

Inside

- Teacher leader resources, p. 4
- Coaching tools, pp. 5-6
- Questions about leadership, p. 7
- Coaches need to be clear, p. 9

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EVERY EDUCATOR ENGAGES IN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVERY DAY SO EVERY STUDENT ACHIEVES

Teacher leader standards

CONSORTIUM SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN PROFESSION WITH LEADERSHIP ROLE

By Valerie von Frank

When a group of national education leaders began looking at what it would take to prevent teachers from leaving the profession, the answer wasn't shocking: teachers want opportunities to grow and lead while remaining in the classroom. But what the group did with the answer holds the potential for creating major change.

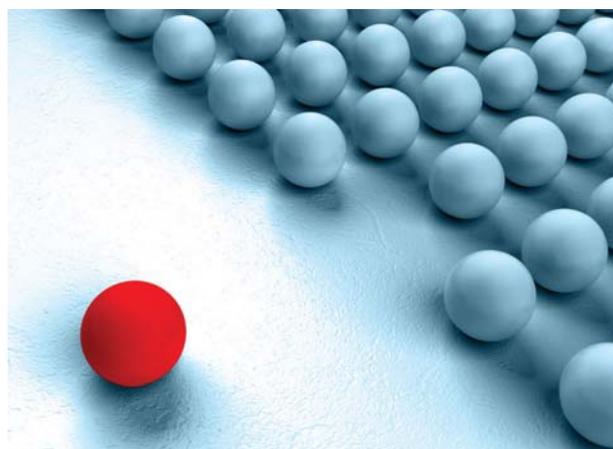
In work funded by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), these leaders have created a list of standards for teacher leaders modeled on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) State Standards for School Leaders. The group, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, will publish the standards in the first quarter of 2011; they will be available at the web site for the Center for Teaching Quality (www.teachingquality.org).

The new standards have the potential to create change in a profession that has traditionally separated itself into two categories: teachers and administrators.

"We are recognizing that teacher leaders exist and have a role," said Katherine Bassett, director of educator relations at ETS and the consortium's facilitator, "and we are defining what that role would look like."

Not all teachers are leaders

Bassett said part of the group's work was to carefully differentiate between excellent teachers and teacher leaders.



Their roles are not the same. Some educators believe that many teachers may learn to be highly effective, but not all want to or will be teacher leaders. Others contend that all teachers should acquire the skills of teacher leaders.

The consortium uses a definition of teacher leaders by York-Barr & Duke (2004, p. 287) that stated, "Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement."

Teacher leaders may have formal roles on the school or district leadership team, as mentors or coaches, as curricu-

Continued on p. 2

Continued from p. 1

lum leaders, in policy or advocacy, coordinating research, or in leading professional learning, according to consortium notes. Informal roles include study group leaders, committee leaders, and union representatives. Killion and Harrison (2006) defined the roles teacher leaders might have as resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, mentors, school team leaders, data coaches, catalysts for change, and lead learners.

“In terms of employment, the teacher leader is a critical support for beginning teachers and struggling teachers,” Bassett said. “The teacher leader may work with groups to unpack student data, facilitate conversations in groups of teachers, and drive conversations so teachers can learn from each other.”

Seven domains

The standards follow a format similar to the ISLLC standards for school leaders — a series of broadly stated expectations or “domains” that define critical dimensions of teacher leadership and “performance indicators” that define actions or expectations related to that domain. (See box for the seven domains.)

Presenting information in this way allows educators to understand and begin to define what skills teacher leaders need, to measure whether teachers are fulfilling leadership roles, and to begin to learn the skills they need to do so, Bassett said.

According to Bassett, among the skills and knowledge areas for teacher leaders are:

- Adult learning models;

Learning Forward BELIEF

Sustainable learning cultures require skillful leadership.

- Analyzing data and data-driven instruction;
- Partnering with peers and administrators;
- Coaching, observation, and mentoring;
- Communication strategies;
- Facilitation;
- Building trust and relationships (cognitive coaching);
- Organizational structures;
- Change theory;
- Strategies for shifting culture;
- Best teaching practices;
- Professional development that is research-based;
- Organizing teams;
- How to be a community organizer – both internal and external;
- Balancing advocacy and inquiry; and
- Cultural competencies across populations.

“The standards will help in providing a foundation for what programs to prepare teacher leaders might look like,” Bassett said. “They will provide a basis for states to formalize roles and evaluate whether someone is ready.

“Part of the problem is there is no place for teachers to learn these skills,” she continued. “There were no standards on which a curriculum could be based. They are a basis for states to formalize the role of the teacher leader and a catalyst for changing the profession.”

Bassett emphasized that the consortium’s role was to operate at the policy level, not to solve questions of implementing the standards or determining if the role should be achieved through licensing, educational degree, endorsement, or certification. She said, though, that some states or districts might use the standards to consider creating a contractual category for teacher leaders who would be paid at a higher level than other teachers.

Currently, several states are considering defining a continuum of teacher practice. Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri,

Continued on p. 3

TEACHER LEADERSHIP STANDARDS

The standards consist of seven domains describing the diverse and varied dimensions of teacher leadership:

Domain I: Fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning.

Domain II: Accessing and using research to improve practice and student achievement.

Domain III: Promoting professional learning for continuous improvement.

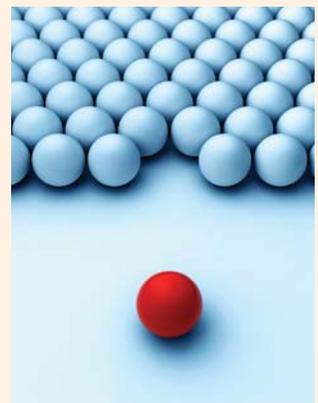
Domain IV: Facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning.

Domain V: Using assessments and data for school and district improvement.

Domain VI: Improving outreach and collaboration with families and community.

Domain VII: Advocating for student learning and the profession.

Source: Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium



Some differentiators between effective teachers and teacher leaders

Effective teachers ...	Teacher leaders ...
Are aware of professional research and literature	Are engaged in professional research and are willing to engage with others
Can explain and analyze their own practice	Lead instructional change
Are change agents	Are change agents and negotiators of change
Are members of and initiate communities of learners	Build capacity in colleagues and systems
Build mutual trust and respect in the classroom	Know how to facilitate and support adult learning
Create safe, positive learning environments	Are as effective with adults as with students
Understand individual student needs and engage in culturally responsive instruction	Think “we” instead of “I”; for example, “What can we do to make this better?”
Analyze data to impact student learning	Teach beyond the classroom; they focus on advancing the profession and lead change
Share expertise	Are boundary spanners
Engage in creative insubordination	Are opportunistic; see and seize opportunities
Belong to professional organizations	Lead by example

Continued from p. 2

South Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia are considering a four-staged continuum of practice in which the fourth stage, beyond being an effective teacher, is demonstrating the characteristics of a teacher leader. Georgia is developing a five-stage continuum, with master teacher as the stage just below teacher leader.

“That states are having that conversation is significant,” Bassett said.

The carrot and the stick

In a recent interview with Claus von Zastrow of the Learning First Alliance, Daniel Pink, author of *Drive*, a book about what motivates people, noted that educators are generally not motivated by external forces such as performance pay or more stringent accountability measures. A reward and punishment system, he said, is outdated.

“Educators understand the differences between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation better than almost anyone in American society,” said Pink. “... Everybody thinks that intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation can more

or less coexist, that they can layer on top of each other. But the science shows that just isn’t right.”

Similar to the consortium’s conclusion, Pink also contended that autonomy drives educators and will create higher performance.

Bassett said developing teacher leaders will create a “largely untapped resource for change and improvement in schools” that will ultimately benefit students.

References

Killion, J. & Harrison, C. (2006). *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

Von Zastrow, C. (2010, January 3). “Carrots and sticks are so last century”: A conversation with author Dan Pink. Available at www.learningfirst.org/carrots-and-sticks-are-so-last-century-conversation-author-dan-pink.

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ARTICLES/REPORTS

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO? HOW TEACHER LEADERSHIP CAN IMPROVE TEACHER RETENTION *Journal of Scholarship and Practice, Summer, 2010*

This article explores an alignment of the attributes of teacher leaders and conditions affecting teacher retention. Characteristics of teacher leaders are discussed and compared with the opportunities and conditions that reportedly have a positive influence on teacher retention.

www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA_Journal_of_Scholarship_and_Practice/JSP-Summer2010.pdf

TEACHERS ARE THE CENTER OF EDUCATION: MENTORING, TEACHING AND IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING *The College Board, December, 2010*

The fourth in an ongoing series of reports on the role of teachers in the U.S. education system, this report looks at nine teachers who have taken

time from their classroom practice to contribute their knowledge and experience to their new colleagues.

http://advocacy.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/10b_1532_Teachers_and_Mentors_Report_WEB_101117.pdf

WEB SITES

SUCCESS AT THE CORE

This free professional development tool kit designed to help middle school leadership teams and teachers elevate classroom instruction and improve student outcomes. Those who register will gain access to seven modules, 24 instructional strategies, and 47 documentary-quality videos.

www.successatthecore.com

TEACHER LEADERS NETWORK

Use this network of active communities populated by teacher leaders to join others from across the nation dedicated to student success and the transformation of teaching into a true profession. A national initiative of the Center for Teaching Quality, much of its work takes place in a web environment tailored for daily use as a professional learning resource.

www.teacherleaders.org

TEACHING AS LEADERSHIP

This resource from Teach for America offers how-to guides, annotated illustrations, common pitfalls, and tools to help all teachers embody principles and strategies that distinguish highly effective teachers in low-income communities.

www.teachingasleadership.org

LEARNING FORWARD PUBLICATIONS

ONLINE COMMUNITY BECOMES A PATHWAY TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP *JSD, February, 2010*

University faculty in a Professional Development Schools (PDS) partnership use web-based tools to encourage teachers to develop leadership capacity.

www.learningforward.org/members/getDocument.cfm?articleID=2016

WEB OF SUPPORT STRENGTHENS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL-BASED COACHES *JSD, Winter 2007*

Educators at all levels, from national to state to local, can work together to weave a web of support for site-based coaches.

www.learningforward.org/members/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1343

CHANGE, LEAD, SUCCEED: BUILDING CAPACITY WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS *NSDC, 2010*

This book shows school leaders and teachers in leadership roles how to redefine leadership in their schools and create capacity through school leadership teams that successfully coordinate professional learning.

www.learningforwardstore.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Find additional resources about teacher leadership.

Clarify the coaching role

Use this chart to help teachers understand the coach's role and the services a coach will provide.



A coach is ...	A coach is not ...
A colleague who co-teaches or co-models a lesson	Someone who teaches small groups or classes
A colleague who co-plans with teachers*	A paraprofessional
A colleague who co-plans with teachers*	Someone who administers individual student assessments (except during the first two days of any statewide assessment)
A colleague who observes teachers and offers feedback to improve teaching*	An administrator who evaluates teachers
A colleague who assists teachers in looking at ways to use data to drive instruction*	A data analyst
A colleague who handles classroom discipline during co-teaching/modeling*	A semi-administrator who monitors students sent to the office for discipline reasons
A colleague who facilitates professional development or provides training for staff *	
A colleague who covers classes so a teacher can observe another teacher for short periods of time	A substitute teacher

* Considered part of 60-75% of time spent on direct instructional interaction with teachers

Source: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Thornton, Colo. Used with permission.

Adapted from: *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-based Coaches*, by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2006.

Student achievement coach expectations

Use this list for more examples of how a principal or coach can clarify the expectations of the coach's role.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct 10 classroom observations with feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Shows progress towards proficiency in Cognitive CoachingSM <input type="checkbox"/> Learn strategies for facilitating data discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Shows progress towards proficiency in strategies for English language learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify own strengths and weaknesses in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> English language learner strategies <input type="radio"/> Math strategies <input type="radio"/> Standards-based instructional planning <input type="radio"/> Models of professional development <input type="radio"/> Instructional strategies that work (Marzano, Pickering, & Polluck) <input type="radio"/> Facilitation <input type="radio"/> Data discussions <input type="radio"/> Differentiation |
|--|--|

Source: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Thornton, Colo. Used with permission.

Adapted from: *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-based Coaches*, by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison. Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2006.

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New standards for teacher leaders: How would they look in practice?

Recently developed model standards for teacher leaders establish clear criteria for teachers who want to advance as professional educators without leaving teaching or their schools (see article on p. 1). The standards strive to build consistency without being prescriptive. They confirm the importance of teacher leadership and define common expectations for those who become teacher leaders. Ministries or departments of education may use the standards as a guide to develop their own standards. Schools and school systems may establish different criteria for various leadership roles since the responsibilities of teacher leaders vary based on the specific leadership role.

The teacher leadership standards have the potential to professionalize teaching and improve both teaching and student learning, but they also raise questions.

Some or all?

A fundamental question is which teachers are teacher leaders and will they be expected to meet the model teacher leadership standards. Some education leaders hold the expectation that all teachers are teacher leaders. Others consider teacher leaders to be a subset of all teachers that includes only those who aspire to a leadership role and who choose to accept additional responsibilities beyond their classroom teaching roles.

Those who hold the expectation that all teachers become teacher

leaders operate from the perspective that all teachers have the responsibility to demonstrate the ability to lead and to contribute to the education profession beyond their individual classrooms. In this case, all teachers are accountable not only for being an effective classroom teacher, but also for contributing in other ways. Because what it means to be a teacher leader differs from system to system, the standards provide examples of what some of those leadership responsibilities might be. Some roles may require the skillfulness to facilitate meetings of peers. Some teacher leaders may need the ability to serve as a spokesperson for the school or the school system. Other leaders may serve as mentors to novice teachers. Leadership may also mean influencing policy about education or contributing to the direction of the school's improvement plan and supporting the implementation of that plan. Leadership may mean participating as a member of a learning community and contributing to collaborative work and learning within a team of peers.

The latter stance, that only some teachers are teacher leaders, is more broadly accepted. The designation of teacher leader is reserved for teachers who

have both more experience and a level of expertise as a professional educator not typical in novice teachers. This perspective of teacher leadership acknowledges that one grows into a leadership role through a wide range of experience and formal and informal professional development. In this perspective, teacher leadership is a point along the career continuum of teachers. Teacher-leader competencies and responsibilities relate to contributions teachers make to school improvement and student achievement outside their own classrooms.

Typical teacher-leader responsibilities include facilitating professional learning communities, leading school-based committees, serving as department, team, or grade-level

Continued on p. 8



Continued from p. 7

chairs, providing coaching, mentoring novice teachers, or serving on district curriculum task forces.

Preparing leaders

Determining which teachers become teacher leaders has multiple practical implications. Some of these implications involve preparation and opportunity for leadership roles. If all teachers are expected to be teacher leaders, will the responsibility for preparing teachers to be teacher leaders fall to those who prepare teacher candidates or will schools systems or individual teachers share responsibility for developing teacher leaders? Both traditional and alternative

teacher preparation programs focus on preparing candidates for the core practices of teaching. Those who prepare teachers may be called upon to reconfigure how they define the core competencies of teachers, how they structure learning experiences

and practice opportunities for teacher candidates, and how they define exit expectations. Licensing agencies may need to alter current criteria and add additional assessments or portfolio requirements to ensure that those licensed to teach demonstrate leadership competencies.

Systems and preparation programs will also need to determine when during a teacher's career leadership competencies are developed. Will teachers' preparatory programs focus

on teacher leadership, or will teachers first develop fundamental teaching skills and focus on developing leadership skills when they are more experienced? If the decision is to postpone development of these competencies, who will provide opportunities for developing these skills? Options include universities and colleges, school systems, or other providers. Teachers may additionally require professional development, formal courses of study, or advanced degrees to gain expertise in teacher leadership.

Opportunities to lead

Another major consideration is the number of opportunities for teachers to engage in authentic leadership practices. Preparing teachers for leadership and then affording them insufficient opportunities for authentic leadership wastes the potential created. If teachers are expected to acquire leadership competencies and yet have no opportunity to use and refine those skills in their work, those competencies will quickly weaken and their acquisition becomes pointless. And, if the opportunities to engage in leadership are not authentic, professionally rewarding, challenging, coordinated, and supported, teacher leadership will be trivialized. Many schools and school systems currently have insufficient opportunities for teachers to engage in authentic leadership roles.

With opportunities for leadership are parallel needs for ongoing professional development, supervision, and support of teachers engaged in leadership roles. When a teacher assumes a designated leadership role, someone will need to provide the appropriate level of coaching and supervision to

allow the teacher to develop leadership competencies. The logical person to assume this responsibility this is the school principal or someone in central office. Expecting teachers to practice leadership without appropriate preparation, ongoing professional development, support, and supervision is not only an unacceptable personnel practice; it also opens the door to other more significant challenges.

For example, will school systems and licensing agencies require all teachers in leadership positions to have appropriate credentials and preparation, and demonstrate they meet the standards? Will some roles, such as that of a coach, require teachers to meet the teacher leader standards while other roles will not require the same? This question has potential for affecting the success and quality of teacher leaders.

Until now, teacher leaders have emerged from opportunities or their own desire to assume leadership, often with little formal preparation. Some teachers have completed advanced degrees in education administration with plans to move into principalships, yet upon further thought decided to remain in classrooms. Once leaders in the field have examined the challenges and issues involved, teacher leader standards will professionalize these opportunities for influence and, ultimately, help improve teaching and student learning.

•
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With opportunities for leadership are parallel needs for ongoing professional development, supervision, and support of teachers engaged in leadership roles.



Crystal clear purpose builds a foundation for the work

By Valerie von Frank

Q What is the most important skill you've needed to coach successfully?

As a coach, being transparent is very important and transparency takes preparation. You have to make sure people understand the reasons behind what you're doing and understand that everything has a purpose. Working with teachers is the same as working with kids — if you aren't clear about what you want them to learn, they aren't going to learn it.

In our school, the coaches, the principal, the assistant principal, the intervention coordinator and the community liaison form the coordination team. The team figures out what we want to have happen in the school and how to pace it so we are clear about what we expect, and that is communicated to teachers.

Then it's my job and the other coach's to help teachers carry it out. Clarity among the leaders in the school is crucial, because if we aren't all on the same page, we can't expect anybody else to be.

Coaches have to communicate well ahead of time about what is going to happen, when, and why. Nothing should come up as a surprise, where people say, 'Oh, I didn't know.' It takes being thoughtful about what we are doing and why, and communicating that plan to staff.

For example, today the coaches are sending out a graphic organizer to help grade-level teams plan their meetings and data driven dialogues for the next three months. Another example is a project we are engaged in schoolwide for bilingual students called Literacy Squared. Before school began, I explained and demonstrated one of their strategies and asked teachers to implement it within the

first couple of weeks of school. I offered them my support. Last week, a new teacher asked for help and I went into his classroom to model the strategy on Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, he did it and I was there to jump in to help and to give feedback. Thursday and Friday, I passed it over to him. He had the why and what ahead of time. Then I showed him how to do it and made sure he was able to carry it forward. You have to be clear about what you expect teachers to do, how and when, or it's not going to happen the way you want.

•
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