in their commitment to ensuring that CCL cycles ran smoothly.

- **When schools had multiple part-time coaches and/or in-house literacy specialists, principals in the more effectively implementing CCL schools worked hard to coordinate the work of these individuals.** One challenge arose when these professional development providers held different ideas about how teachers should be implementing the schools' literacy programs. For example, if the LC literacy coordinator

[12]While participation in CCL was voluntary, some teachers chose to volunteer even though they were resistant to it. Some of these teachers came to appreciate CCL as a result of participating, but others actively interfered with its implementation. It was teachers of the latter kind who principals removed from the cycles.

led a cycle, she might support her teachers in implementing a somewhat different approach to reading and writing than that supported by the BPS coach. Teachers who had or were still participating in both LC and Workshop professional development were faced with competing claims about how they should teach.[13] Coaches and in-house literacy specialists, on occasion, jockeyed for authority, sending mixed messages to teachers and creating tension within lab-site settings. Principals, by their actions, either fostered communication around these issues or let them fester.

Social Context of the School. When we talk about a school's social context, we are referring to a) the willingness or unwillingness of teachers to work with one another and with the principal to forward the work of whole-school improvement, b) the willingness of the principals to lead their schools toward a distributed leadership approach to whole-school improvement, c) the knowledge and skill principals and teachers bring to such work, and d) the presence in the school of at least a few teacher leaders who are willing to take the lead in adopting new instructional strategies and serve as role-models and cheer leaders, in a sense, for their colleagues. As we wrote in *Taking Stock,* the presence or absence of these social context features was associated with the quality of implementation of major components of the district's reform agenda.

Education Matters was familiar with the social context of two of the schools in our sample, Manchester and Elmwood, because they had been part of our ongoing study of whole-school improvement since the fall of 1999. During the 2001-2002 school year, we had continued to interview teachers, principals, and coaches in these schools about implementation of the Essentials and we had observed Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings and Looking at Student Work groups. We did not have this kind of in-depth knowledge of either Baker or Carver. However interviews with teachers, principals, and coaches provided us with a coherent picture of a) the extent to which a collaborative, instructionally focused culture was developing in the schools, and b) the ways in which principals were or were not facilitating the development of such a culture in which teachers, principals and coaches worked well together.

Our analysis of the data led us to conclude that two of the schools, Baker and Elmwood, were actively working to establish a collegial, instructionally focused culture; Manchester and Carver, however, seemed to be less engaged in this aspect of the district's whole-school improvement work. The principal and teachers of Carver, in fact, reported that weak communication, uncertainty, and anxiety best characterized their teacher/principal relationship. This was in sharp contrast to Manchester where the principal and teachers had a high regard for each other's commitment to students and knowledge and skill around instruction, yet there was little focus on establishing a school-wide, instructionally focused collaborative culture. How do we think the social contexts of the schools mattered for implementation of CCL?

- **CCL can flourish in schools that have developed collaborative, instructionally**

[13]We wonder why some schools were still allocating resources to LC training when the BPS has adopted Workshop as the district's approach to literacy instruction.

focused contexts and cultures. Schools that have established positive, strong social contexts might still have a grade-level team or department that has not yet fully integrated itself into the school's collaborative, instructionally focused culture. Such schools seem able to implement CCL successfully by focusing early cycles on the grade-level teams or departments that have already developed collaborative cultures. Principal leadership in such schools supports CCL implementation. CCL implementation, by contrast, is weak or non-existent in schools that have not yet created such contexts and cultures. Our data lead us to conclude that CCL's fate is strongly linked to schools' social contexts as we have described them. Although it might be that implementing CCL could help establish a school's collaborative, instructionally focused culture under certain conditions, our data lead us to conclude that the coaching model, by itself, does not have the power to overcome strong, countervailing social contexts.

- **Teachers with unresolved disputes bring "hard feelings" to their CCL work which tends to interfere with the development of trust that must accompany CCL if teachers are going to demonstrate instructional strategies in front of one another.** The negative social context that permeates such schools or teams within schools makes it almost impossible for coaches to do their work. In such contexts, coaches report that they spend a good deal of time mediating disputes between teachers, and between teachers and their principals. When the disputes involve long-standing teacher/principal interaction patterns, coaches report that they are generally unsuccessful in a) resolving the underlying issues, b) changing the social context of the school, and therefore, c) implementing CCL.[14]

- **Schools' positive social contexts are associated with the development of teacher leadership that can support and extend CCL's impact.** In schools that have developed a collaborative, instructionally focused culture, teachers step forward to participate in additional professional development, they open their classrooms to their colleagues, and, at times, take on the work of leading some component of their colleagues' professional development. Such teacher leaders support coaches' and principals' efforts and report that they develop strong commitment to their work and their schools as a result of their leadership roles.

  In contrast, schools with weak social contexts tend not to have effective teacher leaders or have a few teacher leaders who have the knowledge and skill needed for leadership but who are frustrated by their inability to find support for their work among their colleagues or their principal.[15] As individuals, they do not have the capacity to influence the

[14]Coaches in schools with difficult social contexts turned to their lead literacy coaches and to Cathleen Kral for support. They reported that these individuals were quick to respond to their concerns and to intervene with principals when necessary. They also reported that despite a wide range of supports from the BPS coaching staff, circumstances at these schools rarely improved.

[15]We reported a similar finding with respect to teacher leadership in *Taking Stock*.

development of a school's collaborative, instructionally focused culture. For example, in one of the low-implementing, low-impact schools in our sample, two teachers were highly trained and skilled with respect to using Workshop strategies, according to the coach and the principal. They would have gladly taken on leadership roles with their colleagues. However, there were very few opportunities for these teachers to meet with colleagues in order to work collaboratively to enhance the school's capacity with Workshop instruction. As a result, the school as a whole did not benefit from their expertise, and they were frustrated by the limited impact they could have on their schools because the school had no strategy or capacity for taking advantage of the leadership they could and wanted to offer.

Interaction of Principal Leadership and Social Context. To some extent, we have already outlined the ways in which principal leadership and a school's social context, taken together, influenced the implementation of CCL. We have described what principals did that supported or stymied implementation, and we have described the ways in which the social context and culture of the school as a whole, influenced CCL implementation. However, before we turn to a brief consideration of the challenges that face the BPS with respect to CCL in the 2003-2004 school year, we want to identify two additional ways in which principals' leadership and schools' social context interacted and influenced CCL implementation and impact.

- **In the schools in our sample (and in our sample of high- and low- implementing schools described in our *Taking Stock* report), the quality of principal leadership and the nature of the school's social context are linked with respect to the development of internal accountability for whole-school improvement.** The schools in our sample that had strong principal leadership for CCL developed reasonably good implementation of the coaching model, in part, we think, because although CCL was voluntary, principals held teachers accountable for implementing the Workshop strategies and for improving the quality with which they implemented them. And, if teachers agreed to participate in CCL, principals held them accountable for implementing the model effectively and for identifying any challenges that needed principal attention so that they could be remedied. The combination of accountability and social context was associated with the quality of CCL implementation but it was also associated with another positive outcome, teachers' development of internal accountability for the work of improving teaching and learning. In developing internal accountability for their work, teachers further contributed to the positive social context of the schools. In contrast, the schools in our sample that did not have strong principal leadership for CCL implementation did not as clearly hold teachers accountable for implementing the district's instructional reforms and we found little evidence of the development of internal accountability.

- **In one school in our sample, the school's social context, coupled with the principal's low expectations for the staff and students, limited teachers' investment in the work of implementing the Essentials, as well as CCL.** In our view, based on the data we collected, the teachers and principal had low expectations for the levels at which their

students could achieve, low expectations for what teachers could do to increase the depth, breadth and pace of students' learning, and no expectations that the principal should do anything other than support the teachers for the hard work they were already doing. Teachers as well as the principal made disparaging comments about the students and seemed to agree that "things were going well," given the children with whom they were working. The closed, agreeable, social dynamic that resulted from the interaction of the school's social context and the principal's approach to leadership did not support the development of improved teaching or learning; it did not lead teachers to take on the difficult work of changing their practice.

- **In order for CCL to become effective, sustainable, in-house professional development, teachers must develop ownership of and responsibility for their learning and that of their colleagues. In our view, the interaction of principal leadership and social context influenced the extent to which ownership developed or began to develop in schools.** In the schools in our sample that had strong principal leadership for CCL and that had developed or were in the process of establishing collaborative, instructionally focused cultures, teachers were developing ownership of their professional development work. By ownership we mean that teachers identified what they wanted to learn and why it mattered, they helped design the focus of their inquiry and cycle, and, when one cycle ended, they looked forward to shaping the next. For example, teachers at Baker demonstrated ownership of their professional development when they a) jointly developed their demonstration lessons, b) held themselves accountable for the implementation of those lessons, and c) identified instructional strategies on which they would like to focus in another cycle.[16]

  Ownership at Elmwood was at a slightly earlier developmental stage in that teachers participating in the cycles developed an appreciation of the potential value of CCL. While teachers at Elmwood did not always find their course of study and inquiry focuses to be of immediate value, they did, by the end of each cycle, see the need for this model of professional development. Many were eager to collaborate with colleagues around topics of their own choosing, the likely next step for Elmwood as it expands CCL implementation in the next school year. We have no evidence of developing teacher ownership of the work of instructional improvement at Manchester. At Carver, as a result of their year-long inquiry focus, teachers did begin to consider what instructional issues they wanted to focus on next.

The Challenges Ahead. As the BPS moves quickly toward the full scale-up of CCL, we think there are several lessons that can be drawn from its experience with the scale-up of other components of its whole-school improvement agenda as well as from its pilot year of CCL implementation.

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[16]We think this adaptation - of jointly developing demonstration lessons - would likely be of considerable value to other schools as they scale-up their CCL work. For this reason, we briefly described it in our recent report on Year II of CCL in the EP schools.

The first lesson is that there are many principals and teachers in the BPS who are eager to take on the hard work of implementing whole-school improvement. This is good news because it means that if the district can get the rationale and support right for the work it requests of schools, its teachers and principals will put forth the needed effort. As evidence of this lesson, we remind the district that teachers and principals gamely attempted to implement the first iteration of performance standards during the 1999-2000 school year. Their efforts enabled the district to learn about the strengths and limitations of the assessments which led to a multi-year effort to improve the quality and implementation of this form of ongoing assessment. In much the same way, a group of schools attempted to implement one or more components of CCL during the 2002-2003 school year. The successes, challenges, and failures of their efforts can similarly provide the district with feedback that it can use as it further develops its approach to supporting schools as they attempt to fully implement CCL beginning with the coming school year.

The second and equally important lesson that the district can take from all of its scale-up efforts is one that we noted in our *Taking Stock* report, suggested in our *Scaling-Up* report, and reiterate, here. The district needs to attend to the school-based requirements of scale-up and it has to insure that schools have those requirements in place prior to taking on the next, complex component of reform. To that end, we note:

- **Schools undertook the scale-up of CCL, on a voluntary basis, often without sufficient knowledge and/or consideration of the demands of this work for principals and teachers.** As a result, some of the schools that volunteered to pilot CCL did not have the capacity to implement what they attempted. This was not the schools' fault, but rather the reality of schools' readiness to implement a new and complex form of professional development. When implementation was weak, as a result of the schools' limited capacity, weak implementation in the 2002-2003 school year may have been harmful to the district's overall goals because it left some teachers and principals with an incorrect idea of CCL as professional development.

- **The schools in our sample that struggled to implement CCL did not appear to have some of the key Essentials firmly established. As a result of what we have learned from this small study as well as from past study of the implementation of the Essentials and the components of whole-school improvement, we think it would serve the schools, the teachers and the children of Boston well for the BPS to consider carefully schools' extant development of the Essentials, what they need to do next in order to extend and deepen their development, and then support that development prior to taking on the work of implementing CCL.** If the district accepts the findings and conclusions we have drawn from our work with the EP schools and with the four schools we studied this past school year, then it should be clear that requiring schools to implement CCL (or anything else) when they lack the infrastructure/context in which to do so, is a) a guarantee that coaching resources will be wasted, b) a likely way to persuade teachers and principals that this coaching model is ineffective or too hard to implement, and c) therefore a set-back to the progress of

instructional improvement that the district hopes to achieve and which its children deserve.

Some Considerations Regarding Next Steps

Three years ago, at the end of our *Taking Stock* report (July 2000) we suggested that the district might do well to consider the extant capacity of schools to take on the next steps in the district's reform agenda and provide resources to increase that capacity prior to requiring implementation of "next steps." Eighteen months ago, in our *Implications for Scaling-Up Implementation of the CCL Model* (January 2002) we wrote, "In considering the possibilities for scaling-up CCL, then, the BPS and BPE need to assess whether, to what extent, and in what ways the CCL model, as a next step in whole-school improvement, could be successful in schools that have not yet completed the earlier steps of implementing the Essentials, in schools that do not have in place the conditions found in the EP schools." We reiterate the same suggestion now in light of what we have learned about factors that influence CCL implementation in the EP schools and in other BPS schools.

Three years ago, we also suggested that the district determine why it was that some schools had not yet successfully established the collaborative instructionally focused cultures that form the basis for next steps in implementation so that the BPS could target further support appropriately. We make the same suggestion now with respect to the schools that were unsuccessful in the pilot year of CCL implementation. If the district considers the data it has gathered along with the data and analysis we presented, it will likely realize that not all of the schools in the sample had difficulty for exactly the same reason. If the district becomes clear about *why* these schools have not yet established the cultures that are necessary for further instructional progress, it will be able to develop more appropriate and effective interventions so that these schools will stand a greater chance of succeeding in implementing all of Boston's whole-school reforms, including CCL.

CCL is a potentially powerful professional development model. Education Matters, the BPE and BPS, and the teachers, principals, and coaches who work in schools where it is being implemented well all attest to its power. This coaching model engages teachers in the collaborative pursuit of improved teaching and learning with one another and with the expertise provided by a coach. It can be an important next step in developing the collaborative, instructionally focused school culture that is at the heart of whole-school improvement in Boston.

But, the CCL model does not have the capacity to deal with all of the challenges that will arise when implementation is attempted in weak school contexts. CCL, for example, cannot solve the challenges posed by a weak or resistant principal. By itself, the coaching model cannot adequately address the needs of teachers who have weak content knowledge and/or classroom management skills. It cannot fully orient teachers to the theory of learning that undergirds Workshop strategies nor teach them all they need to know to begin participating in Workshop-focused CCL.

Therefore, as the BPS and BPE consider what they have learned about implementation in the 2002-2003 school year and plan for the coming school year, we think it would be fruitful for those who were involved in last year's implementation – including a sample of coaches, principals, and teachers from schools that had a wide range of experiences – to assess what they learned and the implications of that learning for next steps. In our *Scaling-Up* report we suggested that such a discussion might begin by attending to the leadership characteristics and social context of schools. We offered the following list of school characteristics that might start such a conversation.

- ***The school has good principal leadership and willing teachers but is at an early phase of implementing the Essentials.***

- ***The principal and teachers are compliance oriented, do what they are told, but have not yet taken ownership of the work.***

- ***The school has many teachers who have not been trained in a literacy model or balanced literacy approach.***

- ***The principal is weak but eager to learn and work hard to implement the Essentials.***

- ***The principal is weakly committed to implementing the Essentials; only some teachers have been trained in the balanced literacy approach; ILTs and LASW groups meet sporadically; test scores, measured by school average are deemed "good enough", and yet the school has gotten positive feedback on the little progress it has made.***

- ***The principal is competent but has a significant segment of the faculty that strongly resists implementing the Essentials.***

- ***The principal, despite being strong and/or knowledgeable, and teachers are in frequent conflict with each other and, as a result, have weakly implemented the Essentials.***

This list was not exhaustive when we presented it and we doubt that it is exhaustive now. But, we note that these characteristics were significant in the small sample of four schools in which we studied CCL and that they were closely associated with the quality of CCL implementation.[17]

CCL is powerful professional development, but it is not the solution for school-based problems that get in the way of its implementation. CCL will likely further the development of collaborative, instructionally focused cultures, as we described in our Year II CCL report, but it will not, by itself, lead to the establishment of those cultures when strong, countervailing social

[17]This list focuses on characteristics that might need attention if CCL implementation is to be successful. Needless to say, schools that have strong principal leadership, well established Essentials and, therefore, a collaborative, instructionally focused culture, will likely be successful in implementing CCL without further interventions.

contexts and weak principal leadership stand in the way. While we understand the district's desire to implement CCL quickly in all of its schools, we also know that this important professional development strategy will not succeed in schools that lack the capacity to implement it.

The district's effort to scale-up CCL to all BPS schools at the start of the 2003-2004 school year is indicative of its commitment to offering high quality professional development to all teachers and thereby, high quality instruction to all students. We know that BPS is serious about this commitment. In raising the challenges and making the recommendations found in this report, we also recognize the tremendous effort currently underway in schools and commend those principals, teachers and coaches who stepped forward to begin implementing CCL this year. We are encouraged by the BPS's efforts to support these schools as they move toward full implementation and the further development of collaborative, instructionally focused, school-wide cultures.