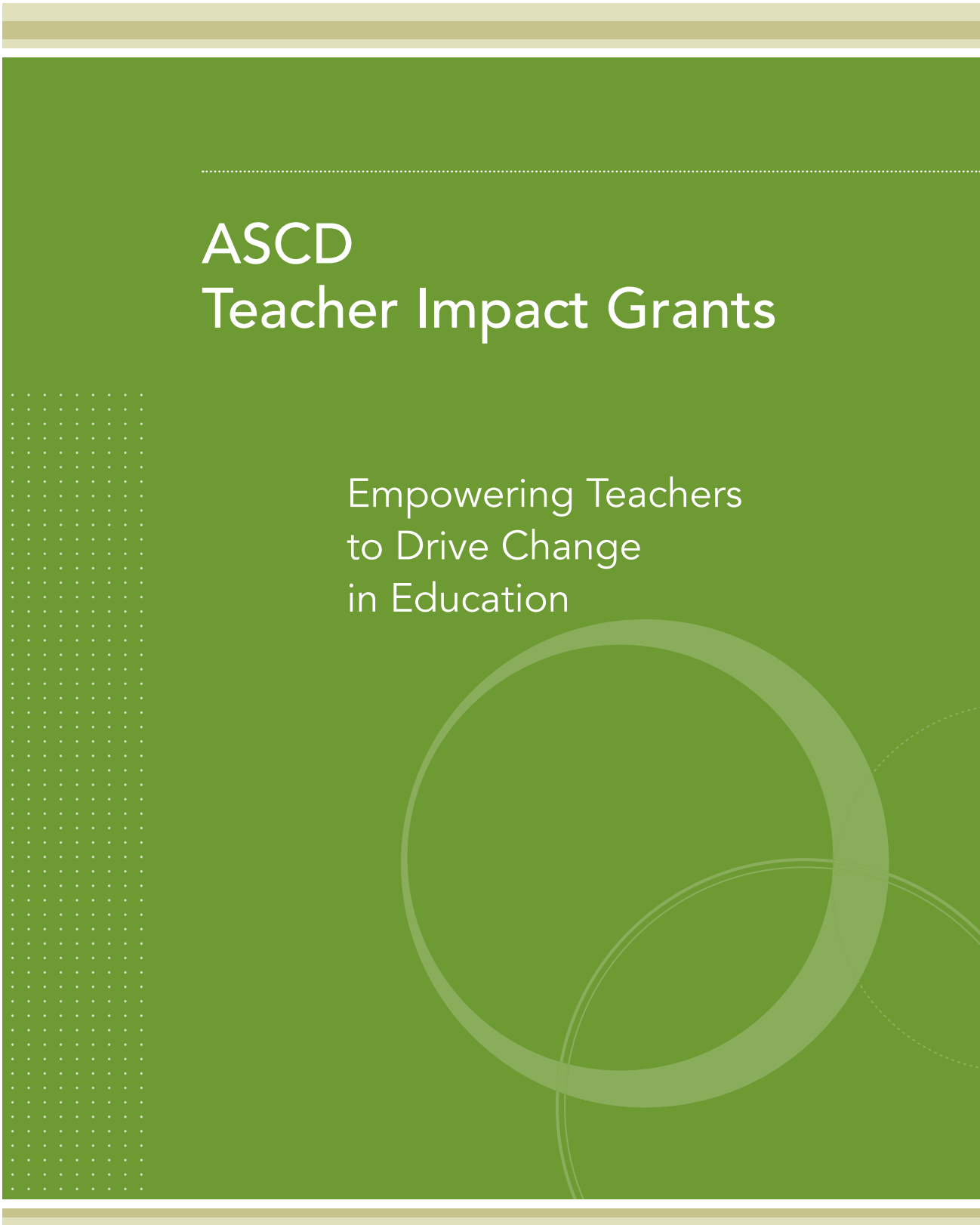

ASCD Teacher Impact Grants

Empowering Teachers
to Drive Change
in Education



Background

Inspired by the Teach to Lead effort—a joint initiative by ASCD, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the U. S. Department of Education to advance student outcomes by expanding opportunities for teacher leadership, ASCD launched the Teacher Impact Grant Program in May 2016. This program aimed to support teachers in implementing fully formed, thoughtful plans derived from their Teach to Lead ideas, particularly those that allow teachers to remain in their classrooms.


With seed money from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and Carnegie Corporation of New York, ASCD developed the Teacher Impact Grant Program to directly fund teachers to develop and execute projects that would serve as models to be replicated and scaled, while also cultivating teachers' leadership abilities to drive transformation in schools, districts, and states.

ASCD Teacher Impact Grants aim to (1) advance high-impact, teacher-led professional learning, (2) provide technical assistance and coaching to support grantees' work as teacher leaders, and (3) increase collaboration between teachers and administrators to sustain their work after the grant period. More specifically, ASCD Teacher Impact Grants help teachers and their administrators partner to transform traditional compliance-driven, top-down professional learning into relevant and exciting teacher-led professional learning.

Within a two-week application window during the 2016–17 academic year, ASCD received 580 applications to the Teacher Impact Grant Program. Each grant proposal included a strategic action plan/logic model planning document that would serve to evaluate the effectiveness of their project throughout the grant period. A panel of vetted current and former classroom teacher leaders associated with ASCD, NBPTS, and the Department of Education reviewed the proposals based on the following selection criteria:

- Significance of the project
- Quality of the project design, management, and personnel
- Predicted impact on teacher and student success
- Sustainability
- Quality of the project evaluation

Seventeen classroom teachers from 15 states received grants in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 (Appendix A). Throughout the grant period, teachers shared experiences and lessons learned, consulted with one another virtually, provided quarterly progress updates, collected evidence, and developed case studies to evaluate their work under the grant.



Grantees received ongoing support, training, and technical assistance from ASCD staff. Grantees were also provided in-person and virtual opportunities to network and collaborate with one another, discuss their challenges and goals, and learn how and where to tell their stories.

This report documents the grant work, as well as advocates for and promotes the work of teacher leadership and teacher-led professional learning to support future grant funding.

Addressing the Challenges of Teacher Leadership


When Teach to Lead launched in 2014, staff conducted a series of listening sessions with 30 national teacher organizations to understand effective teacher leadership and how to build a teacher leadership initiative. Key findings included the following:

- Teachers who have leadership opportunities are more likely to stay in the profession.
- Effective teacher leadership means enhanced outcomes for kids.
- Teachers and school leaders are interested in building teacher leadership opportunities.
- Education organizations find shared vision and ownership in teacher leadership; it is emerging as a common thread that weaves together the profession.
- The teaching profession is changing, as we better understand crucially important factors—like perseverance, resilience, and confidence—that may be just as important to student success as reading and math skills.
- Teachers must have a role in leading this change. Teachers must shape the future of their profession.
- The moment for teacher leadership is now—the teacher leadership movement is necessary and becoming a higher priority among districts and states across the nation.
- Teachers know their students, classrooms, and families best.
- Organizations strongly believe, based on conversations with teachers, that teaching cannot be a one-size-fits-all job and that there must be a variety of paths to professional success based on different interests.

The growth of teacher leadership has been strategically important to educational development in the United States for four key reasons:

First, studies show that more than one-third of teachers are very interested in hybrid roles that involve work both inside and outside their classrooms (MetLife, 2010).

Second, teachers have a larger effect on student outcomes than any other factor, outside of elements beyond a school's control such as personal or family characteristics (RAND Education, 2012). Teachers are most effective when they are empowered with opportunities to grow their leadership skills and change schools.



Third, with the 2015 enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the U.S. Congress recognized the importance of developing teacher leadership capacity in American schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). For the first time, legislation highlighted teacher leadership, offering an opportunity for school systems to channel federal funds into teacher leadership initiatives and staff schools differently. For example, the law allows states and districts to use federal funds for “providing training and support for teacher leaders and principals or other school leaders” as well as granting state and local leaders “authority to make staffing decisions that meet the needs of the school, such as building an instructional leadership team that includes teacher leaders.”

Finally, the United States is facing a national teacher shortage. The Learning Policy Institute estimates a nationwide shortfall of 112,000 teachers in 2018. While shortages tend to focus on recruitment issues, a report from the Learning Policy Institute finds that 90 percent of open teaching positions are created when teachers leave the profession (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). While some retire, about two-thirds of teachers leave for other reasons, most due to dissatisfactions with teaching, such as lack of administrative support, low salaries, testing and accountability pressures, lack of opportunities for advancement, and dissatisfaction with working conditions.

The Teacher Impact Grants help to address these challenges by providing teachers with autonomy and agency to lead initiatives and projects within their schools and districts that support teachers, principals, and, ultimately, students.

Data

As part of the Teacher Impact Grant Program, ASCD provided grantees with a series of three surveys to administer during the one-year grant cycle. These waves of quantitative and qualitative survey data were developed by ASCD to evaluate the program and provide grantees with a source of feedback, data, and quotes to include in individual case studies.

Each grantee team deployed the surveys during three distinct time periods—before (pre-wave), during (interim), and after (post-wave) project implementation—among colleagues who might be influenced by their specific project, including school staff, school-based or district-based administrators, district staff, parents, and students. In total, teams administered 51 pre-, interim, and post-wave surveys, from which ASCD gathered the following data:

- Three hundred seventy-eight (378) total responses to the pre-wave survey set a baseline for the attitudes and current practices in the grantees' schools or districts, and provided data for case studies.
- One hundred fifty-four (154) total responses to the interim wave survey provided a “progress report”—feedback that allowed grantees to make mid-course corrections—provided data and quotes for their case studies, and allowed ASCD to lightly observe their progress.
- Two hundred twenty-eight (228) total responses to the post-wave survey provided grantees with final data, quotes, and reflections for their case studies, provided ASCD with data to analyze any significant changes in the attitudes and behaviors since the benchmark survey (pre-wave), provided data for others seeking to replicate the program, and provided ASCD with detailed information for this culminating report.

This report views the three waves of research in the aggregate, looking for trends, changes in actions and attitudes, and reflections on the influence of the grant work.

Findings

The Teacher Impact Grant Program aimed to improve high-impact, teacher-led professional learning, leadership coaching, and partnerships between administrators and teacher leaders. Throughout the course of the grant period, and to account for both qualitative and quantitative findings, ASCD collected information via survey results, as well as via in-person and virtual convenings with grantees. Overall, grantees, and those influenced by their project, identified an increase in leadership opportunities; the importance of partnering with administration; and an overall increase in the development of their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as teacher leaders. Subsequent figures outline the details of each of these findings.

I. Teacher Leadership Activities

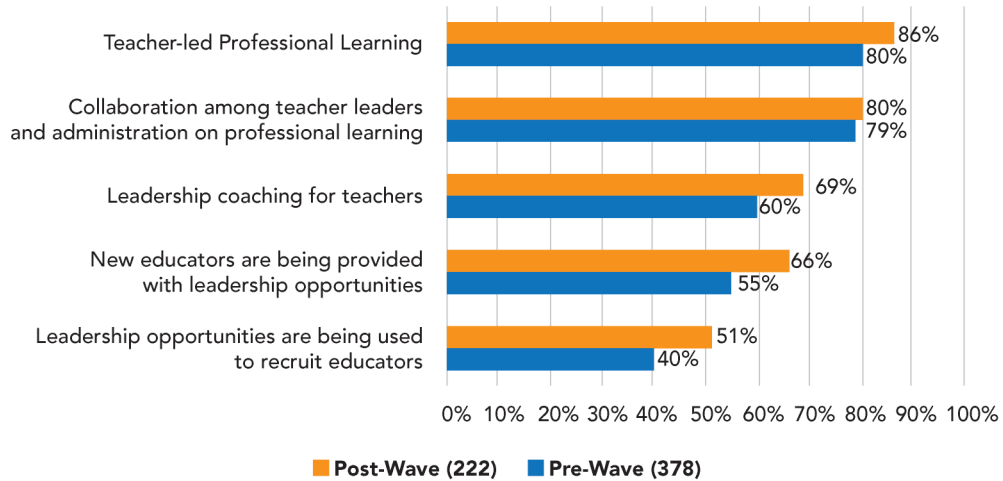
Before the launch of the Teacher Impact Grants, survey respondents reported that only two leadership activities—**teacher-led professional learning** and **collaboration between teacher leaders and administration on professional learning**—were taking place at least “somewhat” in roughly 80 percent of schools and districts participating in the program. While schools and districts did provide those two opportunities more frequently after the grant period, the survey tracked the most notable increases in activities that were not frequently offered before the onset of the program: **leadership coaching for teachers, new educators are being provided with leadership opportunities, and leadership opportunities are being used to recruit educators.**

Figure 1 shows the percentage increase in specific leadership opportunities after project completion.

Figure 1. Percentage of Leadership Activities in Schools and Districts, Pre- and Post-Wave

To What Extent Are the Following Going On in Your School/District?

(Percent occurring "To a great extent" or "Somewhat")



These increases demonstrate that when schools and districts embed and value teacher leadership opportunities into their cultures, as inspired by the Teacher Impact Grants, that work stimulates additional leadership efforts, particularly those that encourage teachers to influence others and invest in leadership opportunities for recruitment and retainment of teachers.

II. Attitudes Towards Teacher Leadership

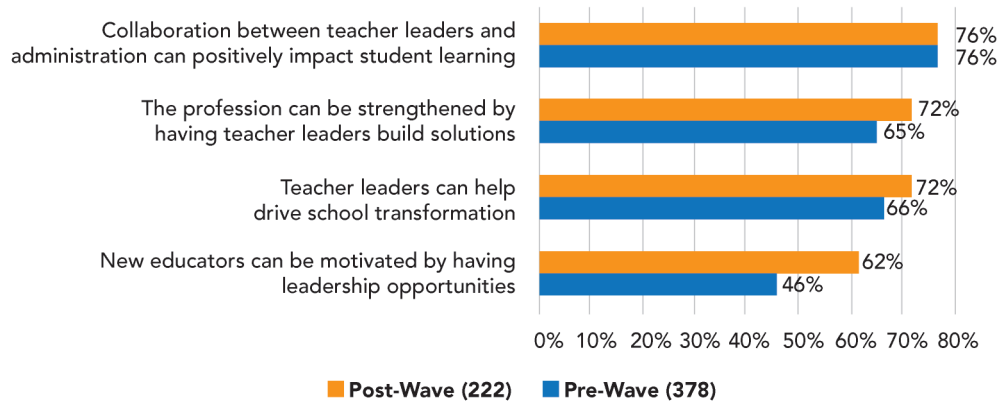
Teacher Impact Grant award recipients and their fellow educators experienced firsthand how attitudes toward teacher-led professional learning can positively affect a school community.

While respondents' support of the statement **collaboration between teacher leaders and administration can positively impact student learning** held steady at 76 percent from pre- to post-wave, making it the most widely held teacher leader opinion tracked, post-wave surveys indicated increases in agreement with other positive attitudes about teacher leaders. In particular, agreement with the statement **new educators can be motivated by having leadership opportunities** increased markedly, from 46 to 62 percent.

Figure 2. Changes in Attitudes About Teacher Leaders, Pre- and Post-Wave

Please Indicate How Much You Agree or Disagree with each Statement Below.

(Percent Agree "Very" or "Somewhat")



While teachers agreed at the onset that collaboration between teacher leaders and administrators has a positive impact on student learning, grantees shared that their relationships with their administration developed on a deeper level throughout the grant period.

The Teacher Impact Grant application required applicants to submit a letter of understanding from their administration regarding their proposal and their plan for implementation. Many recipients shared that this step was crucial to the success of their grant. Grantees were able to implement the grant with confidence, fidelity, trust, and support because they engaged their administration at the start. They also shared that, because they had received a green light from administration, they were better equipped to garner support and buy-in from staff and colleagues.

One grantee shared the following insight:

"For administrators, 'Trust your teachers.' They are well-trained professionals with invaluable experience in the classroom. What does trust look like? Trust means stepping back to let teachers lead, listening actively, and being intentional about how you engage teachers in decision-making processes. Trusting teachers is not a hands-off process. The presence of trust does not mean an absence of care. Make sure your teachers are supported in their leadership roles. Find out what resources teachers need to be effective in their roles and ensure that teacher leaders are equipped with what they need."

III. Program Objectives

In addition to outcomes specific to teacher leadership, survey respondents identified a variety of tangential outcomes that resulted from their projects. The most significant increases in agreement, from the interim wave of surveys to post-wave, were associated with the following statements: **projects from the grant can serve as models to be replicated and scaled, projects are an innovative solution to problem, and projects position teachers as leaders.**

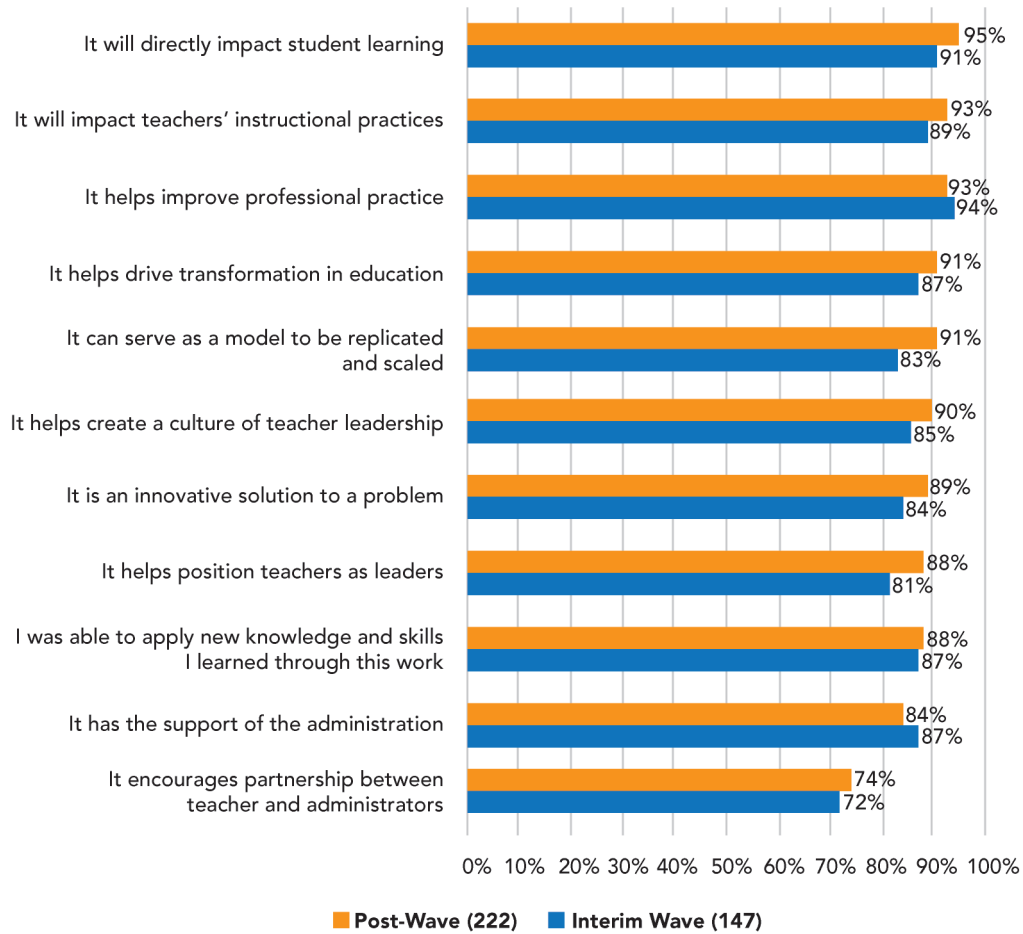
Figure 3 shows the positive growth in respondents' perception of related outcomes, mid-project and after project completion.

This positive growth in perception, especially at the completion of the Teacher Impact Grant projects, demonstrate that the Teacher Impact Grant Program can stimulate innovative solutions regardless of context. Teachers who are positioned to lead these types of efforts ultimately develop their knowledge, skills and dispositions as leaders, which directly affects instructional practices and, as a result, student learning.

Figure 3. Expectations that Projects Will Meet Objectives, Interim and Post-Wave

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements relating to the program objectives of this project at your school/district?

(Percent "Strongly agree" or "Agree")



Call to Action: Funding Future Grants

The strategic importance of the Teacher Impact Grants within educational development rests in its ability to expand support for teachers as valued experts in creating highly effective learning environments by providing them with time and space to collaboratively develop innovative ideas for school improvement; consultation and professional learning to move ideas to action; and access to resources, research, and a wide network of supporters.

The success of the Teacher Impact Grants to date has fostered the development of local ideas into innovative, executable, and measurable plans, while further catalyzing the teacher leadership movement in schools across the United States. Both outcomes are crucially important to building teacher-led solutions that elevate teacher voice and drive reform to improve outcomes for teachers and students.

ASCD believes that expanded funding for the Teacher Impact Grant Program is essential to offering additional rounds of awards, investing in capacity by growing ASCD's program team to oversee grant implementation and evaluation, and building a comprehensive communications strategy to ensure that each project is digitally documented and disseminated through a cascading network of teacher-facing organizations, schools, and local and state education agencies.

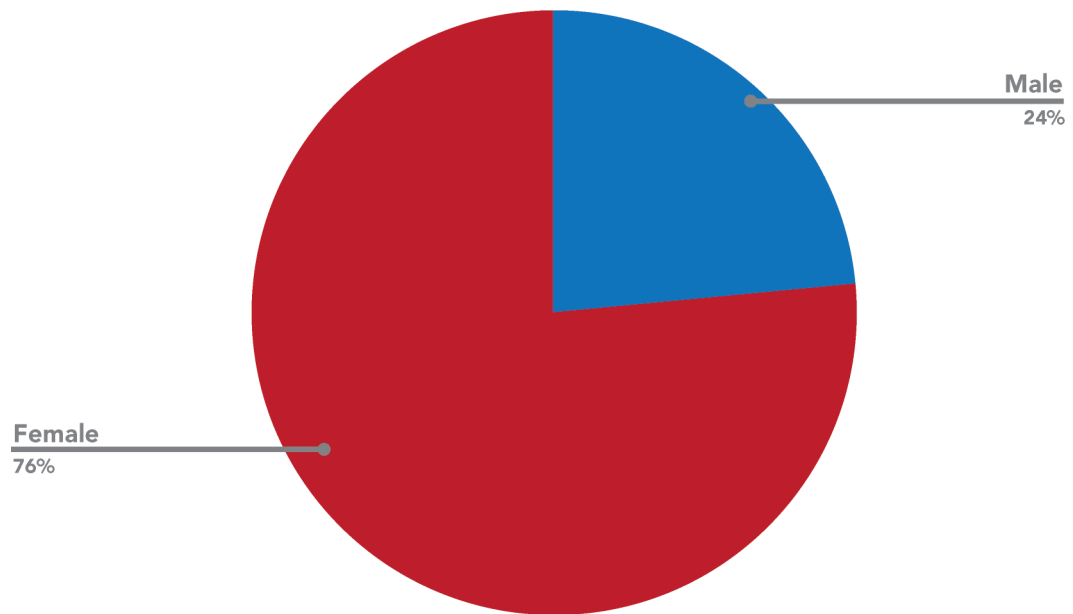
With the publication of seventeen grant project case studies, ASCD will provide the impetus that other professional learning and teacher leadership organizations need to initiate programs, like the Teacher Impact Grants, that directly award teacher leaders in working alongside administrators to lead change in schools and communities.

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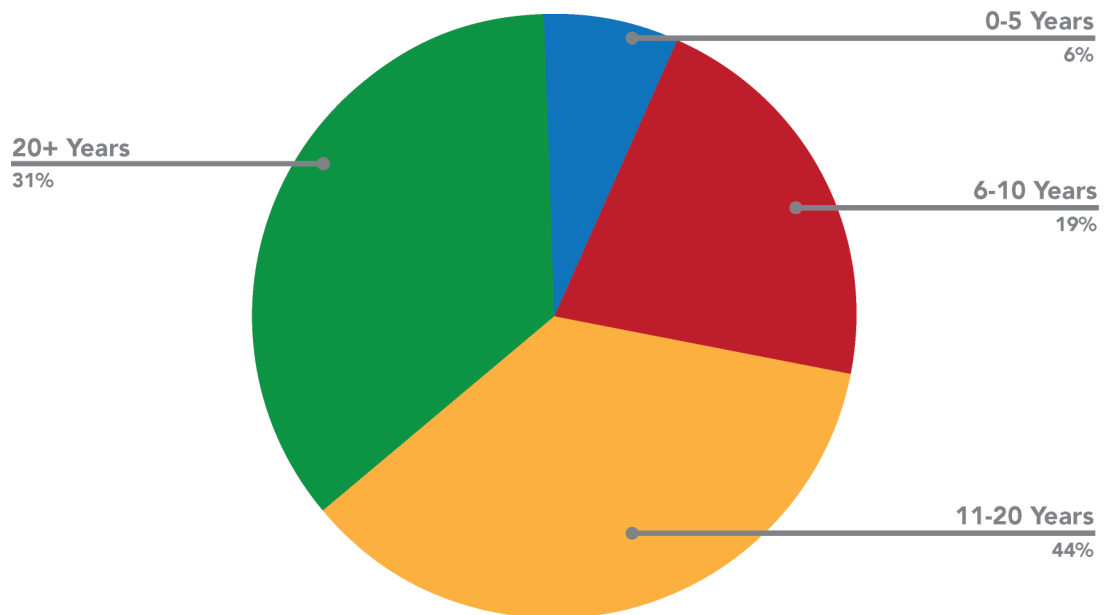
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Appendix A

Graph 1: Grantee Gender



Graph 2: Grantee Years of Teaching Experience



2016–2017 Teacher Impact Grant Project and School Profiles

Project Title	City/State	School or District	School Profile	Strategic Goals of Project
Breaking the Status Quo: Building Positive School Culture Through Impactful School Climate Initiatives	Asheville, NC	Buncombe County Schools	Secondary Rural/ Suburban Public	The project will include two main components: (1) the implementation of a model, named “The Link Crew High School Orientation and Transition Model,” designed to create a shared experience for students and staff, in which upper-level students will serve as mentors and tour guides to help first-year students understand how to succeed in high school; (2) a transformation of the in-school suspension program from a traditional punitive intervention to a nonpunitive, strengths-based educational setting based on Ross Greene’s Collaborative & Proactive Solutions model.
Building Capacity for Sustainable Coteaching Practices	Minneapolis, MN	Washburn High School	Secondary Urban Public	The project will provide opportunities for teachers to learn new strategies for collaborative instruction by observing other coteachers in action, engaging in professional learning through conferences and research-based readings, and dedicating time to establish and reflect on coteaching relationships.
Crab Orchard Houses	Crab Orchard, KY	Crab Orchard Elementary School	Elementary Rural Public	The project will meet the needs of students by implementing a “house team” concept that will provide in-school assistance to students who require additional supports for education and prosocial behaviors that they may not receive at home. House teams will address needs such as conflict resolution, goal setting and planning, active listening, time management, and bullying; will provide opportunities for leadership; and will reflect a blended model of adults and students from all grade levels, K-5, on each team to ensure a setting representative of a home, such as the dynamic between siblings.
Employing a Video Lesson Study Approach in Building Capacity for Teachers Improving Speaking and Listening Skills in a Career Technical Education Medical Pathway	Granada Hills, CA	Los Angeles Unified School District	Secondary Urban Public	The project will fund video capture systems to record student speaking and listening instructional activities. It will also use a video lesson study protocol to examine the procedures of three teachers integrating oral communication into high school English language arts and social studies classrooms over a one-year period.

Project Title	City/State	School or District	School Profile	Strategic Goals of Project
Empowering Teacher Leaders Through Reflection on Videotaped Instruction	Ranchos de Taos, NM	Ranchos Elementary School	Elementary Rural Public	The project will create vertical alignment among teachers and decrease divisions between departments by empowering teachers to analyze videotaped instruction in four cross-departmental teams, including special education, physical education, and art teachers. In this example of job-embedded professional learning, 20 teachers will record their lessons to demonstrate an instructional focus, and five teacher leaders will be trained to guide discussion and analysis. As a result of this rigorous reflective process, the participating teachers will learn to make thoughtful decisions that improve student learning.
Fauquier County Public Schools (FCPS) Collaborative Teacher Leaders	Bealeton, VA	Fauquier County Public Schools	Secondary Rural Public	The project will establish a collaborative teacher leader strand within FCPS's professional development program to enhance communication and instructional practices between the district's five middle schools. Cross-school collaboration currently occurs only informally, but this project will add specific opportunities for teachers to collaborate across buildings to problem solve key instructional topics identified by supervisors and teacher leaders in response to student need. To sustain the success of this collaboration, subject area supervisors and teacher leaders will identify new critical topics each year.
Follow Our Lead: Mentoring Maestros	Jacksonville, NC	Onslow County Schools	Elementary Suburban Military Public	The project will empower experienced elementary school music teachers to mentor (1) music teachers in the district with fewer than three years of experience, and (2) teachers who transfer to K-5 music with less than two years of elementary teaching experience. The concept is to use the expertise of three Onslow County music teachers, with more than 40 years of combined experience, as music mentors and leaders to develop a high-quality teaching network within the county that will offer support, instructional assistance, and encouragement, to ensure that all students receive a first-rate music education.

Project Title	City/State	School or District	School Profile	Strategic Goals of Project
Learning Without Limits: The Implementation of a Teacher Cohort to Shift Toward Highly Personalized Student Learning	Oshkosh, WI	Oshkosh Area School District	Secondary Suburban Public	The project will involve two cohorts of teachers at Oshkosh West High School who will engage students and improve learning by meeting the diverse needs of all students, including the school's most vulnerable student populations. As part of the project, cohort members will participate in instruction coaching and collaborative meetings with colleagues, and host and participate in site visits to build a network of informed educators to transform the traditional classroom experience
Literacy-based Student Engagement	Columbia, MD	Running Brook Elementary School	Elementary Suburban Public SPED	The project will help English language arts (ELA) teachers design lessons that engage students by providing opportunities for extension, enrichment, and inquiry. Through the creation and development of a high-quality, teacher-led professional learning community, teachers will become empowered to implement highly engaging strategies, routines, and texts in their lessons, which will develop independent readers and writers and increase the level of rigor and academic standards in ELA classrooms. Increased engagement will help students retain information and transfer their learning to new contexts.
Makerspace: Design Thinking, Innovation, and Student Engagement	Belle Chasse, LA	Belle Chase Academy	Elementary Urban Charter	The project will focus on makerspaces, which foster the skills necessary for students to participate in a global society, and will help develop a school-based team of educators who will champion the makerspace culture and facilitate its use by students and staff, during and after the school day. Additionally, the grant will help the school offer quarterly workshops to teachers on how to integrate the makerspace and design thinking into their established curricula.
Parent Empowerment Project (PEP)	Phoenix, AZ	Tolleson Elementary School District 17	PreK Urban Public	The project will provide purposeful homeschool connections that empower parents to actively participate in their student's learning, because parents are their child's first and best teacher. This will entail a series of eight monthly family trainings, provided by our preschool educators, connected to a power standard of school readiness for our early learners.
Peer Coaching to Implement Effective Teaching Strategies	Maize, KS	Maize Unified School District 266	Elementary Suburban Public	The project will create a teacher-led coaching model that will allow teachers to collaborate with certified math trainers and master teachers to build conceptual understanding of grade-level standards.

Project Title	City/State	School or District	School Profile	Strategic Goals of Project
Professional Development Models to Improve Religious Literacy and Culturally Responsive Practices	Bethesda, MD	Montgomery County Public Schools	Secondary Suburban Public	<p>In 2015, the district developed a pioneering professional development course that provides educators with high-quality, specific training in religious literacy and cultural responsiveness toward religious minorities. In addition, the course provides rich, in-person experiences with a broad number of community-based faith traditions and thus serves to integrate diverse local populations with education professionals. This project will expand the course to three other school districts with state-recognized educators who will pilot and then refine the course so that the model can be broadly shared.</p>
Scratching the Surface of Building with Code to Develop Reform Through Distributed Leadership	St. Anthony, ID	South Fremont High School	Secondary Rural STEAM Public	<p>The project will accelerate South Fremont High's transition to a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Design, and Math) school by expanding schoolwide distributed leadership and the school's collective engineering mindset to introduce coding concepts that will increase students' opportunities to succeed in a world that increasingly uses coding language. To make this effort a success, a quarter of the teachers at the school have committed to learning the Scratch coding language and then teaching it to students as an initial step in exposing students to coding across the curriculum.</p>
Teacher Talk: Leveraging One-to-One Through the Power of Ten	Sandy Springs, GA	Ridgeview Charter Middle School	Secondary Urban Charter	<p>The project will create a 30-hour professional learning unit course that will train teachers to systematically address problems of classroom practice and facilitate critical conversations on the delivery of personalized, rigorous literacy instruction. The course will build on professional learning and progress from the 2015–16 year—when students received iPads and teachers attended workshops on integrating the technology into classroom instruction—by supporting the delivery of the Georgia Standards of Excellence through common International Baccalaureate® Middle Years Programme unit plans, transferring new literacy pedagogy, and experimenting with iPad-based personalized learning strategies.</p>

Project Title	City/State	School or District	School Profile	Strategic Goals of Project
Teaching STEM Through Professional Learning Communities	Huntington, NY	Elwood School District	Elementary Suburban Public	The project will support the New York State Science Learning Standards by providing teachers with rich professional development regarding the standards, new science curriculum maps, uniform lesson structure, and STEM-based inquiry labs and experiments. The grant will serve the nearly 950 students who attend both Harley Avenue Primary School and James H. Boyd Intermediate School by providing them with innovative STEM equipment required to enrich their participation in engineering lessons and projects.
THE. BEST. TEACHER. PD. EVER!	Peoria, AZ	Peoria Unified School District	Elementary Suburban Public	The project will employ a professional development model that uses collaboration, engagement, support through coaching, professional learning communities, and reflection. It will seek to create an effective and meaningful support system for ongoing growth and development, enhance skills through interaction and peer engagement, and model and celebrate successes.



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