



Teacher Leadership: Leading Side by Side

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*“For God is working in you, giving you
the desire and the power to do what
pleases him.”*

Phillipians 2:13



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INTRODUCTION

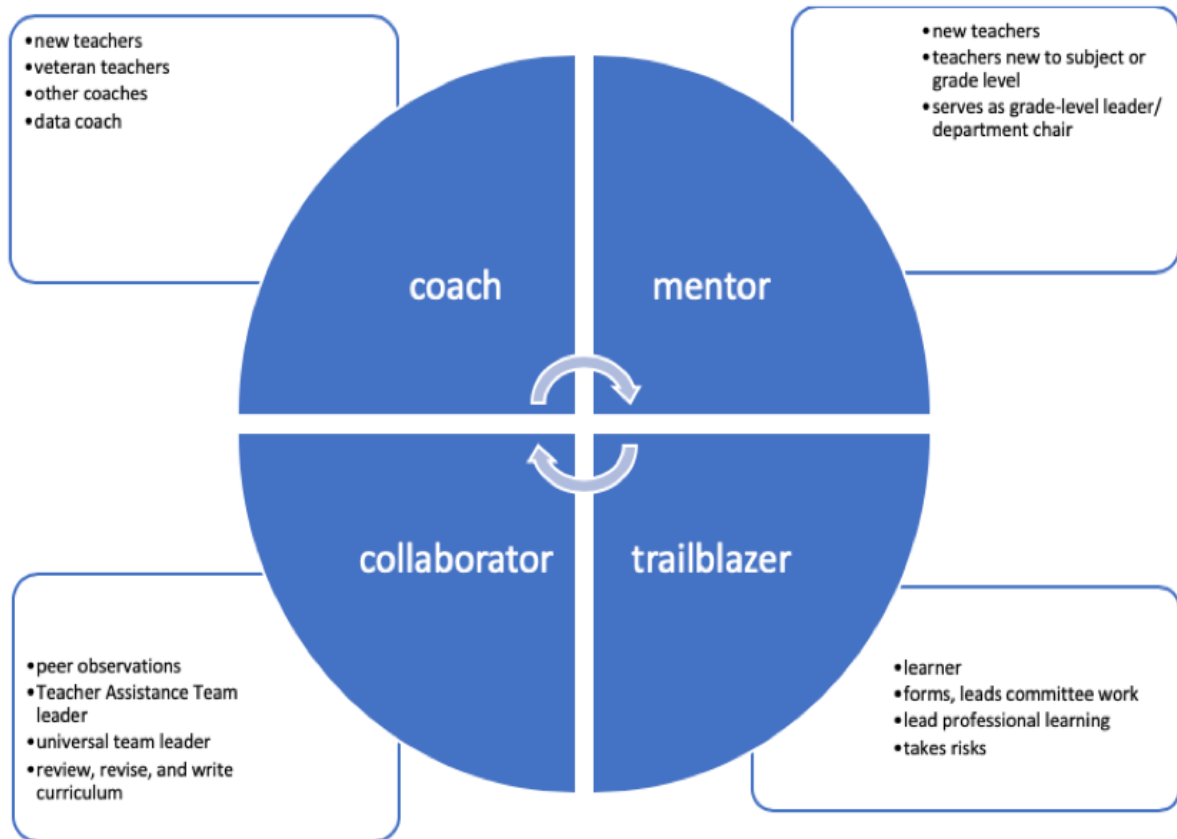
Often the term “school leadership” conjures a picture of a principal, one leader who works alone, delegates tasks to others, and makes the important decisions. But the truth is, “school leadership is only second to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” (Leithwood, 2008, p. 27), so by sharing the leadership load and giving voice in decisions, everyone in a school can work together to improve.

Catholic school principals have a Herculean job to do it all: be an instructional leader, care for the operations of the campus, engage in the governance of the school, work closely with the Pastor and Board, have positive relationships with parents and families, and so much more. All of these tasks take time. And while principals prioritize their days using methods like a Leader’s Schedule (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012), when the boiler goes out or the security system fails, action must be taken immediately.

Teachers rely on each other for leadership in the form of support, mentoring, and guidance even when that leadership isn’t official. They run next door in the morning before students arrive to ask a colleague if the plan for the new math station will work, if the interpretation of the reading assessment data is accurate, if the colleague has a copy of a new novel for literature circles. Teachers trust each other because they see the other teaching, interacting with students, parents, and colleagues, planning, and collaborating. Teachers watch each other teach informally - when tiptoeing into the other classroom during a planning period while the other teacher is teaching to borrow staples or a pack of construction paper. This trust and knowledge lends itself directly to a more formal teacher leadership relationship: if trust exists informally, there’s a good chance that trust will continue when the relationship is more formal.

In Catholic schools, there are currently few pathways to leadership that aren’t the principalship. High schools and some elementary schools have department chairs, some schools have implemented

Figure 1: Roles of Teacher Leaders



learning specialists, and other schools have added instructional coaching roles, but the choices are limited and are often adding another part-time job onto an already very full-time job. But teachers want that next challenge, they want a voice in decisions made that affect them, they want a place at the table - they want to be leaders. They want to lead. They regularly do it naturally. When someone is needed to plan Family Night, teachers step forward. When the math curriculum needs revising, teachers offer to help. When reading scores are low, teachers work together to lead a professional learning session. These types of leadership happen frequently, but rarely is the leadership formalized, named, celebrated, encouraged, or

compensated. A lack of leadership or promotion options can lead a teacher away from a Catholic school or teaching altogether. Teachers want leadership opportunities, and schools need leaders. This paper will explore alternative roles of leadership for teachers in a Catholic school that don't include the principalship and how to start.

What Is Teacher Leadership?

Teacher leadership is a tricky thing to define because it can look so different in different schools. "Teacher leadership is

a powerful strategy to promote effective, collaborative teaching practices in schools that lead to increased student achievement, improved decision making at the school and district level, and create a dynamic teaching profession for the 21st century” (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Commission, 2008, p. 3). In a video from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2015), one teacher

gave the definition that “teacher leaders are looking to increase their effectiveness in the classroom by going out of the classroom.” York-Barr and Duke define teacher leadership as “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” (2004).

Figure 1 shares the four main roles of a teacher leader: coach, mentor, collaborator, and trailblazer. Within those titles, a teacher leader could do any of the following:

- * Spend one planning period per week providing instructional coaching for peers
- * Collaborate with a group of teachers to form a committee to review, revise, and/or write curriculum
- * Serve as a data manager or data coach
- * Spearhead a committee to plan a school-wide academic event
- * Collaborate with another teacher to complete peer observations with goals to improve their teaching
- * Use a special education background to lead the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT)

- * Serve as the universal team leader to implement of PBIS
- * Mentor a teacher new to the school or new to a grade level or content area
- * Lead a professional learning session on a pertinent topic for the school or a group of teachers
- * Lead the PLC for her/his grade level or department

Sometimes the very existence of teacher leadership can promote the idea that teaching is ‘elevated’ and valued in the building, and that can change morale and attitudes about the importance of teaching and instruction. Principals ‘influence student achievement indirectly by creating the organizational conditions through which improved teaching and learning will occur’ (Ross and Gray 2006a, p. 813). A teacher leader’s voice at the table is crucial for teachers’ own buy-in - teachers might stay at a school if they feel they have input on decisions as well as somewhere to ‘move up.’ And the bottom line is that the school needs them - the principal needs them - in order to

be successful academically - if for their excellent teaching, their input in decision making, and their support of school-wide goals and initiatives. And when done right, teacher morale can improve knowing “one of them” is leading instructionally. Instead of “representatives or coordinators to carry out others’ expectations” (Livingston, 1992, p. 9), teacher leaders can be the ones who drive and enact change. A change in morale of teachers can impact the morale and culture of the whole building.

Teacher Leader as Instructional Coach

The coach affects change by working side by side with peers. Recently, Catholic schools have asked teachers to take on this role to support their colleagues to improve instruction. The recognition of the impact of instructional coaching is great progress because it empowers teacher leaders to support their peers and increase their own knowledge of instruction, curriculum, and data. In this way, both the coaches and coachees are learning and improving.

In *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-based Coaches*, Killion & Harrison (2017) offer ten roles of an instructional coach:

- * Resource provider
- * Data coach
- * Instructional specialist
- * Curriculum specialist
- * Classroom supporter
- * Learning facilitator
- * Mentor
- * School leader

One teacher leadership role that has become increasingly common in Catholic elementary and high schools in the past twenty years is the instructional coach. An instructional coach is often seen as someone who shares the leadership for instructional reform with the principal (Taylor, 2008). A coach’s job varies, but a few traits that must exist in a coach include the following:

- * Dispositions that include listening and collaborating
- * leadership qualities
- * in-depth knowledge of excellent teaching and willingness to model their teaching
- * being a learner
- * Problem solver

- * Catalyst for change
- * Learner

In addition to the roles of an instructional coach, this list is a good start when identifying what makes a great teacher leader. Things like “good listener” or “organized” or “patient” or “collaborates well” are not on this list. Perhaps it is assumed that all teachers can do those things. But one shouldn’t assume. Identify the dispositions that good or great teachers possess because a teacher leader must have those qualities, too. Then add qualities of a good leader. Appendix A has a Teacher Leader Dispositions Checklist that serves as a good start. Ultimately a teacher leader is a teacher with strong teaching skills and dispositions who willingly fills a leadership role that is named, defined, and compensated. What a teacher leader is not - a teacher leader is not a teacher who takes on clerical roles, substitute teaching at the last minute every day, or

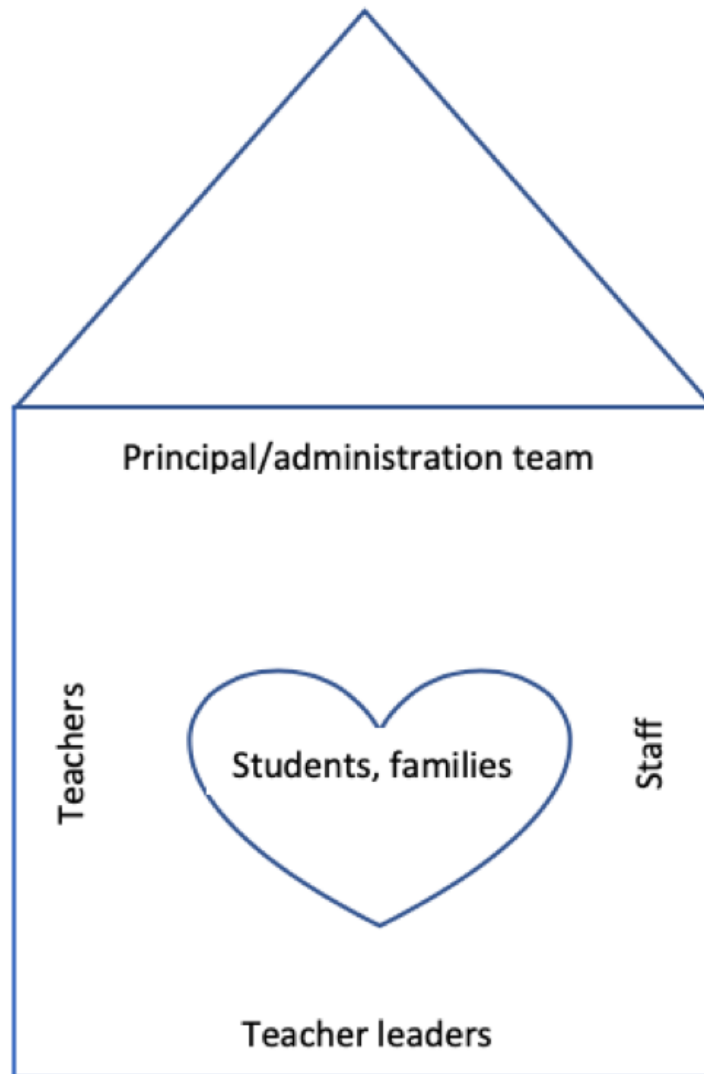


Figure 2: School Structure

serving as a discipline enforcer because her desk is on a floor different than the principal or dean, or default recess or bus duty. These are beyond critical roles in schools, but if a teacher leader is an exemplary teacher, that person should be with teachers and in classrooms as much as possible.

As an instructional coach spends time in other classrooms and see teaching and learning, this provides the coach with a

wider lens of what is occurring in the building. While coaches take an unofficial oath of confidentiality, this new knowledge can be very helpful when working with the principal and other leaders in the school to plan professional learning, textbook adoptions, PLC work, and other important school decisions. Without being in classrooms and seeing teachers and students firsthand, the coach would not be able to make

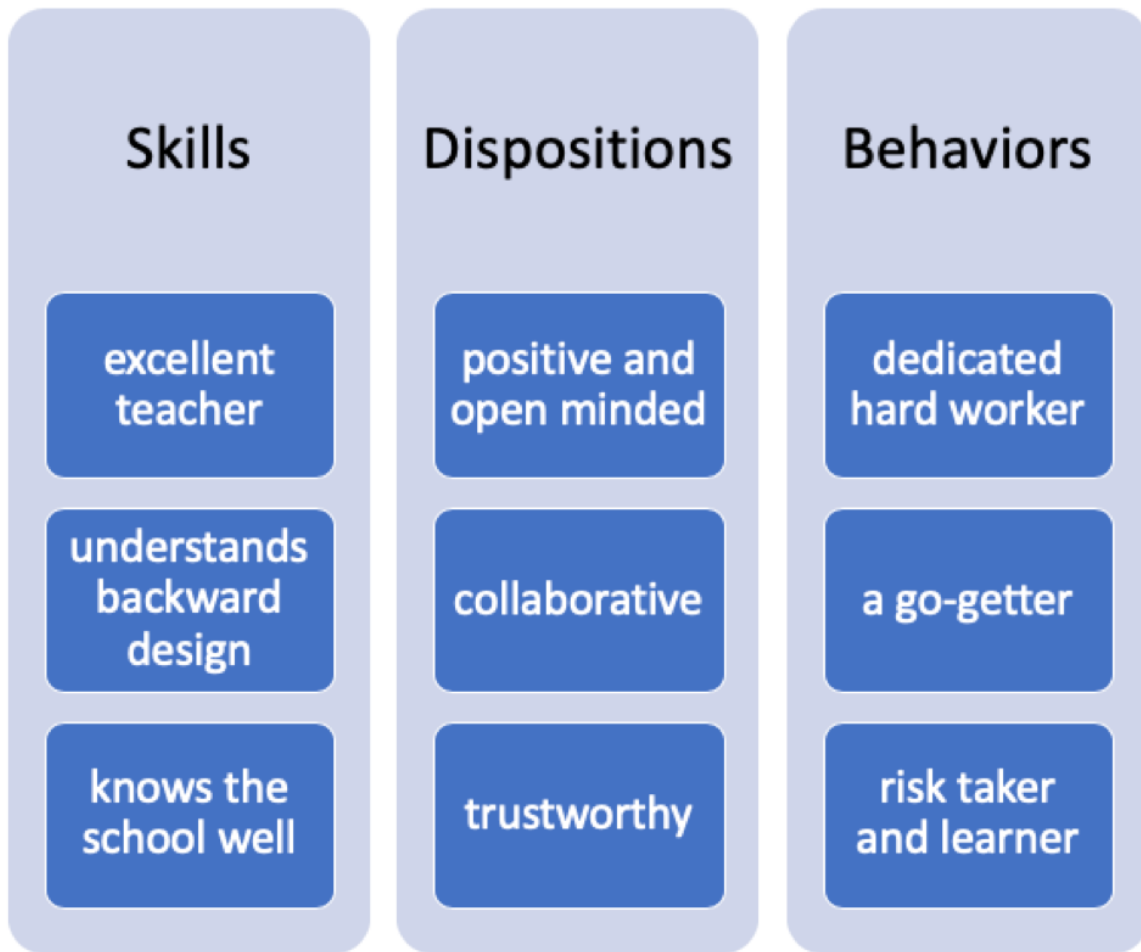


Figure 3: Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions

informed decisions about these important issues.

Teachers who become instructional coaches in their building while continuing to teach report that their own teaching improves as they work with others to improve instruction. This is a terrific byproduct of a structure that empowers teachers as leaders and improves instruction which in turn improves student learning. Teachers who are coached gain knowledge and confidence, and that is an asset again to retain excellent teachers.

Why Teacher Leadership?

Including teachers in decisions about instruction, curriculum, assessment, and data are part of transformational leadership (Minckler, 2014). “Teacher leadership is a viable strategy for addressing the complex nature of schools, while engaging teachers more fully in applying their expertise to strengthen the profession and increase student success” (Killion, Harrison, et al., 2016, p. 4). Teacher leadership can be a great way to lift up teachers while focusing schoolwide on student success.

Changing the culture of a school from always seeking answers from one expert (the principal) to seeking collaboration from many makes everyone's expertise matter. This can do a lot for morale and motivation of teachers when they see that they are experts, and that their expertise can be shared. While anecdotally teachers agree that coaches can serve positively in a school with a challenging or negative climate, a school with a climate that is positive, nurturing, and has a growth mindset is certainly more fertile ground for change.

Figure 2 illustrates the necessity for everyone to contribute their part to the school. The principal is ultimately responsible for keeping a roof over everyone's head. The teacher leaders are the foundation, and the teachers and staff provide support with students at the center, the reason for Catholic schools. The teacher leader, teachers, and staff in conjunction with the principal can lead formally and informally. Certainly, students have leadership roles, too. All members of the school must do their part in order for the structure to stand strong.

Another parallel and equally important benefit of teacher leadership is improved teaching and learning. When focused on teaching, who is better to support and coach a teacher than a fellow teacher? While most principals are former teachers themselves, the teachers in their buildings often struggle with getting this support from the principal for three reasons. First, the principal is ultimately evaluating the teacher, so it can be difficult to open up and be vulnerable, which is required for change, if one is worried about saying something wrong or "fireable."

Second, the principal doesn't necessarily have the teaching experience that matches the teacher's experience. For example, if a high school math teacher becomes principal of an elementary school, she/he may have no experience teaching reading to first graders. This looks much different than teaching math to 10th graders. Certainly good instruction is good instruction, but some things require more nuance. The feedback that a colleague can give in a 'parallel' structure can be easier to internalize and use. Knowing that a colleague has used a strategy and wouldn't likely make a suggestion that he/she wouldn't try is reassuring. Any disconnect can cause miscommunication and frustration. Teachers often want their principal to know how much they would like the principal to spend more time in their classroom (Gonzalez, 2014).

Teachers in Catholic schools want to feel valued, respected, and supported (Jakubak, 2017). Depending on the structures in place, a teacher leader might be able to provide specific feedback more frequently. No rules exist about how frequently a teacher leader can visit a classroom, but in a small school or in a situation where there are multiple teacher leaders in a school, informal opportunities may exist more for a teacher leader than for a principal. No rules exist about how frequently a principal can visit, but time is always a factor.

Third, the job of the principal of a Catholic school is large and varied, often tied up with tasks like fixing the boiler, checking on the school's security system, collecting tuition, and meeting with the pastor. While a Catholic school principal is the instructional leader of the

school in addition to her/his other tasks, the most urgent tasks rise to the top, and a boiler is much more urgent in January in Chicago than instruction.

Professional learning has existed for most if not all of the teaching profession, sometimes taking the informal form of nuns sitting around the dinner table

professional learning today is personalized professional learning, much like the differentiated instruction teachers deliver to students. The one-shot, sit-and-get “institute days” rarely get applied or internalized, and professional learning that is not personalized or differentiated cannot only be left in the folder with the presenter’s PowerPoint

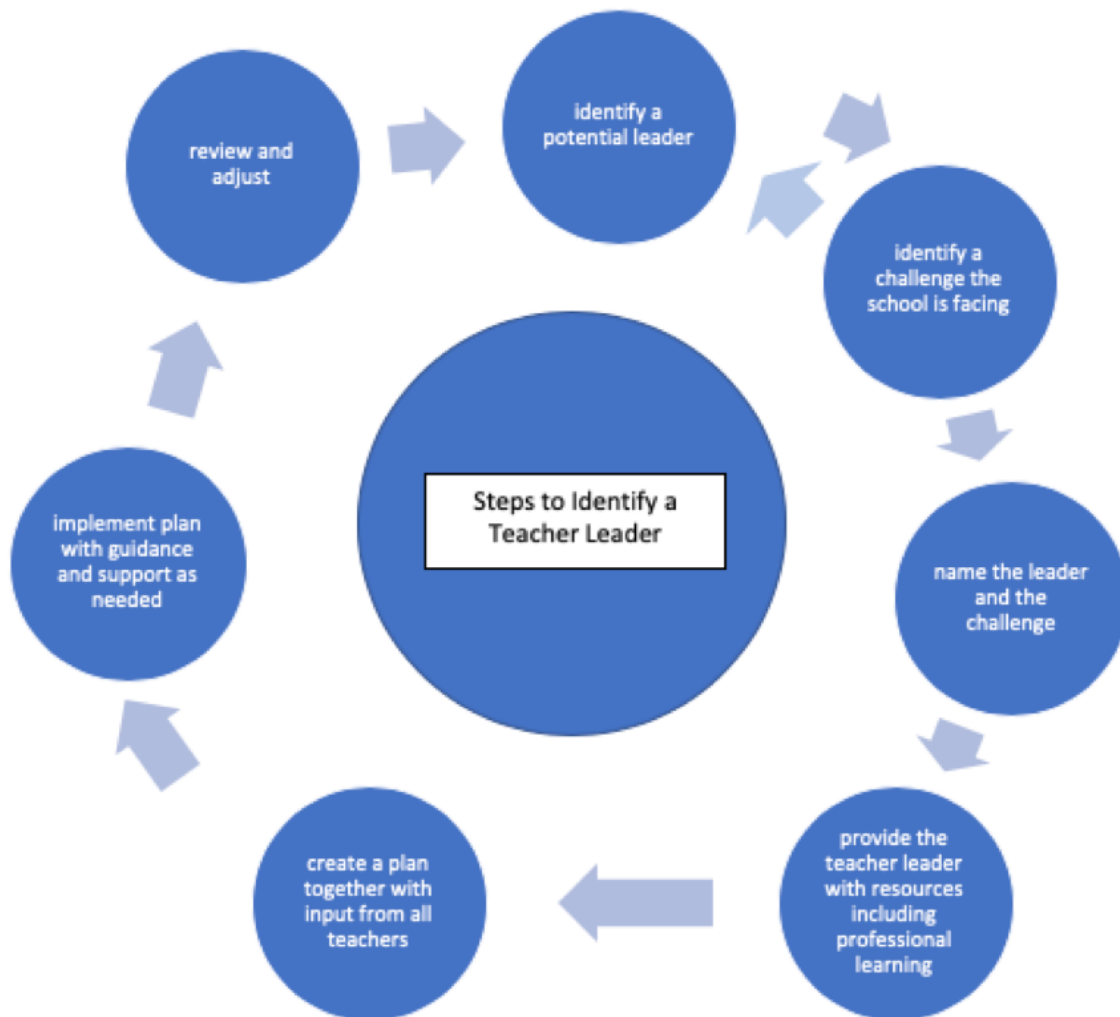


Figure 4: Steps to Identify Teacher Leaders

discussing their classes up to and including a day without students to explore a topic related to the school improvement plan. A current hot topic in

but can also cause a negative reaction when teachers feel disrespected. Teachers need to be treated as professionals, including having access to

meaningful, applicable professional learning opportunities Teachers may have many avenues to improve and grow professionally. The guidance of an instructional coach is just one of these avenues.

Identifying a Teacher Leader

Identifying a teacher leader is a careful process that should not assume that this is the person with the most seniority. It is possible that a great teacher leader is the person who is in her/his fifth year of teaching. Teacher leaders are skilled as teachers as well as in their ability to collaborate with others. Teachers in the building must trust this person. The key is to really know teachers in a variety of settings. Knowing a teacher's teaching style in addition to how she/he interacts with students, parents, and the adults in the building is crucial. Figure 3 shares some of the most important skills, dispositions, and behaviors of teacher leaders.

Sometimes the teacher leader identifies herself/himself by knocking on the principal's door with a proposed solution to a problem. The teacher notices that for the third year in a row, a majority of boys in 3rd grade have scored poorly on the reading assessment. The teacher observes that communities/American history/nouns/the same novel are taught for three years in a row with little new or different learning. The teacher acknowledges that the school has a library but no librarian, and also that the classroom libraries are meager. A principal should acknowledge and appreciate the teacher's willingness to

share, reflect on these observations and determine if they align with the school improvement plan, and then consider and brainstorm - ideally with that teacher - what next steps could be taken. Figure 4 shows a process that can be used to identify teacher leaders.

A teacher doesn't always approach the principal to take on a leadership role. Trust and a supportive atmosphere must exist for this to occur. More likely what occurs is that a need in the school or a leadership role emerges, and the principal seeks to fill the need or role. To avoid confusion and spread the leadership too thinly or without a plan, the principal and a team of teachers can create a system for both identifying needs and how to approach addressing those needs. Sometimes a Teacher Assistance Team is at the forefront of identifying academic or social-emotional gaps, but other times it is just the observations of teachers, school staff or students that can point these needs out. Cultivating a strong school culture and climate can lead to a climate that affirms, builds, and nurtures teacher leadership.

Current State of Affairs

Catholic schools see a high turnover rate of teachers. In general, the rate of attrition in teaching is 40% of teachers leave teaching within their first five years (Chatlin & Noonan, 2005) or about 15% per year, and in private schools the rate is higher at 20% attrition each year (Ingersoll, 2003). The reasons for teachers leaving are varied. In 2017, The Learning Policy Institute commissioned a study, "Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It." Teachers reported leaving because of dissatisfaction more than retirement, personal or family reasons, or financial

From the Field...

“Mrs. Kellogg” loves teaching and loves her Catholic school. But after 20 years teaching math, she isn’t sure if she can teach order of operations and long division anymore - she is burning out. Fortunately, her principal noticed her leadership skills, the rapport she has with the rest of the teachers and approached her to take on a leadership role first as a mentor and then as an instructional coach. This addresses her (maybe temporary) frustrations with the profession as well as her current working conditions. So now this master teacher who is trusted and has great dispositions is empowered to support her fellow teachers. This is really a win/win/win for the teacher, school, and principal.

reasons. Dissatisfaction was reported in these areas: the profession, administrative issues, and working conditions. A recent article in Forbes Magazine about the teacher shortage in the United States questions whether there is a teacher shortage, or if we have devalued the profession so much that qualified, intelligent undergraduate students are choosing not to enter the teaching field because of the way the field has sustained “a drumbeat of disrespect” and new alternative certification programs and lessening of requirements has sent a message that “any body will do” (Greene, 2019). Catholic school teachers’ salaries are ?

to ? of their public counterparts. While most teachers didn’t go into teaching for the money, when there are few or no opportunities to “move up” or improve, that can cause teachers to leave. In most cases, the school can’t do a whole lot to change teacher salaries significantly because that is usually a diocesan decision. But supporting teacher leadership in a school could go a long way to address “the profession” and these working conditions.

A challenge when it comes to teacher leadership is the “leveling” that can occur by teachers themselves (Barth, 2013). Sometimes teachers don’t love it when “one of their own” is appointed or chosen for a position “above” a teacher. This is unfortunate because the trust in a coach or leader who has taught at that same school, side by side with those same teachers, is often quite high. The teachers know this person. They know that this teacher comes early and stays late. They know this person wouldn’t ask others to do a job she/he wouldn’t do. So one change that needs to happen is a mindset change among teachers: it’s okay when “one of us” becomes “one of them.” Or better yet, why must an us vs. them attitude exist between teachers and principals? When the culture of the school is that ‘we are all in this together,’ a shift in mindsets can occur to make way for the idea of a teacher leader. One important step for this to occur is to have systems and procedures in place for full transparency in the building. If ‘relationships are everything’ in education, then relationships and school culture is everything when it comes to leadership.

One reason for the feeling of us vs. them can be a lack of respect for ideas that

come from teachers. Teachers are in their classrooms with students each day all day, so if something isn't working in the school and teachers share this information with the principal or administration team, it should be weighed as something that is worth examining. Shared governance doesn't necessarily exist in schools, and even if it does, it doesn't mean that because I share a suggestion that it suddenly becomes gospel. But when the response to concerns of teachers is to not take them seriously or just do what was planned anyway, that stokes the fires of us vs. them. Having "active involvement by individuals at all levels and within all domains of an organization is necessary if change is to take hold" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teachers also report anecdotally that only 10% of the teachers in their building take on leadership roles. This challenge of the same few teachers stepping up is a problem, but many causes lead to it. One teacher offered the analogy of her son starting school, and she offered to help with the "Room Moms." The Head Room Mom wouldn't really let her help - she was only allowed to be an observer. Do teachers do this to other teachers, too? Once someone fills a need or position, are they gently and gradually blocked from doing that work? Or are the same people leading because those are the people who are trusted to take on the challenge of leadership? How did they gain that trust?

While principals work hard to build a positive culture in a building, there are times when the principal makes a decision that impacts teachers without teacher input. For example, when a principal chooses a new math textbook

From the Field...

"St. Mary's" Catholic School in Chicago had some grant money to spend, and they used it to create a unique position. The two fifth grade teachers split teaching fifth grade, and in the morning the math-inclined teacher was the math specialist, and the reading-inclined teacher was the reading specialist. This gave these teachers some decision making that they hadn't had before - and it removed some of that decision making from the principal. Students struggling to read who weren't responding to Tier 2 interventions in the classroom were given more support by a specialist. Teachers were also given instructional coaching and had strong instructional leadership from these two teachers. This has been very successful for this school, but one challenge these two coaches faced was a teacher who was unwilling to be coached. "I got a \$200 raise last year, and I have been here 19 years."

without talking to the teachers who teach math; or when the principal moves to a block schedule without hearing why this structure is being considered. This can cause teachers to feel that their voices are not heard or valued. This can cause rifts in a good school culture and impact the relationship between the principal and teachers, causing feelings of distrust or frustration.

This example goes back to how teacher leaders are identified. If this is a behind-the-principal's-door kind of thing, then mystery, confusion, and hurt feelings may abound. Like everything else, there must be a process or a procedure for teacher leadership that is transparent and well known. This might mean that people will 'apply' for a teacher leadership position who aren't ready or right for the roles. That shows teachers' willingness to serve and can be used to identify other kinds of leadership.

In all of this, a school will have excellent teachers who have previously served as teacher leaders, or who are not right for a leadership position right now: they are excellent teachers but aren't ready for leadership or don't have the skills or dispositions for it yet. Principals and teachers can find ways to empower teachers' voices even when they don't serve as leaders. Transparency, process, and positive school culture can eliminate the idea of being "just a teacher."

Measuring Success

When teacher leaders are successful, the results are visible in several ways: student progress, teachers seeking out the guidance of the teacher leader, improved engagement and instruction, a shift in school culture from closed doors to willingness to collaborate and grow.

Another way to measure success is to document progress from working with an instructional coach. A checklist can be one way to do this. Once such checklist (Appendix A) has also been aligned to the Danielson Framework (Danielson, 2013), but it is important to note that instructional coaches are not evaluators, so the information gleaned from this checklist in relation to the Danielson Framework should be used for coaching purposes only. Another documentation could be a spreadsheet or log that identifies the initial goal, progress toward that goal including evidence, and then identification by both the teacher and the teacher leader/coach of new goals. Sometimes working with an instructional coach can empower a coachee to become a teacher leader because they

From the Field...

"St. John's" Catholic School in Chicago is known for their inclusion and support of students with disabilities. Teachers have leadership opportunities to be a learning specialist, lead the Teacher Assistance Team, and act as department chair or grade-level leader. Early on in the school's shift to be inclusive, the principal saw teachers naturally leading, so she gave them titles and stipends to match their leadership work including creating particular positions. These teachers stay in Catholic education because the principal and assistant principal aren't the only leaders or decision makers in the school. Many people have voices, and this empowers all teachers.

see the power of coaching and peer leading.

Classroom data are also a good source of information to measure success. If a teacher is working on implementing the workshop model in writing, the teacher leader/instructional coach may use a checklist specific to writing to see how the teacher is implementing this model. A coach or teacher leader may observe and review student work to see how writing looks different with this model. A coach may interview students informally to see how the instruction and independent work is going, review the teacher's anecdotal notes taken during individual conferences, or review the notes taken during/after small-group instruction.

Standardized test scores are often used as a measure of success but as with anything standardized it is important to proceed with caution. These tests are one data point on one day/series of days. Sometimes the "work in progress" that comes with coaching won't be evident right away in the data from these tests. The progress may not be evidenced at all in standardized testing data if the teacher's goals are related to classroom culture or a classroom process.

The goal of teacher leadership is to empower teachers and improve school culture, but the reason for school is students. So if students are happy, healthy, making progress, and learning, then that is a huge measure of success. One final measure of success may be teacher retention. Teachers who are given opportunities to advance in their career are more likely to stay in Catholic schools in general or in their own Catholic school in particular. When

teachers feel their voices heard and can stretch and reach to do something different that benefits more students, they feel validated and want to stay.

Next Steps for Schools and Dioceses

Instead of thinking about school leadership and/or teacher leadership, perhaps the thought should be about collective leadership (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2010), where principals and teacher leaders work together to collectively build a community of learners that benefits all students. Whatever it is called, it is important to research to know what this might look like, and then to imagine what would work best in that school or diocese.

Some principals are well on their way empowering teacher leaders. The principal who has the preschool teacher leading the data management of the universal screener, her junior high math teacher leading as assistant principal, and her fourth-grade teacher leading the school's literacy initiatives is already doing this. In some cases, it is the smaller schools with only one teacher of each grade level who do this well because they must do it well: they can't afford a full-time assistant principal, or they were not allowed to rehire a position after someone retired, and so on.

How Do Principals Start?

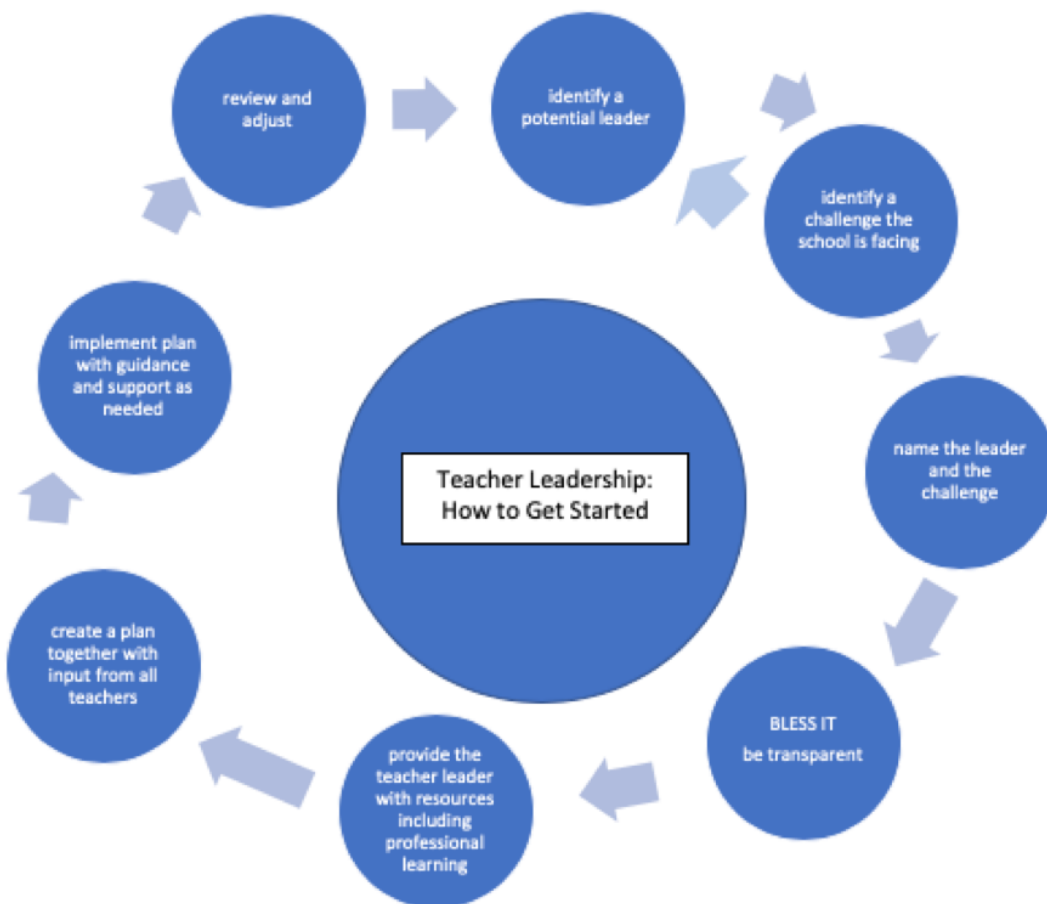


Figure 5: How to Get Started

The first step for principals is to identify a potential leader or think about the root cause of an existing problem or challenge - math scores are low or teachers need more professional learning about writing instruction - and this causes the principal to brainstorm one solution, to empower the excellent math teacher to lead the school's PLCs in some professional learning around math instruction. However the identification occurs, there must also be a plan which must include resources the teacher might need. What will the teacher leader work on? What are the goals of the project? What resources or templates will the teacher leader need? How will the principal, the teacher leader, and the faculty measure success? A resource like

a job description is helpful depending on the scope of the work. Another resource may be some focused professional learning on how to be an instructional coach, how to analyze data, how to write curriculum - whatever is the topic of the work. A plan needs to be identified and documented before the teacher leader starts so she/he has the direction, scope, and clarity to begin. Figure 5 shows a potential flow for starting this process at a school.

Providing professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders will be crucial so they feel "fed" in their new role. Being a teacher leader sometimes means leading professional learning as opposed to participating in it, so finding

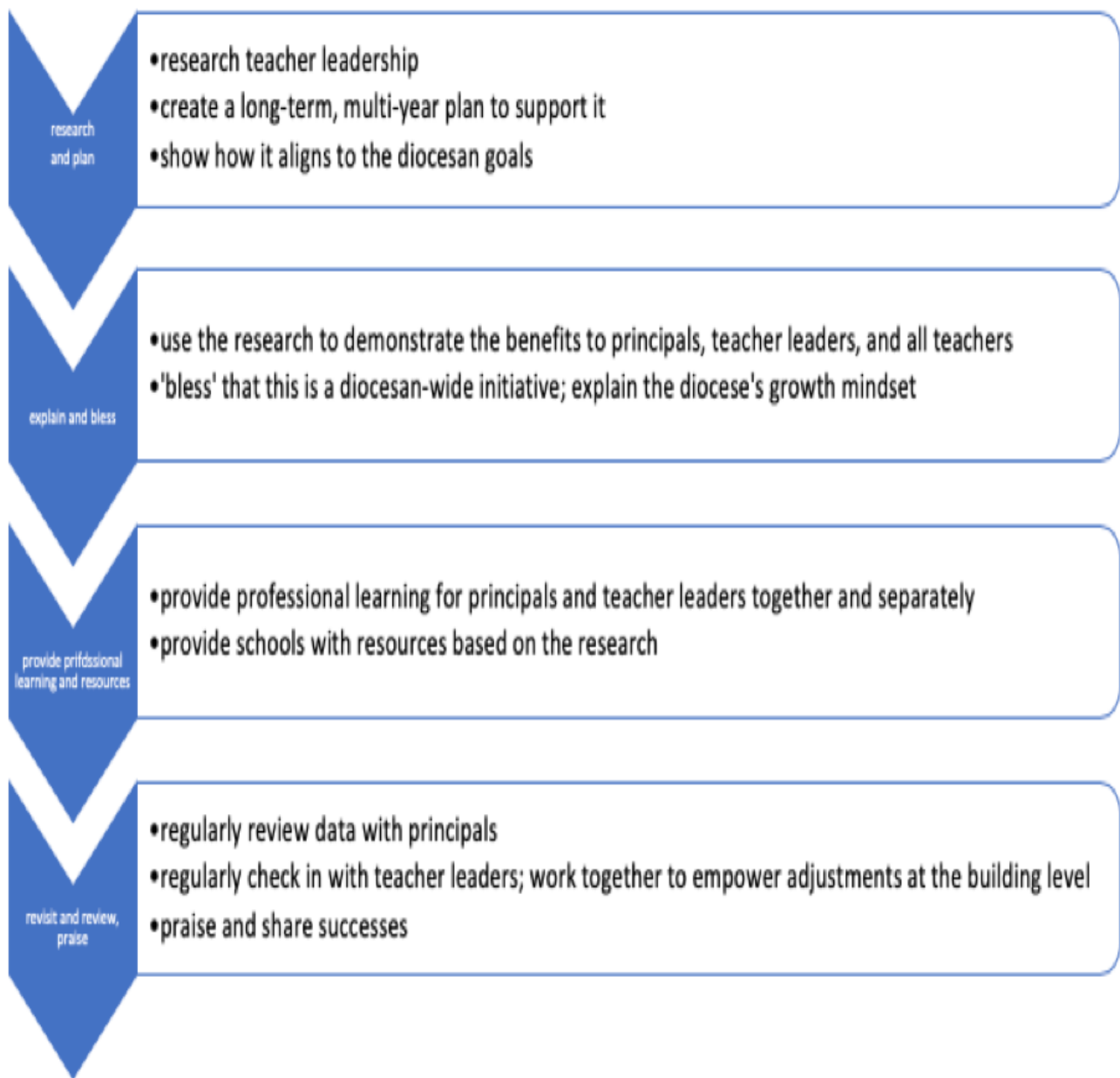


Figure 6: How to Get Started Diocesan Steps to support Teacher-Leader Development

professional learning that is tailored for the teacher leader is just as important as identifying it for teachers. Once the plan

is created, the teacher leader begins the plan's work with the support and guidance of the principal as needed.

This may be regular meetings to analyze data or review curriculum artifacts, or it

could be weekly checks of a shared Google doc with a bi-weekly or monthly meeting. Finally, the teacher leader and principal must review the plan and adjust as needed. This might mean that the project is complete, which would likely occur over the course of at least two school years, and then a new project is created based on data.

When a principal blesses the idea, makes it known that this person is officially taking this role or position, and that it's not fleeting or a swinging pendulum, this impacts how the rest of the teachers respond. Having a plan of how this teacher leader will proceed, perhaps having a job description or a very specific task to address with a time parameter and a goal to achieve can help. What doesn't help and will certainly hinder the teacher leader will be for the principal to minimize the job ("oh, she's just going to be helping you all"), to question what the teacher will be doing ("I have no idea what you will do with the teachers. What are you going to do again?"), or to make it seem like it was required, and the principal is just doing it to check a box ("Yeah, so I was told I HAVE to hire an instructional coach, so I chose Mrs. Ramirez."). Many other sabotaging behaviors will also prevent the success of the teacher leader - and ruin her self-esteem and possibly her reputation all at once. This is also a reason for not jumping into the position of a teacher leader before a plan exists.

How Do Dioceses Start?

The first step for a diocese looking to empower teacher leaders is to do research. What does teacher leadership look like? What will teacher leadership look like in our diocese? What are the benefits? This research may include seeking out schools that are already empowering teacher leaders. It could be seeking out a book by Jim Knight or Elena Aguilar. This helps tremendously when principals ask questions because

the diocese can answer with research. A long-term diocesan plan is crucial so all involved will know that this is not a fleeting initiative that will go away at the end of the year. Make it known that teacher leadership is supported by the diocese. Just like inclusion and other important aspects of Catholic schools, a 'blessing' from the diocese makes a big difference - frankly all the difference - on how something is implemented once systems and procedures are in place, or if it is implemented at all. Having the superintendent's office explicitly state the importance of a teacher leader to collaborate about instructional leadership can also take some pressure off of principals.

In some dioceses, starting a process or initiative might take time. As long as the diocese does not explicitly tell the principal not to empower teacher leaders (which hopefully is highly unlikely), there should be no conflict with school improvement plans because the teacher leader's tasks should be directly aligned with the school improvement plan and professional learning plan.

Conclusion

Teacher leaders are a crucial asset to principals, fellow teachers, and the entire school. Reimagining what school leadership looks like can have positive impacts on the school climate, can offer decision making to more than the principal, and can support the principal's efforts. Empowering teachers can retain good teachers from leaving the school or Catholic schools in general. Teachers who feel empowered feel valued, and that positive attitude contributes to

positive classrooms and schools. Teacher leaders directly and indirectly lead in their schools. But when a process, plan, and/or system is put in

place to transparently show their leadership, a positive school culture can be maintained.

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Appendix A

Teacher Leader Dispositions Checklist

_____respected by peers

_____trusted and trustworthy

_____open minded

_____good listener: doesn't talk over people; doesn't just wait until someone else is done talking to launch into a different topic

_____personable; friendly; socializes well with the administration team, other teachers, families, staff, students, parishioners

_____organized; keeps a calendar

_____prompt and timely

_____a learner; regularly and consistently engages in professional learning

_____humble; doesn't think she/he knows everything

_____believes that all children can learn

_____collaborates

_____has shown evidence of leadership at the school

_____honest and has integrity

_____hard worker; dedicated to the students and the school

_____shows care and concern for each individual encountered

_____maintains confidentiality

Appendix B

Essential Instructional Practices Checklist



Essential Instructional Practices Checklist



Teacher: _____ School: _____ Date: _____ Time: in _____ out _____

Grade level: _____ Subject: _____

EVIDENT THROUGHOUT EVERY DAY

The classroom shows the characteristics of the mission of a Catholic school. (DF 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e)

1. The teacher has rapport with the students. It is obvious that the teacher cares about the students.	Yes-----No	Notes & Evidence
2. The classroom environment is faithful, warm, and welcoming to all.	Yes-----No	
3. The teacher is respectful of the students with regard to their person and their academics at all times.	Yes-----No	
4. Classroom expectations are evident to the students. This includes behavior, small group work, etc.	Yes-----No	
5. Catholic identity is integrated whenever possible.	Yes-----No	

*NA=not observed during this observation timeframe

EVIDENT IN EACH LESSON

The teacher uses essential practices throughout each lesson.

A. The teacher sets a purpose for learning. The teacher states and posts the objective for the lesson. (DF 1c)	Yes-----No	Notes & Evidence
B. This lesson's objective comes from the teacher's written curriculum. This curriculum is aligned to standards and aligned vertically to other grades' curricula.	Yes-----No	
C. Direct Instruction: the teacher models, shows, and tells exactly what the students will do. (I Do) (DF 1e)	Yes-----No	
D. Guided Practice: The teacher and the students practice together. (We Do) (DF 3c)	Yes-----No	
E. The teacher provides time for the students to practice together during guided practice. (You Do Together) (DF 3c)	Yes-----No	
F. Independent Practice: Students work individually; the teacher checks in with students. (You Do Alone) (DF 3e) The requirements and/or expectations of the independent practice are clearly stated and a visual is provided (e.g., page number on the board, written description on board or on paper, etc.).	Yes-----No	
G. The teacher provides intentional, targeted small-group instruction or individual instruction as part of her/his overall differentiation plan. This can occur while students are working individually.	Yes-----No	
H. Students productively talk and work together. (DF 3c) The norms or parameters for this are clear to students.	Yes-----No	
I. Students spend a majority of the class time doing purposeful work of that subject: solving problems, reading, writing, talking, thinking, creating, etc. (DF 3c)	Yes-----No	
J. The teacher uses formative assessment. (DF 3d) The teacher gives feedback about progress regularly.	Yes-----No	
K. Instruction is varied – direct instruction, partner work, small-group work, individual work, etc. (DF 3e) This includes students moving, talking, sharing, etc.	Yes-----No	
L. The teacher believes that all children can learn. (DF 1a, 1b) She/he differentiates for students based on data gleaned from formative assessments, anecdotal notes, knowledge of student strengths, etc.	Yes-----No	
M. Technology is <i>integrated</i> into the lesson in an appropriate and meaningful way. (DF 2e) This includes student use of technology.	Yes-----No	

*NA=not observed during this observation timeframe

DF=Danielson Framework



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