

## Teacher Leadership Roles

### **Description:**

Teacher leadership roles give high-performing teachers the opportunity to extend their impact to address their school's most urgent needs. The most effective roles are those that contribute to the growth and practice of other teachers or that extend the teacher's reach to more students. Roles that contribute to the growth of other teachers include planning for and facilitating collaborative planning time or coaching teachers. Teacher leaders can extend their reach to more students by teaching higher student loads (including more classes, after-school classes, or higher class sizes) or teaching in high-priority areas (e.g., a school struggling to meet the high needs of its incoming Grade 9 students may design teacher leader roles specifically in Grade 9).

Teacher leaders are identified through a selection process, at either the district or school level, that assesses teachers based on the competencies needed for the role. Selected teachers take on the additional responsibilities in exchange for additional pay or a reduced teacher load. They typically receive support from the school's instructional expert development group or leadership team members acting as coaches. The effectiveness of teacher leaders is usually assessed, at least in part, by examining their contribution to student improvement and/or teacher development.

These types of teacher leader roles differ from traditional approaches to teacher leadership in both the responsibilities associated with the role and the support provided. Traditionally structured roles have often revolved around giving input to the school's administration, or facilitating meetings, instead of providing direct instruction expertise to other teachers or supporting a larger number of students. Additional time and/or compensation is usually not provided, and there is typically little support or accountability attached to more traditional roles. The shift to strategic teacher leadership requires redefining what is expected of teacher leaders and ensuring their roles are designed in ways that maximize opportunities for them to be successful.

**Rationale:** Teacher leadership roles are critical in schools looking to dramatically improve student performance. Teacher leadership roles allow teachers to extend their reach to improve student achievement. They can also serve as ways to keep great teachers in schools longer, by providing professional and financial incentives for taking on leadership roles and making the job more sustainable. Lastly, teacher leadership roles create a distributed leadership model that not only makes the administrators' jobs more doable but also strengthens the leadership team's decision-making processes, generates buy-in and commitment from teachers, and increases the fidelity of implementation of initiatives.

**KEY COMPONENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION**

In the absence of a districtwide strategy, a school will need to take on some of the roles ideally done at the system level. For the purpose of the profile, all such components that schools will need to consider when implementing teacher leader roles are included, regardless of district context:

1. Well-defined position descriptions and job responsibilities that are tied to increases in student achievement, and align with school needs and priorities
2. A rigorous selection process that identifies the most effective teachers, allowing them to maximize their strengths and/or extend their reach in the classroom
3. Strong management and support that assess teacher leader performance, help identify targeted areas of support and ongoing professional development, and measure whether roles are having their intended impact on student achievement
4. Sustainable funding to secure the additional pay and/or release time necessary to create a strong value proposition for teacher leader roles

### District-Level Enabling Conditions

Effective implementation of advisory programs is best supported by the following district conditions:

1. **Design system-wide roles** as part of a robust career lattice for teachers that are formalized across schools and designed to align with the district's needs and priorities for change.
2. **Design pay structures and enable scheduling flexibilities** to provide additional pay through stipends or salaries in the career pathway, and enable release time for teachers in their schedules. This may require adjustments or negotiations in the collective bargaining agreement, if one exists.
3. **Support the teacher leader selection process** by creating screening processes and/or tests. For example, DC's LEAP initiative includes common subject-specific tests to assess content expertise for instructional roles. DC also provides baseline expectations for the role that a school can then tailor to its needs.
4. **Provide professional learning opportunities** that support leadership skills for teacher leaders, as well as support for the principals who support and evaluate them.

**Clarify purpose:** Before making decisions about how to organize resources around teacher leadership roles, clarify their purpose in your school.

Use student and teacher data, including teacher evaluation information, to identify your school's most pressing needs, and determine how teacher leadership roles will support your school in meeting those needs.

- *Using your students' and teachers' most pressing needs, what are you hoping to accomplish by implementing teacher leadership roles? How will they align with the school's stated priorities or goals?*
- *Which groups of students and/or teachers will be targeted for teacher leadership roles? For example, will teacher leader roles be developed only for Grade 9 as a priority year? Will only certain types of effective teachers (ELA or math, for example) be considered for instructional leadership roles?*
- *What are one or two high-level goals that you might use to measure success annually? What quantitative targets might you set with respect to those goals in each of the first few years of implementation? For example, if teacher leadership is intended to improve student achievement in priority areas, a school could look at student growth data in those areas. If teacher leaders are intended to support the growth of teachers, evaluation and survey data could be used to measure success in that area.*

## MAKING IT WORK: RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

**Creating an advisory program will have implications for people, time, money, and other resources in your school. Specific decisions to make during the planning process with regard to these implications are noted below, organized by the building block components listed above.**

### 1. Well-defined position descriptions and job responsibilities

Most importantly, positions should be created to address a school's most urgent needs and tied to increases in student achievement. For example, a school with several new teachers struggling to implement rigorous instruction may design a coaching role to support new teachers. The new teacher coaches would be evaluated, in part, on the achievement of the students for whom the new teachers taught.

Once positions have been created to address the school's needs, position descriptions should be written to include both the competencies needed to be successful in the role and the specific responsibilities the role will assume. For example, an instructional coach role might require teacher leaders to demonstrate the ability to provide actionable feedback to teachers on high-priority areas. An ELA coach's responsibilities would include, among others, observing and providing feedback bi-weekly to all Grade 9 and 10 ELA teachers.

Descriptions would also outline the people or teams with whom the teacher leader would work, and in what ways they interact with others in the school (e.g., coach, mentor, evaluator, etc.). Descriptions also include the compensation package offered for each role (i.e., a stipend, salary increase, or hybrid of both) and the amount of release time provided. For example, for roles that include leading collaborative planning meetings, leaders need time to attend meeting(s) and as much time as that to plan the meeting(s). Other roles may require release time to observe teachers or prepare data reports. For sample job descriptions, see the resources section.

Once the school's leadership team has determined what types of roles are needed to address the school's needs, schools may decide to convene a committee of teachers and administrators to build out detailed descriptions, or survey teachers to gauge initial interest and potential concerns. Schools may also look at descriptions from other schools and districts to get ideas on the types of roles best suited for their school. In any case, teachers should be involved in the design process to ensure that the roles are sustainable and attractive for teachers, and to generate broader buy-in for the roles and how they intend to address the school's most urgent needs.

## Key Questions:

- *What are one to three teacher leader roles that will have the highest impact, given your school's goals and priorities? What will the competencies and detailed responsibilities of those roles be?*
- *Who will be involved in the creation of roles?*
- *When will those people meet to create the roles?*
- *Will roles receive additional compensation for the extra work?*
- *Will the roles require release time from full teaching loads?*
- *How will teacher schedules need to be changed to ensure adequate time for teacher leaders' additional responsibilities?*
- *Are any of the roles replacing an existing role or responsibility of a current team member? If so, how will other positions need to be adjusted?*
- *In what ways will you involve teachers in the creation and refinement of teacher leader roles (a committee or task force, faculty-wide communications or surveys, etc.)?*

## 2. A rigorous selection process

Once position descriptions have been developed, the school leadership team must determine the application and selection process.

A rigorous selection process is able to assess candidates on the competencies needed for their specific role. This may include a content exam, a written task, a demo lesson or coaching session, or a series of behavioral fit interviews. It may also include getting references or peer evaluations for the candidate. In some districts, there is system-level guidance on the selection criteria for roles, and materials provided for screening candidates, which schools can adapt to their specific roles or needs.

The application timeline should account for any schedule, staffing, and budget changes that the roles require, and provide sufficient time for any professional learning opportunities or training that new leaders will need. If new hires will be considered for teacher leader roles, the timeline should account for the typical hiring window. Schools hiring candidates externally will also need to consider how to reassign teachers to leverage the new hire's expertise for the school's highest-priority areas.

Once selection criteria and processes have been developed, school leaders must determine if their current staff is sufficient to fill the types of roles it seeks to create now—and to sustain in the future. Leaders may need to identify additional pipeline or recruitment opportunities (e.g., TFA, local

teaching residencies, or teaching universities) to hire teachers who will immediately or eventually take over teacher leader roles as teachers move in and out of leadership, or to support new roles as school needs change.

Key Questions:

- *What criteria will be used to assess candidate quality for each teacher leader role? How will it differ for each type of role and the responsibilities of each?*
- *What is the application or screening process and timeline for teacher leader roles in your school?*
- *Are there any district-level resources or other external resources to support the selection process?*
- *If new hires will fill teacher leader roles, will the selection process be different or the same for new teacher hires?*
- *How will teacher assignments change as a result of teacher leader roles to leverage teacher leaders' expertise in highest-priority areas?*
- *Will you need to seek other recruitment or pipeline opportunities to hire for teacher leader roles now or in the future? What other pipelines currently exist in your system that you can rely on for hiring teacher leaders?*

### 3. Strong management and support for teacher leaders

Just as with teachers, teacher leaders need support to grow and learn in their role. Schools will need to identify who on the current staff will coach and develop leaders, and if additional hires or outside help will be needed to provide support to teacher leaders. Coaches will need time to identify major professional growth areas for teacher leaders, plan for and execute on professional learning opportunities throughout the year, and regularly coach and provide feedback to teacher leaders.

Coaches must also develop a plan for evaluating teacher leaders, including developing performance metrics and evaluation criteria, with measures of student performance, and practice coaching and providing feedback. This type of work may happen in regularly scheduled meetings, but also before or after school, or over the summer as necessary.

Teacher leaders often receive professional learning (PL) support through an Instructional Expert Development Group (IEDG), where teacher leaders and the school's leadership team meet to improve each other's facilitation and coaching techniques, build collective knowledge and practice related to specific content areas and grade bands, and discuss teacher growth and needs to

monitor and evolve professional learning across the building.<sup>1</sup> Other PL opportunities may include visits to other schools, leading PL for teachers, or external PL events.

As part of ongoing progress monitoring, the school's leadership team should assess, on an annual or semiannual basis, the effectiveness of current roles—based on student growth and achievement—and make any changes that are needed to the roles or the leaders assigned to them.

Key Questions:

- *What is the frequency and length of advisory periods?*
- *Who will coach, develop, and/or evaluate teacher leaders?*
- *Is there sufficient capacity on your current administrative team to support teacher leaders, or will you need to hire new positions?*
- *Are there external support staff (either at the district level or through external partnerships) who can help in developing teacher leaders?*
- *How will coaches' schedules be designed to ensure sufficient time for their responsibilities (e.g., determining teacher leaders' PL needs, planning PL opportunities, providing coaching and observations, conducting formal evaluations, etc.)?*
- *How often will coaches meet to norm on support and coaching for teacher leaders?*
- *Will you create an IEDG or other peer group to support teacher leaders' development?*
- *What other PL opportunities will teacher leaders have throughout the year?*
- *How often will teacher leaders be evaluated throughout the year?*
- *What metrics will be used to measure performance of teacher leaders? Will student performance be integrated into the metrics?*
- *How often will roles and positions be re-evaluated? Will teacher leaders reapply annually for roles?*

1. For more information, refer to ERS's Best Building Block profile on Instructional Expert Development Groups.

#### 4. Sustainable funding

Ideally, the teacher pay associated with teacher leader roles is funded through a districtwide compensation system in which teachers with high levels of effectiveness receive more pay for taking on additional responsibilities. Such a system-level approach promotes parity across schools, and ensures that the compensation provided is part of a robust career and compensation pathway system. At the school level, most teacher leadership models will require schools to reorganize resources to enable additional release time for teacher leaders to take on extra work. In cases where the district compensation structures aren't in place, schools must also determine how to pay stipends or adjust compensation in other ways.

Teacher leaders will likely be taking on responsibilities that were previously assigned to other staff. For example, if administrators were previously responsible for the coaching of all teachers and the facilitation of collaborative planning time, perhaps administrator FTE can be reduced as the school transitions to teacher leaders. Often teacher leaders will take on roles (like tutoring of the highest-need students, extended day, etc.) that were once stipended, and so stipends can be repurposed to support a teacher leader strategy. Finally, teacher leader pay or decreased teaching time is sometimes found by increasing class sizes or redistributing the responsibilities of other teachers within the schedule. For example, instead of offering six ninth-grade ELA sections, a high school might choose to offer five, increasing the class size of each, but creating a free period for the ninth-grade ELA teacher leader.

##### Key Questions:

- *What funding can be counted on at the district level to support your teacher leader strategy?*
- *What reallocations of people or stipends are necessary to fund additional pay for teacher leaders?*
- *What types of reallocations (including class size or teacher assignment) are necessary to enable increased release time for teacher leaders?*

## SUMMARY OF KEY QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE PLANNING PROCESS

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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- Using your students' and teachers' most pressing needs, what are you hoping to accomplish by implementing teacher leader roles? How will they align with the school's stated priorities or goals?

### STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

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- Which groups of students and/or teachers will be targeted for teacher leader roles? For example, will teacher leader roles be developed only for ninth grade as a priority year? Will only certain types of effective teachers (ELA or math, for example) be considered for instructional leadership roles?
- What are one or two high-level goals that you might use to measure success annually? What quantitative targets might you set with respect to those goals in each of the first few years of implementation? For example, if teacher leadership is intended to improve student achievement in priority areas, a school could look at student growth data in those areas. If teacher leaders are intended to support the growth of teachers, evaluation and survey data could be used to measure success in that area.
- What are one to three teacher leader roles that will have the highest impact, given your school's goals and priorities? What will the competencies and detailed responsibilities of those roles be?
- Who will be involved in the creation of those roles?
- When will those people meet to create the roles?
- What criteria will be used to assess candidate quality for each teacher leader role? How will it differ for each type of role and the responsibilities of each?
- What is the application or screening process and timeline for teacher leader roles in your school?
- Are there any district-level resources or other external resources to support the selection process?
- What reallocations of people or stipends are necessary to fund additional pay for teacher leaders?

- What types of reallocations (including class size or teacher assignment) are necessary to enable increased release time for teacher leaders?

### **MASTER SCHEDULE**

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- How will teacher schedules need to be changed to ensure adequate time for teacher leaders' additional responsibilities?
- How will coaches' schedules be designed to ensure sufficient time for their responsibilities (e.g., determining teacher leaders' PL needs, planning PL opportunities, providing coaching and observations, conducting formal evaluations, etc.)?
- How often will coaches meet to norm on support and coaching for teacher leaders?

### **JOB AND TEACHER ASSIGNMENT**

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- Are any of the roles replacing an existing role or responsibility of a current team member? If so, how will other positions need to be adjusted?
- In what ways will you involve teachers in the creation and refinement of teacher leader roles (a committee or task force, faculty-wide communications or surveys, etc.)?
- How will teacher assignments change as a result of teacher leader roles to leverage teacher leaders' expertise in highest-priority areas?
- What criteria will be used to assess candidate quality for each teacher leader role? How will it differ for each type of role and the responsibilities of each?
- What is the application or screening process and timeline for teacher leader roles in your school?
- Are there any district-level resources or other external resources to support the selection process?
- Who will coach, develop, and/or evaluate teacher leaders?
- Is there sufficient capacity on your current administrative team to support teacher leaders, or will you need to hire new positions?

### **BUDGET AND STAFFING**

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- Will roles receive additional compensation for the extra work?
- Will the roles require release time from full teaching loads?
- What funding can be counted on at the district level to support your teacher leader strategy?

### **HIRING PLAN**

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- If new hires will fill teacher leader roles, will the selection process be different or the same for new teacher hires?
- Will you need to seek other recruitment or pipeline opportunities to hire for teacher leader roles now or in the future? What other pipelines currently exist in your system that you can rely on for hiring teacher leaders?

### **ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN**

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- Are there external support staff (either at the district level or through external partnerships) who can help in developing teacher leaders?
- Will you create an IEDG or other peer group to support teacher leaders' development?
- What other PL opportunities will teacher leaders have throughout the year?
- How often will teacher leaders be evaluated throughout the year?

### **STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

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- What metrics will be used to measure performance of teacher leaders? Will student performance be integrated into the metrics?
- How often will roles and positions be re-evaluated? Will teacher leaders reapply annually for roles?

| POTENTIAL CHALLENGES                                                                        | POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No formal teacher leadership training is in place, and it's unclear what it should include. | Many teachers taking on teacher leader roles have never had experience managing or providing coaching and feedback to adults. In addition to time dedicated before teachers take on their leadership roles, schools should create time in teacher leaders' schedules throughout the year for ongoing learning opportunities. See the <i>Additional Resources</i> section below for links to free tools and publications that include guidance on how to design teacher leadership roles effectively and provide support. |

## Design Interactions

Strategic school designs have ment interconnected components. Well- designed teacher leadership toles should be integrated with the following *design essentials*:

- Expert-led Collaboration and Professional Learning
- Growth-Oriented Adult Culture

## Research

Jacob, B. and Rockoff, J. (2011). "Organizing Schools to Improve Student Achievement: Start Times, Grade Configurations, and Teacher Assignments." Brookings Institute: Washington, D.C. Retrieved March 5, 2012 from [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/09\\_organize\\_jacob\\_rockoff/092011](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2011/09_organize_jacob_rockoff/092011)

Towers Perrin. (2006). "Winning Strategies for a Global Workforce: Attracting, Retaining, and Engaging Employees for Competitive Advantage." Retrieved March 5, 2012 from [http:// www.towersperrin.com/tp\\_getwebcachedoc?webc=HRS/ USA/2006/200602/GWS.pdf](http://www.towersperrin.com/tp_getwebcachedoc?webc=HRS/USA/2006/200602/GWS.pdf)

## Additional Resources

ERS's School System 20/20 Checklist for Teacher Leadership is a good resource for districts looking to create strong teacher leader pathways. ([https://www.erstrategies.org/news/effectively\\_integrating\\_teacher\\_leadership\\_into\\_the\\_system](https://www.erstrategies.org/news/effectively_integrating_teacher_leadership_into_the_system))

For examples of strong teacher leader job descriptions, some resources are below:

- From DCPS: <http://bit.ly/2tZS9Wo>
- From Boston Plan for Excellence: <http://bit.ly/2uyi4aQ>
- From KIPP Public Schools: <http://bit.ly/2uYxdDI>

New Leaders, Public Impact, and others have published public resources to guide the selection of teacher leaders:

- <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED559349.pdf>
- [http://www.newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/NewLeaders\\_Untapped.pdf](http://www.newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/NewLeaders_Untapped.pdf)
- <http://publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/competencies-of-high-performers/>
- [http://publicimpact.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Turnaround\\_Teacher\\_Competerencies.pdf](http://publicimpact.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Turnaround_Teacher_Competerencies.pdf)
- <http://teacherledprofessionallearning.org/steps/selecting-teacher-leaders/>
- <http://opportunityculture.org/teacher-led-professional-learning/selecting-teacher-leaders/#selectingtable>

Lastly, Leading Educators is a national non-profit that provides technical assistance to school systems and schools seeking to establish teacher leadership roles. Learn more about their approach and download free resources and publications here:

<http://www.leadingeducators.org/>