



ASK

Tracy Crow

How can we develop leadership options for teachers?

Q My path to leadership was a winding one, and it eventually took me to the central office as a director of assessment and curriculum in a medium-sized urban district. I started as a mentor, led curriculum committees, and took opportunities where I found them, eventually getting my administrator's license over the course of several years of night classes.

Our district is now fully recognizing the importance of supporting teacher leaders, and we are looking ahead to intentionally crafting leadership options, both to strengthen career pathway options for educators and develop learning leaders in schools. I am so proud we are doing this, and I'm also eager to learn what this might look like and what we should consider along the way.

We've been hearing from many districts that are taking similar steps to developing leadership opportunities for teachers, and with good reason. *Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems* (Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016) found that the high-achieving school systems studied create learning leadership roles for teachers as a critical element for success.

USEFUL FRAMEWORKS

Learning Forward recently published *A Systemic Approach to Elevating Teacher Leadership* (Killion et al., 2016), a report that not only makes the case for intentionally creating and supporting teacher leaders but also outlines four essential components for establishing a systemic approach. "Advancing their careers while remaining in the role of teacher is what many teacher leaders want and their students and the profession deserve," the authors write (p. 5).

The components are based on several assumptions about teacher leadership, and studying those assumptions along with the full

explanations of the teacher leadership components will help school and district leaders arrive at a common understanding of their goals and outline an action plan. The components are:

- 1. Define teacher leadership purpose, roles, and responsibilities.** What will teacher leadership look like in action, and what are its goals (Killion et al., p. 10)?
- 2. Create conditions for successful teacher leadership.** How will a district create a healthy culture, addressing such elements as trust and collective responsibility, and how will it establish supportive structures such as defined roles and relevant policies (Killion et al., p. 12)?
- 3. Cultivate dispositions for teacher leadership.** What beliefs do teachers hold about their identity as well as district leadership hierarchy that may impact their view of themselves as leaders (Killion et al., p. 16)?
- 4. Assess the impact of teacher leadership.** How will a district

Each issue, we ask a learning professional to answer your professional learning questions. This month's response comes from Tracy Crow, Learning Forward director of communications.

measure the impact of teacher leadership on educator practices and results for students (Killion et al., p. 18)?

Another important resource for district and school leaders to consider as they shape their support for teacher leadership is the Teacher Leader Model Standards, which outline various competencies teacher leaders develop to effectively fulfill informal and formal teacher leadership responsibilities.

The standards were developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium to "encourage professional discussion about what constitutes the full range of competencies that teacher leaders possess and how this form of leadership can be distinguished from, but work in tandem with, formal



LEARNING PROFESSIONALS: WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The “Ask” column is a way to open a dialogue with learning leaders about the issues you face daily. No topic is too broad or narrow. Whether you are struggling to establish a principal pipeline in a rural county or wondering how to find a literacy coach for your school, we’d like to discuss your concerns.

Send your questions to ask@learningforward.org. Take as many words as you need to explain your question(s) — understanding that we may edit them for length or clarity.

We look forward to hearing from you.

administrative leadership roles to support good teaching and promote student learning” (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008, p. 5).

The domains defined in the standards cover a wide range of responsibilities and aspects 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 learning.
- **Domain III:** Promoting professional learning for continuous improvement.
- **Domain IV:** Facilitating

improvements in instruction and student learning.

- **Domain V:** Promoting the use of 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 (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008, p. 9).

OUR VIEW

While Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) don’t

outline processes or definitions of teacher leadership, the Leadership standard explicitly emphasizes leaders’ responsibilities to lead learning and make visible their own learning, whether they lead from the classroom, the principal’s office, or the central office.

In our view, teacher leaders have the drive to continuously improve their skills and practices so that they can contribute to better learning for all students. They take collective responsibility for all of the students in their sphere of influence, which is why they support their peers in their continuous improvement as well. Teachers may hold this stance from any position, whether classroom teacher, learning team leader, or department head.

REFERENCES

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