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Teachers typically do not aspire to become administrators, yet they do seek an active voice in the decisions affecting their classrooms and their working conditions….we must shift our leadership paradigm from a hierarchical model to a shared leadership model.

Jack Dale, Superintendent
The School Administrator, October

What Is Teacher Leadership?

"Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement."

York-Barr & Duke, 2004

"Teacher leadership is not about 'teacher power.' Rather, it is about mobilizing the still largely untapped attributes of teachers to strengthen student performance at ground level and working toward real collaboration, a locally tailored kind of shared leadership, in the daily life of the school."

Task Force on Teacher Leadership, IEL 2001

"Teacher leadership is not for a few; it is for all."

Michael Fullan, 1994

Why is Teacher Leadership Important?

**"When teacher leaders are part of a wider, systemic strategy…
the potential for impact is greater."**

As FCPS develops a culture of continuous improvement, teacher leaders help solve three critical challenges — reach, persuasion, and sustainability.

Reach: Sheer magnitude of the task of reaching all teachers in the Division committed to continuous improvement requires a large number of skilled and experienced teachers who can work with administrators, teachers, students, and the community.

Persuasion: Because they are experienced and well respected by their colleagues, they are well positioned to act as agents of change.

Sustainability: As the Division attempts to sustain continuous improvement beyond the duration of initial funding and beyond exposure to initial training, teacher leaders can support capacity building at the school and classroom level. [1] (See note on next page.)

How is Teacher Leadership Practiced?

Teacher leadership is practiced through a variety of formal and informal positions, roles, and channels of communication in the daily work of schools.

(York-Barr & Duke, 2004)

- "Teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on different leadership roles.…"

(Harris, 2003)

- Lord and Miller (2000) identify four categories:

  - Working with individual teachers in classroom settings - lesson planning, team teaching, etc.;
  - Working with groups of teachers in workshop or comparable professional development settings;
  - Working with teachers, administrators, community members, or students on committees, task forces, at conferences, or in meetings; and
  - Working with various constituents on the task *du jour* - responding to crises, teacher evaluation, etc.

What do Teacher Leaders do?

- Provide professional development of colleagues
- Participate in school improvement planning and assessment
- Involve parents and the community
- Contribute to the profession
- Provide pre-service teacher education
- Develop curriculum
- Coordinate and manage (e.g., improvement efforts, administrative meetings)

(York-Barr & Duke, 2004)

What Supports Teacher Leaders?

School Culture

A collegial and collaborative school culture is a necessary but insufficient condition for promoting teacher leadership (Smylie, 1992). One of the strongest themes evident in the teacher leadership literature is the notion that the emergence of leadership is fostered in the context of a learning community (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). A strong leadership team is the natural outgrowth of a purposeful community - a community with the collective efficacy and capability to develop and use assets to accomplish goals that matter to all community members through agreed-upon processes (Marzano, et al., 2005).

Ryan (1999), in confirming the work of others, found that "supportive school cultures and principal leadership [are] key variables in the success of teacher leaders."

Roles and Relationships

"The success of teacher leadership depends largely on the cooperation and interaction between teacher leaders and their colleagues." Specifically, teacher leaders must be perceived by colleagues as having subject area and instructional expertise (Yarger & Lee, 1994) and must deal with the profession's norms of "egalitarianism," as they operate in a different professional space from their teaching colleagues. (Lord & Miller, 2000)

Principals need to support teacher leaders in three ways:

1) Safeguarding the relationships with those they hope to influence;

2) Giving goal-directed power *to* others rather than retaining power *over* others; and,

3) Aligning teacher leadership with professional learning.

(Moller & Pankake, 2006)

Structures

Replacing hierarchical structures is necessary if teacher leadership is to be supported. (York-Barr & Duke, 2004 citing Darling-Hammond et al., 1995).

While structure creates opportunity for teacher leadership to be effective, it is ultimately what happens within the structure that will determine whether the positive potential is realized (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), i.e., need for time, space, and access.

Professional Development and Support

Teacher leadership can occur if certain conditions are in place:

1) Time set aside to collaborate with colleagues;
2) Professional development including aspects specific to leadership;
3) Improved self-confidence through collab ration, using new teaching approaches and action research; and,
4) Remuneration. (Harris, 2003)

What are the Effects of Teacher Leadership?

Research Results
Effects on Students

While in 1999 Leithwood and Jantzi found that the "studies that have tested it found no conclusive evidence to support a positive correlation between student achievement and teacher leadership," (Wynne, 2001) in a 2004 review of research, Leithwood and others indicate that "leaders contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on other people or features of their organization." This is also the conclusion of Mulford and Silins (2003), i.e., that teacher leadership contributes to organizational learning *(collaborative climate, taking initiatives and risks, improving school practices, professional development),* which, in turn, influences the student outcomes of participation and engagement.

And Marzano, et al., (2005) stress the importance of a leadership team within a school to adequately address the 21 responsibilities of the principal that can have a "profound effect on student achievement."

[1]Adapted to FCPS based on the conclusions of Lord & Miller, 2000 in their synthesis of existing research, practical knowledge and preliminary research findings.

Effects on Teacher Leaders

"By far, the strongest effects of teacher leadership have been on teacher leaders themselves."
(York-Barr & Duke, 2004)

Teacher leaders:

- Grow in leadership skills and organizational perspectives
- Improve instructional practices
- Improve self-confidence and attitude to teaching
- Increase the challenges and expectations they place on students.

Effects on Colleagues

While York-Barr and Duke (2004) found that most of the reported relationship effects involve an element of distancing and conflict, such as lower levels of trust and even resentment among colleagues, Ryan (1999) found a high level of impact on the instructional practices of colleagues. Teacher leaders "were available to their colleagues as a resource in such areas as instructional practice, assistance in dealing with difficult students, helping to plan new programs and even offering advice on personal matters."

Smylie (1992) found that if interactions between teacher leaders and teachers are to be encouraged, policymakers must not only deal with the structure of leadership roles, but also the teachers' professional beliefs.

And finally, Timperley (2005) warns that "teacher leaders with high acceptability among their colleagues are not necessarily those with expertise. Conversely, micro-politics within a school can reduce the acceptability of those with expertise."

Effects on the School

Schools' effectiveness is proportional to "the extent to which teachers participate in all aspects of a school's functioning --- including school policy decisions and review." (Silins & Mulford, 2002)

As noted above, teacher leadership contributes significantly to organizational learning. (Silins & Mulford, 2004)

Two valuable books are *Teacher Leadership that Strengthens Professional Practice* (Charlotte Danielson, 2006) -- in many ways a "handbook" for developing teacher leaders; identifying their dispositions and administrative roles as well as leadership skills (collaboration, facilitation, planning, action, and evaluation); and

Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement (Linda Lambert, 2003) -- a "guide" in how teacher leaders develop. A useful Rubric of Emerging Teacher Leadership provides a way to measure progress from "dependence" to "leadership."

Teacher Leadership that Strengthens Professional Practice

Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement
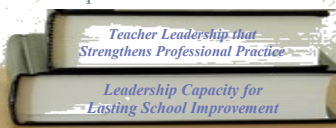
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