



Teacher Leadership

The What, Why,
and How of Teachers
as Leaders

A Report on the Fall 2014 ASCD
Whole Child Symposium



WHOLE CHILD
SYMPOSIUM

The ASCD Whole Child Initiative



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ASCD is the global leader in developing and delivering innovative programs, products, and services that empower educators to support the success of each learner. Comprising 125,000 members—superintendents, principals, teachers, professors, and advocates from more than 138 countries—the ASCD community also includes 56 affiliate organizations. The nonprofit's diverse, nonpartisan membership is its greatest strength, projecting a powerful, unified voice to decision makers around the world. Learn more about how ASCD supports educators as they learn, teach, and lead at www.ascd.org.

Whole Child Initiative

Launched in 2007, ASCD's Whole Child Initiative is an effort to change the conversation about education from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of children. Through the initiative, ASCD helps educators, families, community members, and policymakers move from a vision about educating the whole child to sustainable, collaborative action. ASCD is joined in this effort by Whole Child Partner organizations representing the education, arts, health, policy, and community sectors. Learn more at www.ascd.org/wholechild.

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Putting Educators in Front of the Education Debate: The Panelists

An overarching goal of ASCD's Whole Child Symposia is to convene professional educators to share their knowledge and expertise on timely and relevant educational issues.

“ASCD is committed to putting educators back in front of the education debate”

—ASCD Whole Child Director Sean Slade

The panelists for the Fall 2014 ASCD Whole Child Symposium brought years of classroom and administrator experience to a discussion focused on the “what, why, and how of teacher leadership.”

- **Maddie Fennell** (@maddief) is a veteran teacher who now works in a hybrid role as a literacy coach at Miller Park Elementary Schools in Omaha, Neb., and as a teaching ambassador fellow for the U.S. Department of Education. She serves as secretary of the National Network for State Teachers of the Year and on the board of directors for the Nebraska State Education Association.
- **Becky Pringle** (@BeckyPringle) serves as vice president of the National Education Association, the nation's largest labor union and professional association for educators. A middle school science teacher with 31 years of classroom experience, Pringle has distinguished herself as a thoughtful, passionate advocate for educators and students, focusing on issues of educator empowerment, student success, diversity, and developing future leaders.
- **Tanya Tucker** (@APA_Tucker), vice president of alliance engagement for America's Promise Alliance, oversees the community and partner engagement elements of the Alliance's GradNation Campaign, including the GradNation Communities Network, GradNation Community Summits, and Alliance National Partners.
- **Peter DeWitt** (@PeterMDeWitt), a former K–5 teacher and principal, is now a Visible Learning trainer facilitating workshops with schools nationally and internationally. He also presents on creating inclusive school environments and connected leadership. DeWitt writes the *Finding Common Ground* blog for *Education Week* and coauthored the 2014 ASCD Arias publication *School Climate Change: How do I build a positive environment for learning?*
- **Robyn R. Jackson** (@Robyn_Mindsteps) is a former high school teacher and middle school administrator. The founder and president of Mindsteps, Inc., she wrote the ASCD books *Never Underestimate Your Teachers: Instructional Leadership for Excellence in Every Classroom* (2013) and *Never Work Harder Than Your Students and Other Principles of Great Teaching* (2009).
- **Jennifer Orr** (@jenorr) is a National Board–Certified Teacher in middle childhood with experience teaching 1st-, 4th-, and 5th-grade students. She currently teaches kindergarten. In 2012, she received the International Society for Technology in Education's Kay L. Bitter Vision Award for her work as a K–2 educator bringing technology into the classroom effectively and with innovation. She is also a member of ASCD's 2013 Emerging Leaders class.

Introduction

Were you to ask a teacher for a definition of “teacher leader,” the likely response would be, “How much time do you have?” Today’s teacher leaders assume responsibilities once considered the sole domain of principals: they serve as peer coaches and mentors, they lead curriculum teams, they model exemplary instructional practices, and much, much more.

While the notion of “teachers as leaders” is as old as the education profession itself, the term “teacher leader” increasingly garners more attention, focus, and significance. Why is that?

“What happens in schools is more complex than ever and cannot be accomplished with strict division between administrators and teachers. The leadership and responsibility for student learning must be a collaborative effort. If teacher leaders can help change school cultures so that teachers and principals collaborate to build a culture of learning, everyone benefits.”

—ASCD Executive Director Judy Seltz



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/lc1i63xz>

ASCD's Fall 2014 Whole Child Symposium created the virtual and physical space for two panels of current and former educators, whose expertise spanned classroom teaching, school-based administration, professional development, and education policy and advocacy, to discuss the “what, why, and how of teachers as leaders”:

- What is a teacher leader?
- Why is this role important, key, or even critical to teaching-learning and the teaching profession?
- How can or should one become a teacher leader, and how can administrators—or the educational system—best develop these roles?

This symposium, the second in an ongoing series, demonstrates ASCD's strong commitment to positioning educators at the forefront of conversations on the nation's most pressing education issues. Each event aims to elicit varied viewpoints and provide concrete actions and steps that can improve education systems, processes, and outcomes.

Increasing the number of teacher leaders is an integral step in creating and sustaining highly functioning education systems that support whole students—students armed with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed in both work and society. This role has the potential to transform the process of teaching and learning, as well as the entire preK–12 education profession.

Despite widespread agreement on the importance of cultivating and expanding the leadership capabilities of classroom teachers, development of the teacher leader position has frequently been stifled by lack of frameworks, professional growth paths, and even the myriad definitions that exist for the term.

“Should the process for teacher leadership be a formalized role or an organic role? Should we have steps in place, or should we allow schools to develop teachers as leaders for their own needs?”

—ASCD Whole Child Director Sean Slade

What Is a Teacher Leader?

From the minute they step foot inside their classrooms, all teachers act as leaders. But the defined position of “teacher leader” is, increasingly, serving as a cornerstone of a well-functioning school system, especially given the ever-evolving demands of the education profession, such as more rigorous standards, high-stakes federal and state achievement mandates, increasingly diverse student populations, greater numbers of school-aged children living in poverty, and the hyper pace of technological change.

“First of all, this is not something new that just came into being—every teacher is a leader in one way or another. So I think it’s important that we classify informal leaders and formal leaders, as well as leaders who are self-distinguishing—you see yourself as a leader or as someone from the outside has seen abilities in you that they want to pull out and have you lead others. So it’s nothing new—it is something that’s getting a new focus.”

—Maddie Fennell



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/9qsl9vg7>

“We [need to] have teachers strategically placed so that they are able to step inside the practice of other teachers and help expand their practice and then they become better. . . . The definition [of teacher leader] transcends formally defined roles in the building. With that definition, every teacher, any teacher, at some point in their career, becomes a teacher leader.”

—Robyn Jackson

“A teacher leader who is engaging in the day-to-day work of education . . . comes to the table with that unique perspective. . . the teacher leader voice is critical.”

—Jennifer Orr

But, as was made clear during the symposium, a teacher leader serves not necessarily—nor only—an administrative function: often, it serves as an instructional role, or even a role that primarily determines the school’s climate, and, ultimately, its culture.

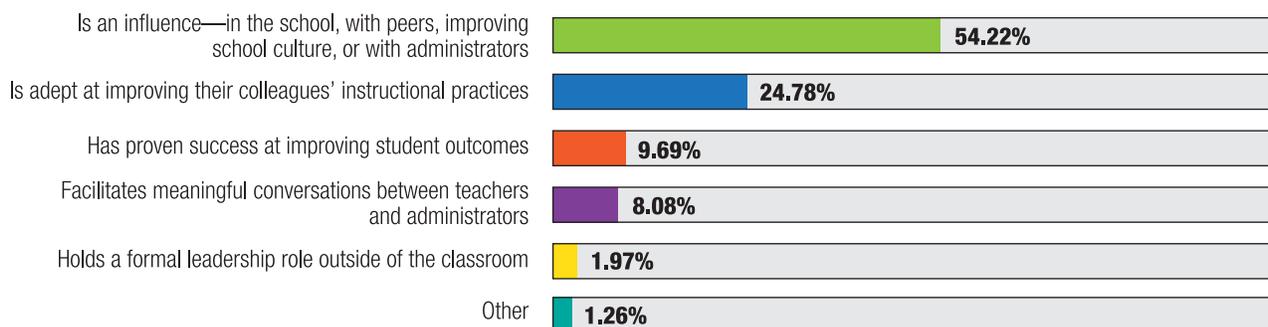
A 2014 ASCD ED Pulse poll—a weekly online poll of ASCD members—reflected this conceptual change—and highlighted some of the ambiguity around the role of teacher leaders—by asking

What do you think is the primary characteristic of a teacher leader?

More than 54 percent of respondents indicated that teacher leaders are responsible for improving school culture. While teacher leaders were viewed as influencers as well as mentors in improving colleagues’ instructional practices, fewer than 2 percent saw “holding a formal leadership role outside the classroom” as a primary characteristic.

Ed Pulse

Customized Implementation Process (rating)



Why Develop Teacher Leaders?

Why is the role of teacher leader so important, especially now? If schools have worked for decades with a hierarchical system where the administration manages and teachers instruct, then what is causing this sea change?

“Teaching today is a more complex set of roles and responsibilities than ever before. The skills and knowledge required to successfully engage students and prepare them for our quickly-changing societies define how teachers lead within the classroom and without. Traditionally teachers who have wanted to lead beyond the classroom went into administration, meaning oft-times the best and the brightest left the classroom after a few years of teaching. But today many more opportunities are emerging for teacher leadership, both formally and informally.”

—Walter McKenzie

<http://inservice.ascd.org/whole-child-symposium-redefining-teacher-leadership>

The role of schools is changing—both as an institution and also in the value they bring to and provide for society. No longer merely the stepping stones to a job or a trade, schools act as important institutions that help grow and develop our youth as citizens and as engaged members of society. To achieve this responsibility, schools must better and more quickly adapt to our rapidly changing world. To teach what and how we taught 40 years ago would restrict our students’ development. And a changing school needs professionals who are skilled, experienced, and nimble.

“Things have changed. The teachers that are in our classrooms today have expectations of themselves and of others that they will step into those roles. And I think that historically, we’ve painted the leader as someone from on high [who] dictated and told you what to do . . . we are looking at teaching and learning in a much different way now.”

—Becky Pringle



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/tq7mzxfh>

“Teacher leadership is critical for really helping a school building build their capacity to increase student learning and student achievement and not only what that teacher does inside that school building but how that teacher leader works with the larger community to drive engagement and support for school goals and for increasing youth success.”

—Tanya Tucker

It’s also time for schools to break out of their anachronistic mindset of equating teacher leadership with school administration—and placing both on the same career trajectory. We must end the practice of moving skilled teachers from the classroom and into the front office and calling that “teacher leadership.” Now more than ever, skilled classroom educators must hone their craft, mentor others, and grow professionally—while keeping one foot firmly inside the classroom.

“We’ve unfortunately built in perverse disincentives within our profession, and we only have a tendency to value those who leave the classroom.”

—Maddie Fennell



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/Otoouswj>

“What we are looking at when I think about teacher leadership in this new context is being intentional about it, more intentional about it. . . . We’ve got to intentionally take this on because if we are going to face as a nation the challenges that we know exist today, let alone the ones we can’t even imagine for tomorrow, . . . we have got to have our educators positioned, trained, supported.”

—Becky Pringle

How Can We Advance the Role?

Perhaps the most intriguing and important part of the symposium discussion revolved not around the *what* or *why*, but rather, the *how*. How can we foster leadership, keep skilled professionals in classrooms, develop mentor roles, and share responsibilities across an ever-broadening array of school requirements and needs?

Train Teacher Leaders—From Day One

Given the ever-increasing expectations and demands of classroom teachers, many are calling for the groundwork for teacher leadership training to commence the moment that individuals begin their teacher preparation work.

“If we want to keep effective, young, good teachers in the classroom for the long haul, to help our children succeed, we’ve got to look at those pathways for leadership.”

—Tanya Tucker



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/mo5wohah>

While creating pathways for teacher leadership, we must differentiate between the skills and training needed by teacher leaders and those needed by administrators. Teacher leadership does not translate to removing effective teachers from their classrooms and into administrative positions. Separate training tracks are needed: one for teacher leaders, one for administrators.

“There are some people who come to teacher leadership as a first step towards being an administrator . . . We also need to reframe the conversation we’re having with teachers around what leadership looks like . . . The first thing we do is we have a great teacher and we take that great teacher out of the classroom—which is just kind of crazy to me.”

—Robyn Jackson



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/ks2a64zx>

Overcome Human Roadblocks?

Obstacles to teacher leadership exist—and often are created by other professionals inside the education system. Author Roland Barth, in a 2013 *Educational Leadership* article, “The Time is Ripe (Again),” discussed this problem:

It’s just a very leveling profession. Teachers are, in a way, their own worst enemy when it comes to unlocking leadership because they don’t welcome it, typically don’t respect it, and often feel threatened by one of their own taking it on. Anyone who bumps above the level is subject to condemnation: “Who the heck do you think you are?!” I’m not talking about trends—I’m talking about people impeding teacher leadership. Some of the people are called principals, and some are called teachers.” (p. 10)

“As we grow more and more teacher leaders, that kind of sentiment will go away because the expectation from the day they step into the classroom, even as they are being mentored, the expectation will be that they will become a leader, in some way either informal or formal. So I see that changing rapidly.

—Becky Pringle

“Every teacher is going to have an opportunity, in their own way, to be a leader. . . . I have to believe that teachers particularly want a learning, and supportive, and collegiate, and more collaborative environment. . . . Teachers are looking for a different type of environment that’s not isolating, [where] they don’t have to be in silos. They don’t have to fear sharing their gifts in a way that help lift up all their colleagues.”

—Tanya Tucker



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/9suq1k01>

Run the Obstacle Course

So what's prohibiting more schools from creating more formalized teacher leadership positions in schools nationwide? Why is this position still relegated to islands of excellence vs. being adopted on a wide scale? Barth also explored these questions in his *Educational Leadership* article. He identified the following obstacles:

- Teacher parity
- Principal “total control”
- Teacher plates are full
- Teachers vs. principals rivalry
- Adherence to a “business model” that doesn't support teacher leadership

Poor decisions and unintended consequences seem to occur when education is driven primarily by cost and production; when teaching and learning is viewed through a business model, versus through a whole child, student-centered lens.

“We cannot reduce our students or teachers to widgets and we cannot focus on profits instead of our kids and what's best for them. We've been going down that dangerous road and we're hoping that's part of the tipping point where we'll turn back to focusing on the students themselves and making sure that all of them are successful, in addition to reimagining the roles of the principal and the teachers.”

—Becky Pringle



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/aum3670q>

Are we asking too much of our classroom educators when we expect them to be teacher leaders as well?

“If folks had those stories and examples of how [teacher leadership] is working and the benefits of how it’s affecting the teachers, the school climate, the culture, the environment, the larger community, . . . I think that folks wouldn’t be as hesitant and would see the benefits of engaging in leadership.”

—Tanya Tucker

“If [teachers] have the power and control to make decisions, there is no stopping them then . . . there is plenty of room on their plate. They will get a bigger plate; that’s what teachers do.”

—Becky Pringle

“Every teacher comes into this profession wanting to make a change and to make a difference. If you give them an avenue to do that they are going to be voracious in going after that if they see it feeding their success in the classroom.”

—Maddie Fennell

Encourage Collaborative Principalship

We cannot overlook the principal’s leadership style when seeking to create the right conditions to support and grow teacher leadership. A principal who is committed to practicing collaborative leadership is essential. Key questions tackled in this discussion included conversations not only around establishing a framework but also what is required to establish the right culture for growth.

- Should the development of teacher leaders be the result of a progressive team of teachers and administrators or more purposeful?
- Can teacher leadership only occur in the right culture, right climate?

“You have to have the best staff . . . have to be OK with people who disagree with you. As a school principal, I was good with that. I had those structures in place where I chose teachers who were going to disagree with me because I felt that it would make decisions much stronger.”

—Peter DeWitt



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/ij8xqtp>

“Enlightened principals gain power by letting power go.”

—Becky Pringle

“We have to help principals understand that collaborative point of view and not feel threatened by that. There are many great principals out there who know that, who understand that, and who are making it work. We need to lift up their stories so that . . . they can tell their principal colleagues: This will be OK.”

—Maddie Fennell

Leadership looks different in every school setting. In theory, principals should be able to differentiate instruction for their teachers the way they did for their students when they were in the classroom. The reality, however, is that too many administrators find themselves mired in the work of chasing accountability mandates, which can crowd out core job responsibilities, including creating the right conditions and developmental steps for teacher leadership. Developing and valuing teacher leaders depends on redefining school leadership.

“If we had a clearer definition of what a leader looks like, more people would naturally step in the role. We need to give people frameworks for leadership . . . [with] flexibility to make things organic . . . but standardized enough for quality leadership to occur.”

—Robyn Jackson

Leverage Online Support for Teacher Leadership

It’s easy to become a teacher leader when you find yourself working in a system that sustains collaborative leadership and teacher leadership advancement. For some teachers, however, social media may be their only support system, the network that they lack in their day-to-day work.

“Twitter has been eye opening for me in the way that it’s been a support for others.”

—Jennifer Orr



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/8v67oitw>

“[Twitter] is almost safer for some people. . . . It’s a school climate issue. . . . The principal might be the micromanager . . . play whack-a-mole because they don’t want somebody to stand up or the people that they allow to stand up are the ones who only will agree with them. There is a lot more to teacher leadership.”

—Peter DeWitt

In addition to raising the bar on standards for what American students should know and be able to do, recent initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards have also created a shared platform for teacher-to-teacher collaboration—on topics including how to become a teacher leader. New reforms and new approaches provide avenues for discussion which can subsequently help the development of new communities and networks.

Don't Expect One-Size-Fits-All PD

A conversation about the right professional development (PD) for teacher leaders falls short if it doesn't address the need for differentiated PD to support the principals who oversee the teacher leaders. How can a principal offer the “right” kind of teacher leadership training if he has no idea of the training needed for his new role?

“Sometimes our circumstances bring us to leadership. . . . When I became a principal, it was my staff that actually helped me grow. They were the ones who gave me the training because I was open to what they were saying. That doesn't mean that we always agreed with one another. But I really wanted to make sure that we had open dialogue. . . . Some administrators aren't necessarily open to that because they feel insecure about putting themselves in that position and that's unfortunate, because they are really missing out on a great opportunity.”

—Peter DeWitt



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/mn10ec2k>

“Don’t make the principals attend the same training that you’re providing for the teacher leaders and call that training the principals. Principals need specific and separate training that looks very different from the training of the teacher leader . . . that’s two very separate roles that need two very separate skill sets.”

—Robyn Jackson

Resolve the Evaluation Conundrum

Regardless of whether or not teacher leadership receives the proper training and hands-on resources, teacher leadership many evaluation systems already require it.

“Leadership is, for many teacher evaluation systems. . . that professionalism standard, you can’t get to the highest level unless you’ve exhibited some kind of leadership. . . so it’s no longer a choice or your destiny or whatever led us to leadership before. Now it’s simply a matter of survival, of being able to meeting the standards set by our states or by our provinces in terms of what we’re required to do as leaders.”

—Robyn Jackson

Standardization, to a certain degree, restricts flexibility however the lack of a framework or path can equally curtail growth. The decision to be made is how much of a framework is needed to provide a scaffold and how little of a standard has to be constructed to provide a goal?

- Is the creation of standards for teacher leadership viewed more as an impediment to success?
- Should the process be more organic or do we need certification/standards?

“I think you need really good training first. I was a teacher leader, and I remember it’s a tricky thing: One day we are colleagues, and the next day I am your coach, or I am your mentor. And I never got any training. I got the title, I got the responsibility, [but] I didn’t get equipped to do that. . . . How do I build trust and rapport . . . how do I make those people listen to me, especially when I don’t have the positional power?”

—Robyn Jackson



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/l0cjzsew>

Create Individual Paths to Teacher Leadership

The process by which each teacher becomes a teacher leader is different and unique depending on a range of factors. Sometimes it's organic, sometimes it's encouraged, sometimes it's strategically led. Some instructional leaders naturally create the space for their classrooms teachers to grow as professionals, to take risks, to growth their leadership potential. Unfortunately, not everyone enjoys such a “gold mine” of colleagues and administrators. How much responsibility should teachers take to advance their leadership roles? What role should they play in forcing change? Should they be waiting for frameworks or professional development or should they be pushing the issue more?

Educators, especially classroom teachers, often feel as though they are on the receiving end of policymaking that affects their day-to-day practice rather than being active participants in the decision-making process.

“I was trained as a high school English teacher. . . I don't know anything about policy. I can tell you what I need, but don't know how to put it in language of policy. . . . There's a lot of pressure on teachers to push for change. Most just want to teach . . . to work with their students. Entering into the political arena, takes a skill set that's almost an antithetical to teaching. Telling me now that I need to go out and push for change . . . I just feel-ill equipped to do that . . . most teachers feel ill equipped.”

—Robyn Jackson

Many educators feel ill-equipped to weigh in on the policy conversations that affect their jobs because they don't think they have the “right language.”

“The reason that a lot of people don't listen is because we're talking ‘teacher talk’ . . . and they're listening with ‘political ears.’ . . . Give me the language, the tools. Politics is its own game. Policy is its own thing. . . . Give me the language to express it in a way that people can actually hear it, and I think that is what's missing from a lot of the empowerment of teachers. . . . Show me how to be heard in a political arena.”

—Robyn Jackson

Many educators believe that that the problem is bigger than the correct vocabulary to navigate the policy arena. In their view, they're not even invited into the conversation.



VIDEO CLIP

<http://bcove.me/xd0lho5e>

“We don't feel heard at a district, or state, or national level . . . we're not invited into that conversation. . . . I don't expect to be invited. We're going to have to figure out how to put ourselves in that conversation. . . . [Teachers] need to be in the conversation. . . . Almost a third of teachers don't feel heard in their school. If they don't feel heard in their own school, they are never going to lift their voices higher than that.”

—Jennifer Orr

“Don't just give [teachers] the talking points, also give them the support.”

—Peter DeWitt

Tipping Point: Yes or No?

Any time a term such as “teacher leader” becomes part of mainstream conversations on education, we have to ask whether we’ve reached a “tipping point” on the topic—and if so, what changes need to occur in the school climate and culture to have more teacher leaders?

- Should we develop standards for teacher leadership?
- Should school environments cultivate trust among their staff?
- Or can we find the answer by combining the two approaches?
- Is teacher leadership becoming the norm or . . . are we still pushing up against longstanding barriers?

“The tipping point will be when you see the relationships between teachers, administrators, parents, and the community coming together [to have] a positive impact upon the students. That’s the main tipping point.”

—Maddie Fennell

**VIDEO CLIP**

<http://bcove.me/lplnkprx>

“I really believe we have reached a tipping point . . . because more people are moving away from this blame frame of accountability.”

—Becky Pringle

“Anything that comes to a tipping, what’s the first thing that we do? We standardize it . . . suck the life out of it. What’s been so powerful about teacher leadership up to this point is that it has flown under the radar so that people can define it in ways that work best for their schools. The moment we reach a tipping point, . . . I worry that we’re going to saddle it with bad professional development.”

—Robyn Jackson

“I’m not convinced that we are at a tipping point. I think teachers in general are overwhelmed . . . I’m not certain that enough of them are ready to take on leadership in a truly meaningful way in order for there to be a tipping point.”

—Jennifer Orr

Summary

While the symposium's first panel viewed teacher leadership through an organizational lens, the second panel brought an on-the-ground, inside the school perspective to the conversation.

Time spent in rich conversation with education experts on a topic such as teacher leadership creates an opportunity for thoughtful commentary, reasoned critique, and direct recommendations for creating supportive systems as well as righting identified deficiencies.

Out of this conversation, several key points came to the fore:

- Collaborative, shared leadership—between classroom educators and building administrators—is essential to meet increased student achievement expectations and support student success.
- Teacher leadership training must be implemented during teacher's entrance to the profession; it should also become formalized and funded.
- Teacher leadership is not synonymous with an administrator track; we must create pathways to teacher leadership that keep teachers in the classroom.
- Teacher leadership must be intentional and fully integrated into school culture.
- Teacher leadership is not a threat to the role of the principal; shared, collaborative leadership plays to the strengths of each individual on the team.
- All teachers can and should be expected to cycle in and out of teacher leader roles and responsibilities.
- Frameworks for teacher leadership are needed, but over-standardization must be avoided. Flexibility is an essential component because each school's leadership needs differ.
- Professional development is equally, but separately, needed for teachers and administrators. Training cannot be the same for each distinct role.

We need to encourage future expansive conversations with educators, policymakers, and community leaders to create policies and conditions that support teacher leadership to take hold and flourish in schools nationwide.

Actions

College- and career-ready standards for students, high-stakes accountability, and other state and federal education reforms have significantly increased the responsibilities of school principals. These growing demands on principals to serve as both instructional leaders and building administrators have elevated the importance of distributed leadership models. At the same time, many teachers are seeking opportunities to expand their roles while staying connected to the classroom. By cultivating teacher leadership, our education system can help to alleviate the pressures on principals while providing teachers with meaningful opportunities to enhance their professional growth.

Understanding and Training First

For teacher leadership to succeed on a systemic level, education policy must intentionally support it and help to prepare both teachers and principals for their new roles. First and foremost, policymakers must understand teacher leadership and its inherent benefits and challenges when crafting professional development policies. As Robyn Jackson emphasized during the symposium, relevant and targeted training for teacher leaders is arguably more important than teacher leadership standards and certifications: “It’s a tricky thing. One day we are colleagues, and the next day I am your coach. . . . How do I navigate my relationships with my colleagues? How do I give my colleagues feedback that’s supportive but not evaluative? How do I build trust and rapport?”

The widespread introduction of new standards and assessments has already increased awareness about the value of providing teachers with ongoing opportunities to hone their practice. Professional development policies and funding decisions should also help to build the capacity of teachers to take on new leadership roles, from coaching their colleagues to building relationships with their communities.

Similarly, appreciation of the need for professional development for principals has grown in recent years. To help teacher leadership gain momentum, professional development for principals could incorporate training on how to leverage and support teacher leaders, delegate and relinquish responsibility, and create a school culture and climate where teacher leaders can thrive.

Purposeful Pathways

Education policy at multiple levels can also create pathways and opportunities for teacher leadership. Currently, teacher leadership often happens by accident and requires a serendipitous confluence of factors. More purposeful pathways to teacher leadership, such as a specific training process or certification, will help more teachers enter into these roles and provide them with necessary support along the way.

Finding Balance

All of the symposium panelists strongly cautioned against policies that standardize teacher leadership, dictating exactly how it should look and be implemented. Instead, it's essential that schools and individuals have the flexibility to define and implement teacher leadership in a manner that's consistent with their unique contexts and needs. Policy must strike a balance between creating teacher leadership opportunities and building capacity but not over mandating how that's done.

Ask Educators

Finally, teachers must play a pivotal role in shaping teacher leadership policies. That may seem almost too common sense to mention, but there is a history of education policy-making that frequently leaves educators out of the equation. Both teachers and principals have important insights on how educator preparation, professional development, and evaluation can complement and support the more systemic use of teacher leaders. They can also share their views on how school structures, schedules, budgets, and other factors can either help or hinder the move to teacher leadership.

ASCD provides educators with multiple opportunities to influence policy and become leaders in their own unique ways. Our Educator Advocates program helps educators understand and influence education policy so that it better supports their work in schools and classrooms. ASCD's Emerging Leaders program helps educators in a variety of roles forge their own leadership paths and become more deeply involved with ASCD. The Whole Child symposia and ASCD Forum are platforms for educators to share their perspectives on relevant and timely education topics.

Such advocacy is an important component of teacher leadership. And it is exactly this type of advocacy by teachers that we need to create and influence the policies that support teacher leaders.

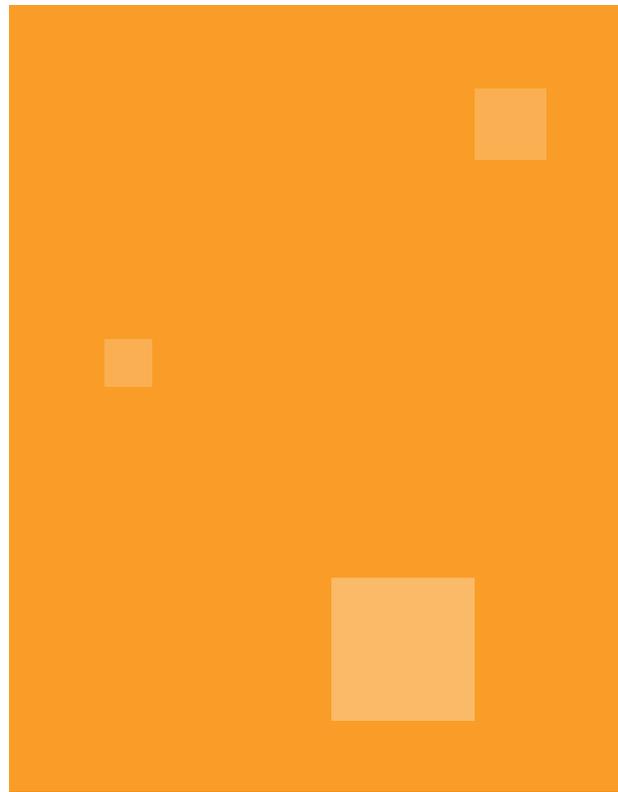
Appendix

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