



Teacher Leadership Standards

Developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium

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Preamble

Teacher leadership is integral to serving the needs of students, schools and the teaching profession. To that end, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium has developed these standards to codify, promote and support teacher leadership as a vehicle to transform schools for the needs of the 21st century. The purpose of teacher leadership is to re-culture the school and teaching in order to support student-centered learning.

The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium invites the profession, the public and stakeholders to engage in dialogue about the various forms and dimensions of teacher leadership as well as the variety of contexts in which teacher leadership can be integral to serving the needs of students, schools and the teaching profession. The standards can be used to guide the preparation of experienced teachers to assume leadership roles such as resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, mentors, school team leaders and data coaches (Harrison & Killion, 2007). They also can serve to reinforce the role of higher education in preparing pre-service teachers to become members of professional learning communities and develop critical skills of inquiry, communication and facilitation.

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

We describe the knowledge base needed by the teacher leader in order to meet the performance expectations related to each domain. The functions then describe in more detail key actions and practices related to each domain. It is not expected that a teacher leader should or could embody the many dimensions of teacher leadership outlined in the standards. There are many contexts in which teachers can assume leadership roles, and it our hope that these standards will help expand opportunities for leadership within the teaching profession.

These domains are not for one person to do, but to guide respective roles within a school. This makes sure everyone understands what their roles and responsibilities are, it helps in creating norms.

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands the principles of adult learning and knows how to develop a collaborative culture of collective responsibility in the school. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote an environment of collegiality, trust and respect that focuses on continuous improvement in instruction and student learning.

Functions

The teacher leader:

- Utilizes group processes to help colleagues' work collaboratively to solve problems, make decisions, manage conflict and promote meaningful change;
- Models effective skills in listening, presenting ideas, leading discussions, clarifying, mediating and identifying the needs of self and others in order to advance shared goals and professional learning;
- Employs facilitation skills to create trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom and build ownership and action that supports student learning;
- Strives to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges; and
- Uses knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and languages to promote effective interactions among colleagues.

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

The teacher leader understands how research creates new knowledge, informs policies and practices and improves teaching and learning. The **teacher leader models and facilitates the use of systematic inquiry as a critical component of teachers' ongoing learning** and development.

Functions

The teacher leader:

- Assists colleagues in accessing and using research in order to select appropriate strategies to improve student learning;
- Facilitates the analysis of student learning data, collaborative interpretation of results and application of findings to improve teaching and learning;
- Supports colleagues in collaborating with the higher education institutions and other organizations engaged in researching critical educational issues; and
- Teaches colleagues to collect, analyze and communicate data from their classrooms to improve teaching and learning, and supports them in these efforts.

¹ By colleagues, we mean members of the school community, including teachers, administrators, specialists and others involved in the education of children at the school or district level.

Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote, design and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.

Functions:

The teacher leader:

- Collaborates with colleagues and school administrators to plan professional learning that is team-based, job-embedded, sustained over time, aligned with content standards and linked to school/district improvement goals;
- Uses information about adult learning to respond to the diverse learning needs of colleagues by identifying, promoting and facilitating varied and differentiated professional learning;
- Facilitates professional learning among colleagues;
- Identifies and uses appropriate technologies to promote collaborative and differentiated professional learning;
- Works with colleagues to collect, analyze and disseminate data related to the quality of professional learning and its effect on teaching and student learning;
- Advocates for sufficient preparation, time and support for colleagues to work in teams to engage in job-embedded professional learning;
- Provides constructive feedback to colleagues to strengthen teaching practice and improve student learning; and
- Uses information about emerging education, economic and social trends in planning and facilitating professional learning.

Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

The teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by being a continuous learner and modeling reflective practice based on student results. The teacher leader works collaboratively with colleagues to ensure that instructional practices are aligned to a shared vision, mission and goals.

Functions

The teacher leader:

- Facilitates the collection, analysis and use of classroom- and school-based data to identify opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization and school culture;
- Engages in reflective dialogue with colleagues based on observation of instruction, student work and assessment data and helps make connections to research-based effective practices;
- Supports colleagues' individual and collective reflection and professional growth by serving in roles such as mentor, coach and content facilitator;
- Serves as a team leader to harness the skills, expertise and knowledge of colleagues to address curricular expectations and student learning needs;
- Uses knowledge of existing and emerging technologies to guide colleagues in helping students skillfully and appropriately navigate the universe of knowledge available on the Internet, use social media to promote collaborative learning, and connect with people and resources around the globe; and
- Promotes instructional strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and ensures that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction.

Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement

The teacher leader is knowledgeable about current research on classroom- and school-based data and the design and selection of appropriate formative and summative assessment methods. The teacher leader shares this knowledge and collaborates with colleagues to use assessment and other data to make informed decisions that improve learning for all students and to inform school and district improvement strategies.

Functions

The teacher leader:

- Increases the capacity of colleagues to identify and use multiple assessment tools aligned to state and local standards;
- Collaborates with colleagues in the design, implementation, scoring and interpretation of student data to improve educational practice and student learning;
- Creates a climate of trust and critical reflection in order to engage colleagues in challenging conversations about student learning data that lead to solutions to identified issues; and
- Works with colleagues to use assessment and data findings to promote changes in instructional practices or organizational structures to improve student learning.

Domain VI. Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

The teacher leader understands that families, cultures and communities have a significant impact on educational processes and student learning. The teacher leader works with colleagues to promote ongoing systematic collaboration with families, community members, business and community leaders and other stakeholders to improve the educational system and expand opportunities for student learning.

Functions

The teacher leader:

- Uses knowledge and understanding of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and languages in the school community to promote effective interactions among colleagues, families and the larger community;
- Models and teaches effective communication and collaboration skills with families and other stakeholders focused on attaining equitable achievement for students of all backgrounds and circumstances;
- Facilitate colleagues' self-examination of their understandings of community culture and diversity, and encourages colleagues to develop culturally responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences of students and achieve high levels of learning for all students;
- Develops a shared understanding among colleagues of the diverse educational needs of families and the community; and
- Collaborates with families, communities and colleagues to develop comprehensive strategies to address the diverse educational needs of families and the community.

Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

The teacher leader understands how educational policy is made at the local, state and national levels as well as the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators and other stakeholders in formulating those policies. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for practices that support effective teaching and increase student learning, and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community and profession.

Functions:

The teacher leader:

- Shares information with colleagues within and/or beyond the district regarding how local, state and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning;
- Works with colleagues to identify and use research to advocate for teaching and learning processes that meet the needs of all students;

- Collaborates with colleagues to select appropriate opportunities to advocate for the rights and/or needs of students, to secure additional resources within the building or district that support student learning, and to communicate effectively with targeted audiences such as parents and community members;
- Advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and human and material resources, that allow colleagues to spend significant time learning about effective practices and developing a professional learning community focused on school improvement goals; and
- Represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom.

Glossary of Terms

Action research: The process by which participants examine their own practice systematically, using techniques of research (Ferrance, 2000). Implicit in the term *action research* is the idea that teachers will begin a cycle of posing questions, gathering data, reflecting, deciding on a course of action, documenting results and sharing findings with colleagues and the school community.

Advocate: To formulate a position and communicate it through a process that includes defining objectives, gathering facts to build a case, assessing and taking into account others' interests and resources, presenting a clear case and revising it in response to feedback. An advocate is one who speaks on behalf of a particular viewpoint of the issue in question.

Best practices: Strategies, activities, techniques or methodologies that have been shown through research or evaluation to reliably achieve their objectives.

Coaching: A method of professional learning in which a teacher leader supports colleagues as they refine and improve practice.

Colleagues: Members of the school community, including teachers, administrators, specialists and others involved in the education of children at the school or district level.

Continuous improvement: The concept of continuous improvement is a theory of management advanced by W. Edwards Deming, a business consultant and philosopher. His theories were first adopted in Japan, then spread to companies like Ford Motor Company. His 14 points for Quality Assurance (Deming, 1993) became a practical tool for carrying out continuous improvement in the workplace. His ideas of learning from mistakes and maintaining a commitment to improvement and quality have been adapted by educators such as Wiggins and McTighe (2007), whose cycle of vision-feedback-adjust bears resemblance to the Deming Cycle of plan, do, check and action.

Culture: A set of practices, attitudes, values and beliefs shared by a particular group or organization.

Data-driven decision making: A process of making educational decisions based on the analysis of classroom data and standardized test data. Data-driven decision making uses data on function, quantity and quality of inputs and how students learn to suggest educational solutions.

Differentiated instruction: The process by which several different learning experiences are offered to students within a lesson or series of lessons designed to meet students' varied needs or learning styles. This also is referred to as "individualized" or "customized" instruction.

Facilitation skills: The ability to use knowledge of group processes to formulate and deliver the necessary structure for meeting interactions to be effective. This includes being sensitive to effective processes and meeting dynamics that allow participants to focus on the content or the substance of their work together (Basic Facilitation Primer, 2003).

Formative assessment: A type of assessment that is closely related to the instructional process. Ideally, these assessments are incorporated into classroom practice where they provide the information needed to adjust teaching and learning on an ongoing basis. Thus, formative assessment informs both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made.

Job-embedded learning: Planned and purposeful learning that occurs while teachers and administrators engage in their daily work. While performing their job duties, participants simultaneously specify goals for professional learning and achieve those goals through a process of collaboration with colleagues on matters related to their work. They learn by doing, reflecting on their experiences, and then generating and sharing new insights and learning with one another.

Job enhancement: Extending the duties and responsibilities of a job, often entailing greater levels of responsibility, autonomy and control, thereby increasing job satisfaction.

Mentoring: This refers to a developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable teacher helps a less experienced or less knowledgeable teacher develop the skills to be effective in the classroom, develop the ability to be reflective about his or her teaching and become an active member of the school community.

Performance management and evaluation systems: A comprehensive process used to measure, improve and reward the performance of agencies, programs or employees, including an evaluation of how well an employee performs his or her job compared with a set of predetermined standards (as defined by the Pew Center on the States [www.pewcenteronthestates.org]).

Professional development: A comprehensive, substantiated and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (as defined by the National Staff Development Council [www.nsdc.org]).

Professional learning community: A collaborative process in which teachers and other education professionals commit to engaging in continuous improvement through ongoing professional learning. This process is characterized by collegial exchange in which educators work together to improve student learning by investigating problems; specifying goals for educator learning; engaging in collaborative learning through formal and informal professional learning strategies such as lesson study, examining student work and peer coaching; reflecting on practice; and holding one another accountable for improved practice and results.

Re-culture: This term has been used by Michael Fullen (2001) to express the need to change the professional culture of schools. "Transforming the culture — changing the way we do things around here — is the main point" (p. 44).

Reflective practice: As defined by Schön (1983), reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline. In education, it refers to the an educator examining his or her own teaching methods in light of how well students are learning, determining in collaboration with colleagues or coaches how to improve one's practice, examining the results of an intervention and making any necessary changes.

Research-based: Characterized as having been identified through research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to educational activities and programs.

School community: A group of people bound by a common interest in ensuring a high-quality education for all students in a school or district. School community members include, but are not limited to, students, teachers, administrators, school counselors, school support personnel, families, community agencies, businesses, residents and other partners in the educational process.

Stakeholders: All those who are significantly affected by or desire to influence specific programs or policies. This can include educators, parents, community members, teachers' associations and legislators.

Student learning: The broad array of skills and competencies that we expect students will gain across their K–12 education. This includes deep knowledge of core concepts within and across disciplines, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, collaboration, analysis, synthesis, demonstrating social and civic responsibility and applying learning to new situations.

Summative assessment: A structured and standardized means of measuring student progress. These assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know. Many associate summative assessments only with standardized tests such as state assessments, but they also are used as part of district and classroom programs such as end-of-course exams, benchmark tests and end-of-unit tests. Summative assessment at the district/classroom level is an accountability measure that is generally used as part of the grading process.

Teacher leader: A teacher who assumes formally or informally one or more of a wide array of leadership roles to support school and student success. Examples include resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader (e.g., serving on a school committee, acting as a grade-level or department chair, supporting school initiatives or representing the school on community or district task forces or committees), data coach, catalyst for change, or learner modeling continual improvement, demonstrating lifelong learning and using what they learn to help students achieve (Killion & Harrison, 2008).

Teacher leadership: 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 (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Transformational change: Change that affects the entire organization and requires creating the conditions to develop the capacity of both organizations and individuals to learn. This means moving away from just structural changes to changing the culture of the classroom and school (Fullen [b], 2001).