

University of Louisville

## ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

5-2021

### Space to lead: cognitive coaching as mindful school leader practice.

Jennifer Helm Cox  
*University of Louisville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Cox, Jennifer Helm, "Space to lead: cognitive coaching as mindful school leader practice." (2021).  
*Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 3660.  
<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/3660>

This Doctoral Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. This title appears here courtesy of the author, who has retained all other copyrights. For more information, please contact [thinkir@louisville.edu](mailto:thinkir@louisville.edu).

SPACE TO LEAD: COGNITIVE COACHING AS MINDFUL SCHOOL LEADER  
PRACTICE

By

Jennifer Helm Cox  
B.A., University of Kentucky, 1995  
M.A., Bellarmine University, 2004

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education  
In Educational Leadership and Organizational  
Development

Department of Educational Leadership and Organizational  
Development University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2021

Copyright 2021 by Jennifer Cox

All rights reserved



SPACE TO LEAD: COGNITIVE COACHING AS MINDFUL SCHOOL LEADER  
PRACTICE

By

Jennifer Helm Cox  
B.A., University of Kentucky, 1995  
M.A., Bellarmine University, 2004

A Dissertation Approved on

April 6, 2021

by the following Dissertation Committee:

---

Dr. Kyle Ingle (Chair)

---

Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller

---

Dr. Deborah Powers

---

Dr. Maggie McGatha

## DEDICATION

Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path.

— Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*

This dissertation is dedicated to every school leader who knows in their bones that leading does not have to harden, drain, or exhaust us to the point of joylessness. To the leaders who were brave enough to be vulnerable in this study and to all who are fighting the good fight of finding energizing work/life balance. I see you.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my family. Tony, Alex, Jacob, and Sam, each one of you sacrificed in some way to allow me to reach this goal. I love you. Thank you to my UofL doctoral cohort families from Block '16 to Block '20. I found people to inspire, guide, advise, and prove that the hard work pays off. You took time to look back and give a hand to those climbing behind you and it is appreciated. Special love to my Block '19 friends, who laughed, cried, grit teeth, and celebrated with each other every step of the way. To my friends who believed I was capable of this work before I believed it for myself- thank you for your love and confidence. Thank you to Dr. Kyle Ingle, who never allowed me to get away with mediocrity. To Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller who showed me beautiful, wordy, storied projects matter in the research world. Thank you for meeting with us in our monthly Dissertators United meetings; never letting us give up. Dr. Deborah Powers, thank you for keeping it real with your fellow practitioner-scholars, and for understanding what it is to pursue this degree while leading a school. Thank you to Dr. Maggie McGatha who trained me in Cognitive Coaching long before I was a principal or doctoral student. In so many ways your teaching entirely changed my professional life. Finally, I am grateful to every friend I have in Shelby County Public Schools who cheered me on, supported me, and believed I could succeed as I navigated the principalship, dissertation, and family.

## ABSTRACT

### SPACE TO LEAD: COGNITIVE COACHING AS MINDFUL SCHOOL LEADER

## PRACTICE

Jennifer H. Cox

April 6, 2021

Anxious, stressed school leaders can adversely affect the climate and culture of the communities they serve. As stress takes its toll on the leader's self-efficacy, conflict and disruption in the leader's ability to focus, negotiate negativity, and remain solutions oriented can decrease commitment of staff and other stakeholders to organizational goals. Constant connection through technology coupled with the multiple roles a principal must fulfill for their schools leaves little room for renewal, self-development and reflection leaving principals feeling drained of energy and a true sense of continual mastery, leaving them with low self-efficacy and primed for burnout.

Leaders engaged in growing their flexibility, mindful awareness, professional and personal development may be more resilient, agile, and responsive to the high demand of school administrator's job. This study examines the experiences and reflections of 5 principals in a suburban school district as they engaged in Cognitive Coaching. Data were analyzed using The Listening Guide methodology according to the following two research questions: 1) How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after



a Cognitive Coaching cycle? and 2) How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle? The study seeks to fill a gap in the literature offering job embedded strategies principals can practice for lessening stress and problem centered thinking.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides the framework for this multiple case study investigating how principals describe perceived self-efficacy and mindful leader traits during and after Cognitive Coaching cycles. Principals in this study discuss the value of protected time for the mindful practices of reflection, relationship building and renewal. They saw value in setting aside time to examine their impact with a Cognitive Coach. Every principal reported feeling better prepared, at ease, and confident after planning, reflecting, and problem solving with a Cognitive Coach. Self-efficacy and mindfulness matter especially in times of crisis because leaders with high self-efficacy are calm, focused, and exhibit fewer outward signs of frustration and stress in the face of challenge. Leader education programs and district leaders should explore evidence based, job embedded strategies such as leader coaching and other mindful practice to help school leaders mitigate and regulate the stress of the job for the sake of retention and well-being.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	5
Theoretical Dispositions .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	6
Research Design and Data Sources.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Organization of Remaining Chapters.....	10
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	12
Challenges of School Leadership.....	12
Changing Nature of the Principalship.....	18
Theoretical Lens for Mindful School Leadership.....	26
Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory .....	27
Mindful Leadership.....	30
Benefits and Effectiveness of Mindfulness.....	32
Formal and Informal Mindful Practice .....	35
Leadership Coaching .....	39
Coaching as Professional Development.....	40
Coaching in Educational Settings .....	42
Cognitive Coaching Defined.....	44
The Intersection of Cognitive Coaching and Mindful School Leadership .....	48
Summary .....	50
METHODOLOGY .....	53

Research Design.....	53
Context of the Study .....	54
Sampling .....	55
Positionality .....	55
Data Sources .....	58
Data Collection .....	58
Data Management .....	60
Data Analysis .....	60
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	62
Limitations and Delimitations.....	64
Foreshadowing Future Findings .....	65
Summary .....	67
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS .....	68
Case Narratives .....	68
Principal Manley and Coach Smith .....	73
Principal Beeler and Coach Dosier .....	74
Principal Cook and Coach Stuart.....	75
Principal Siers and Coach Keene.....	78
Principal Harris and Coach Martin .....	80
Cognitive Coaching Questions’ Elicitation of Self-Efficacy and Mindfulness Traits..	82
During Cognitive Coaching .....	86
After Cognitive Coaching .....	104
Mindful Leadership Traits During and After Cognitive Coaching.....	107
During Cognitive Coaching .....	108
After Cognitive Coaching .....	123
Summary .....	126
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS .....	128
Discussion and Significance .....	129
Research Question 1 .....	130
Research Question 2 .....	133
Implications for Practice.....	138
Implications for Policy.....	140
Conclusion .....	144
REFERENCES .....	147
APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT .....	161

APPENDIX B: PLANNING, REFLECTING, PROBLEM-SOLVING CONVERSATION MEMORY MATS .....	165
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE FIELD NOTE JOURNAL PAGES .....	168
APPENDIX D: INTERPLAY OF MINDFULNESS, SELF-EFFICACY, AND COGNITIVE COACHING QUESTIONS .....	171
APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL I POEMS .....	177
APPENDIX F: DEBRIEF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS.....	200
CURRICULUM VITA .....	201

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
Table 1. Leadership Actions that Relate to Mindfulness Constructs.....	33
Table 2. Mindful Strategies for Achieving School Success .....	38
Table 3. Study Informants, Principals and Coaches .....	70
Table 4. Strategies for Inviting Cognitive Shift.....	72
Table 5. Mindfulness and Self-Efficacy Trait Occurrence with Cognitive Coaching States of Mind during Coaching.....	84

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A school principal may begin the day with a host of tasks to do before day's end—observing teachers and students in classrooms, giving meaningful feedback to teachers, welcoming new students with a personal tour of the building, meeting with the leadership team to discuss how to support staff, students, and families, and perhaps greet a few parents in the carpool line. Although such planning is productive and allows for visible, intentional leadership moves, the likelihood of completing all of the items by day's end is complicated by the unforeseen demands of the day. In a study on principal time usage, Sebastian, Camburn, and Spillane (2018) identified ten functions among which principals must spread time over the course of a school year. The study found school leaders give time and attention to at least five of these functions each day with the least time dedicated to professional development. School principals must be ready to navigate the many roles demanded of the job and often must switch rapidly between those roles multiple times a day. These roles include those of instructional experts, innovators, disciplinarians, financiers, public relations directors, conflict negotiators, and masters of local, state, and federal policy (Fisher, 2014). The principal may start the day with clear intentions but cannot foresee the various and sundry issues that may arise unexpectedly. Schools as workplaces have changed. Technology, increasing student social-emotional distress, and the pressure of state and federal accountability demands can have teachers and administrators switching between events and foci multiple times

per day (Ehrlich, 2017). The coping mechanism to these rapid stimuli is multitasking. Multitasking, though, can reduce productivity and cause educational leaders to ignore our social connections to others, thereby negatively affecting our emotional intelligence as well as our self-efficacy (Ehrlich, 2017). School leaders run the risk of reacting mindlessly to events in the day, which can feel much like efficiency, but can close the mind to alternative viewpoints, creativity, and empathetic consideration of the needs of others (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013).

### **Background of the Study**

Principals set the tone for culture and climate of the school and are significant factors to school success (Burkhauser, 2017; Huang, Hochbein, & Simons, 2018). If the leader of the school is anxious and stressed, it may adversely affect the school climate and interactions with colleagues, leading to increased conflict among staff, decreased commitment to organizational goals, and low perceptions of self-efficacy. A recent survey of 420 principals and school leaders about regulation strategies used to battle burnout found leaders who report using specific self-regulation also reported less stress (Tikkanen, Pyhalto, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2017).

Teaching and leading in an environment characterized by a constant state of change is more likely to cause stress and negative feelings when the employees care deeply about the outcome (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Most educators join and remain in the profession because they care deeply that our work matters to children and their futures. Demands to change the way we educate students, although positive and even necessary, increase anxiety and cause us to question whether what we are doing is the right thing. When change initiatives cause cognitive dissonance, Wisse and Sleebos

(2016) stress the importance of a “salient personal self”- a cognitive self-construct that can mediate uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, and confusion. Both Cognitive Coaching and Mindful Leadership practices aim to reduce focus on such negative perceptions and concentrate attention and energy toward acknowledging the negative emotional responses, then quickly moving to planning, problem solving, and action strategy (Brown & Olsen; 2015; Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Rapid life pace and work thanks to informational technology and constant connection to increasing amounts of stimuli make it extremely difficult for people to possess the agency needed to invest in self-renewal and development. When we do not take the time for this investment, self-efficacy suffers. Individuals who fail to take the time to reflect upon how well they are adapting to change, functioning in multiple areas of life, or notice success may feel drained of time, energy, and a sense of growth or continual mastery (Bandura, 2001). The term investment implies the spending or finding of time. Time is a precious commodity to organizational leaders and one they are not likely to carve out for themselves for personal growth.

In education research, self-efficacy studies primarily exist in the following categories: student self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, collective teacher self-efficacy, and most recently, school leader self-efficacy (Fisher, 2014). In the empirical studies that exist on principal self-efficacy, there is no commonality on how it is developed or measured, but there is agreement that leaders reporting high self-efficacy are persistent and resilient as they face difficulties and rapid change in their work (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2003) describe the differences between high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy principals. High self-efficacy leaders approach problems of



practice with confidence, calm, and focus on high yield strategies. Conversely, principals with a low sense of self-efficacy are less flexible when faced with failure. They are less likely to seek other perspectives, can devolve to blaming others, exhibit outward signs of frustration and anxiety, and might resort to positional power to change practice.

An overview of current mindfulness research offers hope for application to leadership and organizations. Mindful leaders pay attention to body, mind, spirit, and emotions. Consciously aligning belief and action allows them to be present with teams, connect people with clear vision, and inspire others because they are more confident, aligned, focused, and less reactive when pressure builds (Ehrlich, 2017). Key and Pidgeon (2013) studied the relationship between mindfulness, self-efficacy, and resilience. Their regression models pointed toward mindfulness and self-efficacy as predictors of resilience. In a mixed method study focused on the beneficial effects of flexible leadership, Baron, Rouleau, Gregoire, and Baron (2017) suggest leaders engaged in mindful awareness and development may be more resilient, agile, and responsive to the demands of school administration. The study goes on to suggest mindfulness as a worthy consideration for school leader development and support programs.

For principals who find it difficult to engage in mindfulness practice on their own, it may make sense to enlist the assistance of a coach. Most mindfulness practice, even among school leaders, is solitary (Brown & Olsen, 2015). There are times when educational leaders should consider turning to others within their various networks to assist when facing self-doubt (Hite, Williams, & Baugh, 2005). Whether individuals choose to build and maintain a sense of self-efficacy alone or collaboratively has no effect on its ability to help one navigate change, evaluate action/belief alliance, or design

a plan to achieve a specific outcome (Bandura, 2001). One study followed twelve principals and four assistant principals engaged in a Cognitive Coaching cycle over the course of four months (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). Among data collected were coaching session notes, observations, and a questionnaire to measure consciousness, craftsmanship, flexibility, efficacy, and interdependence, otherwise known as the Five States of Mind (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Participants showed growth in the states of mind, reported the coaching session as very valuable professional development, and five of them chose to continue working with the coaches (Edwards, 2016).

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore Cognitive Coaching as a possible self-regulatory practice to raise self-efficacy and mindful leader disposition. In the study, I ask the following research questions:

1. How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?
2. How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?

### **Theoretical Dispositions**

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory serves as the framework for this study. Bandura (2001) defines four core tenets of agency (the capacity to control the quality of experience) contributing to self-efficacy as intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Likewise, the literature describes mindful leaders as intentional, thoughtful, emotionally intelligent; making them less reactive, and they are able to reflect upon the impact of actions (Wells, 2015). McCormick (2001) notes the use of Bandura's

social cognitive theory in investigating sports performance, but the same agentic system applied to sports function apply to leadership function. People with high self-efficacy hold high expectations for selves, are persistent in challenges, and seek out problem solving strategies rather than seeing challenges as immediate failure. Applying social cognitive theory to leadership performance and self-efficacy is an important perspective because it looks at leader thinking connected to practice. Cognitive Coaching, with its structured inquiry conversations, aims to shift cognitive processes from less productive to more productive. In their study of school principals engaged in coaching cycles, Ellison and Hayes (2006) propose that mediation of thinking, which occurs in a coaching conversation, is necessary to successful problem identification, solution planning, and problem-solving skill synthesis which are needed in demanding professions like school leadership.

### **Significance of the Study**

My study adds to the body of research in several areas. First, my study will contribute to current mindful leadership literature, which is gaining greater attention; especially in business (Ehrlich, 2017). While there are numerous studies identifying perceived principal stress, there remains a gap in the literature offering job embedded strategies for lessening stress and problem rumination which can hinder a leader's strength and effectiveness (Klocko & Wells, 2015). This study will explore Cognitive Coaching as one such strategy. Unique to this study is the aim at mindful leadership through collaboration. Most popular mindful practice stresses isolation, which may not always be the right choice for every individual. Some of us need an accountability and/or thought partner with expertise is using inquiry to spawn reflection. Second, this research

looks at Cognitive Coaching for building principals and the influence of leadership actions. Most Cognitive Coaching studies examine teachers and the application to classroom practice. The growth of coaching cultures to create mindful, reflective organizations requires leadership engaged in the metacognitive work along with staff. Finally, I hope this dissertation brings light to the importance of preserving and growing self-efficacy for those hoping to sustain in the principalship. Previous research claims the importance of self-efficacy for resilience in challenging work and even suggests self-regulation strategies, but these strategies lack clear definitions (Kearney et al., 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Cognitive Coaching is one specific practice of self-regulation and mindfulness.

### **Research Design and Data Sources**

The purpose of this multiple case study is to collect data from principals engaged in a Cognitive Coaching cycle focused on a leadership goal or problem of practice and observe any perceived change in self-efficacy and mindful leader disposition. I will use selective sampling for this research. Trust, relationship, safety, and vulnerability are key factors to successful coach/coachee relationships (Burnett, 2014; Costa & Garmston, 2016). It can take several months of intensive work to establish a trusting coaching dynamic, and even then, the combination may not provide enough psychological safety for the coaching work to be impactful. Given the time constraints for this study (one school semester), the sample will include principals who report trusting the expertise of their instructional coaches and who have willingness to confide in them during coaching conversations.

Participants will participate in weekly digitally recorded coaching conversations. Coaching conversations will use semi-structured interviews defined as coaching maps by Costa and Garmston (2002). Cognitive coaches are trained to use a coaching map which allows the coach to control the focus and agenda of the discussion but leaves open the direction of the conversation (see Appendix B for coaching maps). Data will be qualitative consisting of interviews and transcribed audio recordings of coaching conversations between the instructional coaches and principals. Using The Listening Guide method for thematic and narrative analysis, I will uncover meaning in the Cognitive Coaching protocol for school leaders by taking the transcribed interviews through three coding cycles, or listenings, as outlined in the method (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). During the first and second listenings, I will take the data through a 1<sup>st</sup> cycle hypothesis coding process using a priori deductive codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Saldana, 2016). During the third listening, I will leave flexibility to create codes for data that does not seem to fit any of the deductive codes, thus allowing the emergence of any unanticipated themes and concepts in the process (Miles et al., 2014).

### **Definition of Terms**

Key terms of this study are defined below:

**Agency-** Attributed to Bandura (2001), agency is one's capacity to control an experience.

**Burnout-** The feeling of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion experienced after long term ineffective attempts to cope with ongoing stress of a situation.

**Coach** – one who creates a non-judgmental space where he/she listens, paraphrases, and questions in a way to support the person receiving the coaching to become increasingly self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying (Rogers, Hauserman, & Skytt, 2016).

**Coachee** – a person who receives consult from a coach, especially in a professional setting; the client in a Cognitive Coaching cycle (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

**Cognitive coaching**- Attributed to Costa and Garmston (2002), a process and set of strategies intended to mediate thinking of individuals and organizations aimed at growing self-direction and self-reflection. Cognitive Coaching mediates thinking in one or more of The Five States of Mind: efficacy, consciousness, craftsmanship, interdependence, and flexibility.

**Cognitive dissonance**- Awareness of conflicting values, beliefs, or assumptions that causes discomfort. In a state of flexibility and reflectiveness, cognitive dissonance can serve to expand understanding, build empathy, or change thinking and beliefs.

**Consciousness**- Attributed to Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002), consciousness is one's ability to notice how internal beliefs, external stimuli, and past experiences affect reactions to current situations as they unfold. Consciousness is one of The Five States of Mind in Cognitive Coaching.

**Craftsmanship**- Attributed to Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002), educators who are high in craftsmanship are internally motivated to strive for excellence in teaching for themselves and for excellence in learning for their students. Educators high in craftsmanship are questioners always seeking research proven best practice to inform instructional planning and continually use formative assessment to reflect. Craftsmanship is one of The Five States of Mind in Cognitive Coaching.

**Empathy**- Refers to the ability to identify and understand the motives, feelings, needs, and perspectives of others. In leadership, empathy is important when building relationships and establishing trust.

**Emotional intelligence-** Known as a key component of effective leadership (Ehrlich, 2017), emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize one's own emotions, their triggers, and that of others. Emotionally intelligent leaders consider how their actions will affect others and use that knowledge to intentionally communicate goals, strengths, and areas for growth.

**Flexibility-** Attributed to Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002), flexibility allows one to be open to multiple perspectives, ideas, and possibilities. Flexibility is one of the five states of mind in Cognitive Coaching.

**Interdependence-** Attributed to Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002), interdependence is the ability to see one's contribution to a system as well as what is gained from the system. Interdependence is one of The Five States of Mind in Cognitive Coaching.

**Mindful leadership-** The application of mindfulness to leadership actions including, but not limited to awareness, presence, listening, trust, non-judgment, responsiveness, patience, empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

**Self-efficacy-** The belief in our ability to influence events that affect our lives and control over the way we experience them: optimistically or pessimistically (Bandura, 1994).

**Self-regulation-** The ability to act in the best interest of self, consistent with beliefs and values. In this study, self-regulation refers to one noticing stress and its affects, then seeking to problem solve in order to alleviate negative emotions.

### **Organization of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter I of this dissertation includes the introduction, background of the study, purpose and research questions, theoretical disposition, significance of the study, research

design, data sources, and definition of terms. Chapter II details current research literature on school leadership challenges, establishes a theoretical lens and definition for mindful school leadership, and points to benefits and effectiveness of mindfulness. The chapter continues with research on leadership coaching and coaching in educational settings- including Cognitive Coaching. Chapter III describes methodology, sample, limitations and delimitations, and research basis for my study. Chapter IV discusses emerging themes resulting from first, second, and third coding cycles of coaching sessions, and a debrief interview. Chapter V of this dissertation summarizes findings, discusses possible applications for inside the district of study, for education leadership policy and programming, and for future research.



## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to explore Cognitive Coaching as a mindful school leader practice among school principals in a suburban school district in Kentucky. The study will give voice to the principals and their perspectives on the value of Cognitive Coaching in terms of their self-efficacy as school leaders. I seek to establish a research context wherein embedded, regular, leadership coaching makes sense for school principal professional, cognitive, and emotional support. First, I will provide the reader with what current literature defines are professional demands on school principals that potentially diminish mindful leadership qualities and self-efficacy. Next, this review will outline current methods of leader professional development and formative assessment that are largely one-size fits all and take place outside of the decision impact context. Finally, I will establish the relevance of leadership coaching and its bearing on leader impact and well-being.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?
2. How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?

### **Challenges of School Leadership**

Successful school leadership has been and continues to be a concept of evolving definitions. Wang (2018) reviewed the history of educational leadership theory

development from the 1950s to the present day. Wang revealed that the principal of the 1950s and 1960s led in a closed system where he or she was decision maker and bureaucratic organizational head. The 1970s witnessed the application of behavioral and social science research, thereby challenging that education leaders managed an open system requiring more contextual consideration to determine successful leaders and learners. The 1980s brought focus on a school leader's role in school improvement and this continued into the 1990s with an additional layer of theories on staff and student empowerment, and instructional leadership for improvement. In the last two decades, the tide of education leadership research has turned to social justice, transformation, trust, culture and climate, and an increase in the number as well as diversity of decision-making members. The principalship just a few decades ago consisted largely of building management and student discipline. Today, principals must be instructional experts, vision builders, culture improvers, professional developers, achievement masters, and community connectors (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Friedman (2002) attributes burnout to "demanding rapid response" (p. 230) to the needs of others in all of the aforementioned identities leading to a feeling of low accomplishment, frustration, and exhaustion. Continual, unregulated exposure to job stress, like that of school leadership, can lead to greater levels of burnout and subsequent leaving the profession (Tikkanen et al., 2017).

The work of the school principal is full of frequent interruptions, involves long hours of a harried pace, and is driven by the often-non-aligned demands of many stakeholders (Spillane & Lee, 2014). School leadership challenges can be even more intense to the new school principal. Novice principals enter their new positions with

idealism with what Spillane and Lee (2014) call a “sense of ultimate responsibility” (p. 442). Since novice principals can feel as if every outcome rests with them, their experiences are often described as “overwhelming, pressure-filled induction reality shocks” (Spillane & Lee, 2014, p. 434). If these principals believe they are responsible for everything that happens under the school roof, it can increase the likelihood of micro-management (Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015). Notably, most research on new principal experiences dates back prior to Common Core state standards and the targeting of low performing schools through high stakes testing. Expected performance as an instructional leader in an environment of high stakes accountability adds pressure to the multifarious job of a school leader (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Given the tendency of fragmented and posthaste work, a principal can find him or herself in rapid response mode (O’Malley, Long, & King, 2015).

### **Competing Attention**

O’Malley et al. (2015) used a case study to illustrate the rapid response mode principals find themselves in and the dangers of remaining in this mindset. In a day’s time, the case study principal responds to department concern over funding, an assistant principal’s challenge of a teacher evaluation, an angry parent, a hurting student, a newspaper interview request, and a prominent community member who is concerned about achievement scores, all the while attempting to visit classrooms. Given this peek into a typical principal’s day, one can see the burden upon the leader to demonstrate competency in all of what the Wallace Foundation (2011) defines as functions of effective school leadership: culture shaping, success visioning, distributing leadership, instructional improvement, and resource management. Principals holding themselves to

high expectations in all of the aforementioned functions can find many opportunities to fall short and encounter waning self-efficacy. Some can become emotionally exhausted, leading to burnout and temptation to quit (Friedman, 2002). Managing staff, attending to others' job satisfaction, monitoring quality curriculum and pedagogy, new district initiatives, and self-regulation are significant internal causes of principal stress. Compounding those demands can be external expectations for raising test scores along with competing work and personal time (Friedman, 2002). Klocko and Wells (2015) conducted a study on perceived workplace stressors for principals. They used the same survey instrument in 2009, with 900 principals responding, and again in 2012, with 709 principal responses. What emerged in 2009 as top stressors were prevalence of task management stress, diminished revenue problems, not enough time to complete the work, paperwork load, and work-life balance stress. While all of these factors remained evident as sources of school leader stress, the survey results found a statistically significant increase in reports of loss of personal time, sense of overwhelm, anxiety over teacher evaluations, and reports to district and state agencies. Klocko and Wells (2015) attribute the rise in the named 2012 issues to a fear and vulnerability culture surrounding diminished test scores. Principals trying to implement change in an age of high stakes accountability experience higher levels of vulnerability and stress that could be labeled chronic.

### **Leading in a Change Environment**

The sense of urgency and pressure associated with national and state performance expectations for schools can leave district leaders and school principals grasping for the quick fix for school turnarounds. The problem with this method of fixing schools is it

often creates a disconnect between belief, theory, and practice for educators. The longer educators spend operating in this disconnect, the higher the feelings of isolation, mistrust, weakening autonomy (Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Principals must navigate the waters of these negative feelings, which ultimately create organizational resistance to change over time. Part of what solidifies a leader's sense of self-efficacy is the ability to carry out needed changes in their organizations. Research on principal self-efficacy found school leader self-efficacy significantly and negatively associated with feelings of isolation and positively correlated to perceived trust between teachers and leaders (Tshannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Leading in a change environment will never be easy, but school leaders must resist the impulse to reach for a quick fix mandate, and instead approach school change reflectively, mindfully, intentionally, and knowing it will take much time.

Teaching and leading during school change is more likely to cause stress and negative feelings when the employees care deeply about the outcome (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Most educators join and remain in the profession because we do care deeply that our work matters to children and their futures. When change initiatives cause cognitive dissonance, Wisse & Sleebos (2016) discuss the importance of a "salient personal self"- a cognitive self-construct that can mediate uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, and confusion. Both Cognitive Coaching and Mindful Leadership practices aim to reduce focus on such negative perceptions and concentrate attention and energy toward acknowledging the negative emotional responses, then quickly moving to planning, problem solving, and action strategy (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Brown & Olsen, 2015).

Sometimes the prospect of leading organizational change can bring positive emotions and excitement about the possibilities. In their paper establishing a framework

for organizing responses to what they name “ambivalence,” Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, and Pradies (2014) explain how the simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotions (ambivalence) is quite common in organizations and it can actually be a positive thing. Ashforth et al. (2014) explain the lynchpin of ambivalence as positive or negative is the level of cognition and subsequent behavior. A person experiencing ambivalence also experiences discomfort. If the person is highly aware of the discomfort and the causes, he or she can use the experience to foster growth and deeper understanding of behaviors that must follow in order to produce a positive outcome. If the person lacks awareness, the discomfort can result in highly reactive behaviors that are dismissive, cause tension, and are threatening to colleagues.

Highly reactive behaviors can damage relationships. Relationships are of critical importance to change leaders. In her review of thirty-six empirical studies on principal turnover, Rangel (2017) found three characteristics of the job as predictors of turnover: autonomy, relationships, and the changing work of the principalship. Among the research, there were policy issues specific to accountability as well as school culture attention linked to the three job characteristics (Rangel, 2017). Principals enacting significant change in response to district and state performance demands must always keep school culture and staff relationship considerations in any turnaround plan. Leaders trying to change practice often meet resistance from staff particularly when the change encroaches on perceived autonomy (Klocko & Wells, 2015). One could draw the conclusion that leading in an environment that is changing practice in response to district and state demands to raise test scores brings a confluence of all three of the predictors for principal turnover (Rangel, 2017).

## **Changing Nature of the Principalship**

Many attribute school leader shortages to increasing demands of the profession without adequate development and support creating early and permanent burn out. Student achievement accountability, district initiatives, and pace of the job are associated with higher rates of exhaustion, cynicism, reactive coping habits, and feelings of professional inadequacy (Tikkanen et al., 2017). Prolonged experience with such workplace stressors tends to happen in areas where expectations around complex tasks are continually changing as well as in areas where dealing with other people is required (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). Such are the conditions of the school leader.

Principals are accountable to a multitude of stakeholders; among them, students, parents, teachers, district leaders, and state accountability measures. In his study of principal professional development, Dempster (2001) surveyed parents and teachers, held focus groups with district and regional officials, politicians, and education policymakers, then ranked in order of importance expectations of principals. Expectations on the surveys and discussed in focus groups included:

- Vision, values orientation
- Staff, parent, and community relations
- Management of change
- Concern for students
- Management of the school
- Personal qualities

Dempster (2001) found that parents and teachers tended to rank matters of internal and relational expectations as most important while district leaders' and state accountability

expectations tended to focus on changing the status quo and managing external demands. Ironically, changing the status quo consistently ranked as least important to parents and teachers (Dempster, 2001). The findings illustrate the daily stress of the building principal when working among the convergence of demands from stakeholders outside of the school system and what leaders themselves perceive as priority issues. Principals must prioritize daily, and sometimes multiple times per day, where to spend time and energy. Dempster (2001) cautions that, “The strength of this dilemma should not be underestimated. When leading locally is framed and constrained by system policies and priorities, school principals can become the ‘meat’ in an unpalatable sandwich” (p.10).

Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) describe the complexity of being a school leader through a theory called layering. Leaders enact multiple practices that are perfected over time often in contexts where belief and action is difficult to align and where stakeholders have conflicting interests. Principals may frequently need to justify success in terms of test scores and academic progress, though they know that is only a portion of the success at their schools. School leaders may be more than their impact on academic outcomes, but those qualities of strong leadership are difficult to measure. Qualities such as trust building, teacher leader support, organization adjustments, and clarity of direction can be overshadowed by the hard data that can be gathered around scores (Day et al., 2016). The authors stress that successful leaders seem to be able to layer well – determining the appropriate response to each situation where leader action is in alignment with leader and organizational beliefs. Priority push and pull along with weighing appropriate responses can be particularly stressful for the rural principal, who must often lead among tight knit



communities where expectations for performance and the fulfillment of multiple roles is very high (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

### **Unique Challenges of Rural Principals**

This dissertation study takes place in a rural community consisting of thirteen schools. Five of these schools have novice principals; defined by Wieczorek and Manard (2018) as having zero to three years of experience. In their study of the demands of novice, rural principals, Wieczorek and Manard (2018) asked what specific leadership challenges exist for rural principals that could be especially difficult for new principals. What they found was in addition to leadership challenges faced by principals across the literature, rural school leaders face pressure to be visible, financial and resource limitations, and expectations to fulfill multiple roles beyond what is customary. As a result, rural principals report intense levels of stress, isolation, and vulnerability when trying to balance work, life, and community responsibilities.

The rural principal is not only the managerial head of the school. He or she is a prominent member of a close-knit community, who is working for what is often the largest employer of that community. This can cause a feeling of working under a microscope. News travels quickly in rural communities and principals are expected to meet the resulting expectations of the stakeholders almost immediately (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Rural principals must be willing and comfortable with high visibility and accessibility, which may mean more frequent and lengthy interruptions to an instructional leader's school day. A leader who is approachable and willing to reach out to community members to discuss building and district issues is one with an increased likelihood of success in a rural school district (Preston & Barnes, 2017). In one interview with a study

participant, Spillane and Lee (2014), recorded the principal's sense that he felt pulled in hundreds of directions that often competed with one another. Principals in rural settings can feel responsible for everything having to do with school achievement and operations plus responsible for managing community perceptions and feedback about how well it is working (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

Part of managing community and stakeholder perceptions can mean special attention to transparency around being a solid steward of school resources. Rural communities often struggle with a lack of wealth systemically and the principal can use financial transparency as a way to build trust. That level of transparency coupled with the attention of rural stakeholders means the school leader must intimately know the values of the community at large. Spending carefully requires alignment of those values with responsibilities, beliefs, and practices of the educators in the school. The principal must then carefully message that alignment to families and the board of education (Klar & Brewer, 2014).

At the district level, financial and human resource constraints can mean the rural principal must take on many roles and multiple job responsibilities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Rural principals often step into teaching positions when there is a need. He or she delivers professional development to staff as a way to save money and serves on district curriculum, budget, and facilities planning committees at the request of the superintendent (Preston & Barnes, 2018). If current trends in rural education continue, principals in these contexts will be asked to do even more with fewer resources as state budgets favor larger, urban school districts. These school leaders may continue to be asked to spearhead district leadership roles that exceed the expectations of their urban

colleagues (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). The literature emphasizes the need for contextually specific professional development and ongoing support, mentorship, and coaching to address the needs of rural school leaders (Klar & Brewer, 2014; Preston & Barnes, 2017; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018).

### **Professional Development**

Studies across the field agree upon the need for professional development that prepares novice principals and sustains experienced ones in the growing complexity of the work (Dempster, 2001; Houchens & Stewart, 2016; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Scott & Webber, 2008). Twenty first century leader development research encourages participatory, reflective methods aimed at increasing clarity, focus, and personal resilience in the face of competing priorities and attention demands (Houchens, Stewart, & Jennings, 2016; Scott & Webber, 2008; Wise & Hammack, 2011). Principal preparation programs continually search for ways to better prepare future administrators for the work ahead, yet many principals take advantage of the autonomy they have to personalize professional learning given the context in which they work. While they may value what they learned in a formal program, principals are expected to serve as lead learners of organizations striving to always be better by seeking just right, timely professional development experiences (Drago-Severson & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2018).

There is evidence that professional development, personalized support, and self-regulation strategies can mitigate principal stress that can lead to burnout (Tikkanen et al., 2017). However, in a culture of high achievement and accountability, most principal professional development focuses on remediating academic achievement and fixing poor teacher practice. When school administrators spend time away from their buildings

engaged in these one-size-fits-all professional development sessions knowing there will be little follow up support, feelings of exhaustion and stress can actually increase (Nicholson, Harris-John, & Schimmel, 2005).

Sustained leadership development may be best developed over time, one on one, in small groups, through leadership coaching which helps the principal interpret and process feedback within the action context, then turn the feedback into an actionable plan (Goff, 2013). Fusco, O’Riordan, and Palmer (2016) suggest authentic leader development must involve a complex reflection on self, which does not usually happen in typical leader professional development. Most organizations see leader development as a layering process of skill after skill that may meet the needs of circumstances, but fall short of creating deeply personal learning that actually shifts practice for the long term. Authentic leadership is defined as leadership that merges sense of self with clarity, goals, and actions. Traditional learning, training, and feedback for organizational leaders fails to form autonomy and agency- key factors of authentic leaders (Fusco et al., 2016).

Professional fulfillment and transformation rarely result from traditionally planned professional development for organizational leaders. Most planned and delivered professional development, especially if hired in from an outside agency, puts the focus on needs and priorities of the organization over the individual (Dempster, 2001). Making organizational vision the focus of some learning for its leaders is not inherently bad, but it cannot be the only focus of professional learning if we expect real transformation. Nicholson et al. (2005) explains the importance of professional learning to transfer into principal practice. She questions whether central office designed learning sessions, even those arranged as a professional learning community actually improve practice. Some

studies point to the power of contextualized, one-on-one professional learning experiences for organizational leaders.

Double loop learning requires participants to reflect upon strategies and actions, examine what these say about their assumptions and beliefs, adjust or modify with feedback, then implement the adjusted action plan (Argyris, 2002). One study (Houchens, Hurt, Stobaugh, & Keedy, 2012) used a double loop learning coaching protocol with school principals. In the study, participants were able to identify that the pace and managerial nature of the work of a principal could cause leaders to underestimate the power of emotional trust and relationship with staff, especially when tough feedback was called for. Participants revised their own theories of practice, built empathy for teachers with regard to evaluative feedback through coaching, and shifted decisions away from adult needs to student needs based in data. They also were able to plan and engage in tough, but necessary conversations with difficult teachers with greater confidence and clarity. The principals attributed these changes to protecting the time for coaching conversations and reflection leading to greater understanding about the impact of decisions on culture and learning climate.

Traditional professional development for principals relies on the assumption that if we observe and copy what leaders in “successful” schools are doing, then that will bring success (Nicholson et al., 2005). One need only to look through one week’s email and postal mail to see the market for leadership development. Flyers, conferences, speakers, books, and workshops make millions each year catering to those who wish to create better schools for our nation’s students. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, one of the preeminent leaders in education professional

development, reported revenue of over \$40,000,000 in fiscal year 15-16 (ASCD, 2016). While there are many options for quality off-site professional development, Nicholson et al., (2005) discusses support for personalized and embedded principal professional development specific to individual school needs. Honig and Rainey (2014) found principal professional learning communities, which tend to take place within and between school districts to be more beneficial to leader impact but suggests one on one or small group learning might be even more powerful.

High quality professional learning is an important support for school leaders, but principals can learn deeply about innovative school change, feel the motivation to lead change, and have the skill to do so, but without financial and physical resources can see themselves as less effective than they could be. Neumerski (2012) writes of the Demand-Support-Constraints Model. According to this model, working in a demanding environment with little support and insufficient resources creates strain on leadership. Finding similar perceptions, DiPaola and Tshannen-Moran (2003) collected survey data from Virginia principals and through descriptive analysis determined principals perceive increasing demands expanding the definition of the role without changes in the system to provide knowledge, support, and resources to be successful.

From the University of Washington's Center for Education Leadership came a Principal Support Framework (2016) with three specific action areas for district support of school leaders. One of these areas is support of the principal as instructional leader. The vision of such support includes adequate tools and personalized professional development delivered through teaching, mentorship, and coaching. The framework also points out the goal of providing collegial opportunities for reflection on practice and

sharing of resources. Ultimately, principals simply cannot perform the duties of the role in isolation. The best leader development is reflective, collaborative, differentiated, and embedded in daily operations.

School leadership necessitates the ability to not only be manager, instructional leader, professional coach, master educator, public relations specialist, and change agent, but to navigate the cognitive and emotional toll switching in and out of those roles can take. It is not realistic to expect principals, especially when operating in rapid response to the daily operations of a school, to be successful at all times and when they are not, the fallout can be frustration, anxiety, isolation, loss of trust, and waning self-efficacy. How can a school leader maintain a high sense of self-efficacy, passion, peace, and joy about the work even in the midst of falling short of goals? Researchers suggest it may not be enough to wait for the right resources, for a powerful professional development session, or for stakeholders to buy in to needed changes. Principals need a practice of cognitive and emotional shift they can engage in on their own so they can be responsive to the needs of their learning communities rather than reactive to the emotions that inevitably come with the desire to meet those needs and the possibility of falling short of their own expectations.

### **Theoretical Lens for Mindful School Leadership**

Although mindfulness, and even more so, mindful school leadership are relatively new concepts in empirical research, increasing psychological and medical interest in the application and results of mindful practice has researchers in business and education paying attention (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Current research concentrates on mindfulness training for teachers and students. One such study looked at mindfulness

training related to teacher stress reduction and decreased feelings of burnout (Roeser, Jha, Wallace, Wilensky, Schonert-Reichl, Cullen, Oberle, & Thomson, 2013). The study used a mindfulness training logic model and theory of change detailing the building of teacher skills, mindset, emotional coping and resilience leading to positive classroom outcomes. Some of these outcomes were an emotionally supportive climate, positive relationships, feelings of belonging, motivation to learn, and positive social conduct. Results of this study suggested that teachers who learn to self-regulate in order to meet the emotional, social, and cognitive demands of teaching have increased time, clarity, and motivation to build relationships with students (Roeser et al., 2013). Not only are these benefits desirable in the context of teacher to classroom, but also in that of principal to staff.

### **Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory**

McCormick (2001) explains that social cognitive theory has been used to study other fields such as athletics and medicine as a lens for the relationship between self-efficacy, goal setting, and performance, so it has similar implications for looking at organizational leadership. He says, "Applying social cognitive theory and the self-efficacy construct to the leadership process has theoretical and practical implications (McCormick, 2001, p. 30)." One of these implications is that a leader has the ability to control thinking, emotional responses, and actions in a proactive way that assists the leader in shaping the task environment as positively or negatively influential (McCormick, 2001). This implication closely resembles Bandura's (2001) definition of agency.

Bandura (2001) defines four core tenants of agency (the capacity to control the quality of experience). A person operating with agency is intentional, capable of



forethought, can consider self-reactiveness, and is capable of self-reflection.

Intentionality means actions emerge from plans and reflection. Forethought refers to self-motivation and goal setting that leads one to prioritize behaviors and actions. Self-reflectiveness requires a person to be metacognitive about actions and the context in which those actions occur. Self-reflection is the process of analyzing one's actions for the purpose of determining whether or not those actions produced the desired result. Human agency and self-efficacy are related definitions with agency focused on actions and self-efficacy focused on beliefs that influence those actions.

Self-efficacy is the belief in our ability to influence events that affect our lives and control over the way we experience them (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy can influence our actions. Cognitively, a person with a strong sense of self-efficacy will have an optimistic point of view in the face of challenges. These persons are also motivated to reach goals and tend to pursue those goals in a proactive way. Emotionally, self-efficacy is related to emotional intelligence. People who are highly emotionally intelligent recognize and forgive themselves for feeling deflated in the face of failure, and are able to bounce back from disappointing circumstances. Finally, those who are efficacious tend to make decisions that create opportunities for growth for self and others (Bandura, 1994).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) write, "The purpose of leadership is to facilitate group goal attainment by establishing and maintaining an environment favorable to group performance" (p.574). DeWitt (2017) calls this environment collective efficacy and if principals are to facilitate this well, they must first have a strong sense of self-efficacy and one of the practices he suggests for attaining strong

efficaciousness is leader coaching. Versland and Erikson (2017) used teacher perception data in a case study of the connection between principal self-efficacy and collective self-efficacy using Bandura's (1994) efficacy concept as a sense making tool. One of the teachers surveyed in the case study explained the power of the principal leading by example. Because the principal was transparent with staff about working toward personal and professional goals, reflection, clarity, and empathy teacher leaders felt empowered and safe to do the same and they credit this with subsequent positive teacher leader development and student achievement.

In a study analyzing particular principal stressors, Friedman (2002) suggests administrators endure a complex school atmosphere requiring immediate and shifting responses to demands that are not always in alignment. When principals begin to feel inadequate, tired, ineffective, and frustrated the risk is burnout leading to consideration of leaving the position or to the idea there is no choice but to live with those emotions. There are several ways to alleviate reaction to stress that leads to burnout. Fiske and Taylor (2013) explain six areas of psychological control that could help alleviate stress.

Principals can reflect upon their own behavior in stressful situations. They can ask themselves if there are any actions that could possibly escalate the negativity in a given situation. It is possible to reframe how one thinks about an event by approaching it from multiple perspectives. When possible, school leaders can intentionally time decisions, taking notice of how a particular action will affect staff, student, and community reactions. Gathering additional information about stressful situations in an attempt to understand more deeply why they are occurring can give perspective on how to react. Principals often find themselves reacting urgently with the outcome of not carefully

aligning actions with beliefs about teaching and learning (Friedman, 2002). Taking time to pause and align actions to beliefs can reduce stress and elevate self-efficacy by increasing one's belief that he or she can have some control of results even in rapid-fire decision-making seasons (Fiske & Taylor, 2013).

### **Mindful Leadership**

Kabat-Zinn (2003), known to many as the person who brought mindfulness to the mainstream, defines it as a universal characteristic that every human being has.

Mindfulness is a state of mind that involves attention and awareness aimed at bringing peace and clarity to thought. Kabat-Zinn (2003) argues that mindfulness feels strange and new to people because our society undervalues attention to the present moment instead opting for distraction, multitasking, and future-focusing, mistaking the constant state of distraction as progress. At Kabat-Zinn's Stress Reduction Clinic, patients use meditation to relax and let go of expectations, goals, and any feelings of negativity for having not reached them yet. Distraction is a common challenge for leaders. Distracted leaders react impulsively while mindful leaders are aware of emotional and cognitive triggers and as mindful practice is deepened, can become more flexible and empathetic in response to others (Baron et al., 2017).

Hoy (2002) suggests educator mindfulness and increased self-efficacy should be researched further. He ties Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1997) to understanding how individuals intentionally respond to specific contexts. Mindfulness promotes reframing of challenges and increased creativity in generating possible solutions. Hoy (2002) goes on to suggest mindful approaches to teaching could positively influence student creativity and achievement. In this case teachers are modeling openness and

creativity in problem solving for students. It is reasonable to assume the same could hold true for school leaders. If the principal's mindfulness and self-efficacy increases, teacher creativity and achievement might be positively influenced (Wells, 2015).

There are specific states of mind associated with mindfulness: awareness, presence, compassion, empathy, listening, patience, and trust. These states of mind mirror qualities of effective leaders (Wells, 2015). Effective leaders cultivate emotional intelligence in themselves and in those whom they lead (Wells, 2015). In one review of leadership literature, McCleskey (2012) found suggestions that emotional intelligence may help us understand leader behavior and effectiveness. Some of the research suggests emotional intelligence impacts work-related processes such as collaboration and reading team member perceptions. Emotionally intelligence principals are able to inspire trust, value sharing, vision, and flexibility in the organizations they lead. These principals model emotional intelligence in those they lead by a) acknowledging and accepting their own and others' emotions as part of the work, b) using emotions as a catalyst for action, c) seeking to understand the underlying causes of emotions, d) managing emotions in decision making and leadership actions (Brinia, Zimianiti, & Panagiotopoulos, 2014). Wells (2015) presents a construct connecting leadership actions and mindful leadership as shown in Table 1. The table presents a compilation of the traits of effective leaders Wells gleaned from a review of leadership research. For each of the effective leader traits, there is a corresponding list of mindfulness traits Wells (2015) suggests connect to or strengthen the leader trait.

While Table 1 is not an exhaustive list of effective leader traits, it does represent the many and often competing draws on an organizational leader's time and focus (Wells,

2015). Ehrlich (2017) suggests effective leaders are emotionally intelligent, and the starting point of becoming an emotionally in-tune leader is through cultivating a sense of knowing what you are feeling, accepting the feeling non-judgmentally, then using that information to make decisions that are less emotionally reactive and dramatized. Ehrlich goes on to recommend mindfulness practice as a tool for building self-awareness that allows effective leaders to perform with clear values and vision.

### **Benefits and Effectiveness of Mindfulness**

Some studies have connected mindful constructs to the characteristics of high reliability organizations (Ehrlich, 2017; Rodriguez, 2015). Others (Kearney et al., 2013) have suggested there may be a correlation with mindful principals and student achievement, but questions still remain and there is a need for more research about mindful strategies that are appropriate for school leaders. Kearney et al. (2013) found principal mindfulness to be a resourceful practice for leaders who wish to be open to alternative perspectives, think creatively and positively about problem-solving, and wish to resist the temptation to fall back on old, familiar practices. Kearney et al. (2013) states:

Principal mindfulness matters. It is a relatively new campus climate variable (Hoy, 2002). As such, these researchers believe it is important to explore it... Exploring individual mindfulness may provide principals with an additional resource when challenging formal procedures and hierarchical structures. The ability of a school principal to lead mindfully can have a profound effect on school mindfulness and the faculty's ability to take risks... Finally and perhaps most importantly is the applicability of theory to practice. (p. 331)

*Table 1. Leadership Actions that Relate to Mindfulness Constructs*

<b>Leadership Actions</b>	<b>Relationship to Mindful Constructs</b>
Creating Vision	Awareness, being fully present, patience, listening, trust, equanimity, letting go, non-striving, nonjudgment, non-reactivity
Building Culture	Listening, non-judgment, trust, equanimity, awareness, compassion, self-compassion, patience, letting go
Communicating	Listening, awareness, non-judgment, patience, equanimity, compassion, self-compassion, trust, letting go, non-reactivity
Influencing	Awareness, compassion, non-judgment, acceptance, non-reactivity, patience, trust
Getting buy-in	Patience, awareness, non-judgment, listening, trust, equanimity, compassion
Developing common goals	Being fully present, non-judgment, compassion, trust, listening, letting go
Resolving problems/conflict	Compassion, non-judgment, listening, being fully present, patience, acceptance
Evaluating performance	Patience, awareness, listening, being fully present, letting go, beginner's mind
Recognizing others	Awareness, patience, trust, listening, compassion, letting go, non-reactivity
Inspiring others	Patience, listening, trust, compassion, awareness, equanimity, being fully present
Building capacity in an organization	Compassion, non-judgment, listening, being fully present, patience, acceptance
Building collaboration	Being fully present, non-judgment, compassion, trust, listening, letting go

*Note.* Adapted from “Conceptualizing Mindful Leadership in Schools: How the Practice of Mindfulness Informs the Practice of Leading,” by C. M. Wells, 2015, *NCPEA Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, 2, p. 6. Copyright 2015 by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration

In her autoethnographic doctoral dissertation, McDonald (2014) describes her deepening ability to use mindful reflection to reconcile experiences with reality in situations where emotional responses may hijack reasoning. Emotions often redefine a situation making it worse or better in our minds than it really is. Noticing an emotionally charged situation and using mindful meditation to take herself off autopilot allows her to respond to others with loving kindness and empathy, ultimately allowing her to feel more successful in the way she responded. McDonald (2014) describes in detail a conversation with a colleague that could have not gone well. She paints a picture of the moments in the conversation where her mindfulness practice allowed her to pause before speaking, consider the colleague's point of view, and even pause to walk away from the conversation for a while as she sensed the need for her colleague to process some negative emotions without being pushed. School and teacher leaders find themselves often in conversations just like McDonald describes and it is the leader's response that often takes the dialogue to a positive or negative path.

Wells (2015) points out mindful leaders are equipped to deal with the realities of the school landscape. They do not put positive spins on emotions and hunches. Instead of increasing the stress of negative situations that inevitably develop in school management by dwelling on anger, shame, and fear, mindful leaders can feel the negativity and quickly move to a more positive space of creating an actionable strategy. Mindful leaders are highly agentic, spending little time on judgment of selves regarding what did not happen as intended and more time and energy enacting change. They are resilient, emotionally intelligent, empathetic, able to regulate emotions, and are capable of recognizing multiple perspectives. Polsfuss and Ardichvilli (2009) call state of mind the

“master competency” for leadership (p.23). These researchers, though not using the word, “mindful,” contribute the competencies of resilience, effective relationship building, and the ability to grow a healthy culture to strong leadership. Mellor (2015) says mindful leaders are self-aware, attention directed, socially aware, and can approach problems from multiple perspectives. Similarly, Ehrlich (2017) notes mindful leaders are motivated, engaged, emotionally stable, focused, clear, flexible, and often more resilient to stress and fatigue. This intentionality surrounding emotional control matters because emotionally intelligent school leaders are open to alternative viewpoints, often welcoming others to challenge their thinking while resisting the urge to become defensive (Hoy, 2002). Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) offer a specific example in an article on positive psychology and educational leaders as they describe principals who approach problems of student achievement with inquiry instead of conviction and judgement. These leaders build trust with those whom they lead and value a team approach to solving complex problems that arise in the organization. Trust and shared responsibility for solving problems ultimately improve culture, climate, and collective efficacy (Hoy, 2002). Self-regulation and emotional awareness are not things to master, rather these are to be deepened and cultivated through a mixture of formal and informal workplace practice (Brendel, Hankerson, Byun, & Cunningham, 2016).

### **Formal and Informal Mindful Practice**

Mindful practice can be categorized in two ways: formal and informal. The literature defines formal practice as residing in a thirty minute or more protected time (Ehrlich, 2017; Wells, 2015) that can include meditation with or without the aid of an app, face to face guidance, or homework with a course of study (Birtwell, Williams,



Marwijk, Armitage, & Sheffield, 2018). Formal mindful practice can also include mindful movement, such as yoga, that focuses coordination of movement and breath (Wells, 2015). Informal mindful practice does not require one to stop and engage but can be integrated into everyday activity. Informal mindfulness requires paying attention on purpose to whatever is in the present moment (Birtwell et al., 2018). Informal mindful practice can take place in many moments of a person's day through pausing and noticing breathing or emotional arousal. One can actively bring attention back from distraction then intentionally assess whether or not to react or respond (Wells, 2015). Informal mindfulness lasts fewer than five minutes and while both formal and informal practice was shown in one empirical study to reduce stress in a small sample of university students, formal mindful practice showed far greater likelihood of reduced stress through sustained practice (Hindman, Glass, Arnkoff, & Maron, 2015).

While organizational mindfulness research generally supports the benefits of having a mindful leader at the helm, Dane (2011) suggests there is more research needed on the effects of mindfulness on organizational performance. Dane asks if it is possible for too much focus on mindfulness to actually harm the performance of a leader. There are many times when complex situations require immediate and clear decisions. Principals do not have time to feel out an emotion and meditate on a solution. So, which form of mindful practice makes sense for school leaders? Dane calls for further research on tools for mindful processes as well as for measuring the impact of mindful leadership over time.

In her mixed-methods dissertation, Rodriguez (2015) reports her principal participants acknowledged frequent mindful thinking such as focus, reflection, emotional

awareness, and acceptance, but most could not name intentional mindful practice. Rodriguez (2015) suggests the need for further studies exploring specific mindful strategies used over time in educational settings. Kabat-Zinn (2003) cautions against removing meditation altogether from mindfulness practice, but others question the practicality of meditating during the busy school day. Delany, Miller, El-Ansary et al. (2014) equate mindfulness in educational settings with resilience building and while they name meditation and deep breathing as examples of resilience building strategies, they name several strategies associated with coaching. Instructional and executive coaches often encourage coachees to manage time, attend to process learning over outcome achievement, name and claim incremental evidence of success of leadership impact, and connection with beliefs that may drive actions (Costa & Garmston, 2013). Delany et al. (2014) list similar strategies as suggestions for elevating resilience.

Kearney et al. (2013) conducted a mixed-method study of Hoy's M-scale to analyze mindful leadership in highly effective schools. What emerged from the study were three mindful strategies regularly labeled in transformational leadership research and a connection to achieving school success (Table 2).

Mindful leadership is about more than the leader feeling at peace. The pursuit of mindful leadership is to lead authentically. Authentic leadership aligns beliefs and actions. Self-regulation and alignment of action to belief and purpose are important to practice and positive influence of mindful practice (Roesser et al., 2013; Keye & Pidgeon, 2013). The benefits of such alignment are clarity of purpose, job satisfaction, a climate of hope and perseverance, and increased productivity (Baron et al., 2017).

Table 2. Mindful Strategies for Achieving School Success

Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Integration of multiple voices</li> <li>• Avoiding the quick fix</li> </ul>
Relationship Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Work-life balance</li> <li>• Listening</li> </ul>
Perpetual Renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trying new things</li> <li>• Failing forward</li> <li>• Reading avidly</li> </ul>

Note. Adapted from “Mindful Leaders in Highly Effective Schools: A Mixed-Method Application of Hoy’s M-scale.” by W. S. Kearney, C. Kelsey, and D. Herrington, 2013, *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41 (3), p. 326

Brendel et al. (2016) examined the impact of regular mindfulness practice on the desirable leadership qualities of creativity, resilience, and stress and anxiety reduction and found principals sought to practice a mixture of formal and informal mindfulness activities. Formal practice, such as meditation and breathing exercise, made sense during times of the day when renewal and nourishment were the focus; lunchtime for instance. The study cited informal mindfulness practice as that occurring when the leader intentionally maintained emotional grounding in the present moment so as to temper emotional reaction.

It is important that we understand more about how to develop authentic, mindful leaders (Bishop et al., 2014), and principal coaching may be one formal practice to do just that (Baron, 2016; Goff et al., 2013; Houchens et al., 2012). Birtwell et al., (2015) explored formal versus informal mindful practice and found participants reported difficulty remembering and finding time for formal practice. Some participants engaged in isolated practice reported feelings of discomfort and feared doing it incorrectly- at which point they stopped. When all 218 participants responded to an open question about

what might support successful mindful practice, Birtwell et al., (2015) identified four categories upon analysis: practical resources, time/routine, support from others, and attitude/state of mind. A leadership coaching cycle, such as Cognitive Coaching, has potential to support a school leader in all four of those categories (Costa & Garmston, 2013).

### **Leadership Coaching**

Some call for school leaders to take steps toward their own intentional behavior and cognitive control (managing verbal, physical, and thought reactions to negativity) along with decision and information control (gaining and reflecting upon timing, occurrence, and response impact (Friedman, 2002). School principals need a support system in this work (Friedman, 2002). Some studies (Houchens & Keedy, 2009; Huff, Preston, & Goldring, 2013; Wise & Hammack, 2011) have reported evidence that leadership coaching could provide behavioral, cognitive, and reflective supports principals need to elevate their sense of self-efficacy. Houchens et al. (2012) describe a double-loop learning process of principal coaching where the principal sets goals, changes behaviors accordingly. The principal then reflects upon what is working before revising goals as one enters the loop again. In a study analyzing the effectiveness of a newly developed Norwegian scale for measuring teacher efficacy in relation to collective efficacy and burnout, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) found teacher efficacy (the belief in the ability to produce a desired result) to be strongly correlated with cognitive and emotional support from school leadership.

Leadership coaching has long been a practice of the business world, while coaching school principals is newer to leadership research (Wise & Hammack, 2011). In

the school setting, the purpose of leadership coaching is to set goals and monitor evidence of best practices that grow the organization and lead to improved teaching and learning (Wise & Hammack, 2011). Ladegard and Gjerde (2014) studied leadership coaching and its effect on self-efficacy. In their mixed methods study, participating coaches noticed leader goals change as coaching continued. While leaders may have begun with surface, activity focused goals such as delegating more tasks, with the questioning of their coaches, these leaders uncovered deeper awareness of selves. In the case of the leader wanting to delegate more often, he realized through coaching conversations, the real issue was a need for control and a lack of trust in the abilities of coworkers. Principals who are highly efficacious positively affect goal attainment of an organization and are better equipped to manage the challenges and competing priorities that accompany school turnaround and improvement efforts (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Principals working with coaches to elevate self-efficacy through more effective leadership actions may become more self-aware and emotionally intelligent simultaneously (Wells, 2015), which is the inherent goal of mindful practice as well.

### **Coaching as Professional Development**

Coaching for organizational leaders first appeared in research literature about 30 years ago and has long been a widespread practice in the business world (Wise & Hammack, 2011). Leadership coaching has the potential not only to benefit the practice of the leader himself, but of those who follow. Through the process, leaders engaged in regular coaching wish for those whom they lead to experience the same level of awareness around best practice as they have. These coached leaders often subsequently

seek to provide individualized coaching and support to others in the organization. They seek to create a culture of coaching (Anthony, 2017).

Using a web-based survey to 3,629 leaders, Anthony (2017) examined the relationship between leadership coaching and impactful leader behaviors. One of the first studies to empirically show this relationship, Anthony refers to transformational leadership theory as she discusses how the analysis shows that leaders who are coached are more socially and emotionally aware, able to model positive leadership behavior for staff, and better able to plan for staff development. This study finds organizational leaders receiving coaching, which is itself a personalized plan, build a desire through the process to pass along personalized development to their followers. The data shows a significant positive relationship between leadership coaching and delegation. When leaders delegate challenging tasks to followers, it enhances positivity, citizenship, autonomy, trust, and the opportunity to hone important skills without fear. On the other hand, data from this study revealed a significant negative relationship between leadership coaching and close supervision. When leaders engaged in coaching, and as a result delegated more, they micro-managed less. This study adds to the body of research emphasizing the importance of leaders who are skilled at developing interpersonal relationships thereby increasing the likelihood of successful personalized development plans.

Ladegard and Gjerde (2014) describe coaching models that combine cognitive questioning intended to shift leader focus from negative problem-based thinking toward planning and implementing solutions can have a positive effect on goal attainment, perseverance, self-efficacy, and feelings of overall well-being. In this study, the

researchers analyzed focus group feedback from a test group and a control group and found the effect the named leadership traits to be significant. Ladegard and Gjerde (2014) go on to suggest further research be done to explore the connections between leader beliefs, theory, and practice, something Houchens and Keedy (2011) label double-loop learning. Fusco et al. (2016) suggest this is exactly the kind of professional development leaders need in these times of rapid change and expectation of response. Fusco et al. call on the need for today's leaders to have elevated social consciousness, confidence to accompany skill, and beliefs aligned to actions and aspirations.

### **Coaching in Educational Settings**

Teacher-peer mentorship research emerged in the early 1980's; leader mentorship and coaching is a more recent phenomenon (Wise & Hammack, 2011). The success of business coaching in elevating organizational productivity not only prompted the spread of the practice into the education arena, but prompted researchers to find out more about coaching best practices. What Wise and Hammack (2011) found in their study of coaching practice was that school leaders trust coaches who are adequately trained in coaching and instructional practices. They also narrowed their findings to several emerging coaching best practices. Successful coaches must have the ability to build trust. They must be able to clearly and effectively communicate goals, the monitoring of progress toward those goals, as well as demonstrate an ability to release the progress monitoring to the person receiving the coaching. A skilled coach will use inquiry to create a psychologically safe space for the leader to reflect. The coach's knowledge of best practices for student achievement is also an essential ingredient for successful principal coaching cycles (Wise & Hammack, 2011).

Ellison and Hayes (2006) studied principal coaching cycles and defined trust as the foundational element for the success of this embedded professional development. In the absence of trust, the principal may not be willing to share authentic struggles for fear the coach might think poorly of his/her leadership capacity. The coach earns trust through keeping appointments, maintaining confidentiality, and following through with directives (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). Establishing trust can take time, many months of interaction outside of this study, and there is potential that principals do not trust the coach placed in their buildings ever. Successful instructional coaches understand trust cannot be expected to occur immediately and they are skilled in expediting trust building by rooting the work in clear norms, values, goals, and expectations (Wise & Hammack, 2011).

Few empirical leadership coaching studies that have dived just so far as to see the connection between amount of coaching and a correlation to positive changes in self-efficacy have adequately shown such a connection. Coaching behavior, namely facilitative coaching behavior seems to have a greater impact on leader self-efficacy. Facilitative coaching behavior invites the leader to set personalized goals, calls for the coach to assist in naming and reflecting upon success and failure, challenges the leader to consider multiple perspectives, then prompts the leader to make and carry out an action plan (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). Ladegard and Gjerde suggest school districts ensure coaches involved with leadership coaching cycles be adequately professionally trained and developed themselves. Ladegard and Gjerde also identify the importance of evaluating the impact of a leadership coaching cycle throughout the process rather than at the end of the cycle, which validates a research approach that seeks to collect data at multiple points in time.



## **Cognitive Coaching Defined**

Cognitive Coaching is a process of structured conversations intended to support the educator in becoming more resourceful through refining cognitive processes. The process was developed by Costa and Garmston (2013). The purpose of the Cognitive Coaching model is to support the coachee in becoming increasingly metacognitive and self-directed in his or her performance. The model stresses positive impact such individuals can have on the functioning of the entire team or organization (collective efficacy). Wise and Hammack (2014) found that Cognitive Coaching's questioning techniques increased self-efficacy and teaching pedagogy, which in turn, yielded increases in student achievement scores.

Cognitive Coaching is rooted in clinical supervision (Anderson, 1993). Throughout the history of teacher professional development there was little focus on psychological or metacognitive development. Teacher monitoring and correction, usually based in the evaluator's or larger organizational initiatives, were done to teachers in the hopes of improving student outcomes. In the 1950s and 60s, Morris Cogan and his colleagues in the Harvard University Master of Arts in Teaching program (and later at the University of Pittsburgh), conceived of and developed the idea of Clinical Supervision. Seeing a need for a more collaborative approach to teacher observations Morris designed a framework for Clinical Supervision which consisted of a multi-stage cycle including a pre-observation conference, a classroom teaching observation, analysis of observation notes, a planning conversation, a post-observation conference, and a review/recommendation for improvement (Anderson, 1993). Through the 70s, Clinical Supervision saw increased attention as a method of supervision that gave teachers more

voice and investment where goal setting was concerned. From the work involving Clinical Supervision came an evolution of classroom supervision in the 80s that stressed the importance of collegiality, collaboration, professional trust, and affirmation if teachers were to buy in to supervisor direct feedback. As some educators questioned the ability of a supervisor to nurture these qualities with those whom they supervise, there emerged emphasis on the power of team teaching and peer coaching (Anderson, 1993).

Though foundationally rooted in clinical supervision of teachers, Cognitive Coaching has specific differences. Clinical supervision's observations and analysis focus on the teaching moves and behaviors. The philosophy was that if ineffective behavior was replaced by effective behavior, then more successful teaching and learning would occur. Costa and Garmston, the creators of Cognitive Coaching, posit teacher's actions are outward expressions of thinking and belief systems. Therefore, the cycle of Cognitive Coaching, the planning conversation, observation, and reflecting conversation, includes carefully crafted questions that intend to uncover unproductive thoughts and beliefs in an effort to create a coachee who can internalize different ways to think about teaching and learning and can become more self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying (Costa & Garmston, 2016). The research on mindful teachers and leaders points to increased self-awareness, flexibility, reflectiveness, clarity, resilience, and consideration of multiple perspectives- all associated with effective decision making (Brendel et al., 2017; Ehrlich, 2017; Mellor, 2015). Relatedly, the intention of Cognitive Coaching is "to transform the effectiveness of decision making, mental models, thoughts, perceptions, and to habituate reflection" (Costa & Garmston, 2016, p. 13).

Ellison and Hayes (2006) conducted an action research study on 16 building administrators hypothesizing that over the four-month period leaders would emerge more resourceful and less stressed. Methods included recorded coaching conversations, journal entries, and pre/post scale self-measurement on the Cognitive Coaching states of mind. The results of the study used a pre-and post-assessment self-assessment survey that showed increases in flexibility, craftsmanship, and consciousness. Ellison and Hayes (2006) claim their action research solidified their belief that principals deserve the same support and enrichment they seek to provide staff if expectations and stress associated with the role continue to shift and increase. They cited the most significant results as an increased sense of resourcefulness for the principal participants along with thirteen of sixteen participants stating coaching was the most valuable professional development they had ever received.

Ellison and Hayes (2006) ask, as the role of school principal changes, how will systems respond in order to create the kind of leaders who can successfully navigate an increasingly complex job? In their study, Ellison and Hayes (2006) explore how Cognitive Coaching might influence leader resilience in the job. Cognitive Coaching seeks to affect five states of mind – efficacy, flexibility, consciousness, craftsmanship, and interdependence. Efficacy increases resilience, openness, positivity, and enthusiasm for the work. Consciousness focuses attention on the way one is thinking about judgment, perception, assumptions, data, and understanding. Craftsmanship refers to drive toward excellence in performance and is based in beliefs about what exactly “excellence” is. Flexibility allows us to expand from egocentric views of situations to more diverse perspectives. It also elevates our empathy. Interdependence is the view that we are but

one functioning part of a holonomous system; a system that collaborates and depends upon the capacity of others to perform for the common good (Costa & Garmston, 2002, 2016; Ellison & Hayes, 2006).

Rogers et al. (2016) study of the impact of Cognitive Coaching on school leadership found that as leader self-efficacy rose, so did collective efficacy among staff. Principals reported the coaching conversations resulted in more reflective and complex thinking around decisions, elevated capacity to enact changes impacting student learning, and, in the end, test scores rose. Analysis of questionnaire responses and performance data showed provincial test scores went up in 10 schools, stayed essentially the same in eight schools, and went down in three schools. Both leader self-efficacy and the school's collective efficacy increased in 21 schools and stayed the same in two schools. While 19 new principals felt they were more reflective and were thinking in more complex ways, four new principals felt that they were now less reflective and thought in less complex ways. Sixteen new principals were more satisfied with choosing to become a principal, five indicated there had been no change in satisfaction, and two indicated they were less satisfied. School climate and collaboration among teachers increased in 13 and 16 schools, respectively, and stayed the same in seven and five schools. Of the 23 new principals, 22 indicated that Cognitive Coaching benefited them professionally and 18 indicated Cognitive Coaching benefited them personally. New principals in 16 schools indicated the Cognitive Coaching they had received benefited their teachers, their students, and the students' parents, respectively, and another eight indicated there had been no change in benefits.

## **The Intersection of Cognitive Coaching and Mindful School Leadership**

Mindful school leader practice seeks to elevate self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and empathy. Self-awareness as defined by Brown and Olson (2015) includes growth in aligning belief to action and consideration of other points of view; the same qualities are part of Cognitive Coaching's consciousness and flexibility. Self-regulation (Brown & Olson, 2015) is necessary for focus, clarity, and flexibility, which are goals of Cognitive Coaching's craftsmanship and flexibility states of mind. Brown and Olson (2015) claim motivation as foundational to resilience and as the basis of purposeful action as does Hayes and Ellison (2006) for craftsmanship, efficacy, and interdependence. Both Cognitive Coaching and Mindful School Leader Practice seek for leaders to be empathetic, acknowledging one's own perspective as limited therefore begging the need for openness to other points of view.

As much as Cognitive Coaching aims to facilitate necessary mind shifts when priorities are competing, so does mindful leader practice (Brown & Olson, 2015). According to the authors, mindful school leadership is framed with specific emotional components. Emotional component 1 claims self-awareness can assist leaders in overreacting less often, can help leaders think more clearly and act in accordance with beliefs and values. Emotional component 2 focuses on self-regulation where leaders notice when stress has entered a situation and practice to reduce impulsivity, regain emotional composure, and maintain flexibility. Brown and Olson (2015) hold these are crucial moves in leader self-efficacy under high pressure, which I contend the principalship certainly is a position of high pressure. Emotional component 3 is motivation. In popular understanding, motivation is often egocentric, answering questions

of how will I be successful, how can I keep achieving, what do others notice about me that keeps me going? Ehrlich (2017) describes “eudemonic happiness.” Happiness related to competence and experiences in life that are meaningful and purposeful. When we lead from a clear sense of what we value, consider of purpose, and from that which increases our interconnectedness we create positivity around us. A more positive state of mind means increased productivity, engagement, resilience, and confidence in what we do (Ehrlich, 2017). Rather than reflect on motivations from the outside, mindfulness asks one to become motivated by passion, purpose, and lifework that affects the betterment of the whole. The final emotional component is empathy. For organizational leaders, it is especially important to build strong teams and this requires the leader to respond to the feelings of the team within the context of the organizational direction. Empathetic leaders are sensitive to how rapid change, accountability pressure, and need for support affect their teams (Brown & Olson, 2015).

Cognitive Coaching also seeks to develop emotional intelligence in coachees (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). The characteristics of the five States of Mind Cognitive Coaching seeks to elevate have strong similarities to the emotional components of a mindful school leader. First, efficacy means having internal regulatory resources and drive to take action in order to be a problem solver. Consciousness is a state of awareness of self, others, the context, and monitoring how decisions affect those things. Craftsmanship is not so much about perfectionism, but about intentionality. Those operating with high senses of craftsmanship strive for refinement, clarity, and excellence. Flexibility seeks alternative perspectives, it is empathetic and tolerant of differences. Interdependence is high when we realize our actions are contributing to a common good.

Interdependent leaders are collaborative and able to balance their own wants and needs with that of the whole group (Ellison & Hayes, 2006).

### **Summary**

Popular mindful practices for anyone include breathing practices, body scans, journaling, mindful eating, and meditation (Brown & Olson, 2015). There are no studies exploring Cognitive Coaching as a mindful practice; what is more, most of the mindful practices outlined in the literature were completed in isolation. Coaching is a practice done with an accountability partner. Working with a coach encourages self-efficacy in difficult decision making which can unearth significant emotional response and stress. A skilled coach can assist the school leader in grounding thinking in the present context while facilitating focus, reflection, deep thinking, and affirmation of progress toward goals (Wise & Hammack, 2011). Since Cognitive Coaching seeks to produce similar cognitive effects as mindful practice, the aim of my study is to explore it as viable mindful leader formal practice.

Although we are beginning to see research on the benefits of mindfulness, mindful leaders, and mindful schools, there is much more to discover about mindful school leader practice. The purpose of *The Mindful School Leader* (Brown & Olson, 2015) is to give principals narratives, examples, and suggestions for mindful leader practice. I argue that what is missing is the interdependent accountability that comes from having a coaching partner in the journey to more mindful leadership. While meditation, journals, breathing, and intentional healthy practices are certainly beneficial, it is my experience as a principal that in the midst of daily pressure, breakneck pace, and on-the-fly decision making it would be all too easy to let those practices wane. It is also my

experience as a trained Cognitive Coach that much of what I practiced with teachers and asked for from my own coach when I became a principal mirrors the cognitive shifts of mindful practice. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and core features of human agency (2001), I seek to understand how Cognitive Coaching relates to self-efficacy and mindful leader disposition.

Most of the studies cited in the literature review are qualitative in nature, relying on self-perception surveys, interviews, and journals for data collection. In the mixed-methods or quantitative studies, there is mention of The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and the Langer Mindfulness/Mindlessness Scale (Pirson & Langer, 2014). The weakness of measuring mindfulness or self-efficacy quantitatively is that it is a point in time measurement. Mindfulness and self-efficacy are not static states. They are context specific, which means data collection should likely include qualitative data to explain the context and the factors working against a more mindful and efficacious state.

The benefit of measuring mindfulness qualitatively is the glimpse inside the journey that is increasing self-awareness and its effect on actions and reactions. Becoming more reflective and responsive rather than emotional and reactive is not always an easy and gentle path. I can speak both as a former coach and as a coachee to the vulnerability it requires, especially as a leader, to really feel and admit anger, failure, fear, anxiety, rejection, and frustration and what is more, to reflect upon mistakes made in trying to outwit that vulnerability. Both Cognitive Coaching and mindful practice are about honoring the feeling, learning from it, then clearing the decision-making table of it so clarity, empathy, positivity, and self-efficacy can be the mindset of leader and



organizational progress. Researchers can learn as much or more from participant journeys as they can from the “arrival” at a more mindful state. It’s in studying the process that we can better understand mindful practice that works. In listening to the participants in this study describe emotions, problems of practice, stressors, then observing their coaches question and paraphrase into cognitive shifts, we can identify perceived mindfulness and self-efficacy throughout the process.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore Cognitive Coaching as a possible mindful school leader practice. Two research questions guide the study: How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle? How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle? In this chapter, I will discuss the rationale for multiple case design as well as the research design, sampling, data collection methods and tools, analysis, and findings. I will acknowledge limitations of the study as well as considerations for strengthening the design for validity. As a researcher/insider, I realize the implications of conducting research within my own organization and will go into detail about my positionality and its potential bearing on the process and product. All participants will be informed of the purpose and procedures and will have voice in how their data will be used. This chapter closes with a summary.

### **Research Design**

This is a multiple case study of school principals experiencing Cognitive Coaching in the school context. I seek to generate new knowledge around a current practice in the district of study that is relevant to the local context. Participants will generate new knowledge in two ways. First, Cognitive Coaching is already a well-utilized reflective practice with teachers in the school district that serves as the context of this

study, but never has it been used as reflective practice for principals there. Additionally, no research explores Cognitive Coaching as mindful school leader practice, therefore the research will build new knowledge for both the local and broader research contexts.

During the Cognitive Coaching cycles, principals set personalized leader goals as part of the development of purpose for the reflective practitioner theory (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006). Data sources are qualitative, consisting of interviews and transcribed audio recordings of coaching conversations between the instructional coaches and principals. Using The Listening Guide methodology (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017), the data analysis uncovers meaning in the Cognitive Coaching protocol for school leaders. I seek to explore Cognitive Coaching as a workplace embedded mindful leader practice by presenting a cross-case analysis of self-efficacy, mindful traits and Cognitive Coaching states of mind occurring throughout the data.

### **Context of the Study**

The context of the study is the application of Cognitive Coaching protocol conversations within an instructional coach/principal partnership in a single rural school district in the southeastern United States. The school district consists of thirteen school sites, employing one instructional coach per school at the elementary and middle school level, and two coaches per building at each of the high schools. Every coach is trained in Cognitive Coaching through the local education cooperative and uses this coaching model as the primary coaching delivery model in every school. Traditionally, in this school community the partnership is between the coach and teacher with the partnership seeking to improve instructional practice. This improvement comes as the coachee responds to coach questions in such a way as to focus, shift, or solidify a state of mind

that aligns with actions that positively impact student achievement (Costa & Garmston, 2013). This research study takes a coaching protocol reserved for district teachers and applies it to building principals. There has been some question about continuing to fund coaches for this school district and the findings in this study will be shared with the district staff developer and student achievement chief officers as additional information to inform that decision.

### **Sampling**

To conduct this research, I used purposive, critical case sampling, which involved selecting a small number of cases resulting in rich data (Guetterman, 2015) with the following criteria – principals who employ Cognitive Coaching as embedded professional development for their teachers, coaches who are trained in Foundations of Cognitive Coaching, and who have two or more years of experience with Cognitive Coaching. This qualitative study is not intended to be generalizable to another setting, but to be instrumental in growing knowledge around a practice in the setting of the study. The total number of principals in the district at the time of the research was 13 with a sample size of 5 participant pairs of principal and coach. Miles et al. (2014) suggests five deeply explored and researched cases as a minimum for a multiple-case sample. Principals and coaches were invited to participate through email request as well as face-to-face requests at district administrative team meetings.

### **Positionality**

My position as a principal who personally uses coaching as a self-efficacy and mindful leadership practice may bias me to data sources that support principal coaching for mindful leadership, therefore I remained open to the prospect that participants may

not emerge from the study with the same perspective as I had. As Herr and Anderson (2014) advise those assuming an insider stance for research, “To downplay or fail to acknowledge one’s insider or participatory status is deceptive and allows the researcher to avoid the kind of intense self-reflection that is the hallmark of good practitioner research” (p. 56).

There are several important aspects of my positionality to discuss as potential bias. I am a trained Cognitive Coach and a practicing principal. Since the beginning of my coaching career six years ago, I have desired a deeper principal connection to the purpose of instructional coaching. As a coach, I longed for the chance to hear one of my principals ask for coaching for themselves. I believed administrators who encouraged coaching for teachers could benefit from the kind of introspection on practice that I saw happening with my teacher coachees. When I became a principal, I decided to pilot the theory on myself by asking the Cognitive Coach in my building to engage me in coaching cycles around my leadership goals. My experience with receiving coaching had a positive effect on my self-efficacy and clarity. I was much less excitable and reactive to difficult situations. Of course, I had no proof or sound evidence, just a hunch and a question of whether or not other principals could feel supported through coaching. I landed on my dissertation topic out of a curiosity to explore an experience I had.

Milner (2007) offers a framework to guide reflection upon researcher positionality. Although the framework’s focus is racial and cultural positionality, Milner (2007) suggests that even studies without race and culture at the center may find the framework useful. Although this study does not focus on race or culture, it is important that I consider the needs and experiences of participants of color. Included in the

participant pool is one black administrator. Milner (2007) advises that regardless of the topic under investigation, color blind and culture blind lenses on the part of the researcher can present dangers of misinformation and misrepresentation.

One of the potential participants shared with me in a collegial conversation unrelated to the research, her discomfort with being vulnerable about struggles as a leader in the district. She attributed the discomfort to her experience as one of the first black, female leaders her district. She described anxiety about being seen as not as intelligent or equipped to lead a school as her white female (and especially her white male) colleagues. Cognitive Coaching relationships require a high level of trust and vulnerability (Wise & Hammack, 2011). I would be remiss to believe my experience with organizational trust and vulnerability is the same as my colleague's. After all, our organization as a whole is predominantly white and the coaching staff is entirely white.

The first tenet of Milner's (2007) positionality framework is researching the self. I must ask myself about the ways in which my racial and cultural background influence my experience of the world and the world of this school administrator work. The coaching relationship requires vulnerability, as I stated before. I wonder if, as a white administrator in a predominantly white organization, I am emotionally and psychologically safer to be honest about my struggles in the position? The second tenet is reflection about myself in relation to others. I am a building principal in the district where I am conducting my research, which makes me an insider-researcher. Glesne (2016) notes researchers are often drawn to "backyard research" (p. 48). While backyard research can be beneficial because investment, collaboration, and trust are pre-established, there are drawbacks. Colleagues in the study may find it difficult to separate my role in their minds as friend

and principal from that of researcher. Interviews can also uncover knowledge about colleagues that might affect my perception of them in our professional future (Glesne, 2016). Milner (2007) also reminds the researcher to reflect upon the relationship of self to the system. It is important to notice what, if any, systemic and organizational barriers exist for the participants.

### **Data Sources**

Coaches, principals, and I participated in an orientation meeting for the purpose of establishing norms and agreements to preserve the consistency of coaching and data collection across sites. I drew upon two major sources of data, the majority of which came from the recorded and transcribed weekly coaching conversations between principal and coach. The other data source was a recorded and transcribed debrief interview between each principal and me.

### **Data Collection**

During the orientation meeting, the following norms were established: coaching conversations should occur weekly, Cognitive Coaching tools and resources will be used with fidelity, and all conversations shall be recorded. Herr and Anderson (2014) describe an action research study conducted by a principal in his own organization with teacher leaders. This principal held a similar meeting before the collection of data and referred to this as the look phase of research. The purpose was to create transparency, build trust, and create a picture of the current leadership environment of the school. The purpose of this study's orientation meeting was to create and calibrate the current coaching environment and protocols across the district study sites. During the orientation meeting,

research participants received a paper copy of norms, expectations, and agreements (Miles et al., 2014) for the study (see Appendix A).

The bulk of the data came from recorded and transcribed coaching conversations using Cognitive Coaching protocol maps (see Appendix B; approved use granted from Thinking Collaborative), which are semi-structured in nature. Ellison and Hayes (2006) used an earlier version of these protocol maps in their study where principals engaged in Cognitive Coaching as professional development. These weekly one on one conversations create a safe space for school personnel to share experiences (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Weekly coaching conversations are the suggested timeline for coaching cycles (Costa & Garmston, 2013). After each conversation, coaches uploaded the recorded file to a Google Drive folder with access restricted to the coach, principal, and me, as researcher.

I held a separate, recorded debrief interview with each principal at the end of the study allowing participants to be metacognitive about their own participation in the study (see Appendix F). Principal participants had an opportunity to reflect on whether or not the time given to coaching was time well spent. Would they enter into or continue principal coaching? If yes, why? If no, why not? This debrief also provided an opportunity for member checking any data analysis I had completed on the transcripts. Action researchers are encouraged to engage in conversations with those who are willing to challenge the hopes or assumptions about the data (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Holding the debrief interviews further ensured I did not insert my hopes and assumptions about the overall experience for principals and coaches.



## **Data Management**

Miles et al. (2014) makes several suggestions as part of a high-quality data management plan for a qualitative study. The significant issues for qualitative researchers are accessibility, documentation of processes and analysis, and protection/retention of data during and after the research is complete. I stored all recorded and electronic data in two places: on a password protected personal laptop and on a clean USB reserved only for this study. Any physical documents, notes, participant information, and informed consent were kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

## **Data Analysis**

Creswell (2014) describes qualitative data analysis as akin to peeling an onion, grouping and regrouping the layers, and putting it back together again. Data analysis in qualitative research is unlike quantitative methods where data is collected and then analyzed in a separate step. Qualitative researcher analysis and data collection happen simultaneously to form and reform a story from the data (Creswell, 2014). I followed Creswell's (2014) suggested steps for data analysis in qualitative research: organize and prepare data, read and look at data, then begin coding. This process was ongoing as coaching session transcripts were produced and each step of the Listening Guide (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017) was applied.

I used the transcription service, Rev.com, for the coaching conversations. As each transcript was produced, I wrote field notes in the margins of the printed interviews, as double entry journal notes. I organized the double entry field notes and transcribed coaching conversations in Dedoose, a platform for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research.

The Listening Guide method has researchers take data through three reviews where the text is coded multiple times. The reviews were 1) determination of plot, 2) formation of I poems, and 3) coding for contrapuntal voices (Petrovic, Lordly, Brigham, & Delaney, 2015). In the first step, I sought to understand the context, participants, and the internal and external forces at play framing the coaching conversations and the principals' lived experiences. The second step, I poem construction, where all first-person statements were lifted into a separate document and listed sequentially, sifted out self-perceptions, beliefs, and actions of the participants. The final step has the researcher listen for moments in the interviews where multiple or conflicting participant voice occur (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Petrovic et al., 2015). The Listening Guide is an applicable analysis method when special attention must be given to the first-person voice (Gilligan & Eddy). It highlights the way our minds work with our emotions, making it aligned to the work of mindfulness. The LG requires the researcher to pay careful attention to what is said, how it is said, and in what context, just as the practice of Cognitive Coaching does, thus making the data analysis reflective of the coaching sessions themselves.

I began analysis using a priori deductive codes (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). I left flexibility to create codes for data that did not seem to fit any of the deductive codes, thus allowing the emergence of any participant created themes (Miles et al., 2014). In the dimension of self-efficacy, the deductive codes were capability and optimism. Bandura (2005) defines self-efficacy as one's belief in his or her capability to influence the outcome of a given situation. McCormick (2001) ties Bandura's definition of self-efficacy to the leadership mechanism of persistence with optimism when faced with challenges associated with personal and professional goals. The deductive codes for

the mindfulness dimension were awareness, observe, describe, and acceptance. Mindful leaders possess the ability of present moment awareness with the ability to observe their interactions with others while living the experience. Present moment awareness and observation allows the leader to regulate emotions and respond more intuitively (Baron, 2016). In their study on mindfulness and leadership flexibility, Baron et al., (2017) found the ability to describe inner experiences of an outward situation is positively correlated with strategic/operational flexibility and the ability to accept thoughts and feelings without getting sidelined by them is linked to behavioral flexibility in leaders. In the validation study of the Kentucky Inventory for Mindfulness Scale (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004), all four of the named mindfulness dimensions were strongly correlated to one another.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Miles et al. (2014) offers methods for generating meaning from qualitative data that is credible and trustworthy. One method I used was counting. Qualitative research can sometimes ignore numbers, but Miles et al. (2014) state three good reasons to count the qualitative data: 1) to quickly see what is evident in a large batch of data; this study will produce a large batch of data 2) to verify or offer counterevidence for a hunch or hypothesis, and 3) to protect against researcher bias. I used counting in a Code Co-occurrence chart to see how often CC states of mind occurred with mindful dispositions. I utilized data triangulation through multiple context-rich principal interviews, a debrief interview with each participant, and member checks to ensure validity and credibility of data and analysis. Although the rural setting yielded a small sample size, the study explored the coaching application across multiple cases which brings to light not only

intricacies of a single case but allows for pattern study across cases leading to deeper understanding of principal experiences with coaching (Glesne, 2016).

In the case of my study, the community of practice was the participants – each one a coach or an administrator. Whatever actions yield from understanding more deeply the process of Cognitive Coaching and whether or not there is perceived impact on self-efficacy and mindful practice, those actions will be better informed for the community of practice having participated in a coaching cycle for their own goals. All participants and researcher deepened understanding what it means to leader practice when the principal used the coach for his or her own needs.

In Chapter IV, I discuss any new knowledge and understanding generated by the participants around leader coaching. Next, I discuss how the research questions were met. I address the third goal, education of both researchers and participants, by discussing any way principals indicate in coaching conversations and the debrief interviews a shift in thinking, understanding, or action. Since district leaders and the local school board are interested in coaches' accountability for their influence on learning environments, I not only discuss coach influence in the study findings, but also via planned condensed report to the district's student achievement team members. I was specifically aware of anything that Glesne (2016) cautions the insider-researcher to heed. Glesne (2016) suggests careful documentation in research field notes of threats to the trustworthiness of the study and responses made to the research process as a result. Some of these threats might include loss of objectivity, gaining access to information that may skew interpretation of the data, and overlooking the impact of coaching moves because they seem familiar and routine given my background knowledge of coaching.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

Glesne (2016) defines a study limitation as a place where the researcher can explain where and why there is partial knowledge. First, the sample size is small in this study, making it less than ideal for generalization. Several surrounding districts employ instructional coaches and a study involving data from those coaches and coachees could enrich this study. Given my position as an insider-researcher, working full time as a principal in the district, this study focuses on participants who are easily accessible, allowing me to carefully attend to the data collection process and timeliness while continuing my regular job responsibilities.

While the school district provides Cognitive Coaching training to all instructional coaches, the extent to how skillful each coach is remains beyond the control of the study. If a coach worked with a principal less open to cognitive mediation questions and the skill of the coach was low, this could have affected the outcome of the coaching cycle, or worse, frustrated the principal as he or she devoted precious time to participating. Because the professional developers in the district are transparent about believing and investing in Cognitive Coaching as an effective coaching model, participants' expectations might have been biased, thereby influencing responses.

Conducting research in one's own organization carries specific ethical considerations. First, participants knew me and may have been aware of my doctoral pursuits, background as a Cognitive Coach, and interest in mindful school leadership. Second, because participants were also my colleagues, their likely wish to contribute positively to the study could have trained responses during coaching sessions and interviews to what they assume I would want. Fleming (2018) warns that how an insider

researcher is perceived can bring about fear of judgment from colleagues and if there were to be any interpretation of the researcher having power in the study context, some level of coercion is possible. Next, there has been much discussion at the school board level about whether or not to continue funding instructional coaches. Principals in this study were aware of this discussion and again, this knowledge could cause them to respond in a way they perceive as positive for the coach over responding without bias (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). It would have been unethical for me to interpret only those patterns in the data which support my desire for a positive outcome (Fleming, 2018). Data collection halted for several weeks during the study. I held orientation meetings with participants in February 2020, only to have the school district and face to face research shut down due to the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020. While I made necessary changes to the research design to allow participants to continue coaching conversations virtually, not all participants chose to do so, which is a limitation leaving the question of what findings might have been deepened and what was missed because of this interruption. Finally, there is the ethical challenge of maintaining privacy and confidentiality beyond the life of the study itself. Those researchers who choose contexts where they are well known and integrated may see future situations where data or findings are relevant. Just because a study timeline has come to an end, the need for the researcher to maintain confidentiality never does, which is something I will need to be mindful of in the future (Fleming, 2018).

### **Foreshadowing Future Findings**

The findings for this study are useful for coaches and principals within the district of study as well as outside the district. As shown in the literature review, principal stress

and burnout are problems that do not discriminate. Whether leading in a large, urban district, or a smaller, rural district, like the one in this study, principals considering how they might mitigate stress could be interested in reading collegial experiences with leadership coaching. Mindfulness in education settings for both children and adults is a topic gaining mainstream as well as education research attention. Because mindful school leadership is relatively new to the research scene, there are more studies exploring what mindfulness is and how becoming more mindful can affect social emotional and cognitive traits than there are studies on specific practices that can work in the daily life of a school leader. DeWitt (2018) wrote about why school leaders should be coached. He noted the competing priorities of school leaders as an immense source of stress and sometimes insecurity. Leaders need professional development as much as teachers do to goal set, develop strategy, build efficacy, and communicate effectively. Coaching can be a practice to meet those professional development needs regardless of district context (DeWitt, 2018).

Though this study possesses some limitations which hinder generalizability, the findings have some practical usefulness for the local context as well as for the body of empirical research about mindful school leadership. In their study of 162 leaders practicing mindful meditation in the workplace, Baron et al., (2017) concluded that by developing mindfulness, leaders are more flexible and responsive to the demands of different and rapidly changing situations. The researchers note the lack of studies specific to mindful leadership and suggest it as a line of future research especially dealing with leaders' mindful practice and documented effects, which this study accomplishes.

## Summary

In the methodology section, I defined the study's methodology as a multiple case study intended to explore two research questions: 1) How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle? 2) How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle? I seek to generate new knowledge around a current practice in the district of study that is relevant to the local context. In this study, the action will be the introduction of leadership coaching. In this chapter, I discussed the rationale for case study as methodology as well as the research design, sampling, data collection methods and tools, analysis, and foreshadowing of future findings. I acknowledged limitations of the study as well as considerations for strengthening the design for validity. As a researcher/insider, I described the implications and ethical considerations of conducting research within my own organization and went into detail about my positionality and its potential bearing on the process and product. The findings for this study provide insight to building principals, instructional coaches, and the district as a whole about how instructional coaches can be a resource for teachers and leaders. I anticipate the findings will inspire creativity in how we might use job embedded practices to help school leaders nurture clarity and responsiveness in the midst of urgent needs and quickly changing contexts for decision making.



## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore Cognitive Coaching as a possible self-regulatory practice to raise self-efficacy and mindful leader dispositions in school principals. The following chapter details the findings from this multiple case study research design. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2001), I present each principal's experience using Cognitive Coaching to reflect upon cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors of decision making. This chapter also illustrates how the data and subsequent analysis answers my research questions, which are:

1. How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?
2. How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?

The chapter is organized into five parts: 1.) a case-by-case narrative including participant profiles and plots of the coaching sessions; 2.) findings of self-efficacy and mindfulness traits elicited by Cognitive Coaching States of Mind; 3.) description of perceived self-efficacy during and after coaching; and 4.) description of perceived mindfulness traits during and after coaching; and 5.) a chapter summary.

### **Case Narratives**

These narratives were derived from transcribed audio recordings and analysis

through the Listening Guide (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017) method for qualitative data. In total, five principals and their corresponding coaches participated in my study (See Table 4). The principal informants serve as leaders in various school levels: two elementary principals, one middle school principal, one high school principal, and one principal of a K-8 school. Three of the principals are female and two males. All are white with the exception of one African American female. The years of experience of the principal participants span from first year to eleven total years. Each instructional coach has at least five years of experience and all have been trained in Cognitive Coaching foundations. Coaches number four females and one male and all are white. The certified turnover rates are 5% to 8% for three of the represented schools. Smithfield K-8 School sits at 0% turnover because every certified staff member is new to the school, which opened its doors to students in 2019. Sevilla Middle School's turnover rate at the time of this study is 15%, which is slightly above the national average of 13.8% (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

*Table 3. Study Informants, Principals and Coaches*

Principal	Principals' Gender	Principals' Race	Principals' Years of Experience	School	Level	% of Certified Turnover	Coach	Coach's Gender	Coach's Race	Coach's Years of Experience	# of Coaching Conversations
Manley	M	W	3	Triton Elementary	Elementary	5%	Smith	F	W	8	2
Beeler	F	W	10	Post High School	High	8%	Dosier	M	W	8	3
Cook	M	W	4	Bowman Elementary	Elementary	5%	Stuart	F	W	8	2
Siers	F	AA	1	Smithfield K-8 School	Elementary/ Middle	0%	Keene	F	W	5	2
Harris	F	W	11	Sevilla Middle School	Middle	15%	Martin	F	W	7	4

Each case narrative begins with a participant profile, then is structured according to the steps of the Listening Guide. The first step, identifying the plot, reveals the issues at hand, context, and barriers each principal wishes to discuss with the instructional coach. The second step in the Listening Guide, analysis of the I poems, acts as a sieve for the conversations, pulling out moments of clarity, efficacy, and identifiers of particular stressors. This step also reveals in the participants' own words, mindfulness traits of description, observation, awareness, acceptance, as well as the efficacy constructs of positivity and capability. The third step, identification of the contrapuntal voices, lays bare the cognitive dissonance or the point and counterpoint voices that Cognitive Coaching conversations intend to ignite. Wisse and Sleebos (2015) stress the importance of a "salient personal self" as a mediator of uncertainty, doubt, and confusion. In listening for when these point and counterpoint voices occur in the interviews, we can hear the salient personal self in action, taking thoughts from a place of uncertainty to naming, planning, and action.

Since I am examining participant self-efficacy, and the indicators of high efficacy and low efficacy are contrapuntal in nature, I listened to the recorded interviews and read closely the transcriptions for where the tone of the conversation turned from capable and positive to incapable and pessimistic and vice versa. At these points in the conversation, I lifted poignant statements from the principals, coded them with the a priori mindfulness and self-efficacy codes. I then pulled from the transcript the coach question or paraphrase that prompted the poignant statement. I coded the coach questions and paraphrases according to the Cognitive Coaching Five States of Mind: efficacy, flexibility,

craftsmanship, consciousness, and interdependence. Questioning and paraphrasing within each state of mind employs strategies for cognitive shift (See Table 4).

*Table 4. Strategies for Inviting Cognitive Shift*

State of Mind	Coaching Strategy	Example
Efficacy	Invite reflection about being in charge	“What has worked in the past to get teachers to buy into something new?” (Coach Stuart)
	Elicit knowledge, skill, or positive attitude	
Flexibility	Invite a shift in perceptual position	“What appeals to her?”
	Explore filters of perception	“Do you think she would think that was a better alternative?” (Coach Smith)
Craftsmanship	Elicit criteria	“What evidence would tell you that the steps you are taking toward personalization are working?” (Coach Martin)
	Pose a data search	
Consciousness	Invite metacognition	“What is it you truly want to know?” (Coach Keene)
	Encourage the making of a new connection	
Interdependence	Invite collaboration	“Is there something coming up where you are doing something collaboratively and you might need to coordinate and think about who your audience is?” (Coach Dossier)
	Elicit positive intentions of others	

*Note.* Adapted from “Problem solving conversation mat” by Thinking Collaborative, 2018

Coach questions have potential to prompt a noticeable cognitive shift for the coachee. Table 4 shows examples from the transcribed interviews of coach questions that preceded participant cognitive shift. Coding both question and response allowed for the analysis of occurrences between Cognitive Coaching questions, mindful disposition, and self-efficacy traits (Appendix D).

## **Principal Manley and Coach Smith**

Principal Manley is in his third year as principal of Triton Elementary, where he previously served two years as assistant principal. The school is relatively high performing in the district with little teacher turnover and a very active parent teacher organization. Manley is familiar with Cognitive Coaching from his days as a classroom teacher when he engaged in several coaching cycles with his building's instructional coach (Smith) in the areas of unit design, preparation to host lab classroom visitors, and various classroom problems of practice. He reports consulting and planning with Smith, almost daily, but admits it is focused on teachers' needs and student data rather than on specific leadership goals or issues. Smith is a seasoned instructional coach with more than five years of experience. Upon agreeing to be a participant in this study, Smith looks forward to reviewing Cognitive Coaching protocols and the chance to hone her skills with this model of coaching, which she admits has not been her go to coaching model because of the time it takes to commit to a full coaching cycle and to adhere to the coaching maps.

*Plot.* Manley's first coaching conversation is a planning conversation around a whole school innovative initiative. Triton Elementary is ready to hold their spring exhibitions of student learning and the school has partnered with a local mall to host displays in some of the empty storefronts. The school has done this before, but this time, Manley wants to adjust and anticipates some pushback from the staff on the adjustments he wishes to make. So, Principal Manley and his coach, Ms. Smith, talk through how best to communicate their intended changes and deliver a clear message to the staff that the adjustments are not reflective of their past performance, but an attempt to create a better

experience for students and families. He wants to be empathetic to the concerns of the staff, but ultimately, wants the flaws from the first semester not to be repeated.

Smith's second coaching session is a reflective conversation about how a trial run of spring testing unfolded. Smith's goal of this coaching conversation is to be able to name successful elements of the plan and to name necessary changes while those thoughts are fresh in his mind. Both of Principal Manley's coaching conversations center around a common principal stressor of leading in a change environment. An important part of a leader's self-efficacy is the ability to successfully lead necessary changes in his or her organization (Tshannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

### **Principal Beeler and Coach Dosier**

Principal Beeler is in her tenth year as principal of Post High School. With her leadership, Post High School became one of the first schools to host visitors from around the state to see Thinking Strategies in action. A decade ago, the district began sending groups to study at the Thinking Strategies Institute in Denver, Colorado, a learning conference designed by the Public Education and Business Coalition, that focuses on training educators how to teach the learner over content, and how to foster metacognition and agency as part of the learning process. Since that time, Post High School has been on the front lines of redesigning the high school experience and Principal Beeler has represented the county at conferences around the state speaking to other leaders about empowering a school for transformation. The school's instructional coach, Dosier, is an experienced instructional coach and former high school teacher. He has coached teachers at Post through several years of transformation and innovation, and during this study, works with changes the school has undergone in the effort to be more student centered.

*Plot.* Principal Beeler engaged in three different coaching conversations with Coach Dosier. The first two conversations were part of a coaching cycle, a series of coaching conversations that follow the coachee from planning to reflection on the same goal or project. In Beeler’s case, she was preparing for an upcoming state convening where she was to speak about the innovations in personalized learning that had taken place over the course of the last few years at Post High School. She was particularly interested in planning her session to balance enough information without overwhelming the audience or seeming like a principal telling others what to do. Mr. Dosier planned with Beeler, attended the session at the convening to collect some data, then reflected with her to complete the coaching cycle.

The third coaching conversation was a planning conversation for creating a part of the teaching and learning vision for next school year at Post High. In this conversation, she attempted to balance proactive planning with flexibility. Principal Beeler was concerned that in the attempt to remain flexible, teachers were planning “on the fly” causing rigor and intentionality to suffer. Especially evident in this conversation was Beeler’s struggle with competing attention. In the first moments of the conversation, she listed the issues in planning for the following year that felt of equal weight: a new building renovation and ensuing logistics, district strategic leadership plan goals, and teaching pedagogy.

### **Principal Cook and Coach Stuart**

Principal Cook has been the building leader at Bowman Elementary School for four years. Prior to that, he was an assistant principal at another school in the district. When Cook took the helm, the school was in need of a culture and climate makeover.



Though the staff did not have high turnover, multiple years in a row of stagnant and /or declining test scores left many feeling ineffective, negative, and hopeless for an answer to school turnaround. Principal Cook could see the high skill set and desire to grow students both academically and social-emotionally, so he set out on a mission to raise the efficacy of his teachers. His instructional coach, Ms. Stuart, who coached in the building under previous administration as well, worked alongside Cook to coach teachers individually and in groups. Bowman Elementary saw great growth in 2018/2019, and they were able to exit TSI (Target School Improvement) status with the state. Now, time is of the essence. Principal Cook has a sense of urgency and tremendous responsibility to continue the climb with achievement. This combination of emotion and a passion to do what is good and right for students can sometimes cause a “hastiness” in decision making and messaging to staff, and Coach Stuart is looking forward to Cognitive Coaching as a mediator for quick decisions that can feel like top-down mandates to teachers.

*Plot.* Principal Cook engaged in two coaching conversations. His opening statement of his first conversation begins, “I’m trying to figure out...” To a coach, this is an indication of the need for problem solving and planning even if the coachee cannot name that for himself. In the next conversation, Cook is able to name the purpose of the coaching by stating, “I need to plan.” The first conversation’s focus is the challenge of encouraging three grade levels in his elementary school to deepen the rigor of the projects they are developing for students. What he desires is an approach that includes student voice and co-creation of project design in order to elevate engagement and critical thinking. Though he wants the motivation to be intrinsic, he battles the temptation to issue a directive and have it done. In this conversation, he visualizes with Coach Stuart

several ways he might increase engagement and student agency including “book reviews, a publication, a competition, displays, a public performance.” In order to shift Cook’s focus from all the ways *he* might engage students to all the ways he might inspire *teachers* to engage students, Coach Stuart makes frequent use of the coaching strategy of paraphrasing and elevating Cook’s own words to intentionally shift his consciousness from ego centric to empathetic.

Principal Cook speaks of his sense of urgency in this matter, stating:

I think what I need to do is actually jump in and say [to teachers], “You know what? We’re doing this. This is my charge for students.” Then go to the students first and not the teachers and challenge them, “Hey, this is what I need done. I need some book reviews to entice students in our building to read that book.

You’ve all read that book and have been part of the book club. Now let’s create a video or an advertisement...” We’ve got to give them an opportunity to invest in the work.

Coach Stuart follows with her paraphrase and elevation of what Cook really wants out of his interaction with teachers and students:

You want to intrinsically motivate them, it sounds like to me. We want to give give them opportunity for some voice and choice in it and maybe the ways that they do that. So, in thinking of all those goals for students, what avenue might be best for teacher buy in for planning with more voice and choice for students?

Not every skilled paraphrase and elevation works right away.

Principal Cook spends a good part of this first coaching conversation talking about possible fixes to the student engagement issue without narrowing in on how to

partner with teachers to make it happen. Coach Stuart prompts directly, “What has worked in the past to get the teachers to buy in to something new that we could try?”

Cook replies:

Well, and some of it’s been working through students to get challenges going with students and then the teachers see the benefit of it. I think we need to pave the way because we’ve done a lot of talking and challenging and it’s just not moving to fruition, so it’s time to go to the students and mandate that it happens.

Sometimes it’s that push and go through and do the expectation, and if it’s not great, it’s not that great, but at least it gets movement.

In Principal Cook’s second coaching conversation, he begins with the wish to empower teachers to create the framework of a new guided reading initiative. The tone of this conversation indicates his battle with control and direct versus inspire and empower when it comes to motivating teachers. The back and forth between control and letting go comes to the surface in Cook’s I poems.

### **Principal Siers and Coach Keene**

Principal Siers has taught and led in the district for her entire career. She and her children are graduates of the district and she lives in the county. Her community ties are close, and people look to her as an important bridge from the district to the families it serves. Often, Siers is a sounding board for concerns and suggestions from community members on how the district can do things differently or better. While she understands this is part of living and working in the same community, Ms. Siers has spoken honestly about how difficult it is sometimes to always have her game face on, whether engaging in professional or personal business around town. Ms. Siers is a first-year principal in an

innovative K-8 school model, the only one in the district. The school opened in 2019 and after spending the first semester of the year with her students and teachers split among the other schools in the district because the building was not ready for occupancy, they are finally ready to come together under the new roof. The focus of the coaching conversations between Ms. Siers and her coach, Ms. Keene, are largely about building strong teams and creating a coherence while developing the collective culture and climate of this new school model.

Keene is an experienced coach with placements at the elementary and middle school levels. Having experience coaching teachers at both of these levels is one of the reasons she was placed as the new coach of Smithfield school. At the beginning of this research, Keene reported looking forward to getting back to her roots as a Cognitive Coach, a methodology she feels the district has gotten away from in the last few years, citing a strong focus on data analysis and student-centered coaching aimed at increasing instructional impact on student performance. While Cognitive Coaching can certainly include data analysis, and often does, the focus of this coaching methodology has more to do with the beliefs of the individual receiving the coaching and how those beliefs manifest in decisions and practices. Keene sees this kind of coaching as crucial for principals.

***Plot.*** Principal Siers engaged in two Cognitive Coaching conversations and a debrief interview. Siers and Coach Keene report that they meet together to discuss school issues on a daily basis, but those meetings are often unstructured and involve immediate issues of instruction, and teacher professional development rather than principal development. As a new principal, Siers desires her coaching to focus on building

relationships with and among staff, parents, and students. Siers wastes no time getting into exactly what she wants to discuss in the first conversation – she has a strong desire to learn from and build relationships with her staff. She wants to plan a face-to-face meeting with each staff member and wishes for Keene to help her keep these sessions focused, but authentic and open. The second coaching conversation, also about relationships, sees Principal Siers seeking balance between supporting and listening to parents and students while also supporting staff, which can often be at odds for the school leader. So, it is for Siers. She finds herself in the situation where she must bring some legitimate parent concerns to a team of teachers and she wants to message the concerns in a way to spawn teacher awareness and growth as opposed to what she fears – teacher defensiveness and excuse making.

### **Principal Harris and Coach Martin**

Principal Harris has been a principal for more than ten years and was an assistant principal in a different district prior to that. She came to the district in this study as a change agent and successfully turned Sevilla Middle School from declining to excelling. In a district with a history of having only two middle schools, there is no wiggle room for performance academically and athletically. In a district with two schools, there is always a performer and an underperformer in the community's eyes. The pressure is great to be the high performer, especially as the principal who quickly turned the school around in the first place. In her initial interview, Harris speaks of being “eleven years in and feeling stuck.” When Smithfield School opened in 2019, Sevilla had several teachers transfer causing a bit of a disruption in the school's team configuration. Harris was in the process of building pockets of mastery in personalized learning throughout the school, but many

of those teacher leaders took positions at the innovative Smithfield. Principal Harris' coaching conversations focus on working through feelings of burnout and of growing tired of reinventing the school yet again.

Sevilla's instructional coach is new to the district and to coaching (one of the staff losses to Smithfield was Coach Keene). Because one of the qualifiers for study participation was at least two years' experience with Cognitive Coaching, Principal Harris' conversations happen with Coach Martin, the experienced Cognitive Coach from the other original middle school across the county. Because Cognitive Coaching requires a trusting relationship, the principal from Ms. Martin's school agreed to share her between the buildings for a few weeks so Martin could build trust with both Principal Harris and the staff as well as get a sense of culture and climate at Sevilla.

**Plot.** Principal Harris engaged in four Cognitive Coaching conversations with Coach Martin. In the first conversation, Harris wastes no time identifying the issue about which she would like to think differently. She begins, "My current *stuckedness*, so to speak is I'm in eleven years as a principal." Martin invites her to go on. "I have been an administrator for seventeen years, and I'm starting to feel like I think I do a good job, but sometimes I feel like it's never enough." In this conversation, Harris expresses a desire to have a more positive and proactive approach to challenges of school leadership that seem to repeat for her every year. Principal Harris holds herself to high expectations and often feels solely responsible as the instructional leader of the school. Friedman (2002) explains that school leaders who hold themselves to high expectations and who lead in a change environment can have multiple experiences with what they deem failure and those experiences over time can take a toll on self-efficacy.

The second and third conversations Principal Harris has with Martin are planning conversations centered on some changes happening to systems and structures in the school due to a number of new staff. Harris is creating an academy structure in the school where each academy will focus on personalizing learning for students. Harris spends these coaching sessions working through thinking about structures, building teacher pedagogy, and maintaining student achievement, all the while battling her reservations about whether or not teachers are ready to be empowered with her vision. She fears further perceived setbacks will not only damage her own efficacy, but that of her teachers, ultimately, negatively affecting students.

In her final coaching conversation, there is a change of tone in Principal Harris. Between the third and fourth conversation, a teacher leader at Sevilla attended a conference with the staff developer, chief academic officer, and superintendent. While there, they had a meeting about creating the academy structure, and that talk led to a plan for the structure to change at the teacher level. The teacher leader took charge of a grassroots effort in the school to make the academy structure happen in the coming school year. Harris is elated that the teacher leader and colleagues came to her and asked for the change to happen. Principal Harris is excited about this possibility and recognizes the momentum that exists with a teacher led change that does not appear to be a top-down mandate.

### **Cognitive Coaching Questions' Elicitation of Self-Efficacy and Mindfulness Traits**

The I poems construction and analysis of contrapuntal voices revealed points of cognitive dissonance in each coaching conversation. Cognitive Coaching calls these points in conversation, “invitations to cognitive shift” (Costa & Garmston, 2013, p.105).

When commentary of the principals turned from positive and capable to pessimistic and incapable and vice versa, I lifted from the transcription the principal statement along with the coaching prompt or paraphrase. When the commentary of the principals pointed to a mindfulness trait, I repeated the process using the a priori mindfulness codes. I coded sixty principal statements with the inductive mindfulness codes and the coach prompt or paraphrase with the Cognitive Coaching States of Mind. Table 5 displays code occurrence throughout the sampled coaching statements spanning all participants.

Principal Manley's self-efficacy coded excerpts concentrated in capability and seemed to occur when his coach questioned him in the craftsmanship state of mind, though capability codes occurred for Manley in every state of mind. Principal Beeler remained largely positive through her coaching and those feelings seemed to occur most often when her coach questioned her in the consciousness state of mind. It is interesting to note Beeler is the only coach whose feelings of incapability occurred with interdependence questions from her coach. She revealed in her debrief interview that her internal battle with time often has her completing tasks on her own as opposed to delegating. Principal Cook's self-efficacy toggled between positive and pessimistic as he and his coach worked to elevate his consciousness to his struggle between taking control and giving teachers autonomy. Principal Siers' codes concentrated in incapable with consciousness and efficacy questions at the start of coaching, but capable codes appeared as the coaching conversations developed. Principal Harris' incapable codes appeared along with efficacy questions, and this makes sense as her discussions with Coach Martin began with the topic of her feelings of burnout.



Table 5. Mindfulness and Self-Efficacy Trait Occurrence with Cognitive Coaching States of Mind during Coaching

Traits		State of Mind			
<i>Mindfulness</i>	<i>Consciousness</i>	<i>Craftsmanship</i>	<i>Efficacy</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Interdependence</i>
Observe	2, <b>3</b> , 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4	3, 4, 5		2, 4
Describe	1, 2, 3, <b>4</b> , <b>5</b>	1, 4, 5	1, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 4
Awareness	<b>1</b> , <b>2</b> , 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 3	3, 5
Acceptance	1, 3, 4, 5	1	4, 5	3	
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>					
Positive	1, <b>2</b> , 3, <b>5</b>	1, 2, 5	2, 3, 5	2, 3	3, 4
Pessimistic	2, <b>3</b> , 5		2	1, 3	3
Capable	1, 2, 4, 5	<b>1</b> , 3, 5	1, 2, 4, 5	1	1, 5
Incapable	2, <b>4</b> , 5	4, 5	4, <b>5</b>		2

Notes. Numbers represent specific principal and coach matches; specifically, 1 = Manley/Smith; 2 = Beeler/Dosier, 3 = Cook/Stuart, 4 = Siers/Keene, 5 = Harris/Martin. Bolded counts indicate highest concentration of codes for each participant during coaching.

As Martin continued to shift consciousness questions to planning for the future with past success in mind, Harris' data showed more positive codes coinciding with consciousness, craftsmanship, and efficacy states of mind.

The mindful trait of describe and the Cognitive Coaching state of consciousness occurred most frequently together in the sampled principal statements. Awareness and consciousness occurred next most frequently. Both describe and awareness occurred often with the state of efficacy. The mindful trait of acceptance did not co-occur at any time in the sampled statements along with a coaching prompt inviting interdependence. Mindful observance did not co-occur with a flexibility coaching prompt during the study. What emerged from analysis of the code frequencies was a gender difference. Principal participants heavily engaged in the mindful constructs of describe and awareness. Similarly, the state of consciousness appeared most often of any of the states of mind and was distributed among the men and women with no noticeable difference. However, the coaches of the male principals held nearly all of the interdependence and flexibility codes. This suggests that these coaches noticed a need to ask questions intended to build interdependence and flexibility more often with male principals than in with female principals. Ultimately, Table 5 reveals data indicating each principal in this study had the greatest opportunity to investigate their own self-efficacy and mindful leader traits when coaches asked questions to invite a shift in consciousness.

### **Self-Efficacy During and After Cognitive Coaching**

Following the steps for constructing I poems that Zambo and Zambo (2013) used in their research, I returned to the transcriptions of each coaching conversation and debrief interview after reading for the plot of each case. I underlined each first-person

statement from each principal during the coaching conversations, then cut and pasted the statements into a separate document, preserving the order (Appendix E). I then coded individual lines and groups of lines with a priori self-efficacy codes: positive, pessimistic, capable, or incapable. I annotated the poems according to the plot to gain understanding of the situations that were affecting the principal's perceived efficacy. By separating out the I statements from the interview transcripts, I was able to observe the participants' associations between leader performance situations and the ways he or she speaks of him or herself (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). I followed a similar analysis with each principal participant's debrief interview, pulling salient I statements out of the transcripts and coding for self-efficacy again. The I poems created from the coaching conversations provided data for perceived self-efficacy during Cognitive Coaching and the debrief interviews provided data for perceived self-efficacy after Cognitive Coaching.

### **During Cognitive Coaching**

What follows are excerpts from the I poems and contrapuntal voice analyses constructed from the transcripts of principal. Each excerpt indicates points in the coaching conversations where the principal participant either explicitly states or offers through narrative his or her self-efficacy state. I developed all I poems and contrapuntal voice analyses from the transcripts of recordings during the coaching conversations.

***Manley.*** Principals often encounter the challenge of asking a teacher to try something new or different. In this case, Principal Manley wants a respected, veteran teacher to change up a process she has done the same way for years.

I just think with intentional planning, kids could be better served.

I thought, "we don't even necessarily have to do it the way we've done it before."

I need you [the coach] to help me make this work from person to person.

I need you to help me figure this out.

I know how this conversation is probably going to go.

In that final “I” statement, Manley is pessimistic about how a conversation is going to proceed with a teacher he believes will be reluctant to his plan. Through the questioning of the coach, he plays out some scenarios of the conversation and becomes more highly aware of his belief that he does not want to take an authoritative approach with this teacher. Toward the end of this section of the I poem, he says, “I got it”, which points to a more positive and capable mindset than when he began discussing the possible outcomes with Coach Smith.

I need both of us to have an open mind.

I’ll tell her, just tell her.

I’ll list out the reasons.

I’ll tell her.

I hope to be able to say

I’m going to be honest with you.

I did you guys a favor in the fall.

Now I’m pulling the favor card.

I need you to help me.

I don’t know;

I could just go to them and be like, “You’re doing this. The end.”

I need to make sure that...

I don’t want to be so inflexible.

I think I've got it!

I know how I need to approach this conversation.

The place in Principal Manley's coaching sessions where the contrapuntal voices of capability and positivity interact with incapability and pessimism is when he wrestles with how to approach a staff member in his school with a message he feels she will not like (See Appendix D). During this part of the conversation, Coach Smith questions Manley through possible scenarios. Coach Smith asks, "What do you think it will take for this teacher to get behind this idea?"

"Nothing. She'll consider it, but won't be happy about it," Manley replies.

Sensing pessimism going into the conversation, Smith asks a question inviting metacognition to elevate his consciousness to the purpose of the coaching conversation. She asked, "What do you need out of this coaching conversation?" Manley responds, stating, "I need you to help me figure this out. I know how this conversation is going to go. I want this conversation (with the teacher) to be amicable."

Principal Manley is prepared for a negative dialogue with his teacher and the phrase "help me figure this out" prompts Coach Smith to ask a question so Manley can name success criteria, a Cognitive Coaching strategy for elevating craftsmanship. Smith proceeds, "Talk about what you want for you and for the teacher. What do you want the end result to be?"

Manley answers, "Number one, I need to make sure that there is a clear reason and rationale (for the way the teacher would like to have things done in the situation). Number two, I don't want to be so inflexible as not to listen to ideas."

Coach and principal then spend about 15 minutes in role playing the conversation. Coach Smith is intentionally helping Manley anticipate approaches, periodically pausing to ask a question to build empathy and perspective. One such question is, “What are some ways we can help her with that? What are some supports she or the team need?” Principal Manley then returns to the role play conversation, inserting suggestions, ideas, and strategies that now sound much less like him telling the teacher how things will be done and much more like an invitation to collaborate and problem solve.

A regular part of any Cognitive Coaching conversation is reflection on the coaching itself (See Appendix B). With this ending, not only has the coachee gained something from the dialogue, but the coach can receive feedback, explore refinements for next time, and impact his or her own self-efficacy as a mediator of thinking. Smith asks a final question, “How has this been helpful to talk through all of this?” Manley ends the conversation explaining a new feeling of action. He now has a purpose for the outcome of the teacher conversation that is more about supporting students and their educator than it is about getting his way.

**Beeler.** Principal Beeler is inherently an efficacious leader. During her coaching conversations, there were few indications of wavering self-efficacy, however, her I poems revealed two interesting leadership moves that help her feel confident and prepared. First, Beeler is not crippled by a sense of ultimate responsibility as discussed in the literature. In fact, when speaking about school planning, she almost exclusively uses collective pronouns such as we and our. School leaders with high self-efficacy build staff with strong collective efficacy and they see school goal attainment as an effort belonging to all members of the team (Rogers et al., 2016).

We have everyone defending now.

Our driving question...

Our community is set.

Our emphasis will be...

We will check.

We will share.

We will have students ready.

We will name topics, curriculum, and scope of work.

Next, Principal Beeler feels most positive and capable when she can take time to plan and carefully map out the work that needs to be done. She indicates this during coaching conversations, as exemplified in the I poem that follows, and again in her debrief interview. What I noticed in analysis of Beeler's I poems was a repeated use of the words and phrases associated with preparedness.

I want people to feel proactive.

I'm planning for the end of the year.

I can plan...

I can work on...

Do I need to do anything on the front end?

We need to prioritize.

I have to be full on focused.

I have to make sure I am clear.

I'll have to be clear.

I had better plan for that in the beginning.

Cognitive Coaching takes coachees through planning, reflecting, and problem solving conversations. If preparedness is something that keeps self-efficacy high for Principal Beeler, planning conversations are where she likely could see the greatest benefit.

In using The Listening Guide analysis methodology, the third listen for the contrapuntal voices relies heavily on hearing the musicality of the conversation and having the researcher make sense of it (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). It was not difficult to recognize the musicality in Principal Beeler's coaching conversations. Each conversation's cadence had a similar pattern: wonder, question, wonder, question...and this could go on for some time until, finally, a question from Coach Dosier prompts Beeler to "land" confidently on a belief statement. I named Beeler's contrapuntal voices "maybe" and "yes" in my field journal, and in capturing significant "yes" statements along with the coaching question that preceded it, I noticed each has a self-efficacy code of positivity and capability (See Appendix D). Some examples of coach prompts having consciousness and craftsmanship codes leading to "yes" statements from Beeler follow.

During a reflecting session where Beeler reflected on a session with colleagues during a conference where she shared what makes her school's competency-based graduation requirements beneficial for students, Coach Dosier asked her to explore indicators of success with an efficacy question, "If you were to try to put a finger on some things that you did that made it successful, or not, what would those be?" Several of those musical back and forth questions and wonders follow this question,

I don't know...

I think...



I guess...

I guess...

I feel...I don't know.

Then Beeler lands on the "yes" statement.

The personal connection. Every kid should be able to walk out of school and sell themselves. How much better do kids do when they have somebody who knows them, who can coach them into that? Your advisor is your mentor.

Here, Principal Beeler transitions from vague to precise, which is the definition of the cognitive coaching state of mind, consciousness. Precision relates to self-efficacy and to mindfulness as mindful leaders are clear, focused, and can communicate in order to build common goals (Ehrlich, 2017). The word proactive appears throughout Beeler's I poems, indicating that clear and precise direction is something she associates with self-efficacy.

One of the struggles many school principals wrestle with is a sense of never having enough time (Dempster, 2001; Klocko & Wells, 2015). Principal Beeler's relationship with time is connected to her sense of self-efficacy throughout her I poem. When she feels like she has conquered the challenge of time, she describes herself and the situation as a success. However, when she feels like time is not on her side, she describes the context pessimistically or in terms of her lack of success.

I feel like it's been a whole year of catch-up.

I'm planning instantly and I'm planning for the future.

I won't be able to do that until...

I don't think I'll be ready to share.

We have two days.

It's not enough time.

We'll worry about that later.

I knew what time it was.

I watched the time.

It took eleven minutes.

I went faster.

I knew to watch the time.

I didn't have time.

I could have spent more time.

I was very worried [about the time].

I guess I gained some time.

I focused on the time.

I used the clock.

I can plan things out two weeks ahead.

I did not like feeling rushed.

In planning for summer professional development, Beeler wishes to balance district alignment and expectations with giving teachers autonomy and honoring their expertise. Dosier leads, "Teachers might want flexibility, so you are advocating for...?"

After a pause, Beeler states, "Our teachers do not want to feel boxed in. I don't want teachers to feel like this is being done *to* them." The coach invites the principal to set a purpose for a coaching conversation to provide clarity, focus, and a path for naming outcomes, "Is there something coming up where you are doing something collaboratively with some folks and that might need to be coordinated?" Beeler confirms, "Yes. All of

our work on Tuesdays, and the professional development that's coming up for the summer and next year.”

What is present in each of the statements are the self-efficacy codes of positivity and capability. Leaders who are efficacious can plan proactively for growth opportunities for self and others (Bandura, 1994; McCormick, 2001). All of Principal Beeler's coaching conversations focus on creating an experience where either she, her audience, or her staff can grow from the decisions she makes in the planning stage. Because Coach Dosier recognizes the context, he questions in a way to raise her efficacy through elevating her consciousness to the hopes and realities of the situation. He also asks Beeler to ground her reflection in previous success so she can remind herself of similar past experiences where, intentionally or not, her decision making led to desired results. Learning from previous experiences and having the opportunity to name and replicate successful decisions is a key component to strong self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001, 2005).

**Cook.** Principal Cook exudes a mixture of positive and pessimistic tone, which is indicative of his coaching conversations as a whole. He begins one conversation wishing to begin a reading initiative with his staff that allows for teacher and student voice, choice, and empowerment.

I want to give voice and choice.

I don't want to narrow.

I think like a charge or a drive.

I think we need to pave the way.

In the same conversation, Cook seems unsure of how to pave the way.

I'm not sure.

I think maybe...

I do not think...

I don't know.

I'm unsure.

I don't know if we can.

I'm not sure.

I've got to figure that out.

Further into his coaching, Principal Cook makes one statement that sums up both of his coaching sessions perfectly.

I want to give them [teachers] empowerment.

I just give them too much power.

Cook's self-efficacy growth area is how to shape a vision in such a way that teachers know how to operate independently and effectively within his expectations. Principal Cook struggles with how to set clear tight and loose expectations.

As Coach Stuart paraphrases and prompts through these statements, she attempts to raise interdependence (Appendix D). In Cognitive Coaching, a coach might question for interdependence in an attempt to invite collaboration and bring to the attention of the coachee the positive intentions or abilities of others (Thinking Collaborative, 2018). At several points throughout both coaching sessions between Stuart and Cook, the coach asks a similar question to remind the principal of the importance of trusting teacher expertise. Coach Stuart asks, "What will you leave up to teachers? What data?" The question mitigates the contrapuntal voices of autonomy and control, asking Principal Cook to name some of the decision making he will trust his teachers to handle on their

own without directives. In the end, Principal Cook and Coach Stuart reach a point where Cook decides to meet with each group of teachers involved in the project to establish clear guidance and a framework of expectations together. The principal also decides to find an additional hour or two of planning time for the teachers involved so they can feel supported as they create a plan that will work for students. Creating cultures of trust is an important school leader trait appearing in the literature on both mindful leadership and self-efficacy (Kearney et al., 2013; Tshannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

*Siers.* Something interesting emerges from the I poem in this first coaching session. Siers is apprehensive about what she might hear during the teacher meetings as much as she is eager to build relationships with her staff. There is a theme of vulnerability that develops.

I depend on you guys [administrative team] to affirm my decisions.

I already know you guys dispositionally.

I have not gained that with them [staff].

I really want a good answer.

I really care to know.

My concern is lack of honesty.

I don't want to hear...

I've worked really hard.

I know

I got a lot more work to do.

I don't have a clue

How well I'm doing.

I think things are where I want them.

I found out from one of my other staff members [she was wrong about her perception].

I feel blindsided.

I didn't know that...

I don't know if I'm going to get.

I also feel

I need to prep myself.

How can we be better?

How can I do more?

I just need to make sure.

I know everything is not perfect.

I want to know...

I don't know...

I want to make sure...

I have been so surprised.

I ask questions.

I feel like we're doing well.

I think we're doing ok here.

Sometimes I'm surprised.

I think that's why these conversations are important.

The coaching questions and the trust between principal and coach have created space for Siers to speak vulnerably about how to prepare for what might not be great

news from her staff. Coach Keene notices Siers is delving into a place of wavering efficacy, then asks a question to get Siers seeing even the negative feedback from staff as usable data for building strong school culture. Keene asks, “Would you say that your goal or your goals from these meetings is to walk away with a sense of your staff and who they are and also some reflections about finishing this year and going into next? What do you truly want to know about our work?” With this question, Principal Siers is able to name a list of success criteria for her vision of Smithfield School.

I want things systemic.

I want my building to come together.

I really want to uplift the teachers.

I want a school that is very supportive and vulnerable.

I want to know what makes a good day at school.

I want to know what that looks like for them.

I want to personalize.

I named the contrapuntal voices in Siers’ coaching conversations apprehension and certainty. Throughout her Cognitive Coaching conversations, Principal Siers toggled between feeling incapable and capable. In the process of coding these self-efficacy indicators in her conversations, the presence of both codes was nearly fifty-fifty. The pattern for Siers is to begin in wavering efficacy and make more positive and capable statements by the end of the conversations. Both Cognitive Coaching and Mindful Leadership practices aim to reduce focus on negative perceptions and concentrate attention toward acknowledging the negative emotional responses, then quickly moving

to planning, problem solving, and action strategy (Brown & Olsen, 2015; Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Some examples of statements from Siers' coaching clearly shows areas of low self-efficacy. Upon a prompt from Coach Keene to examine why one on one staff conferences are important to her, Siers explains, "I don't have a clue how well I am doing. I think things are where I want them, then I found out differently. I feel blindsided." Just as Principals Manley and Cook requested coaching prior to tough conversations with staff, Siers broaches the same subject in one of her sessions. She shares "I think this can turn on me. It makes me feel apprehensive," when her coach asks her to name her emotional response to the prospect of the upcoming discussion.

Listening intently to this kind of statement from her principal throughout the coaching sessions, Keene draws most of her questions from the states of mind of consciousness and efficacy (Appendix B; Appendix D). She acknowledges uncomfortable feelings with Siers, but then quickly turns to a question about goals and pathways to success. Two examples are, "What about this work is really important to you?" and "If you have a goal walking away from this meeting, what would it be?" Much of what Keene asks Siers to do is envision times that were successful in her leadership or to envision what might be successful. In this invitation for visioning, the coachee is able to describe how she is feeling, become aware of why, accept the feeling for what it is, then observe what factors could lead to a favorable outcome. Description, awareness, acceptance, and observance, all four a priori mindfulness codes, appear throughout Siers' coaching transcripts. In one such excerpt, Principal Siers shares about a time she



accomplished synergy between student, school, and parent – one of the overarching goals she shares during her coaching.

It's my job to make sure that I am a bridge between home and school.

I need my parents to feel heard- they are my customers too.

I just think sometimes, when I don't try to make us right when we're wrong, parents feel heard. So, there is trust that I took care of them and their students. It can make or break how they walk out of the room feeling.

Throughout Siers' coaching is a shift from pessimistic and incapable codes to positive and capable codes for self-efficacy. When she speaks of her ability to build trust, her tone and word choice is confident and positive. The more often Siers recalls having been successful in similar situations, the more she is able to remain in an efficacious frame of mind as she plans with her coach. In Coach Keene's questions, are frequent Cognitive Coaching codes of consciousness and efficacy indicating Keene's awareness that she must craft questions for Siers that invite reflection on times she was in charge and successful. This way, she can apply past skills to present situations and feel better prepared to handle them well – a part of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2001).

**Harris.** In Principal Harris's I Poems, there is a sense of ultimate responsibility coupled with not feeling particularly effective lately.

I'm starting to feel like...

I think I do a good job.

I feel like it's never enough.

Where I am now?

I don't know.

I could be better.

I guess...

We are the only school.

We aren't growing.

I'm the building leader.

I have a huge turnover.

I've not endured.

It still feels like not getting it done.

I'm trying to lead us out.

Harris feels like she has to reinvent the school year after year, and she reports it feels exhausting.

I'm having some tough conversations.

I'm going back to 2010.

I'm trying to rebuild the kingdom.

If I had done a better job...

I'm 11 years in;

I feel like in dog years,

I'm in 21.

Harris wishes to be a strong instructional leader and knows she needs to build capacity in others, but there is something of guilt she feels for relying on others to help her "rebuild the kingdom."

I can see that whole instructional leadership thing.

I'm so far away from that.

I'm leaning heavily on my instructional coach and assistant principal.

When Coach Martin prompts Principal Harris to think about and describe what implementation of the scaling of the innovative structures might look like, Harris spends some time describing the shift it takes to create student driven routines and structures. She says, "Flexible use of time and space – teachers have done a masterful job there." Harris turns the conversation into a planning session where she plans how to use current administrators' strengths along with the school's current PLC structure to conduct internal visits where other academies can learn from the original personalized learning team through lesson study. Internal lab classroom visits are not new to Sevilla, as a matter of fact, schools outside the district and state have visited the original personalized learning team. Harris had just not thought of the power of those kinds of visits under one roof. In the final moments of the conversation, when Martin asks how this session has been helpful, Harris acknowledges that she ignored a great tool and resource she already had in place. Instead, she allowed her thinking to go to "how do I fix this?" She concludes with describing how good it feels to be reminded of successful tools she had not used in a while.

I need to continue to refresh.

I can continue.

I'm sitting here recording notes.

I need to tackle...

I can easily pull up...

I tend to forget my resources

I might not have looked at for a while.

I coded the contrapuntal voices in Harris' coaching fret and hope. Her tone of voice changes in her final conversation and Coach Martin notices, then prompts Harris to tell her about what happened to affect the change. The following I Poem comes from this final coaching session where Harris has been approached by a teacher leader who wants to create a coalition of the willing to spread the innovative school model, which had previously been concentrated to a single teaching team, to other academies.

I literally had people approach me.

I planted some seeds.

I can't say that I didn't just try.

I think we're ready.

I think we're ready.

I think one of the reasons.

I think the sweet spot...

I believe firmly in teacher empowerment.

I make with intention.

I share.

I think about the power of buy in.

I believe.

I make sure they feel supported enough.

I'm really excited!

It is interesting to hear Principal Harris' voice change depending upon her focus on self-versus focus on teachers. An emergent theme in the entire body of her coaching conversations, is Harris' fretful voice, negative vocabulary, and more pessimistic

statements when she spoke of herself. On the contrary, and especially once her teacher leaders stepped up with their ideas, Harris' hopeful voice is more prevalent. When identifying evidence for success and describing solid pedagogy already in place, Harris' tone is confident, quick, and decisive. She uses words such as masterful, impactful, and wins. Principal Harris may not realize or wholeheartedly believe in her leadership as a catalyst for the positive teaching and learning she is able to name seeing it in others.

### **After Cognitive Coaching**

Each principal participated in an exit interview via Zoom due to social distancing restrictions at the time of the interviews (Appendix F). During the debrief interviews, participants spoke of their experience in the research process. What is common in the responses is an appreciation of the time set aside for reflection as well as for an opportunity to work with the districts' instructional coaches in a new way. Each principal has used instructional coaches as thought partners and guides for teachers and teams, but none of them had used a coach for their own processing and planning. All of the participants plan to incorporate Cognitive Coaching conversations into their schedules in the future and all coaches reported excitement to do so.

Though each principal had different leadership goals and situations to work through with the coaches, all of them found benefits in the practice. Principals Manley and Beeler found the strongest impact on self-efficacy when coached through staff and personnel issues. Manley describes his role play of a potentially tough personnel conversation with his coach, Ms. Smith, as "verbal chess" where he can play out several scenarios and receive feedback on his messaging and his reactions. Going forward from this research experience, he says, "I'll try to be pretty strategic about having personnel

level discussions with people and not having to just go in guns blazing. The personnel perspective, especially, was very, very helpful.”

Principal Beeler said the coaching helped her focus and work through some complicated and complex problems weighing on her mind. She says her sense of effectiveness and confidence is stronger when she can have a solid presentation in place. Presentation and messaging were important to Beeler throughout her coaching, whether she planned to present to a large group or small. The word “proactive” appears throughout her I poems, indicating the trait is important to her. She credits Coach Dosier’s listening and questioning skill with helping her see what her audience perspective might be and for enabling her to plan with their needs in the forefront.

Principal Cook offers that his instructional coach, Stuart, helps him read his “navigational compass.” She questions him in a way that pulls him back to what he says several times during the debrief, the “heart of the matter.” Cook knows it is easy, when problem solving, to get caught up thinking about how much teachers might struggle with something new or different. According to him, Stuart consistently questions him back to realizing that teachers are talented and capable experts. Admittedly, COVID-19 school shutdowns thrust teachers and administrators into the unknown and that created some panic for Cook as he began to wonder if his school could shift so quickly. Cook recalls a powerful question Stuart asked on a Zoom planning call one afternoon. She asked, “What do you think teachers and students *can* handle?” He says what followed was a deluge of ideas and examples of wonderful innovations teachers already had in place. Cook is thankful for that single question which turned the tide of an entire conversation and ended

up becoming a professional meeting opening statement. What he says evolved in that conversation was his sense of efficacy in himself and in his school.

Principal Siers had a strong realization during her participation in the study:

I absolutely will continue to meet with my coach for myself. I think I always could trust my coach and I always used her, but honestly, I never used her for myself. I always saw her as a resource for my teachers. With this invitation to participate in this research, was the first time I realized that she's also a resource for me, in my role, and so I think that made me more aware about utilizing her.

At one point in the debrief, Siers mentions a morning she came to school with a personal issue on her mind. She needed to have an important conversation with her husband, so she asked Coach Keene to help her see the issue from her husband's point of view. While that conversation does directly deal with teachers and students, school principals have families and personal lives, too. Negotiating emotional and mental energy trying to achieve work/life balance is a real challenge reflected in the literature (Klocko & Wells, 2015). Siers speaks of a sense of strengthening trust in her relationship with Keene after that coaching session because in that moment, the leader became vulnerable. Trust, relationship, safety, and vulnerability are key factors to successful coach/coachee relationships (Burnett, 2014; Costa & Garmston, 2016). She finishes the debrief speaking of a disagreement with another administrator in her building- they weren't seeing eye to eye on a discipline issue. Siers describes being quite worried and upset by the exchange, so she went to Keene for a coaching conversation, and after she says, "I really felt like a mountain had been taken off my shoulders."

Each principal shared in the debrief interview that he or she would ask for Cognitive Coaching in the future. Principal Manley plans to seek out coaching to role play scenarios with Coach Smith so he can work through negative emotions prior to speaking with staff. Principal Beeler commented, “Planning conversations gave me a stronger sense of efficacy. Once I know that planning is in place, I can go into a situation with a higher sense of efficacy.” Principal Cook noticed that coaching opened his mind to trust his teachers. Principal Siers stated, “I absolutely will continue. I honestly never thought of using my coach for myself. I saw her as a resource for teachers, but I’m realizing she is a resource for me too. After talking with her I felt more confident and prepared going into my difficult conversation.” Principal Harris credited coaching conversations with helping her realize that disruptions amplify and trigger feelings of burnout for her. She offered the suggestion that I discuss leadership coaching as a district investment with the district Student Achievement Team when I present these research findings to them.

### **Mindful Leadership Traits During and After Cognitive Coaching**

I returned to the principal I poems and debrief interviews for a second round of coding, this time for perceived a priori mindful leadership traits: observe, describe, awareness, acceptance. Using Table 1 as guidance, I read the I poems and transcripts for statements or portions of the coaching conversations where each leader described performing a leader action. I then coded that portion of the coaching session with one or more of the a priori mindful traits.



## **During Cognitive Coaching**

*Manley.* The mindfulness traits that emerged from both of Principal Manley's coaching conversations were *describe* and *awareness*. At several points in the conversations, Manley describes a feeling about his planning for a schoolwide event, for instance, he names the need for a change in practice:

I just think with intentional planning, kids could be better served

I thought, "we don't even necessarily have to do it the way we've done it before."

I need you (the coach) to help me make this work from person to person

I need you to help me figure this out

I know how this conversation is probably going to go

In the sample statements from Principal Manley's and Coach Smith's transcripts (Appendix D), each time the coach prompt calls for consciousness, an invitation to notice what is going on with self and others, it results in a mindful statement of description, an explanation of emotion coupled with context. When a leader can describe the context of a situation and notice what emotions emerge with that context, he is building emotional intelligence and present moment awareness (Ehrlich, 2017). This matters to decision making because emotionally intelligent leaders can open themselves to alternative views without feeling challenged or threatened (Hoy, 2002). In his coaching session, Manley states the desire to be flexible and have an open mind during what he perceives might be a difficult conversation signaling his awareness that, in this situation, he may tend to be closed minded. Awareness of one's own emotional and cognitive states is a key mindfulness trait (Baron, 2016).

**Beeler.** The mindfulness traits that emerged from the coaching conversations through Principal Beeler's I poem construction were *describe* and *awareness*. This principal spends much of her coaching time describing the context of the situation at hand, in this case, the state conference presentation, and how she feels about certain aspects of her efficacy before and after the event. Her coach helps her home in on goals, messaging, and presentation technique which keeps her thinking in a state of present moment awareness allowing her to focus on planning for the presentation intentionally even while in the midst of the plethora of other duties a school principal has to capture her attention.

Our driving question is...

Our emphasis will be...

We will check.

We will share.

We will name topics, curriculum, and scope of work.

We can start...

We can use this for the future.

I'm planning instantly.

I'm planning for the future.

I'm also think about the how.

I want them (the audience) to walk out of here with...

Principal Beeler displays evidence of present moment awareness, knowing how she feels about the coaching conversation at the end, saying, "It's forced me to be present. This [the coaching] has helped me think about my audience."

Also occurring during the planning session for the conference, Beeler expresses concern that she will appear haughty and condescending to her audience, saying she prefers to “share things openly and humbly.” As the coach then probes her with a craftsmanship question to elicit success criteria, he asks “What would success look like?” The wish appeal to her audience and to avoid appearing to know it all shows awareness of her messages and their effect on others.

Along with the mindfulness themes of *describe* and *awareness* in the I poems, there emerged an inductive code- a strong sense of the school leader as collaborator. Whenever Beeler speaks of the points for her presentation that require her presentation partners to be synchronous, the collective pronouns “we” and “our” begin the statements.

We have everyone defending now.

Our driving question is...

Our community set.

Our emphasis...

We will check.

We will share.

We have to get students ready for...

We will name topics, curriculum, scope of work.

We have it ready.

We are proactive.

We can increase.

We're going to start...

We did it last year.

We want...

She speaks in the collective again in her second coaching conversation where she is planning a next school year visioning day for her staff.

We can do...

We were way too small.

We get that.

We support teachers.

We need to come back to that.

We're going to do that.

We need to have a mini...

We want this to be successful.

We're hoping...

We've lived through it.

Speaking in collective pronouns as she works through her planning conversations with Coach Dosier indicates the leadership actions of recognizing others and building collaboration (Table 1). Recognizing others relates the mindful trait of awareness of others while building collaboration relates to the mindful trait of present moment awareness (Wells, 2015).

**Cook.** The wish to give strong voice and choice to students during projects is evident at the beginning of Principal Cook's first I poem.

We need to extend.

We've got to give an opportunity.

I want to give voice and choice.

I don't want to narrow.

When Coach Stuart begins to question Principal Cook about how he might motivate students and teachers to co-create projects, Cook's uncertainty about leading teachers to buy in to a new way of thinking comes through.

I know.

I'm not sure.

I think maybe...

I do not think...

I think we need to pave the way.

I wasn't going to say...

I was thinking maybe...

I don't know.

I'm unsure.

I don't even know.

I think it could even be...

I'm not sure.

Coach Stuart suggests cultivating a sense of buy in over mandating teachers to approach the project creation a certain way. Creating buy in is a leadership action related to mindful awareness (Table 1). What becomes apparent in the I poems next is Principal Cook's sense of urgency. Urgency and pressure to get things done quickly can leave school leaders reaching for a quick fix that often leads to the leader dictating what to do rather than taking the time for building buy in. The longer educators spend operating in

this disconnect, the higher the feelings of isolation, mistrust, and weakening autonomy (Houchens & Keedy, 2009).

I don't really care about selling them [the teachers].

I think it's time to get moving.

I don't know.

I just want to get it done!

Sometimes, in Cognitive Coaching, it can take more than one coaching cycle to soften that sense of urgency and get the coachee thinking about the moves it may take to evolve into the goals they have set for themselves. Principal Cook wants teachers to involve students more deeply in the creation of projects to increase engagement and ownership of the learning experience. When Coach Stuart revisits the issue with Cook, he is able to name some of the problems and sticking points that may be holding the school back rather than just express how badly and quickly he wants it done.

I want to give them empowerment.

I just don't want to give too much power.

I want to open it up.

I want to make sure they have a framework.

I think of autonomy.

I want to push them.

We need to look at data.

We have some fixed minds.

We need to also have a heart.

Principal Cook dives in to how he, as the instructional leader, might shape a conversation around data to lead teachers to notice and name a different approach.

I'm getting everybody together.

We have to look at data.

I'm going to shape that conversation.

I want them to feel like this is not new or more work.

I need to think about the teacher.

I'm just constantly battling in my mind.

How do I shape this?

I hope I can say...

I feel like they can...

I don't have to dictate.

In Principal Cook's two coaching conversations highlighted in this study, he allows his coach to question, paraphrase, and elevate the language of his goals. Coach Stuart never tells Cook that he is wrong to feel his urgency about getting his teachers on board with a better student engagement plan. On the contrary, a Cognitive Coach allows the coachee to feel whatever they feel about a difficult to reach goal, even if it is a negative feeling, which is mindful acceptance in action. By taking the time to reflect and work through the sense of urgency with his coach, Principal Cook seems to reach a more trusting state of mind about his teachers when he says:

I need to think about the teacher.

I don't have to dictate.

The contrapuntal voices at play in Principal Cook's coaching conversations are control and autonomy. Cook feels what many principals feel, which is a call to build collective efficacy and autonomy (DeWitt, 2017) within a staff coupled with the temptation to direct people because it takes less time. At several times in the coaching conversations, Coach Stuart intentionally questions the issue of teacher buy in, but more than that, an interesting pattern emerges from her paraphrasing. Stuart takes advantage of capturing Principal Cook's own words when he talks of believing in teachers, then she paraphrases at the same time elevating mindful language that Cook accepts and confirms. He explicitly states, frustrated, the main idea of the total of his coaching conversations by saying, "I think [I want them to have] autonomy, but I want them [the teachers] to personalize...I just want to get it done."

In her paraphrase, Stuart guides Cook out of the negative emotion by employing the Cognitive Coaching skill of organizing and abstracting (Appendix B), stating, "Every teacher is a master of content...you want them to have autonomy and some decision-making power of how they are going to reach student goals." Cook confirms, "Yes. Exactly."

Sometimes, a person in a coaching conversation remains caught in the frustration of the problem at hand. A mindful leader has the ability to control thinking, emotional responses, and actions in a proactive way that assists the leader in shaping the task environment as positively or negatively influential (McCormick, 2001). Cook, at this point, is not capable of that shift with just his internal monologue. Stuart, as his coach, can offer paraphrases that acknowledge the frustration, but do not allow the focus of the conversation to remain the negative emotion. When the coachee gets stuck in pessimism,



the conversation can actually damage self-efficacy, so sometimes, Cognitive Coaches quickly step into the role of consultant, offering an answer or suggestion. Principal Cook asks, “How do we intrinsically motivate and build agency?”

Stuart offers, “You want them [teachers] to motivate the students. We want to give them the opportunity for some voice and choice in it and maybe we give examples of ways teachers can do that for students.” The coach is careful not to remain in the consultant voice for too long. One of the aims of Cognitive Coaching is for the coachee to experience an elevated sense of efficacy, not because the coach gave them good answers, but because they can draw on previous experiences to name success for themselves (Costa & Garmston, 2013, 2016). When coaches are trained in Cognitive Coaching, they are taught to recognize the conversation can close once the coachee feels more resourceful, which is what Stuart tries to accomplish in this part of the session (Appendix B).

**Siers.** The first words of her first interview show Principal Siers’ desire to practice the mindful leader disposition of present moment awareness.

I wanted to meet with all my staff.

I have met with everyone to some extent.

I wanted it to be more structured.

I want to make sure...

I do get time to sit still, pay attention, and listen.

I wanted to get all of the meetings in before coming back in April and getting started with a normal school day.

She had no idea at the time of this coaching session that COVID-19 shutdowns would have students and staff leave for the 2020 spring break early and not return for the rest of the year.

I want the meetings to be intentional and

I want to know about school and how they feel.

Siers acknowledges another reason these meetings are important. Her school opened with students and staff spread all over the district because the building was not ready for occupancy. At the time of this coaching conversation, Smithfield School's students and teachers had only been under the same roof for less than two months.

I didn't get to start the year with them.

I felt like these meetings could give me a little bit of insight into my staff

If I listened.

At this point, Keene questions Siers about why this insight she wishes to gain is crucial to teaching and learning at Smithfield.

I'm thinking about dispositions.

I have decisions to make.

I've watched teachers teach.

I'm looking at synergy.

What do you truly want to know about our work?" With this question, Principal Siers is able to name a list of success criteria for her vision of Smithfield School.

I want things systemic.

I want my building to come together.

I really want to uplift the teachers.

I want a school that is very supportive and vulnerable.

I want to know what makes a good day at school.

I want to know what that looks like for them.

I want to personalize.

The question Keene asked invited a shift in perception, which is a flexibility state of mind in Cognitive Coaching. Siers can take all the data from the staff conversations, both positive and negative, and accept the input (mindful acceptance). Staff feedback can now be interpreted not as how well the principal herself is doing, but about how the school is fairing in reaching its vision.

Principal Siers tackles a more specific staff relationship issue in the second coaching conversation. Some of her parents have brought concerns about a team of teachers. It seems these teachers are having a difficult time responding with empathy, according to the parents. In this situation, Siers says, “My job is to make sure I am a bridge between home and school. I need my parents to feel heard. Those are my customers, but I also need my teachers to feel supported. They [teachers] did not sit in that meeting and listen to me support them to the death, which I will always do. But sometimes, we’re not right and I’m not going to make us right when we’re wrong.” The conversation with the team will be tough and Siers wants to talk through the scenario with Coach Keene before the meeting. Principal Siers states, “I’m apprehensive.”

Principal Siers demonstrates mindful description and awareness when she can name a feeling, especially a negative one (Wells, 2015).

I’ve had several parents come to me.

I feel like some are legit concerns.

I have to have a tough conversation.

I feel like this one needs to be in a group.

I feel like it may turn on me.

My job is also to make sure that I am a bridge between home and school.

I need parents to feel heard.

I need teachers to feel supported.

I'm not going to make us right when we're wrong.

I just think about the way

I deliver it.

May turn on me.

Makes me apprehensive.

I just need everybody's needs met.

I'm not sure I can fix everything.

Principal Siers struggles with a common problem for school leaders, especially new ones, and that is a sense of ultimate responsibility (Spillane & Lee, 2014). At this point in the coaching, Keene asks Siers to recall a time when she had a tough conversation that turned out better than she had expected. Siers is able to describe how she felt before, during, and after a previous difficult scenario when she chose to facilitate an empathy building conference with parents, students, and teachers over suspending the students.

I brought in some of the students.

I set the students up with prompting.

I think it went way better.

I think it was way better than days off [suspension].

I think all came up with a different perspective.

I definitely want to do that.

I really have a lot of great things to say about this team.

I don't want to send mixed messages.

I've done that before.

I know they're in it for the kids.

I defend them, I do.

I also need to remind them.

I want them to pause.

I say stop and think.

I want them to remember it's not personal.

Once Siers recalls the previously successful conversation, she has a moment of realization and decides to document some ideas that have occurred to her during the coaching.

I'm writing this down.

I don't think I would've done this if we didn't talk.

I don't know if I would've thought it was successful.

I've never spoken to them about...

I think those talking points helped me.

This sure has helped me.

The final lines of her I poem suggest that Siers feels more capable of tackling the tough conversation with her teachers by the end of this coaching conversation.

*Harris.* Principal Harris spends some time in one of her conversations naming a number of barriers to school success; among them, time, high staff turnover, and her own feelings of burnout. Apologetically, she says to Coach Martin, “I don’t want this to seem like an excuse.” Coach Martin helps Harris into a state of mindful acceptance by offering some consulting and responds, “Just because you name something as a fact and it presents a good deal of challenge, doesn’t mean it’s an excuse. It’s okay to name an actual fact you are dealing with.” Without permission from her coaching partner to feel negatively, Harris may not have easily reached a point of accepting the challenges so that she could move into a more proactive frame of mind.

Principal Harris recognizes some past success may not have been intentional, but accidental leadership. Upon Coach Martin’s prompting, Harris is trying to name in hindsight what it was that led to that success and while she does not quite name specific leadership moves, she does reach a point of mindful acceptance of being her own worst critic.

I was feeling overwhelmed as a principal.

I was meeting [success] by chance.

I felt like after I got a year under my belt, we took steps back.

I’m praying for this year.

I don’t want that to be an excuse.

I honestly don’t think I’ll see the growth that I’m hoping for.

I want every kid to come out of here with value.

I’m not going to sit here and point fingers.

I think that it’s my job.

I've not done my job.

I wonder...

I don't know.

I am my own worst critic.

I beat myself up.

There is evidence of both fret and hope in the vocabulary appearing in the I Poems. In the first three coaching sessions, Harris' mindful observance and description included words like overwhelmed, never enough, endure, tanking, tough, rebuild, heavy, chance, doom, and gloom. However, when the conversation shifted from reflection to planning and action on the heels of the teacher leader's desires to grow, Harris' word choice was more hopeful with words like seeds, ready, buy-in, support, achieve, appreciate, refresh, and resources.

Coach Martin's questions often lead Harris to reflecting on and accepting the current state of the school. Wells (2015) lists mindful acceptance as an important part of the leadership actions of influencing the organization, building common goals, and building capacity in others. Martin asks this question, "Thinking through your most recent data, were there things you had done or asked teachers to do that caused you to anticipate different results?" Harris names a deficit mindset prevalent in her staff, "I'm trying to lead us out of thinking some kids can't grow. I'm having tough conversations and things are starting to collide." This statement opens the door for the coach to engage her coachee in a series of questions about how to craft those conversations in a focused, clear, but empathetic way.

## **After Cognitive Coaching**

In their debrief interviews, participating principals described their perceived mindfulness and self-efficacy with these descriptors: focus, proactive, perspective, empathy, introspective, aware, reflective, and noticing emotional triggers. These words, phrases, and their synonyms appear throughout the literature review of this study.

During debrief interviews, principals in this study name specific stressors they were able to work through with coaches and how they perceive their mindful leader dispositions to have been affected. Principal Manley appreciated that his coach offered a safe space for role play in preparation for a potentially difficult staff discussion. He reported that the experience gave him perspective and empathy he might not have taken the time to develop without the help of his coach. Principal Cook gave similar credit to his coaching conversations. Leaders who engage in mindful awareness and development may be more resilient to negative or unwanted situations and better able to respond with clarity, focus, and empathy to the demands of the school principalship (Baron, et al., 2017).

As mentioned in Principal Beeler's plot, this study took place during a time when Post High School administrators and staff certainly had some projects competing for their attention. The school had a scheduled renovation, there were several initiatives including developing a strong advisory program happening, and in the meantime, Beeler needed to prepare for a statewide conference presentation. In her debrief interview, Beeler stressed the importance of her coaching conversations having given her real focus on one priority at a time. Principal Beeler demonstrates mindful awareness and acceptance when she



explains how she will seek coaching support in times when the ability to focus seems difficult and is causing her to feel anxious and racing against the clock.

Principal Siers was explicit with her claim of elevated mindfulness as a result of coaching:

I thought the experience was very positive. I'm not usually one who stops and thinks. I mean, I'm thoughtful about things, but coaching made me more mindful because I stopped and reflected. It made me more reflective, and I believe that is where it was supposed to take me. I absolutely will continue. I always could trust my coach, but honestly never used her for myself. I saw her as a resource for my teachers. This was the first time I saw her as a resource for myself and I felt more confident and prepared.

Principal Harris, who struggled with feelings of burnout prior to the onset of COVID-19 talks of how that disruption amplified her burnout. "Time, time...time. I think I spent more time working as a principal during COVID than I ever did before. And I thought I was exhausted before. This is a whole different exhaustion but taking time for coaching felt selfish." At one point in the coaching sessions, Harris told Coach Martin she felt guilty, and Martin was able to help Harris understand why taking time to be introspective and reflective triggers guilt. Ultimately, by the end of the process, she changed her mind and wondered if the continuation of coaching sessions could become an ongoing form of self-care, another mindfulness benefit.

Harris credited her coaching experience with her ability to empathize with her teachers' exhaustion:

There were a lot of points that she (coach) brought up in questioning of me that I was able to throw out to teachers too, as to why they were thinking or

approaching things a certain way. And throughout the pandemic, we actually changed our academy structure. So, the tools that she gave me translated into how I approach and support the staff.

Mindful describing and awareness are similar, but the subtle difference between the two in this study were determined through careful listening for what Costa and Garmston (2013) call cognitive shift. I listened for the shift from egocentric describing of details and how the principals, themselves felt to understanding the feelings from a more objective perspective. The following are examples of signals of cognitive shift:

As he works through the details of a professional planning day, Principal Cook says, “This might work really well. I could do some advisory stuff to support grades three through five...the department could grow in terms of their...Ah. Okay. Collaboration...my goodness...let’s do it!”

In a reflecting conversation, Principal Siers shares, “I thought I was self-aware, but now I know maybe I was self-critical. My coach reminded me I didn’t need to know the answers right now. No one is waiting for me to mess up. Those are self-imposed expectations.”

Principal Harris recognizes the power of her inner voice as it damages her self-efficacy when she says, “I am my own worst critic. I can beat myself up better than anyone. I’m a worrier. I tell my staff to do what you know you can control, but I’m not good at that myself. I don’t break a situation down to where I can recognize small victories.”

The ability to experience emotions, even negative ones, without judgment is critical to mindful acceptance (Ehrlich, 2017). While it is not desired for principals to

remain in a reactive state, the ability to experience reactive emotions in a safe space with a coach was something Principal Cook and Principal Harris found beneficial. Throughout his coaching conversations, Cook wrestled with the temptation to react positionally, given his frustration with the pace at which his staff was moving with personalized learning strategies. At one point in his coaching, Cook told his coach he wanted to give teachers empowerment, but not too much power because he was afraid they would not be effective because of their fixed minds. Harris opened her first coaching conversation sharing her feelings of burn out and being “stuck.” There are few places where school leaders can be so vulnerable. In their debrief interviews, both Cook and Harris speak of their appreciation of having a trusted coach where they could share real feelings without being evaluated or judged for feeling them. Both these principals describe feeling better able to move to positive feelings and planning after they had acknowledged their frustrations. This experience is supported by Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory where self-reactiveness is an important part of facing difficulty, setback, and disappointment so the self can become more agentic, self-regulating, and motivated to change (Bandura, 2001).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, Cognitive Coaching is described as a beneficial and positive process by the principal participants. In spite of having a trained instructional coach on staff for several years, none of the principals in the study had thought to use the coach for their own planning, reflecting, or problem solving. Organizing the data according to The Listening Guide method allows each principals’ context, inner voice, emotion, and cognitive shift in response to coaching questions to reveal itself.

A cross case analysis of the data shows none of the principals struggled to come up with a stressor to consume the coaching time. The principals' struggles in this study mirror those discussed in the research: burnout, competing attention, personnel issues, performance and accountability, clarity, and focus. The description of the plot for each principal paints the context of the subject of each coaching conversation. The I poems constructed from the transcripts revealed keywords and phrases that were coded for the mindfulness and self-efficacy a priori codes of observe, describe, awareness, acceptance, positivity, ability, pessimism, and inability. Naming the contrapuntal voices from the transcripts allowed me to uncover nuances, tensions, and cognitive shifts occurring during the coaching sessions. Once revealed, I was able to return to the transcribed interviews and identify coach questions and paraphrases that prompted the particular shift. Finally, I created a code occurrence count to see any emerging trends of mindfulness, self-efficacy, and Cognitive Coaching states of mind appearing in the data together.

In the next chapter, I will draw conclusions from the data. I will discuss findings and their connections to the literature, next steps for this study, and recommendations for future research in school leader mindfulness and self-efficacy.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of my qualitative study is to capture perceived mindful leadership traits and indicators of self-efficacy in school principals during and after engaging in Cognitive Coaching. This chapter includes discussion of major findings as they relate to the research on challenges of school leaders, mindful school leadership, self-efficacy, and leadership coaching as embedded, personalized professional development. Also included is discussion on why Cognitive Coaching, in particular, makes sense as a possible mindful leader practice connected to self-efficacy. I conclude this chapter with limitations, implications for the study's context, and suggestions for future research.

In this study, I answered the following research questions:

1. How do principals describe perceived self-efficacy during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?
2. How do principals describe their own mindful leader traits during and after a Cognitive Coaching cycle?

Bandura's self-efficacy theory holds intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness all contribute to self-efficacy. These qualities are part of what mindful leaders possess and what mindful practice aims to build in people (Wells, 2015). Mellor (2015) says mindful leaders are self-aware, attention directed, socially aware, and can approach problems from multiple perspectives. Cognitive Coaching conversations

intend to build aware, empathetic, focused, positively directed problem solvers through a process requiring the coachee to intentionally explore thinking, anticipate multiple approaches, and reflect (Costa & Garmston, 2016; Thinking Collaborative, 2018). Cognitive Coaching has potential as a practice to build mindful leaders with increased self-efficacy.

### **Discussion and Significance**

What began for the participants as perceived stressors with potential to exacerbate feelings of pessimism and low capability, coaches were able to help reframe through Cognitive Coaching. Through careful listening and skilled questioning, coaches guided principals to pause, reflect, empathize, and envision actions that could lead to successful outcomes. By reserving time in their schedules to meet with a coach and deciding to become vulnerable enough to trust the coach to share a problem of practice, school principals in this study protected time for the mindful strategies of reflection, relationship building, and renewal (Kearney et al., 2013).

The purposes for working with the coaches varied from principal to principal. Conversations centered on personnel issues, planning for professional development and presentations, building culture and climate, and instructional visioning. Though the purposes were personalized, there were common benefits of Cognitive Coaching for the school leaders. Every principal reported feeling better about the issue in question after having discussed it with the coach. An important part of mindful leadership and authenticity is the ability to consider the impact of important decisions on others in the organization (Baron, 2016). The principals in this study discussed the value of reserving

time for reflection on their impact. Leading in a constant state of change, as most school principals do, can exacerbate negative feelings (Tikkanen et al., 2017). Scheduling the protected time to navigate negative feelings and having a coach assist processing and reflection through Cognitive Coaching questions provided a method of self-regulation key to higher self-efficacy and mindful leadership (Bandura, 2001; Brendel et al., 2016; Brown & Olson, 2015). Coincidentally, school leaders and coaches in this study experienced arguably the most intense state of change for public schools in recent history- the Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent abrupt school shutdowns. While some of the principal-coach partners may not have recorded conversations as they navigated the emergencies at their schools, every participant reported relying heavily on each other for planning and reflection.

### **Research Question 1**

Self-efficacy involves four experiences: repeated accomplishment, learning through observation, social persuasion, and emotional state. As people have these experiences, they dwell in cognitive states of intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 1997). During the Cognitive Coaching conversations in this study, participants experienced the recall of accomplishments and processing of emotional states more than observation and social persuasion. Coach questions prompted participating school principals to focus on intentional actions, to consider what might happen so they could prepare for the unknown, offered a safe space to react with emotion, and asked these leaders to reflect on beliefs, actions, and impact.

What may be a simple but important finding in my study is the very act of setting aside specific time on a regular basis for focus, planning, problem-solving, and reflecting opens the door for a school leader to work on his or her own self-efficacy. Without the time to notice accomplishments, emotions, intentions, actions, and impact, it can be difficult for leaders to recreate the conditions for repeated accomplishments. A consistency throughout every coaching conversation was coaching prompts intended to elicit from the coachee a list of accomplishments, strategies, and successes that could be applied to a current or future situation. Coaches can become accountability partners to school leaders to make such time in their busy weeks, and Cognitive Coaches are trained to, when necessary, ask the right questions to focus on efficacy by inviting reflection about situations when the coachee's being in charge was beneficial to the school. They can engage principals in planning for and having confidence that accomplishments can and will be repeated (Thinking Collaborative, 2018).

What stops principals in my study from regular, protected time for investing in their own leader well-being is supported by the literature (Huang et al., 2018; Sebastian et al., 2018). First, there is the issue of time. School principals do not tend to set aside time during the school day, when a coach might be available, for themselves. In every plot and I poem the theme of time or urgency revealed itself. Principals' days are filled with interruptions that are unpredictable and beyond the control of the school leader (Huang et al., 2018). In the debrief interviews, when asked why coaching did not continue with the same dedication of time and attention to self-efficacy, every coach and principal pointed to the unpredictable and urgent issues brought about by the pandemic, making it not the right time for reflection and coaching.



My analysis reveals another reason for not dedicating time for self – guilt. Three of the five principal participants discussed feeling guilty when they took time to talk to their instructional coaches about themselves. Principal Manley’s coach, Ms. Smith, shared in her debrief interview that Manley was very uncomfortable talking about his own goals, settling instead on a goal he had for a personnel issue. He shared with her that he thought he should not be spending her time or his on his own reflection but should discuss something to benefit the school. Principal Siers described coaching as a resource she never considered for herself before. She viewed the coach as a resource only for teachers, but in one instance she felt as if a “mountain had been lifted from her shoulders” when her coaching session had ended. Principal Harris’ coach, Ms. Martin, asked outright in one conversation why she had not set aside time for herself with a coach, to which Harris replied, “I feel guilty.” In both the literature and in this study, there is a gap in understanding how regular investment of time and focus on deep reflection on professional belief and practice can benefit school leaders and in turn their school communities.

Throughout the entire body of coaching conversations, the instructional coaches spent the majority of their paraphrasing and questioning in the areas of consciousness, craftsmanship, and efficacy. In a Cognitive Coaching cycle, often a coach begins in intentional elevation of consciousness, or bringing an issue into focus. If a coachee is feeling less than effective or is unable to name the skills and strategies they possess to persevere through an issue, the coach will respond and question specifically for increasing craftsmanship and feelings of efficacy (Costa & Garmston, 2013). As the coaches in this study invited consciousness, the state of mind where the principal

explored perceptions and monitored the situation at hand, the partners engaged in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory's intentionality property, making active decisions in specific activities. As coaches invited craftsmanship, the state of mind where the principal used intrinsic motivation and self-assessment to aim for excellence, the partners engaged in the SCT property of self-reflectiveness; the ability to evaluate thinking and behavior. Finally, as the coaches invited efficacy, the state of mind where the principals became open and enthusiastic about achieving a goal, the partners engaged in the SCT property of forethought, a person's ability to envision their positive influence in a situation (Bandura, 2001; Costa & Garmston, 2013). The Cognitive Coaching states of mind aim to produce a similar outcome as do the Social Cognitive Theory properties – a person with higher self-efficacy. It cannot be said that the principals in this study have higher self-efficacy in general after having engaged in Cognitive Coaching, but each principal did raise their self-efficacy for the particular situations they chose to discuss with the coaches.

## **Research Question 2**

Kearney et al. (2013) studied mindfulness in school leaders and what they found were common behavior characteristics including time set aside for reflection, openness to ideas from multiple perspectives, resistance of quick fixes, development of trusting, empathetic relationships, and purposeful renewal. Mindfulness as applied to organizational leadership stems from Langer's work as a term meant to counter the autopilot mindlessness to which busy leaders can often fall prey (Kearney et al., 2013). Over the course of six weeks, the five school principals in my study engaged in two to four Cognitive Coaching conversations. I coded these conversations for mindfulness

based upon the four mindfulness skills identified by The Kentucky Inventory for Mindfulness Skills: observe, describe, accept without judgment, and act with awareness (Baer et al., 2004). As the principals in this study observed a situation, they noticed the plot, players, and context. As they described, which occurred more often than simple observation because Cognitive Coaching questions are designed to elicit more, the principals identified feelings accompanying the circumstances, be they positive or negative. When principals accept without judgment, they allow the experience to be without evaluating it or trying to fix it, so it is out of the way. Acceptance can be important to empathy and openness to alternative perspectives. When principals act with awareness, they focus in order to give clarity to a situation, and actively interrupt the autopilot response. As with coding for self-efficacy, I analyzed the Cognitive Coaching prompts and questions that occurred with the mindfulness codes (Table 5).

There was a strong code occurrence between the mindful skills of describe and awareness with the Cognitive Coaching states of mind, consciousness and efficacy. Of the 60 coded excerpts in this study, describe and consciousness occurred together 45 times. Awareness and consciousness occurred together 34 times. These numbers are supported by the literature. When people engage in mindful description, they are bringing into focus the details, thoughts, and feelings that surround a situation so that they can begin to manage those emotions making planning next steps more proactive and less reactive (Brinia et al., 2014; Brown & Olson, 2015; Ehrlich, 2017). Costa and Garmston (2013) define the state of mind of consciousness as a metacognitive state where feelings, thoughts, and context are explored with an open minded and curious lens. The fact that the consciousness code appears more often than any other in this body of data is

supported by literature describing consciousness as the opening to all other states of mind as it leads to self-awareness necessary for deeper exploration of belief-action alignment (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Ellison & Hayes, 2006). It makes sense that when the coaches in this study asked a question or offered a paraphrase illuminating consciousness, the principal excerpt accompanying the prompt showed evidence of mindful description.

There was a frequent occurrence of mindful awareness with consciousness codes. Since consciousness is the invitation to metacognition and reflection, a consciousness coaching question, interrupts the pull of competing attention and busyness masquerading as efficient work (Costa & Garmston, 2013). Distraction is a common challenge for leaders making the protected time between coach and principal all the more useful for intentional reflection on practice.

Clearing the air of emotion in an empathetic and supportive way but helping the coachee move quickly into problem-solving is a critical skill of a Cognitive Coach (Costa & Garmston, 2013). Perhaps this is why the data shows another strong code occurrence between mindful description and awareness with the state of mind of efficacy. Coaches in this study might have recognized, after a time of clearing the air of emotion and focusing on the situation at hand, a need to ensure the school leaders left the conversation feeling in control and efficacious going forward. In this study, all leaders spoke of stress and fatigue at some point, then after coaching, reached a place where they reported specific steps for problem solving, clear goals, empathy, and a feeling of relief and renewed confidence about the topics of their Cognitive Coaching conversations.

One emergent theme in the data concerns the presence of flexibility and interdependence codes. Though these codes do not appear as often as other states of mind

in the coach prompts, they are almost exclusively present in the conversations of the two male principals. It is important to know that a Cognitive Coaching conversation is an ebb and flow of coach question, coachee response, coach interpretation and paraphrase, then another question based upon what the coach has heard. Cognitive Coaches are trained to put their own bias and personal preferences aside, but Costa and Garmston (2016) address the issue of gender in coach-coachee communication in their research. Both male principals had female coaches.

Women and men differ in their ideas of the purpose of communication. Women are more often expressive, and relationship driven while men can be more goal oriented and focused on tangible results or solutions (Costa & Garmston, 2016). Women use language as a tool for developing relationships and men use language to assert dominance and achieve outcomes. In interpersonal communication, women tend to be more willing to dive deeply into the root causes of an issue while men will offer quicker solutions to a problem in order to avoid what they might see as unnecessary interpersonal communication (Costa & Garmston, 2016). What appears in the data could be a need for these two male leaders to elevate their flexibility and interdependence, but could just as easily be, as Costa and Garmston explain, the female coaches' interpretations of the male coachees' responses through the lens of communication bias. I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge that as a female researcher, my interpretation of the interaction could have been unconsciously skewed by my own bias. To make that determination, further analysis over a longer period of time with specific attention to coach-coachee gender is needed.

There are some studies on mindfulness and leader self-efficacy that look closely at gender differences in the data. In their study of mindfulness and gender, Wang and Morris (2017) explain the differences as a possible indication that females may be more susceptible to changes in stressful situations, but acknowledge the need for more research in order to say definitively. This study relied on self-perception data as collected through interviews. In a study on confidence gaps in female leaders, Herbst (2020) found a significant difference in self-perception accuracy. Despite male and female leaders being rated as equally strong by colleagues, men tend to rate themselves higher than do women. Herbst also cites research positing female leaders attribute success to external factors over ability more often than male leaders. Finally, according to Bandura (1997), gender plays a very important role in self-efficacy because of the social expectations that differ for male and female leaders.

Since this is a study about Cognitive Coaching, it makes sense to mention what Costa and Garmston (2016) discuss in their research. Costa and Garmston (2016) discuss two schools of thought on gender and coaching. First, there is an entire body of research addressing brain chemistry and how it affects empathy and decision making. There is another body of research on adult constructivism based in the work of Robert Kegan's developmental theory. This literature claims most adult learners regardless of gender fall into three categories: instrumental knowers, socializing knowers, and self-authoring knowers. Instrumental knowers make meaning from concrete representations, clear goals, and measurable expectations. Socializing knowers are reflective and other-centered. They feel responsible for the feelings of others. Self-authoring knowers are also self-reflective, but focus more on their values, standards, and how their demonstration of

competency aligns with those. For the purpose of this study, while the gender differences are of interest, perhaps also viewing the data through a more constructivist lens tells us more about the participants, their states of mind, and their cognitive shifts.

### **Implications for Practice**

In my current school district, there is much discussion about the best ways to use instructional coaches. Some of this discussion stems from misunderstanding the benefits of coaching to teaching practice beyond the test scores. A significant factor in the success of coaches in a building is the principal's understanding and belief in the process (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014; Neumerski, 2012). One of the ongoing frustrations of instructional coaches in the district is the competing priorities of school principals and their opinions of how to use coaches. Coach Martin shared her excitement to grow coaching understanding for principals in her orientation meeting with Principal Harris and me. She wondered if every principal were required to attend Cognitive Coaching training or at least required to experience coaching for themselves, could it help to align coaching work across the district.

Coaching began in the district as a grant funded position in 2011. The grant money lasted three years and in the years since the grant ended, coaches and the district staff developer have needed to justify the cost benefit of their work to the budget committee and school board. As professional development budgets continue to be slashed at the state and local levels, building a system of professional development through leveraging existing personnel and internal expertise is a wise move. Instead of sending principals to costly leadership conferences, coaches can work with school leaders in the context of their own buildings and problems. This avoids taking leaders out of buildings,

which disrupts the learning environment, and reduces the risk that money spent on conferences, consultants, or one size fits all programmatic approaches might not even reach fruition once the principal returns to school. Each participant in my study described the experience as beneficial because it was personalized in a way conferences, consultants, and programs cannot accomplish.

One poignant point Principal Harris described in her debrief interview was feeling safe with Coach Martin in vulnerability. Leaders, feeling a sense of ultimate responsibility, can be uncomfortable discussing unknowns, frustrations, and worries. Harris felt safe sharing and processing these issues in a one on one, confidential setting with a coach. Harris posed the question after her coaching whether the process makes sense as a future portion of the principal evaluation system where success criteria for school leaders in Kentucky calls for reflection.

I hope to deepen the understanding of using instructional coaches in my organization for personalized professional development. In an age when education budget cuts often affect professional development budgets, getting creative about how leaders develop could be of great importance. In the coming months, the instructional coaches who participated in this study and I will hold a roundtable discussion of the experience with the district staff developer. The goal of the discussion will be to take a close look at what the district currently does for principal development and support, while brainstorming ways that district instructional coaches can use Cognitive Coaching as part of the overall plan.



## **Implications for Policy**

Beyond the scope of my school district, I hope to share this research with a broader higher education and audience. Principal preparation programs are looking for ways to fortify future principals with tools to sustain in leadership with resilience and motivation being a repeated theme (Garza et al., 2014). There is a plethora of books advising principals on the best way to be all the roles they must, but few studies examine down to the problem of practice level. There were few studies I found that followed a principal's implementation of mindfulness practice or of their own Cognitive Coaching experience. The principals in my study, although brief with a limited sample, exhibited self-efficacy and mindful traits through proactive planning, reflection, problem-solving, consciousness, and awareness. Principals are eager for ways to feel more efficacious, confident, and clear about their work, and they know it is important to do so, but are looking for steps to inform that state of being (Wells, 2015). One clear finding from my study is that principals who set aside time with a coach for present moment awareness, reflection, and self-evaluation found themselves more focused, aware, confident, and prepared in specific stressful experiences.

Leadership preparation programs at the college level are beginning to include social emotional learning and mindfulness concepts in coursework (Wells, 2015). Strong leaders possess a healthy self-concept and can look at problems with energy and potential rather than with avoidance and dread (McCormick, 2001). School leaders should be as prepared for maintaining their well-being in the midst of stress as they are for expecting the work to be stressful (Anderson, Hayes, & Carpenter, 2020). Leadership preparation

programs can cultivate practice in paths to well-being by making space for current research as well as practical applications during programming.

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (NPBEA, 2015) outline ten standards with success criteria for effective school leadership. In nine of the ten standard descriptions appears the requirement to attend to student, staff, or leader well-being. Standard 6 specifies two areas where school leaders can demonstrate the development of professional capacity of the school community by attending to his or her own personal and professional health and well-being. The standard defines the way for leaders to model lifelong learning through reflection, study, and self-improvement. By seeking the help of an instructional coach trained in Cognitive Coaching a school principal can create clear evidence for this standard and model transparency, vulnerability, and mindfulness for their staff.

Furthermore, state and local policy makers in the locale of my study look for creative pathways for professional growth aimed at those educators not interested in pursuing administration. Becoming an instructional coach can serve as one of these pathways, but few local programs exist for formal learning culminating in a coaching degree or professional certificate. My study not only highlights the planning, reflection, and problem-solving benefits for principal participants, but the craft of coaching itself. For teacher leaders working toward a rank change or a professional context with a broader scope than the classroom, coaching can be an attractive option, but there remains room for growth in providing opportunities for coach training.

## **Implications for Future Research**

Baron et al. (2017) note the lack of studies specific to mindful leadership and suggest it as a line of future research especially dealing with leaders' mindful practice and documented effects. The school leaders in my study practiced self-awareness, could regulate emotion, maintained motivation in the face of friction, and were empathetic to the striving and struggles of those whom they lead as the literature describes as mindful leadership (Brendel et al., 2016; Brown & Olsen, 2015). Research also supports what my participants described as benefits of Cognitive Coaching: the ability to mitigate negative thinking, emotional responses, proactive planning and focus with a positive end goal in mind for their schools even in the face of obstacles (McCormick, 2001; Wells, 2015). My present study documents one job embedded activity, Cognitive Coaching, as a potential mindful leader practice. Each plot and I poem shows school leaders' emotional responses, attempts to deal with negativity, and plans for personal and organizational benefit. Additional research should be directed at specific principal practices and what, if any, effect it has on mindfulness or self-efficacy. Both mindfulness and self-efficacy have been discussed in the literature as indicators of resilience (Keye & Pidgeon, 2013). Resilience is not specifically addressed in my study and future research would likely require a larger participant sample over a longer period of coaching time. While there is much research on leader self-efficacy, mindfulness as applied to the workplace, and specifically to school leaders, is a fairly new concept in need of more empirical evidence.

Ironically, during the course of this study, one of the most stressful and pervasively impactful events in recent history took a very real toll on school leaders across the country – The Coronavirus Pandemic. In two recent briefs written on school

leaders' response to the crisis, Kaul, Van Gronigen, and Simon (2020) and Anderson et al. (2020) examined the emotional and logistical pull on the country's school principals. Principals are often "the first responders in tragedy" for their students, staff, and their families (Kaul et al., 2020). School leaders report feeling an urgent call to meet basic needs of students and teachers, to attend to student and staff emotional well-being, all the while battling the logistical barriers of technology access and rapid communication. High self-efficacy matters during this crisis and others because leaders with high self-efficacy are calm, focused, and exhibit fewer outward signs of frustration and stress in the face of challenge (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2003). Therefore, like my study suggests, more research is needed around the leadership competencies of communication, collaboration, self-directedness, and flexibility to see how these competencies benefit school communities, especially in times of stress (Kaul et al., 2020).

Anderson et al. (2020) conducted 30 interviews with school leaders of multiple grade levels and district contexts and identified three roles principals are playing during the Pandemic: advocate, absorber, and target. Principals are concurrently advocating for resources and basic needs so learning can continue, are absorbing and calibrating the stress of staff, students, and the community, and are often the target facing community disappointment and dissatisfaction with school response. While school leadership is definitely feeling an amassment of these stressors because of COVID-19, these are stressors that always exist for principals. The pandemic principals reported self-care strategies helped them maintain energy and perspective so they can attend the others' needs. Many of the benefits of attending to their own well-being they cite are similar to those of the principals in my study of Cognitive Coaching – networking, cultivating

positive thinking, nurturing hope, and creating a space for dealing with stress. More research is needed on strategies for dealing with stress, anxiety, and multiple focus overload that strong school leaders employ day to day. Studying these strategies can assist school leader preparation programs and school districts with equipping new leaders with a social emotional skillset aimed at battling burnout, fatigue, apathy, and early exit from leadership roles.

Education researchers are publishing about the importance and timeliness of school leaders finding ways to remain confident, clear, and emotionally strong as recently as November 2020 (Anderson et al., 2020; Kaul et al., 2020). This dissertation helps to fill an important gap in the literature by exploring specific strategies principals can use to accomplish the goals of confidence, clarity, responsiveness, and resilience for their own well-being and for that of the communities they serve. While some researchers may be critical of how much we can really glean from qualitative case studies of only five pairs of coaches and educational leaders, the purpose of case study research is “not to represent the world, but to represent the case” (Stake, 2005, p. 460). My research, though not generalizable to other contexts, can serve as one piece to inspire future research of the impact of Cognitive Coaching on personal, professional, and organizational outcomes, especially as interest in empirical data on leader well-being grows. Future research should also explore how mindful, efficacious school leaders fair with school improvement endeavors.

### **Conclusion**

The school leaders in my study described feeling clearer, more confident, and better prepared for next steps after having Cognitive Coaching conversations with

instructional coaches. Clarity, confidence, and careful attention to reactions (or next steps) are crucial components of leader self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). Though the topics of the conversations varied, each of the principal participants brought with them a leadership goal they felt they needed to reflect upon and plan around. These leaders created vision, planned and clarified communication, resolved problems and conflict, and outlined steps to build capacity in their schools. Wells (2015) aligns these leadership actions to mindful constructs of present moment awareness, acceptance, patience, trust, and compassion.

In their dialogue with coaches, principals had the opportunity to describe in detail the context of the struggle as well as the emotional toll it took on them. Mindful description grounded the principals in the present moment of the situation allowing them to focus on paths and solutions forward rather than on the history of the issue or on all of the what ifs along the way. I found the coaches asked Cognitive Coaching questions intended to invite the consciousness state of mind whenever principals described. Consciousness questions also appeared often when principals demonstrated the mindful trait of awareness. Awareness moments were times in the conversations when principals made a new connection or came to a realization about the situation being discussed or about their actions in that situation. Cognitive Coaching paraphrases and questions inviting the efficacy state of mind also coincided with the mindful traits of describe and awareness.

Mindful, efficacious school leaders are resilient, emotionally intelligent, empathetic, able to regulate emotions, and can recognize multiple perspectives. While I cannot be certain that the principal participants will remain mindful and efficacious in the

future, for the leadership goals they chose to work through with Cognitive Coaches in my study, they were. Cognitive Coaching afforded principals the space and time to observe, reflect, and align actions to beliefs. School leadership is a profession where continual, daily interruptions to productivity and focus can increase stress and anxiety and sap one of confidence and clarity, leading to burnout or a desire to leave the job (Tikkanen et al., 2017). Increasing a sense of self-efficacy does not require a professional development session outside of the school building. Cultivating mindfulness can mean but does not require a principal to meditate in her office. Principals should be encouraged to build time into their schedules to reflect, adapt, self-regulate and recognize growth and success. Cognitive Coaching can provide a structure where this renewal, reflection, and attention to well-being can happen on demand and embedded in the context of the work.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, E., Hayes, S., & Carpenter, B. (2020). Principal as caregiver of all: Responding to needs of others and self. *CPRE Policy Briefs*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Retrieved from [https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_policybriefs/89](https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_policybriefs/89)
- Anderson, R. H. (1993). Clinical supervision: Its history and current context. In Anderson, R. H., & Snyder, K. J. (Eds.), *Clinical supervision: Coaching for higher performance* (pp. 5-18). Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing.
- Anthony, E. L. (2017). The impact of leadership coaching on leadership behaviors. *Journal of Management Development*, 36(7), 930-939. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-06-2016-0092>
- Argyris, C. (2002). Double loop learning, teaching, and research. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1(2), 206-219.
- ASCD. (2016). ASCD 2016 Annual Report. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/about-ascd/annual-report.aspx>
- Ashforth, B. E., Rogers, K. M., Pratt, M. G., and Pradies, C. (2014). Ambivalence in organizations: A multilevel approach. *Organization Science*, 25(5), 1453-1478.
- Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., & Allen, K. B. (2004). Assessment of mindfulness by self-report. *Assessment*, 3, 191-206.



- Bandura, A. (1994). *Self-efficacy*. Stanford University, Stanford, CA.
- Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*, 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*, 1-26.
- Bandura, A. (2005). The evolution of social cognitive theory. In K. G. Smith & M. A. Hitt (Eds.) *Great minds in management*. (pp. 9-35) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baron, L. (2016). Authentic leadership and mindfulness development through action learning. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *31*(1), 296-311.
- Baron, L., Rouleau, V., Gregoire, S., & Baron, C. (2017). Mindfulness and leadership flexibility. *Journal of Management*, *37*(2), 165-177.
- Birtwell, K., Williams, K., Van Marwijk, H., Armitage, C. J., Sheffield, D. (2018). An exploration of formal and informal mindful practice and associations with wellbeing. *Mindfulness*, *10*(1), 89-99.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J. Segal, Z. V., ...Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, *11*(3), 230-241.
- Brendel, W., Hankerson, S., Sangwon, B., & Cunningham, B. (2016) Cultivating leadership dharma: Measuring the impact of regular mindfulness practice on creativity, resilience, tolerance for ambiguity, anxiety and stress. *Journal of Management Development*, *35*(8), 1056-1078.

- Brinia, V., Zimianiti, L., & Panagiotopoulos, K. (2014). The role of the principal's emotional intelligence in primary education leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(45), 28-44.
- Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, J. D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 18(4), 211-237.
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848.
- Brown, V., & Olson, K. (2015). *The mindful school leader*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Burkhauser, S. (2017). How much do school principals matter when it comes to teacher working conditions? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(1), 126-145.
- Center for Educational Leadership, University of Washington. (2016). *Principal Support Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.k-12leadership.org/content/tool/principal-support-framework>
- Burnett, S. W. (2014). *Cognitive coaching: The impact on teacher candidates' teacher efficacy* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. (181)
- Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2010). *Doing action research in your own organization*. London: SAGE.
- Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

- Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (2013). *Cognitive coaching seminars foundation training: Learning guide*. Denver, CO: ThinkingCollaborative
- Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (2016). *Cognitive coaching: Developing self-directed leaders and learners*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dane, E. (2011). Paying attention to mindfulness and its effects on task performance in the workplace. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 997-1018
- Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2016). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), 221-258.
- Delany, C., Miller, K. J., El-Ansary, D., Remedios, L., Hoseinis, A., McLeod, S. (2014). Replacing stressful challenges with positive coping strategies: A resilience program for clinical placement. *Advances in Health Science Education*, 20(1), 1303-1324.
- Dempster, N. (2001, May). The professional development of school principals: a fine balance. Professorial lecture presented at the meeting of Centre for Leadership Management in Education, Griffith University.
- DeWitt, P. M. (2017). *Collaborative leadership: Six influences that matter most*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

- DeWitt, P. M. (2018, August). Is leadership coaching the ignored professional development? *Edweek*. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/education/opinion-is-leadership-coaching-the-ignored-professional-development/2018/08>
- DiPaola, M., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2003). The principalship at a crossroads: A study of the conditions and concerns of principals. *NASSP Bulletin*, 87(534), 43-65.
- Drago-Severson, E. & Maslin-Ostrowski, P. (2018). Looking behind the curtain: Principals' internal experiences of managing pressing challenges. *Journal of School Leadership*, 28(3), 315-343.
- Edwards, J. L. (2016). *Cognitive Coaching: A synthesis of research*. Highlands Ranch, CO: Center for Cognitive Coaching.
- Ehrlich, J. (2017). Mindful leadership: Focusing leaders and organizations. *Organizational Dynamics*, 46, 233-243. doi10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.05.002
- Ellison, J.L., & Hayes, C. (2006). *Developing principals through cognitive coaching*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Fisher, Y. (2014). The timeline of self-efficacy: changes during the professional life cycle of school principals. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(1), 58-83.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (2013). *Social cognition: From brains to culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Federici, R. A., Skaalvik, E. M. (2012). Principal self-efficacy: relations with burnout, job satisfaction and motivation to quit. *Social Psychology of Education*, 15, 295-320. doi: 10.1007/s11218-012-9183-5

- Fleming, J. (2018). Recognizing and resolving the challenges of being an insider researcher in work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(3), 311-320.
- Friedman, I. A. (2002). Burnout in school principals: role related antecedents. *Social Psychology of Education*, 5, 229-251.
- Fusco, T., O’Riordan, S., Palmer, S. (2016). Increasing leaders’ self-concept clarity in the authentic leadership coaching group. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 12 (1), 24-32.
- Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). *US struggles to hire and retain teachers* (EPI Report). Retrieved from Economic Policy Institute website:  
<https://www.epi.org/publication/u-s-schools-struggle-to-hire-and-retain-teachers-the-second-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/>
- Garza, E., Drysdale, L., Gurr, D., Jacobson, S., & Merchant, B. (2014). Leadership for school success: Lessons from effective principals. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(7), 798-811.
- Gilligan, C. & Eddy, J. (2017). Listening as a path to psychological discovery: An Introduction to the listening guide. *Perspectives on Medical Education* (6), 76-81.
- Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York, NY: Pearson.

- Goff, P., Guthrie, J.E., Goldring, E., Bickman, L. (2013). Changing principals' leadership through feedback and coaching. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52 (5), 682-704.
- Guetterman, T. (2015). Descriptions of sampling practices within five approaches to qualitative research in education and the health sciences. *Educational Psychology*, 16(2, Art. 25).
- Herbst, T. H. H. (2020). Gender differences in self-perception accuracy: The confidence gap and women leaders' underrepresentation in academia. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 46(1). Retrieved from:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339469389\\_Gender\\_differences\\_in\\_selfperception\\_accuracy\\_The\\_confidence\\_gap\\_and\\_women\\_leaders'\\_underrepresentation\\_in\\_academia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339469389_Gender_differences_in_selfperception_accuracy_The_confidence_gap_and_women_leaders'_underrepresentation_in_academia).
- Herr, K. H. & Anderson, G. L. (2014). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hindman, R. K., Glass, C. R., Arnkoff, D. B., & Maron, D. D. (2015). A comparison of formal and informal mindfulness programs for stress reduction in university students. *Mindfulness*, 6, 873-884.
- Hite, J., Williams, E., & Baugh, S. (2005). Multiple networks of public-school administrators: An analysis of network content and structure. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 8 (2), 91-122.
- Huang, T., Hochbein, C., & Simons, J. (2018). The relationship among school contexts, principal time use, school climate, and student achievement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 1-19.

- Honig, M. I., Rainey, L. R. (2014). Central office leadership in principal professional learning communities: The practice beneath the policy. *Teachers College Record, 116*, 1-48.
- Houchens, G. W., Stewart, T. A., & Jennings, S. (2016). Enhancing instructional leadership through collaborative coaching: a multi-case study. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 6*(1), 34-49.
- Houchens, G. W., Hurt, J., Stobaugh, R., Keedy, J. L. (2012). Double-loop learning: A coaching protocol for enhancing principal instructional leadership. *Qualitative Research in Education, 1*(2), 135-178.
- Houchens, G. W., & Keedy, J. (2009). Theories of practice: Understanding the practice of educational leadership. *Journal of Thought, 44*(3-4), 49-61.
- Hoy, W. K., Gage, C. Q., & Tarter, C. J. (2006). School mindfulness and faculty trust: Necessary conditions for each other? *Educational Administration* Hoy, W. K. (2002). An analysis of enabling and mindful school structures: Some theoretical, research and practical considerations. *Journal of Educational Administration, 41*(1), 87-108. doi: 10.1108/09578230310457457
- Huff, J., Preston, C., & Goldring, E. (2013). Implementation of a coaching program for school principals: Evaluating coaches' strategies and the results. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 41*(4), 504-526.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 10*(2), 144-156. doi: 10.1093/clipsy.bpg0

- Kaul, M., VanGronigen, B.A., & Simon, N.S. (2020). Calm during crisis: School principal approaches to crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic. *CPRE Policy Briefs*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Retrieved from [https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_policybriefs/89](https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_policybriefs/89)
- Kearney, W. S., Kelsey, C., & Herrington, D. (2013). Mindful leaders in highly effective schools: A mixed-method application of Hoy's M-scale. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(3), 316-335. doi: 10.1177/1741143212474802
- Keye, M. D. & Pidgeon, A. M. (2013). Investigation of the relationship between resilience, mindfulness, and academic self-efficacy. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(6), 1-4. doi:10.4236/jss.2013.16001
- Klar, H. W., & Brewer, C. A. (2014). Successful leadership in a rural, high-poverty school: The case of County Line Middle School. *Journal of Administration*, 52(4), 422-445. doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2013-0056
- Klocko, B. A., & Wells, C. M. (2015). Workload pressures of principals: A focus on renewal, support and mindfulness, 99(4), 332-355. doi: 10.1177/0192636515619727
- Ladegard, G. & Gjerde, S. (2015). Leadership coaching, leader role efficacy, and trust in subordinates: A mixed-methods study assessing leadership coaching as a leadership development tool. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 631-646.
- Mangin, M. M. & Dunsmore, K. L. (2014). How the framing of instructional coaching as lever for systemic or individual reform influences the enactment of coaching. *Educational Administration*, 51(2), 179-213.



- McCleskey, J. (2012). Emotional intelligence and leadership: A review of the progress, controversy, and criticism. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 22(1), 76-93.
- McCormick, M. J. (2001). Self-efficacy and leadership effectiveness: Applying social cognitive theory to leadership. *The Journal of Leadership Studies*, 8(1), 22-33.
- McDonald, T. (2012). Embracing mindfulness: A woman superintendent's journey. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Washington State University, Pullman.
- Mellor, N. (2015). Mindful leadership. *The Safety & Health Practitioner*, 33 (5), 8-9.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook and the coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Milner IV, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, 36(7), 388-400. doi/10.3102/0013189X07309471
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2015). Professional standards for educational leaders. Retrieved from <http://www.epsb.ky.gov/mod/book/view.php?id=133&chapterid=83>
- Neumerski, C. M. (2012). Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we know about principal, teacher, and coach instructional leadership and where should we go from here? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49 (2), 310-347.

- Nicholson, B., Harris-John, M., Schimmel, C. J. (2005). *Professional development for principals in the accountability era*. Charleston, W.V.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory.
- O'Malley, M. P., Long, T. A., & King, J. (2015). "What do you do all day?!" Navigating the challenges of school leadership as an early career principal. *Journal Cases in Educational Leadership*, 18(2), 107-121.
- Petrovic, S., Lordly, D., Brigham, S., & Delaney, M. (2015). Learning to listen: An analysis of applying the listening guide to reflective papers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14 (5), 1-11.
- Pirson, M. & Langer, E. (2014). Developing the Langer mindfulness scale. In *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2015(1), 11308
- Polsfuss, C. & Ardichvili, A. (2009). State-of-mind as the master competency for high-performance leadership. *Organization Development Journal*, 27 (3), 23-33.
- Preston, J., & Barnes, K. E. R. (2017). Successful leadership in rural schools: Cultivating collaboration. *The Rural Educator*, 38(1), 6-15.
- Rangel, V. S. (2017). A review of the literature on principal turnover. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(1), 87-124.
- Rodriguez, J. A. (2015). Mindful instructional leadership: The connection between principal mindfulness and school practices. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Washington State University, Pullman.
- Roeser, R., Schonert-Reichl, K., Jha, A., Cullen, M., Wallace, L., Wilensky, R., . . . Harrison, J. (2013). Mindfulness training and reductions in teacher stress and burnout: Results from two randomized, waitlist-control field trials. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 787-804.

- Rogers, W. T., Hauserman, C. P., Skytt, J. (2016). Using cognitive coaching to build school leadership capacity: A case study in Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Education, 39*(3), 1-29.
- Saldaña, J. (2016) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Sebastian, J., Camburn, E. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2018). Portraits of principal practice: Time allocation and school principal work. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(1), 47-84.
- Scott, S., & Webber, C. (2008). Evidence-based leadership development: The 4I framework. *Journal of Educational Administration, 46*(6), 762-776.  
doi:10.1108/09578230810908343
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2010). Teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout: A study of relations. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*, 1059-1069
- Spillane, J. P., & Lee, L. C. (2014). Novice school principals' sense of ultimate responsibility: Problems of practice in transitioning to the principal's office. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 50*(3), 431-465.
- Spillane, J. P., Harris, A., Jones, M., & Mertz, K. (2015). Opportunities and challenges for taking a distributed perspective: Novice school principals' emerging sense of their new position. *British Educational Research Journal, 41*(6), 1068-1085.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Thinking Collaborative. (2018). Cognitive coaching memory mats. Retrieved from <https://www.thinkingcollaborative.com/store>
- Tikkanen, L., Pyhalto, K., Pietarinen, J., & Soini, T. (2017). Interrelations between principals' risk of burnout profiles and proactive self-regulation strategies. *Social Psychology of Education, 20*, 259-274. doi: 10.1007/s11218-017-9379-9
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Gareis, C. R. (2003). Principals' sense of efficacy: Assessing a promising construct. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(5), 573-585.
- Versland, T. M., & Erickson, J. I. (2017). Leading by example: A case study of the influence of principal self-efficacy on collective efficacy. *Cogent Education, 4*, 1-27.
- Wallace Foundation. (2011). *The Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*. Retrieved from <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/overview-the-school-principal-as-leader.aspx>
- Wang, W., & Morris, R. (2017). Mindfulness and gender: A pilot quantitative study. *Issues In Information Systems, 18*(4), 105-115.
- Wang, Y. (2018). The panorama of the last decade's theoretical groundings of educational leadership research: A concept co-occurrence network analysis. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 1*-39.
- Wells, C. (2015). Conceptualizing mindful leadership in schools: How the practice of mindfulness informs the practice of leading. *NCPEA Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research, 2*(1), 1-23.

- Wieczorek, D., & Manard, C. (2018). Instructional leadership challenges and practices of novice principals in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 34*(2), 1-21.
- Wise, D., & Hammack, M. (2011). Leadership coaching: Coaching competencies and best practices. *Journal of School Leadership, 21*, 449-477.
- Wisse, B. & Sleebos, E. (2016). When change causes stress: Effects of self-construal and change consequences. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 31*(2), 249-264.
- York-Barr, J., Sommers, W. A., Ghere, G. S., & Montie, J. (2006). *Reflective practice to improve schools: An action guide for educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Zambo, R. & Zambo, D. (2013). Using I poems to hear the voices and understand the actions of EdD students conducting action research. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(84), 1-17.

## APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: Space to Lead: Cognitive Coaching as Mindful School Leader Practice

### **Summary Information**

The purpose of this study is to fill in gaps that exist in the research concerning the impact, if any, of Cognitive Coaching on school leader mindful disposition and self-efficacy. This study seeks to reveal any effect of school leader coaching cycles on principal ability to pause, reflect, goal set, and act proactively rather than reactively to the rapid pace decision making environment in which principals are expected to remain effective.

Participants will be invited based on their access to an instructional coach who has practiced Cognitive Coaching for two or more years. After being identified, contacted, and agreeing to take part in the study, participants will 1) attend a one-hour orientation meeting 2) agree to enter a six-week coaching study where 3) principal and coach will record a thirty minute to one hour Cognitive Coaching conversation and 4) meet with the primary researcher, in person or virtually using Zoom meeting platform, for a four question debrief about the study experience.

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort engaging in Cognitive Coaching conversations. There may also be unforeseen risks.

### **Benefits**

You may not benefit personally by participating in this study. The information collected may not benefit you directly; however, the information may be helpful to others.

### **Alternatives**

Instead of taking part in this study, you could choose to recommend an assistant principal to the researcher to take part, or you can simply decline to take part.

### **Payment**

You will not be paid for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please continue to read below.

### **Introduction and Background Information**

You are invited to take part in a research study because you lead a school with access to an instructional coach trained in Cognitive Coaching. The study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. W. Kyle Ingle and Jennifer H. Cox, Ed.S. at the University of Louisville. Five school principals and five instructional coaches will participate in this study.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to fill in gaps that exist in the research concerning the impact, if any, of Cognitive Coaching on school leader mindful disposition and self-efficacy. This study seeks to reveal any effect of school leader coaching cycles on principal ability to pause, reflect, goal set, and act proactively rather than reactively to the rapid pace decision making environment in which principals are expected to remain effective.

**Procedures**

In this study, you will be asked to participate in 1) a one-hour orientation meeting where all participants will reach consensus on common definitions of self-efficacy and mindful school leadership. At this meeting, you will be able to ask any clarifying questions about the study and you will take a survey in which you will self-report your current state of self-efficacy and mindfulness. 2) Participants will agree to enter a six-week coaching study where 3) principal and coach will record a thirty minute to one hour Cognitive Coaching conversation. These coaching conversations will be focused on your self-selected leadership goals. 4) After a six week period of coaching conversations, participants will meet with the primary researcher in person or virtually for a four question debrief about the study experience and to retake the self-efficacy and mindfulness survey so self-reported perceptions can be compared to the first survey data. You have been invited to participate in this study because you lead a school who has access to a trained Cognitive Coach. You will be one of five principals and five instructional coaches who will participate in this study. Throughout the duration of the coaching conversations, you may decline to answer any questions that may make you uncomfortable. Your participation will last approximately eight weeks consisting of one orientation meeting lasting one hour, a six week span of Cognitive Coaching conversations lasting thirty minutes to one hour each, and a debrief meeting (face to face or via Zoom meeting platform) with the principal researcher lasting thirty minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded and will be transcribed verbatim.

Your interview transcripts will be shared with you if you choose to read them. Results of the overall research study will be shared with you at your request. Since the study seeks to provide actionable information about the district coaching program, overall research results shall be shared with the superintendent of schools and the school board using no identifying information for principal, coach, or school.

Your interview transcripts will not be stored and shared for future research even if identifiable private information, such as your name, district, and school are removed.

**Potential Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort engaging in Cognitive Coaching conversations. There may also be unforeseen risks.

**Benefits**

You may not benefit personally by participating in this study. The information collected may not benefit you directly; however, the information may be helpful to others.

**Alternatives**

Instead of taking part in this study, you could choose to recommend an assistant principal to the researcher to take part, or you can simply decline to take part.

**Payment**

You will not be paid for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

**Confidentiality**

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your information may be shared with the following:

- The sponsor and others hired by the sponsor to oversee the research
- Organizations that provide funding at any time for the conduct of the research.
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human participants safety or research and legal compliance
- The local research team
- Researchers at other sites participating in the study
- People who are responsible for research, compliance and HIPAA/privacy oversight at the institutions where the research is conducted
- People responsible for billing, sending and receiving payments related to your participation in the study
- Applicable government agencies, such as the Office for Human Research Protections

**Security**

The data collected about you will be kept private and secure by being located on a password protected computer operating on a secure server. All paper transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked personal office.

**Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide not to be in this study, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. If you decide to be in this study, you may change your mind and stop taking part at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. You will be told about any new information learned during the study that could affect your decision to continue in the study.



**Research Participant’s Rights**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a research participant, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the study doctor, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has approved the participation of human participants in this research study.

**Questions, Concerns and Complaints**

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Dr. W. Kyle Ingle at 502-852-6097.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

**Acknowledgment and Signatures**

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature and date indicate that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document though you are providing your authorization as outlined in this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name (Please Print) Signature of Participant  
Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form Signature of Person Explaining  
Date Signed  
Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I) Signature of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I) Date  
Signed

Phone number for participants to call for questions: Jennifer H. Cox, (502) 777-2708

Investigator(s) name, degree, phone number, University Department, & address: Dr. W. Kyle Ingle, PhD, 502-852-6097, University of Louisville, Room 333, College of Education, 1905 South 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Louisville, Kentucky, 40208

Site(s) where study is to be conducted: Various school buildings in Shelby County, Ky.

## APPENDIX B: PLANNING, REFLECTING, PROBLEM-SOLVING CONVERSATION MEMORY MATS

**PAY CLOSE ATTENTION**

Attend with both your mind and your body using elements of rapport:

**POSTURE GESTURE TONALITY LANGUAGE BREATHING**

**Questions for Specificity**

- Universal Quantifiers (e.g., "Never?")
- Modal Operators (e.g., "What Stops You?")
- Unspecified Verbs (e.g., "Think what, specifically?")
- Unspecified Nouns (e.g., "Which parents, specifically?")
- Comparators (e.g., "Better than what?")


**Paraphrase**

Acknowledging - "You're thinking that..."

Organizing - "On the one hand..."

Abstracting - "So a strong belief..."

---




**CLARIFY GOALS**

"What do you want them to leave thinking/feeling able to do?"

"What are your goals objectives/ outcomes/purpose?"

"What do you want them to walk away with?"



**SPECIFY SUCCESS INDICATORS**


**...and plan for collecting evidence**

"How will you know you are successful?"

"What might success look/sound like?"

"What evidence will you collect?"

"What data could I collect for you?"




**ANTICIPATE APPROACHES**

"What might be some of the strategies you've considered?"

"What are some strategies you have used before that might be successful with this group?"

"What are your hunches about how \_\_\_ will view this meeting?"

"In what sequence will you use your strategies?"




**ESTABLISH PERSONAL LEARNING FOCUS**

"What is most important for you to pay attention to in yourself?"

"What do you want to be sure you do very well? How might you know you're doing it?"

"If you could video tape this meeting, what would you want to see/hear in yourself when you replay it?"



**REFLECT ON COACHING**

**...and explore refinements**

"As you reflect on this conversation, how has it supported your learning?"

"How might you incorporate this process into your own thinking?"

**Listening Set-Asides**

- Autobiographical -
- Inquisitive -
- Solution -


**PAUSE**

to allow your partner time to think

Visual Construct

Auditory Construct

Kinesthetic or Emotive



Visual Recall

Auditory Recall

Internal Dialogue or Self Talk

## POSING QUESTIONS

### Characteristics of Mediative Questions

#### 1. INVITATIONAL

- Approachability: Verbals and Nonverbals
- Plural Forms  
"What are the reasons for...?"
- Tentative Language  
"What might be the causes of...?"  
"What are some of your hunches about...?"
- Positive Presuppositions  
"As you examine the data, what are some of the similarities and differences?"
- Open Ended

#### 2. ENGAGE COGNITIVE OPERATIONS

- RECALL
- INFER
- PREDICT

#### 3. INTENTIONAL

- EXPLORE THINKING
- SPECIFY THINKING



...and recall supporting information

Identify, retrieve, name, outline, evaluate, conclude, generalize, judge

"How do you think it went?"

"How are you feeling about...?"



Compare, categorize, distinguish, evaluate, sort, judge, conclude, relate, infer, appreciate, empathize, if... then, personalize

"What comparisons might you make between the lesson you had planned/envisioned and the one you taught?"

"What effect did your decisions have on the results you achieved?"

"What are your hunches about what caused...?"



Formulate, forecast, experiment, construct, generate, elaborate, connect, project

"What learning(s) do you want to take with you to future situations?"

"What do you want to stay mindful of from now on?"



Plan, design, project, speculate, envision

"So how might you apply your new learning?"

"How might you ensure that you maintain focus?"



...and explore refinements

Plan, design, project, speculate, envision

"As you reflect on this conversation, how has it supported your learning?"

"How might you incorporate this process into your own thinking?"

**ESSENTIAL COACHING PATTERN**  
PAUSING - PARAPHRASING - PAUSING - POSING QUESTIONS

**COACHING FEEDBACK**  
DATA - MEDIATIVE QUESTIONS

**REFLECTING CONVERSATION MEMORY MAT**

**COACH'S SET ASIDES**  
The Coach sets aside the need for:

CLOSURE    COMFORT    COMPREHENSION

BMIRS

**Behavioral Manifestations of Internal Response States**

P

EXPRESS EMPATHY

...by matching intonation and accurately naming the person's feelings:  
"You're frustrated..."

A

REFLECT CONTENT

"...because you have so many things on your plate and you can't keep up..."

G

STATE THE GOAL

...that you infer the speaker is trying to achieve:  
"...and what you want is to be in control of your time and your work..."

H

PRESUPPOSE READINESS TO FIND A PATHWAY

"...and you're looking for a way to make that happen."

Strategies for Inviting Cognitive Shift

Consciousness - invite metacognition, encourage the making of new connections

Craftsmanship - elicit criteria, pose a data search

Efficacy - invite reflection about being in charge; elicit knowledge, skill or positive attitude

Flexibility - invite a shift in perceptual position, explore filters of perception

Interdependence - invite collaboration, elicit positive intentions of others

LEAD

LOCATE AND AMPLIFY INTERNAL RESOURCES

...by asking questions that lead to resourcefulness in states of mind.

1. **Where do I start the lead?**
  - ~ Initiate a lead question intended to access and illuminate a SOM.
  - ~ Pose questions to create better goal specificity.
  - ~ If first question is unproductive, explore other states of mind.
  - ~ Continue questioning guided by the colleague's responses, maintaining empathy and rapport.
2. **Where do I go from there?**
  - ~ Offer abstracting paraphrases.
  - ~ Ask questions from cognitive shift strategies.
  - ~ Use an outcome structure to shift the focus from a third party to the person being coached.
  - ~ Observe BMIRS throughout the conversation.
3. **How do I know that I am done?**
  - ~ Cognitive shift occurs.
  - ~ The coachee is feeling more resourceful.
  - ~ Close the conversation and leave thinking open by asking a walk-away question and/or reflecting on the process and exploring refinements.

PROBLEM-RESOLVING CONVERSATION MEMORY MAT

Copyright© 2018 Thinking Collaborative, LLC

PO Box 630860 Highlands Ranch, CO 80163    303-683-6146

THINKING COLLABORATIVE  
www.thinkingcollaborative.com



APPENDIX C: SAMPLE FIELD NOTE JOURNAL PAGES

*\* Must*

That's a great question. So for me, workshop is the foundation of everything. To me, it was 10 years ago we were in Denver and that work with PEVC was that huge shift in my thinking and how I was taught to teach and how I taught and how I received learning as a student, that the shift needs to go to students, and so that whole shift of student discourse, the power of conferring, annotating, focusing on those thinking strategies, just that critical thinking piece. When we latched onto that learning at West, that's when we took off. That's when kids grew, and I also believe with personalization of learning, if you don't have a strong workshop model foundation, you can't personalize, because in a personalized learning opportunity, if it's all teacher led, it's not personalized learning, and so the students should be experiencing the learning and partnering with the teacher.

*Voice Change Expertise Cadence ↑*

So I think that workshop's our foundational instructional delivery model, period. In terms of learning targets and criteria, to me that points back to clarity of understanding the standard. So if they don't get it, the kids aren't going get it, and then we're just spinning in the mud. So teachers are having a hard time holistically just bringing it out to what they want in that daily lesson. I have an amazing new science teacher who's come out of Cal. He's very exciting and energetic, but he's having a whole hard time pulling down that essential question to something palatable for students every day so that he can monitor if students are growing. So it's about clarity and it's about delivery, and I think those two things have to happen before we can even think about personalized learning, and then we have some people down the road that have nailed both of those things and they're personalizing learning, and those are huge celebrations.

So it feels very 2011, and when you build something for so long and then it kind of goes whoop, right back. It's exciting in a way though too. It's like, "Okay, I've done this once. Can I do it twice?" But I'm 11 years in, when the average principal life expectancy I think is 3.5 years. So I feel like in dog years, I'm in 21. Actually, I could be 88 years old now at this point, and it's so interesting and I listen to Jennifer and she has such a cool different focus and she just ... her coaching. I was a coach for one year. I was an SA for one year. So she was an instructional coach for years, and so I can see that whole instructional leadership thing and it's like, gosh, I'm so far away from that, and you go to the dark side and then you kind of get far away. Though you're supposed to be the instructional leader, everything else comes at you. *\**

Right.

So I'm leaning heavily on Kelly and teacher leaders and Drew and trying to build him up as an instructional leader, and everybody.

*notice*

Sounds like you are building an instructional leadership team, instead of having to bear the burden of being the sole instructional leader, and there's positives in that as well. So when you think back to ... let's rewind. You feel like you're living in 2011, so let's live there for a minute. When you think back to

Session 1 Feb (Completed 04/03/20) Page 4 of 10

Why she should have done Josh?

Oh yeah. I don't-

It's at least in the building.

Maybe Jennifer directed her toward, I don't know.

Yeah. Oh, you're probably right.

Okay. What would you label the topic of this?

Hold on just a second. I'm going to pull it up and I'll tell you what we will name it. We will name the topics, curriculum, scope of work,

And how it impacts us. Is that what you're thinking about?

Yes. And how we have it ready to share with teachers or get them on board before spring break, even if the work isn't going to happen until the summer. But they can go ahead and start thinking about it.

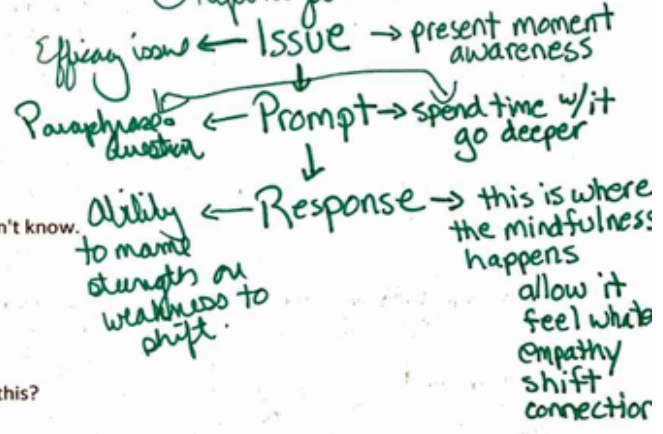
So I think a definite place to start might be as you look at the marriage of what their goals are for it, at least in terms of what's been communicated to you and then our building realities and needs and how those might come together to be your goals because you're in a position where I've got to try to meet the district goals and accommodate that. But if I also got to accommodate building realities and needs and so as those merge, my goals might be

Must

My goal and I'd say my underlying purpose, I don't know if it's underlying whatever, end goal is to make sure that we're proactive going into next year, so we don't feel like we did this year and have to be reactive. I feel like it's been a year of catch-up, and so I want people to feel proactive about their planning, about their courses, about their lessons and activities and things like that going into the year. So we have a smooth, okay. I mean that's smooth. Everybody's always flexible, but it's just instead of, I feel like everybody was planning on the fly, so then we can increase what's going on in the classroom.

for my journal

Organization



- I want to make sure
- I'm very aware of my body language
- I always get surprised
- I think we're doing well in - we're not
- I think that's why these conversations are important
- It's not that I don't try to look
- I absolutely do (coach affirms discomfort at differing perceptions)
- I came out of the classroom
- I had no idea
- I sit in SBDMs
- I used to complain
- I got in SBDM
- I saw school finances
- I absolutely do not negate the importance of instruction and pedagogy
- I think about my staff
- I feel like they are more cultural and manageable
- I'm thinking the difference here
- My elementary and my middle
- I think they're very coachable (elem)
- I feel good about that
- My middle is typical
- I feel like (we discussed the rough start)
- My thinking (culture)
- I have been very impressed
- I want to kind of work to make sure
- I want my building to come together
- I want things systemic
- I think that focus on culture
- I didn't have the instructions in place
- I feel like they could have
- I feel like they would have
- I feel they still saw value in advisory
- I felt on the admin side
- We didn't have things prepared
- I think that's a fair question (coach asks if the questions prepared will yield enough data)
- I'm not sure
- I'm not sure
- I'm not sure
- I think some of these questions can be better
- I really want to uplift the teachers
- I want a school that is very supportive and vulnerable
- I want to know what makes a good day at school
- I want to know what that looks like for them

Principal desires to be in charge of emotions during upcoming potentially tough conversations

Recognizes it is complex to run a school; teachers may not see all the complexities

positiv?  
doesn't sound like a good thing  
holonomy + collateration

something didn't go as well as planned  
doesn't feel support was enough

affirms what is desired from the questions  
Abundance

APPENDIX D: INTERPLAY OF MINDFULNESS, SELF-EFFICACY, AND  
COGNITIVE COACHING QUESTIONS

*Principal Manley/Coach Smith*

<b>Principal Statement</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Coach Prompt</b>	<b>Codes</b>
“Nothing. She’ll consider it but won’t be happy about it.”	Describe, Pessimism	“What do you think it will take for this teacher to get behind this idea?”	Consciousness, Flexibility, Interdependence
“I need you to help me figure this out. I know how this conversation is going to go.”	Describe, Awareness, Pessimism	“What do you need out of this coaching conversation?”	Consciousness, Craftsmanship
“I want this conversation to be amicable.”	Describe, Awareness, Positivity	“Talk about what you want for you and for the teacher. What do you want the end result to be?”	Consciousness, Craftsmanship
“Number one, I need to make sure that there is a clear reason and rationale. Number two, I don’t want to be so inflexible as not to listen to ideas.”	Describe, Awareness, Capable	“What goal do you have for this conversation?”	Consciousness, Craftsmanship, Efficacy
“Oh, it makes it more actionable...giving me a plan for being	Describe, Capable	“How has it been helpful to talk	Consciousness, Efficacy



intentional about those planning conversations with her.”		through all of this?”	
---	--	-----------------------	--

*Principal Beeler/Coach Dossier*

<b>Principal Statement</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Coach Prompt</b>	<b>Codes</b>
“The personal connection. Every kid should be able to walk out of school and sell themselves. How much better do kids do when they have somebody who knows them, who can coach them into that? Your advisor is your mentor.”	Awareness, Acceptance, Describe, Capable	“If you were to try to put a finger on some things that you did that made it successful, or not, what would those be?”	Efficacy, Consciousness, Craftsmanship
“I will share things openly and humbly.”	Awareness, Observe, Positivity	“What would success look like?”	Consciousness, Craftsmanship
“This (conversation) has helped me think about my audience and come at it from their perspective.”	Awareness, Positivity	“How might you incorporate this process into your own thinking?”	Consciousness, Efficacy
“Our teachers do not want to feel boxed in. I don’t want teachers to feel like this is being done <i>to</i> them.”	Describe, Awareness, Positivity	“Teachers might want flexibility. So, you are advocating for...?”	Flexibility, Consciousness

“Yes. All of our work on Tuesdays, and the PD that’s coming up for the summer and next year.”	Awareness, Capable	“Is there something coming up where you are doing something collaboratively with some folks and that might need to be coordinated?”	Craftsmanship, Interdependence
---	--------------------	---	--------------------------------

*Principal Cook/Coach Stuart*

<b>Principal Statement</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Coach Paraphrase or Prompt</b>	<b>Codes</b>
“I think autonomy, but I want to push them (the teachers) to personalize.”	Observe, Pessimism	“Every teacher is a master of content...you want them to have autonomy and some decision-making power of how they are going to reach student goals.”	Interdependence, Consciousness
“How do we intrinsically motivate and build agency?”	Observe, Positivity	“You want to motivate them, and we want to give them opportunity for some voice and choice in it and maybe examples of ways they can do that for students.”	Interdependence, Consciousness
“Success looks like a specific plan for each student, based on what the student needs and not about what the teacher necessarily needs.”	Awareness, Positivity	“It sounds like building some collective efficacy.”	Interdependence, Consciousness, Efficacy
“I’ll let them figure out what they want off of this and then they evaluate which competency through this single point rubric.”	Awareness, Positivity	“What will you leave up to teachers? What data?”	Flexibility, Interdependence, Consciousness

<p>“Any kid who’s going backward is an issue of engagement, connection, and relationship.”</p>	<p>Awareness, Pessimism</p>	<p>“Part of what you are thinking is that it’s not just an academic issue, it could be an engagement issue, or it could be connection with an adult?”</p>	<p>Interdependence, Consciousness</p>
--	---------------------------------	---	---

*Principal Siers/Coach Keene*

<b>Principal Statement</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Coach Prompt</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<p>“I don’t have a clue how well I am doing. I think things are where I want them, then I found out differently. I feel blindsided.”</p>	<p>Describe, Pessimism, Incapable</p>	<p>“What about our work is really important to you? Do you want a gut reaction or a prepared answer?”</p>	<p>Craftsmanship, Consciousness, Efficacy</p>
<p>“I want my building to come together. I want things systemic.”</p>	<p>Observe, Positivity</p>	<p>“What do you truly want to know about our work?”</p>	<p>Interdependence, Consciousness, Craftsmanship</p>
<p>“I’m not sure I can fix everything.”</p>	<p>Acceptance, Describe, Incapable</p>	<p>“In order to do this, you have to have a tough conversation with the team?”</p>	<p>Consciousness, Efficacy</p>
<p>“I don’t want to be the kind of leader that is not clear. I’ve done that before. I guess that is important to me.”</p>	<p>Awareness, Capable</p>	<p>“If you have a goal walking away from this meeting, what would it be?”</p>	<p>Efficacy, Consciousness</p>
<p>“I think this can turn on me. It makes me feel apprehensive.”</p>	<p>Observe, Pessimism</p>	<p>“Is your fear with this conversation is that it is in a group and not one on one?”</p>	<p>Consciousness</p>

“I feel more confident. I feel more prepared.”	Awareness, Capable	“How has this coaching conversation helped?”	Efficacy, Consciousness
--	--------------------	--	-------------------------

*Principal Harris/Coach Martin*

<b>Principal Statement</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Coach Prompt or Paraphrase</b>	<b>Codes</b>
“I am my own worst critic. I can beat myself up and I’m a worrier. I tell my staff to do what you know and what’s in your control, but I am not good at that myself.”	Awareness, Acceptance, Incapable	“Did you have any new thinking or reflections on the conversation in general?”	Consciousness, Efficacy
“I’m trying to lead us out of thinking kids can’t grow. I’m having tough conversations and things are colliding.”	Describe, Pessimism	“Thinking through your most recent data, were there things you had done or asked teachers to do that caused you to anticipate different results?”	Consciousness, Craftsmanship, Efficacy
“I don’t want this to be an excuse.”	Acceptance, Positivity	“Just because you name something as a fact and it presents a good deal of challenge, doesn’t mean it’s an excuse. It’s okay to name an actual fact you are dealing with.”	Consciousness, Efficacy
“Impact to current practice. Teacher initiated conversations with others about planning.”	Observe, Capable, Positivity	“What kinds of evidence of success are you looking for?”	Efficacy, Consciousness, Craftsmanship
“Flexible use of time and space – they’ve (teachers) have done	Observe, Capable, Positivity	“What are the pieces you absolutely believe must be held	Consciousness, Efficacy, Craftsmanship

a masterful job there.”		onto for personalized learning?”	
-------------------------	--	----------------------------------	--

## APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL I POEMS

### **Principal Manley**

#### Coaching 1 – Problem Solving Conversation

I guess it's just a twofold argument  
I want it to be something that's amicable I think it can be something so that kids who are  
going over there will benefit from it  
I just think that with intentional planning on their part it could be better served  
my argument to that is  
I thought in the first place  
that's what I've thought about  
I thought we don't even necessarily have to do it in the way that we've done it before  
I think that it's all in the expectation we set  
I have been corresponding via email  
I always like talking to her  
I don't want you to say give me push back this time  
I told you about this  
next time I don't want to ask her for any more than  
I just don't  
that's the other piece we have to think about  
I wonder if part of that came from 3rd grade really wanting it  
I know  
I would much rather us be like we're just going to use these tables  
I get it from the teacher's end  
I thought 2nd grade did a great job in the fall  
I think she will consider it I was thinking about logistics  
I really do feel like what they are doing can be molded to fit  
I need you to help me make this work from person to person  
I have to have you guys there in order for the night to be successful  
I'm sorry  
I've waited this long  
I've been trying to think of every way imaginable to make it work  
I can't without you guys going  
I know  
I don't want to leave the decision open ended because the other option would be we'll just  
do it another night  
I made that concession in the fall

I can't  
I can't do that  
how am I going to start  
I usually start with questions  
I like your suggestion  
I need you to help me figure out and then maybe just  
I know how this conversation is probably going to go  
I need both of us to have an open mind  
I would basically just need to say  
I really need you guys to go down to the mall for exhibition  
I need to just start with  
I'll tell her  
I'll list out the reasons  
I'll say  
I do think that what you guys are doing can adapt to fit over there  
I'll tell her  
I could say to them  
I've helped them in the past with reading and writing groups  
I would be willing to volunteer Leslie and I  
I can pull a group  
I think that their argument  
I can understand both of them  
my hope is to be able to say  
I'm going to be honest with you  
I will probably have to pull if it comes down to it  
I did you guys a favor in the fall  
I'm pulling in the favor card  
I need you to help me  
I don't know  
I could just go to and be like you're going there. The end  
I need to make sure that  
I don't want to be so inflexible  
I think I've got it  
it's helped me reframe the way  
I need to go about approaching this conversation  
I think it's a little bit different than the last one  
I feel like maybe to a fault sometimes  
I'm overly empathetic to what other people think  
I just need to have the conversation

## Coaching 2 – Reflecting Conversation

I think today was definitely better than yesterday  
I truly just think it was the time dynamic  
I think it was the fact that we just did a single grade today versus 2 grades yesterday  
I need to do moving forward

I need to collaborate with Emily our guidance counselor  
I just need to sit down with her a little bit more deliberately  
I'm very much  
I try to be as hands off as possible let people do their jobs  
there were just things I thought would have been taken care of yesterday that weren't  
I think that she and I will sit down before testing  
I prefer it that way  
I don't need to be involved in all that  
I've been taking notes  
I can simply say  
she and I sit down  
We literally go through the entire plan  
When am I going to sit down with her again  
I think a week before K prep I think we just need to get through this week  
I've been taking notes  
Just make sure I actively go out and am intentional about those planning conversations

### **Principal Beeler**

#### Coaching 1 – Planning Conversation

We have everyone defending now  
Our driving questions  
Our community set  
Our emphasis  
We will check  
We will share  
We have to get students ready  
It's forced me to be present  
It helps me think about my audience

#### Coaching 2 – Planning Conversation

We will name topics, curriculum, scope of work  
We have it ready  
My goal  
My underlying purpose  
I don't know  
We are proactive  
(So) we don't feel like  
I feel like it's been a year of catch-up  
I want people to feel proactive  
We can increase  
I think  
We're probably better off



I don't want to assume  
We're going to start  
We did it last year  
We did it on paper  
I think it will build  
I think we can do that  
We can start  
We use this for the future  
I guess maybe  
I'm really just needing to talk through  
I want to share  
I'm planning instantly  
I'm planning for the end of the year  
I'm also thinking about how  
I feel like that's our life  
We want  
I think you're right (confirmation of a specific from the coach)  
We have to rework  
I think that's the way  
I won't be able to do that until  
I don't think I'll be able to share  
My plan  
I can get on it  
I'd like to take that  
I'd like to have at least  
Then I know, but I think  
I feel like if I don't have it under control  
I'm not sure 100% right now  
I think it will be  
I don't have to worry about  
Our building  
I have to pull it and give it  
I think that  
I don't know that  
We have two days  
We have to do  
I talk to them  
I said you need to share that  
We don't really have to do  
I guess that's how  
I remember them saying  
I remember  
I'm guessing  
We'll worry about that later  
Do we want them to  
I agree (in response to a prompt from coach about what teachers need)

I think that's a great idea  
I don't want them doing work right now that has to be redone  
I just want to make sure (we don't have to redo)  
I'm not sure, so let's talk through this  
I think she can handle it  
I think that's why  
I think she can handle it  
I'm not real sure  
I don't know  
But I can find out  
I can plan  
I can work on  
I have heard  
I need you to fill me in  
I think  
I'm not even going to get it right  
I can't think of them  
We can do  
We were way too small  
We get that  
We support teachers  
I'm wondering  
Where I am on that  
I don't want them to feel like it was done to them  
I think they were  
We need to come back to that  
We're going to do that  
I agree (to a suggestion from coach about discourse structure)  
We need to have a mini  
I don't know  
We want this to be successful  
We're hoping that  
We've lived through it  
Yep. I like that (suggestion from coach on pre work to the meeting)  
Do I need to do anything on the front end  
I think right now  
We need to prioritize  
We use them  
I have not  
I don't think I've heard anything  
I'm sure there'll be  
I think they realized  
I didn't know  
Maybe I can  
I think they're going to be able  
I feel better about that

I think that's good (suggestion from coach to introduce to new staff)

We like

We don't

I'd say don't come

I appreciate it

### Coaching 3 – Reflecting Conversation

I got to go listen

I was going to start

I was going to start

I could reference

I really did start

I talked more about why, with equity

I was like, "why"

I don't know that it went long

I think what happened

I guess

I guess

I feel...I don't know

I knew what time it was

I watched the time

I think

I took 11 minutes

I went faster

I've also had more experiences

I knew to watch the time

Did I get across

I made sure

I made sure

I made sure

I just wanted them to know

I had to rush

I kind of showed

I'm going to come back to this

I don't even know if I showed them this

I did

I didn't really get into

I didn't have the time

I just kind of said

I'm getting ready to tell you

I'm not South

I didn't go south

I could have spent more time on

I felt like I got across why

I didn't have to give the backstory

I was very worried about it {in response to coach naming that she was worried about the messaging because of the time issue in the presentation}  
I guess I gained some time  
I don't have to fill them in on the backstory  
I still got to show  
I'll come in and focus  
I guess I would say I've personalized it  
I think if I did it again  
I don't know  
I didn't have any of that {comparing self to another school}  
I guess it helped when we talked {planning convo}  
I want them to walk out of here with  
I thought that you need to have advisory  
I didn't get to tell them  
I don't think I got to emphasize  
I wish I had done more  
I would say it's the most important thing  
I missed

Coaching 3, second half, tone changes to more reflection than recall

I feel like looking back  
I think one strength  
I think that's good {tying school story to district story}  
I think so  
I don't know {response to coach prompt about being metacognitive to audience needs in the moment}  
I focused on the time  
I used the clock  
I can ramble  
I did not speak too fast  
I used the clock  
I needed to cut something off  
I'm not the wordsmith  
Maybe I'm...adrenaline junkie  
I can handle that better than  
I can plan things out two weeks ahead  
I can become focused  
Why I have to do a lot of things myself {waits until last minute, so delegation is difficult}  
I will never put that on somebody else  
I don't know if it's a leadership quality  
Who I am  
This is what I'm here for  
This is what I'm supposed to do  
I'm nervous  
I have to be full on focused

I have to adjust  
I don't know  
I think back  
I stay true to who I am  
What I know  
I won't speak about something  
I don't know about  
I've had no problem saying  
I'm not sure  
I'll get back to you  
I needed to talk with them  
I did not like that {presentation felt thrown together}  
I feel like we all could have bounced off each other  
I think it could have been better  
I almost didn't  
If I had not  
I think that's important  
I think that's good {tying together what audience knows to what is new}  
I think that is something  
We could have improved upon  
I thought the whole thing was helpful {reflecting convo}  
How am I going to use this  
I have to figure out how  
I have to make sure I am clear  
I'll have to be clear  
I better plan for that in the beginning

### **Principal Cook**

#### Coaching 1 – Planning Conversation

I'm trying to figure out  
I think what I need to do  
I need done  
I need some  
I'm thinking that  
My think is  
We need to extend  
We've got to give an opportunity  
I want to give the voice and choice  
I don't want to narrow  
I think like a charge or a drive  
I want to show off your book  
I want you all to  
I don't want it too structured  
I know

I'm not sure  
I think maybe  
I do not think  
I think we need to pave the way  
I wasn't going to say  
I was thinking maybe  
I don't know  
I'm unsure  
I don't know if we can  
I'm not sure  
I don't know  
I don't even know  
I think it even could be  
I'm not sure  
I go to figure that out  
I need to talk to them  
I need to find a good example  
I don't want them to go too far  
I know  
I would think  
I do is let them figure out  
I want to connect  
I don't really care about selling them  
I think it's time to get moving  
I don't know  
I just wanted to get it done  
I don't know  
I feel like I'm just going  
I got a...plan  
We will go that route  
We'll step into it  
I think the excitement

#### Coaching 2 – Planning Conversation

I need to have  
I need to plan  
I'd love to pick your brain  
I want to give them empowerment  
I just give them too much power  
I want to open it up  
I want to make sure they have a framework  
I thought over non-negotiables  
I sit back and think  
I want to make sure we're doing  
I think those frameworks

I think the autonomy  
I want to push them  
I'm getting everybody together  
We look at data  
We have some fixed minds  
We think it should happen  
We need to also have a heart  
I need to figure out  
I'm going to shape that conversation  
If I bring this up  
I want them to feel like...not new more work  
I think about the teacher  
I get our team to move forward  
I'm just constantly battling in my mind  
How do I shape this  
I just think through that  
I hope I can say it  
I feel like they can  
I don't have to dictate  
I think we wond  
I got to fix this  
I got to fix this  
How am I going to get  
I didn't get the direction we need  
I think it's all about changing ourselves  
I got to think through that  
I'm going to mandate  
I don't think it'll influence  
I was going to empower  
I think we will be there  
I think to inform  
I don't know  
So, I'm flexible  
We have to do something different  
So I am looking for  
So I want to take some teacher professional judgment  
We need to also have evidence  
We're sitting in the desk going through the normal school year  
We're not differentiating here  
I don't want to dig...too much  
I know I don't want to spend time  
I think teachers understanding  
I hear what you're saying  
I may have to mandate  
I don't want to distribute  
I don't want to put that all on their shoulders

I hope I can continue...that we can push forward  
I am wondering how we document  
I know Kindergarten is meeting with me  
I could do some advisory  
I think it's just a growth opportunity  
I think I was going to charge Carrie  
I might meet with them tomorrow  
I want to hear  
I want to be able to get clear guidance and a framework  
I would like to have another hour or two of planning time for them  
I think we're going to work well

### **Principal Siers**

#### Coaching 1 – Planning Conversation

I wanted to meet with all my staff  
I have met with everyone to some extent  
I wanted it to be more structured  
I do get time to sit still and pay attention to and listen  
I've met with a few  
I sent out the zoom meetings  
I've got a calendar  
I'm keeping those times  
I set it for 45 minutes  
I did this thinking we were returning back in April  
I wanted to get all them in before coming back to the normal day of school  
I want it to be a little more intentional want to know about school and how they feel  
I also have a question or two that are about hem  
I can learn a little about them too  
I didn't get to start the year with them  
I tried to select a few questions  
I was thinking of asking  
I felt like could give me a little bit of insight into my staff  
If I listened  
I'm think about dispositions  
I have decisions to make  
I've watched teachers teach  
I'm looking at synergy  
I feel like I can ask you guys(admin) more direct questions  
That is absolutely my goal (coach paraphrases and confirms)  
I trying to acknowledge  
My thinking was right  
I wanted to talk to you about  
I was trying to think of the best way



I want it to be well thought out  
I depend on you guys  
Affirm my decisions  
I know  
I want  
I got to thinking  
I wanted it to be very organic  
I already kind of know you guys dispositionally  
I have not gained with them  
I like that (coach suggests sending questions out to staff ahead of time)  
I'm agreeing with you  
I'm sitting here thinking now about making a decision  
I'm only going to ask that to teachers  
I know have made a great start  
I want to build  
I really want a good answer  
I really care to know  
My concern is lack of honesty  
I don't want to hear  
I've worked really hard  
I know  
I go a lot more work to do  
I don't have a clue  
How well I'm doing  
I think things are where  
I want them  
I found out from one of my other staff members  
I feel blindsided  
I didn't know that  
I don't know if I'm going to get  
That's important to me  
That's very important to me (coach affirms she wants an honest response)  
I also feel  
I need to prep myself  
I'm going to be mindful  
How I frame the questions  
I said  
How can we be better  
I know we can do more  
How can I do more  
I just need to make sure  
I know everything's not perfect  
I don't want to hear that it is  
I want to know  
I don't know  
I want to make sure

I have been so surprised  
I ask questions  
I feel like we're doing well  
I think we're doing okay here  
I've often been surprised  
I thought we were doing well  
I thought we were doing poor  
I'm like, really  
Sometimes I'm surprised  
I want to make sure  
I'm very aware of my body language  
I always get surprised  
I think we're doing well in – we're not  
I think that's why these conversations are important  
It's not that I don't try to look  
I absolutely do (coach affirms discomfort at differing perceptions)  
I came out of the classroom  
I had no idea  
I sit in SBDMs  
I used to complain  
I got in SBDM  
I saw school finances  
I absolutely do not negate the importance of instruction and pedagogy  
I think about my staff  
I feel like they are more cultural and manageable  
I'm thinking the difference here  
My elementary and my middle  
I think they're very coachable {elem}  
I feel good about that  
My middle is typical  
I feel like (we discussed the rough start)  
My thinking (culture)  
I have been very impressed  
I want to kind of work to make sure  
I want my building to come together  
I want things systemic  
I think that focus on culture  
I didn't have the instructions in place  
I feel like they could have  
I feel like they would have  
I feel they still saw value in advisory  
I felt on the admin side  
We didn't have things prepared  
I think that's a fair question {coach asks if the questions prepared will yield enough data}  
I'm not sure  
I'm not sure

I'm not sure  
I think some of these questions can be better  
I really want to uplift the teachers  
I want a school that is very supportive and vulnerable  
I want to know what makes a good day at school  
I want to know what that looks like for them  
I agree with you on that one {coach suggests a change to one question that might cause pressure to answer inauthentically}  
I can't tell you that was intentional {coach notices the layering of questions & connections}  
I'm glad you pointed that out  
I know that's what I want  
I think when I start to build this question bank  
I'm going to be more mindful of that  
I want to personalize

## Coaching 2 – Reflecting Conversation

I'm apprehensive  
I've had several parents  
I feel like some are legit concerns  
I have to have a tough conversation  
I feel like this one needs to be a group  
Turn on me  
make me apprehensive  
I can handle much better  
I have to say  
my job is also to make sure that I am a bridge between home and school  
I need my parents to feel heard  
I need teachers to feel supported  
I will always do that  
we're not right sometimes  
I'm not going to make us right when we're wrong  
I just think the way I deliver it  
Turn on me because  
make me apprehensive  
a handle much better  
I have to say  
my job is also to make sure  
I am a bridge between home and school I feel like that's the first place to go  
I feel like that's my leverage point  
I think conversations with both  
I've already met with the parents  
I think my leverage point is with the teachers  
I hope they feel comfortable I am going to let them know  
I have to work with and rely on

My relationships  
steel feel respected and validated by me  
I just need everybody's needs met  
that's all I need  
I need my kids needs met  
my parents  
my teachers  
I really want them to know  
I've not been out of the classroom so long  
I don't understand how hard this is  
I think some of the reason we're struggling  
I'm not sure  
I can fix everything  
I need to at least approach this from a standpoint  
I don't know  
I have nothing recent  
I have had those conversations before  
when I did was, I read the email back to her  
I'm writing she was a new mom  
I read the email back to her  
I put her daughter's name in the email  
I asked her to be open minded  
I thought about doing that with this  
I don't know  
I had the smaller meeting  
I don't think that needs to be discussed in front of everybody else  
I kind of want that person to be mindful about the way  
I think the one that's with two teachers  
I'm going to talk to the whole team  
I need the team to be aware  
let me make sure  
I talked to mom I feel like they need to know  
we all handle somebody differently  
when we know their story  
I think it might be good to reference that for sure  
I don't want you guys remember  
when we didn't have all the pieces  
so I think that would be good to do  
I saw the people in the room kind of have a reaction  
I know that people know him  
I don't know if I have enough money in some accounts  
I know for a fact  
I know for a fact  
I'm hearing Dana  
I can do this with her  
I think some teachers absolutely are there

I've been with her for years  
I'm going to talk specifically to 7th grade  
I know in the school prior they've had some situations  
they're not going to just trust me because I say trust me  
I'm a little apprehensive  
I'm seeing some personalities  
I'm not the smartest person in the room  
I pay attention to people  
I do know how to approach conversations  
I got this to three  
I got this the whole taint  
I felt like it was validating  
I think they came in and feeling like it was going to be negative  
I brought in some of the students  
I set the students up with prompting  
I even said tell me what my child said that to me  
I think that went way better  
I think it went better then days off  
I think they came in with a different perspective  
I definitely want to do that  
I truly feel it's not lip service  
I really have a lot of great things to say about this team  
I do not want to be the type of leader that's not clear  
I don't want to send miss mixed messages  
I've done that before  
then when I walked out of the room  
I found out later that's not what I said  
I'm very aware of that  
I like to make sure that I'm clear  
I guess what's important to me  
I remind them that it can be frustrating  
I still want my parents and teachers so now  
I have parents coming in Making claims  
I love the kids  
I just want to stop the meeting  
I trust them I know what they're doing is hard work  
I know they're in it for the kids  
I defend them  
I do  
I also need to remind them  
I just want them to pause  
it sounds like I'm condescending  
I say stop and think  
I want them to remember it's not personal  
I don't know  
I want them to know

I get it  
I do  
I've had parents  
no matter what I do it's not enough  
I can get frustrated  
I came to you because  
I'm going to go to the professionals in the building  
I want to talk to you about having a parent night  
I like that idea  
I feel like it's incumbent on me to figure out the way with my team  
it's not my responsibility  
I wish it was  
I wish I could get them to come  
it's my problem  
if I don't offer it  
I'm hoping they see it  
I'm trying to think of ways to support everybody  
I thought that would be good  
I don't think that's the case  
I think this is a way to attack and support everybody  
I don't think I would have done this if we didn't talk  
I don't know if I wouldn't thought it was  
I think instead of me doing that  
I agree  
I think I need to be very intentional I expected to answer I know things happen  
I don't think I've ever spoken to them  
I've spoken to them about  
I don't think I've talked to them specifically about email  
I'm writing this down  
I get it I also know we can do better  
I absolutely do  
I think those talking points helped me  
I think that helps  
I know that Tony has been frustrated  
I get it  
I think what's happening  
we become comfortable  
I think we're making the mistake of equating personalization with that computer  
I think it's a lot of substitution Because it's easier  
I'm doing work  
I don't understand  
I'm not getting the support  
I need to be mindful  
I had this conversation with miss Martin  
I want them to struggle  
I want them to learn

I get that  
I can push a kid  
I don't think some of them know how I need you to know that

I mentioned a little bit about that today  
I really want us to have some breaks with each other  
I also do not want to share her comment  
I'm not so sure  
I teach a different student body  
I'm looking at their scores  
I can say this to you as a teacher I'll swear I wanted to look at any face and be like why  
haven't you turned in your cell phone weekly  
I think it's a lot of substitution I haven't said that  
I'll work for teachers  
I should have said  
I don't know how to write this  
I want to offer grace  
I feel a little bit better  
this sure has helped me

### **Principal Harris**

#### Coaching 1 – Reflecting Conversation

I thought more of a reflection  
I felt that might sound like a griping session  
Where I am right now  
I'm in 11 years as a principal  
I'm starting to feel like  
I think I do a good job  
I feel like it's never enough  
Where I am  
I don't know  
I could be better  
I guess  
Where I am  
We look at map data  
We are the only school  
We weren't growing  
I'm the building leader  
I have a huge turnover  
I've not endured  
I let 10 people go  
I let 9 people go  
It still feels like not getting it done  
I think I was looking for

I was expecting the results we received  
I'm also trying to raise up Kelly  
I appreciate that  
I don't anticipate we will see tanking  
I'm excited about that  
I'm trying to lead us out  
I'm having some tough conversations  
I'm going back to 2010  
I'm trying to rebuild the kingdom  
If I had done a better job  
I also believe in personalization of learning  
I think workshop is our foundational delivery method  
I have an amazing new science teacher  
I'm 11 years in  
I feel like in dog years  
I'm in 21  
I could be 88 years old by now  
I listen to Jennifer  
I was a coach for one year  
I can see that whole instructional leadership thing  
I'm so far away from that  
I'm leaning heavy on Kelly and teacher leaders and Drew  
Where I took them as a staff  
I'm unearthing again  
I was feeling overwhelmed as a principal  
I was meeting by chance  
I felt like after I got a year under my belt  
I'm praying for this year  
I don't want that to be an excuse  
I honestly don't think  
I'll see the growth that I'm hoping for  
I mean, I think I'll see growth  
I should see growth  
I expect  
I expect we'll see some  
I don't think we'll see exponential  
I want every kid to come out of here with value  
I'm not going to sit here and point fingers  
I think that it's my job  
I've not done my job  
I think every student needs to enjoy a success  
I think we've been able to do that for the majority  
Quantifiably, I don't know  
Back in the day, I was very tight  
Shift I'm trying to make  
I wonder



I don't know  
I am my own worst critic  
I can beat myself up  
I'm a worrier  
I talk about this with staff  
I'm not good at that to myself  
I tend to take on the whole kit and caboodle  
I'm not pulling it down  
I can't see small victories  
I'm kind of hurry up and let's go  
I would tell him to pump the brakes  
I'm not pumping my brakes  
I need to pump my brakes  
I need to make sure that I'm celebrating  
I need to celebrate  
I know has worked in the past and be patient  
I'm very very proud of the people upstairs  
I just need to nurture them and love them through growing  
I would hope they would do that for me too

#### Coaching 2 – Planning Conversation

I'm mainly a planning conversation  
I haven't gone through yet  
I didn't feel like I could do something at that level with 30 new faculty and staff  
I'm going to lose almost two teachers  
I'm trying to think  
I'm not sure that I'm completely objective  
I hope to achieve  
I believe  
I know  
I believe  
I want Sevilla to be  
I know  
I know  
I know  
I also believe  
If I were to go too drastically  
I do have pockets  
I look at the compilation of the team  
I might end up having a situation  
I don't want to create that  
I don't want to create division  
I want to create opportunity  
I just don't know if we're there yet

I just don't know that we're there  
I don't know  
I just don't know that we're there yet  
I'm going to have to chunk it  
I want to see that whole school  
I still have people wanting to know why  
I think that mindset worries me for folks  
I crave  
I just never imagined  
I have people asking to go watch  
I'm not trying to be doom and gloom  
I just don't know that we're ready  
I don't want to kill them  
I think it would be easier  
I wouldn't want to go away  
I do feel like  
I do fear  
I would lose teachers  
I think I'm still battling  
I mean  
I can't say it's not  
I do think that there's a sentiment  
I want to disrupt that  
I wonder if I can't manipulate  
I don't know  
I'm a data person  
I would expect  
I would see suit  
I support and advertise  
I would see a very stout workshop  
I would see kids moving  
I would see less  
I would see exhibitions  
I just  
I'd hoped  
I'm still in mourning  
I think we would be there this year  
I would want to hear discussions  
I would love to see students in the driver's seat  
I think Empower is a tool  
I think advisory is helpful  
I think we're gaining some momentum  
I would want to see student led  
I think some teachers are afraid  
I think we're underestimating the power of kids  
Am I underestimating the power of teachers?

Am I still holding things too close to the vest?  
I want to see ownership  
I want to hear it, speak it, see it, live it  
I think I'm always learning  
I think the day  
I don't feel like  
I need to learn  
I need to retire  
I think that's the way  
I'm always trying  
I'm always trying  
I sure have seen a lot  
I don't think it needs to be my vision  
I think it needs to be our vision  
I took a core group to Colorado  
Do I look at a round two?  
I need to share it with my council  
I don't think I can fund  
I need to bring the whole position  
I'll help them do that  
I'm not dealing with discipline (that's a beautiful thing)  
I would do away with  
I think my current thinking is marred by stress  
I'm being a little too cautious  
I don't know

### Coaching 3 – Reflecting Conversation

I literally had people approach me  
I planted some seeds  
I can't say that I didn't just try to  
I think we're ready  
I think we're ready  
I think one of the reasons  
I think the sweet spot  
I made sure  
I believe firmly in teacher empowerment  
I make with intention  
I share  
I thought they would be ready  
I think about the emotional part  
I'm not saying we don't (have jealousy)  
I think about the power of buy in  
I believe  
I make sure they feel supported enough  
I'm really excited

I haven't had this opportunity  
I'm very much a believer in how we run lab visits  
I want them to see rituals and routines  
I think we need to create a structure  
I think we need to be in smaller groups  
I think we could probably achieve this  
I think hearing from students is the sweet spot  
I struggle with grouping people who cannot do school  
I really appreciate  
I really appreciate  
I think it goes back to community  
I wonder if they might need  
I'm wondering if even using that strand  
I wonder if you look through  
I would expect to see  
I should see that happening now  
I expect teacher-initiated conversations with others  
I do expect  
I expect to see  
I've just had to render  
I don't know  
I just wonder if that is the starting point  
I still am wanting to learn  
I just don't think you can  
I just don't feel like  
I don't  
I just need to continue to refresh  
I can continue  
I know people are anxious  
I've never regretted pumping the brakes  
I don't regret that  
I got a little grief for it  
I want to  
I don't want to  
I'm sitting here recording notes  
I need to tackle  
I can easily pull up  
I tend to forget resources  
I'm in my mind  
How can I fix this  
I might not have looked at for a while

## APPENDIX F: DEBRIEF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

### **Debrief Interview Questions for Principals**

1. How might you describe your experience with Cognitive Coaching for school leaders?
2. Is this a practice you might engage in going forward? Why or why not?
3. Coaching conversations slowed or halted upon the advent of COVID-19. To what do you attribute this?
4. How would you describe your mindfulness and self-efficacy amid the COVID-19 shutdown?

## CURRICULUM VITA

NAME: Jennifer Helm Cox

ADDRESS: 18709 Cranbury Ct.  
Louisville, Ky. 40245

DOB: Louisville, Kentucky – March 13, 1973

### EDUCATION & TRAINING:

B.A., Middle School Education  
University of Kentucky  
1991-1995

M.Ed., Middle School Education  
Bellarmine University  
1998-2004

Ed.S., Education Leadership and Organizational Development  
University of Louisville  
2011-2013

Ed.D., Education Leadership and Organizational Development  
University of Louisville  
2016-2021

AWARDS: Nancy Howard Faculty Merit Award for Graduate Education  
Bellarmine University  
2004

Ashland Teacher Achievement Award  
2013

Shelby County Public Schools Teacher of the Year  
Middle School Level  
2013

Excellence in Graduate Education Award  
University of Louisville  
2013

PROFESSIONAL  
SOCIETIES:

Kentucky Association for School Administrators

Shelby County Education Association

Kentucky Education Association

NATIONAL MEETING  
PRESENTATIONS:

Haman, T., Cox, J., Kent, C., Pettit, T., Roberts, D., Santos, A., & Spencer, T. (2021, April). Illustrating the design and potential of the dissertation in practice. Panel session at the annual conference of the American Education Research Association, virtual conference.

Haman, T., Cox, J., Kent, C., Pettit, T., Roberts, D., Santos, A., & Spencer, T. (2020, Oct.). Illustrating the design and potential of the dissertation in practice. Panel session at the annual conference of the Carnegie Project for the Education Doctorate, virtual conference.

Bussey, L. H., Bathon, J. M., Cox, J. H., Givens, G., Honig, M., & Mcleod, S. (2018, Nov.). Entrepreneurial approaches to helping school leaders: Translating research into reforms. Critical conversation at the annual conference of the University Council for Educational Administration, Houston, TX

Cox, J. (2018, Nov.). Space to lead: Cognitive coaching as mindful school leader practice. Roundtable discussion at the annual conference of the University Council for Educational Administration, Houston, TX