

Introduction

This document contains the teacher leadership curriculum developed by a consortium of five states: Kentucky, Ohio, Delaware, Alabama, and Kansas.

Purpose

The five-state consortium curriculum is designed primarily to allow states (and or school districts) to develop initial preparation programs in the area of teacher leadership. Some states are considering a new certificate or license in the area of teacher leadership. In these cases, most of the 14 courses can be used. Other states are weighing the use of a “teacher leader” endorsement on an existing teaching certificate. In these cases, a much smaller number of the 14 courses will be used. A secondary intent of the work is to enrich the pool of teacher leadership professional development opportunities. To facilitate this goal, almost all of the 14 courses are comprised of three domains, each of which can be used separately for staff development.

Need

An initial question that is likely to arise is: Why do we need a curriculum in the area of teacher leadership? Our answer is that schools are becoming leadership dense organizations, or at least the better ones are. They are relying less on a single individual, the principal, to lead and more on teachers to shape and direct school-wide improvement work. At the same time, we learn from the research that most teachers are not well prepared to assume leadership responsibilities beyond their individual classrooms. They were educated to work with children, not to lead adults in the larger work of school improvement. If ideas such as teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and shared leadership that are at the heart of 21st century school organizations are to take root and flourish, new learning will be required.

A second question is: Why not simply have prospective or developing teacher leaders complete the same program of study that prospective administrators take? While there is some important overlap between the new educational/instructional leadership role being suggested for principals and the educational leadership responsibilities that fall to teacher leaders, there are distinct differences as well. Most centrally, the school administration curriculum prepares educators to leave the classroom and assume responsibility for managing the school. Teacher leaders on the other hand remain in the classroom and the DNA of their work is not administration. Teacher leaders need to learn to lead adults and to lead primarily from expertise in the areas of learning and teaching. More often than not, they will not lead from formally assigned roles. They need preparation that is closely aligned with these requirements.

A third question we grappled with is: What is required to make a teacher leadership curriculum come to life, to avoid the fate of being placed in a binder and shelved? While our energy was directed primarily to curriculum development, throughout the process we labored with the understanding that state, district, and school actions will be needed for this project to grow. At the state level, the creation of new certificates or endorsements will be required. At the district and school levels, recognition of the importance of teacher leadership is critical as is the provision of supports, including incentives, for those who assume leadership responsibilities in their schools and in their districts.

Foundation

Standards

The consortium gave considerable attention to developing the appropriate foundation for the teacher leadership curriculum and for its use. One set of discussions centered around the “standards” that would inform the curriculum. We made two critical decisions here. First, the standards would be deduced from the curriculum rather than formed up as an a priori base for our work. Second, each member state would forge a state-specific set of teacher leader standards once the curriculum was

delineated. Listed below is one example of that work from Kansas. Other states are still engaged in the standards development work.

Kansas Teacher Leader Standards

Standard 1: The teacher leader is able to apply strategies of adult learning across teacher leadership activities

Standard 2: The teacher leader is able to advance the professional skills of colleagues by demonstrating and applying expertise in observational skills and in providing feedback in order to support reflective practice focused on improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Standard 3: The teacher leader is able to improve the quality of colleagues' collaboration and interaction with families and other stakeholders.

Standard 4: The teacher leader is able to initiate and facilitate colleagues' design and implementation of action research and analysis of data for individual and group decision making

Standard 5: The teacher leader is able to develop and support collaborative teams and promote collegial interactions that improve the effectiveness of practice.

Standard 6: The teacher leader is able to identify and assess opportunities for educational improvement, and advocate effectively for them within and beyond the school community

Standard 7: The teacher leader is able to inform and facilitate colleagues' selection or design, use, and interpretation of multiple assessments, along with other available data, to make informed decisions that improve the quality of instruction and student learning.

Standard 8: The teacher leader is able to inform and facilitate the design and implementation of coherent, integrated professional development based on assessed student and teacher needs.

Definition

Another set of foundational discussions addressed the issue of defining teacher leadership. Relying on a fairly rich set of definitions from the scholarly literature in this area, we culled the following insights which in turn shaped our definition of teacher leadership. Interspersed throughout the assortment of definitions we reviewed are references to enabling conditions, including elements that distinguish teacher leadership from administrative leadership. Whereas references to position, formal training, legal authority, and organizational expertise pepper writings on managerial leadership, descriptions of

pedagogical knowledge and collegiality anchor the literature on teacher leadership. The definitions also offer a variety of conditions that provide an enabling environment for teacher leadership to take root while setting it apart from prevailing views of administrative leadership. For example, the beliefs that a teacher leader must be someone who (1) is a practicing teacher, not someone who has left the classroom; (2) works and has influence outside his or her classroom; (3) does not engage in managerial and supervisory activities; (4) is often chosen by teacher colleagues; and (5) wields considerable autonomy in undertaking his or her work can all be found in the definitional mosaic we uncovered.

Based on our analysis, and scaffolding on key components listed above, we arrived at the following definition of teacher leadership.

Teacher leaders are educators who use their expertise to improve student learning by working outside the classroom in formal and informal ways to augment the professional skills of colleagues, to strengthen the culture of the school, and to improve the quality of instruction.

Guiding Principles

A final set of foundational discussions unfolded around the “design principles” that would anchor the curriculum development work. After analysis of the relevant literature and considerable discussion, we forged the following design principles that formed the architecture for and are woven into the 14 courses in the five-state teacher leadership curriculum.

- Focus on improving school quality and student achievement
- Be based on best available research and exemplary practice
- Be grounded in practice, emphasizing authentic learning experiences
- Employ instructional designs aligned with best research on learning, including methods of adult development

- Feature inquiry-based models of learning and reflection
- Underscore collaboration among school and university partners in the design of the program
- Emphasize collaborative work among program participants
- Encourage innovation and risk taking among program participants
- Apply to participants from all levels and types of schools and at all stages of careers
- Rely on authentic assessment measures to evaluate candidates

The 5-State Consortium
Teacher Leadership Curriculum

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A. DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL

1. Understanding How Schools Work [AL]
2. Understanding Professional Responsibilities of Leaders [KY]
3. Developing a Deeper Understanding of Leadership [OH]

B. WORKING PRODUCTIVELY WITH OTHERS

4. Developing More Effective Interpersonal Skills [KY]
5. Learning to Coach/Mentor Others [OH]
6. Facilitating Productive Collaboration [DE]

C. DEEPENING THE INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY OF COLLEAGUES

7. Designing and Implementing High-quality Professional Development [KS]
8. Recognizing, Assessing, and Supporting Quality Instructional Practices with Colleagues [KS]
9. Program Evaluation on Teacher Leaders [DE]

D. LEADING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

10. Developing and Sustaining Professional Learning Communities [KS]
11. Leading Change [DE]
12. Teacher Leader Research I [AL]
13. Teacher Leadership Research II [AL]
14. Promoting Equitable Schools for Youngster and Families [KY]