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February 2011

Vol. 6, No. 5

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

**W**hen 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.

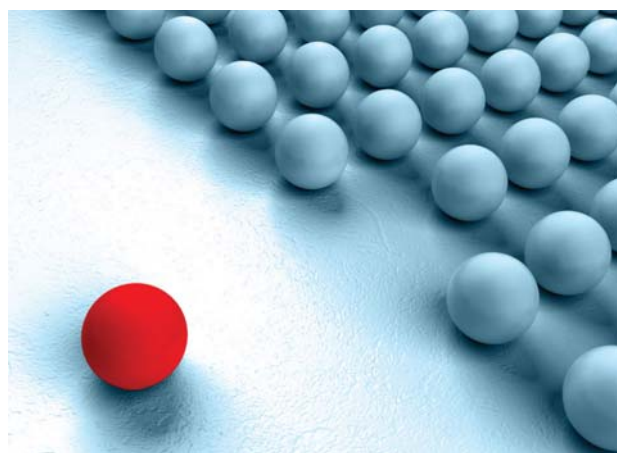
In work funded by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), these leaders have created a list of standards for teacher leaders modeled on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) State Standards for School Leaders. The group, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, will publish 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](http://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-

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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,

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### 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.

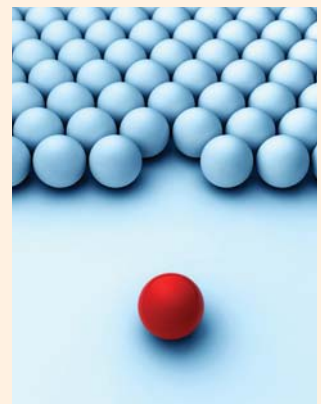
**Domain IV:** Facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning.

**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

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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](http://www.learningfirst.org/carrots-and-sticks-are-so-last-century-conversation-author-dan-pink).

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**Valerie von Frank (valerievonfrank@aol.com) is an education writer and editor of Learning Forward’s books. **

## 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](http://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](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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.learningforwardstore.org)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Find additional resources about teacher leadership.