

Chapter 89

Teacher Leadership: Learning and Leading

Andrea M. Kent

University of South Alabama, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the metamorphosis of teacher leaders, from the roles, responsibilities, and dispositions of teacher leaders, to teacher leaders using technology for self-professional development as well as leading professional development for the improvement of teaching and learning. The underlying premise is that teacher leaders work with diverse populations of both teachers and public school students who are present in schools today. It is strong leadership at the classroom level that makes a difference with colleagues and students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social class, and can ultimately impact an entire school culture. This chapter integrates these core tenants in an effort to guide the reader to understanding the necessity of developing teacher leaders to meet the challenges inherent in 21st century schools and classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher leaders have typically been an integral part of the daily life of P–12 schools. They generally self-identify by becoming the key persons or experts in a school for a specific curricular area. Their commitment to life-long learning lays the foundation for teachers to emerge as leaders. In today's world, technology has become the gateway for learning. Teacher leaders can and should use

a variety of emerging technologies to learn new skills, to continually expand their knowledge, and to enhance their craft. In turn, teacher leaders must be able to use technology to lead diverse groups of teachers, and to show other teachers how to effectively incorporate technology into their teaching while guiding various communities of students along the path of life-long learning. Through the use of innovative and evolving technologies, teachers are able to reach students in the context of the multiple modalities of learning and the various literacies that are inherent within the learning

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styles of students. As examined throughout this chapter, it is the premise that teacher leaders nature great teachers. Ultimately, effective teachers have an immediate impact on our communities and society at large through the P - 12 students who are our leaders of tomorrow (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011).

With the underlying premise of the diverse populations of both teachers and students present in today's schools, this chapter will specifically focus on:

- Define teacher leadership;
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders, including their role in school reform;
- Present prevalent dispositions in teachers serving as teacher leaders;
- Elaborate on the professional development teacher leaders must engage in for continued learning, both for themselves and in leading other teachers;
- Emphasize the role of technology for 21st century teacher leaders.

DEFINING TEACHER LEADERS

Teacher leaders have been prevalent in schools for many years. The concept of teacher leadership is not new, but as their roles and responsibilities continually mature as part of school reform. In light of current challenges faced in the schools each day, the implementation and impact of teacher leaders must continually be examined (Berry, et al., 2011). Leadership characteristics generally emerge as teachers are called on to serve outside, and in addition to, their role as classroom teachers, leading in various capacities at the school level. It is the definition of teacher leadership in *Teaching 2030* (Berry, et al., 2011) that forms the premise of this chapter. In this book, a teacher leader as a *Teacherpreneur* is defined by Ariek Sacks, as:

...a teacher leader of the future that has proven accomplishment and deep knowledge of how to teach, a clear understanding of what strategies must be in play to make schools highly successful, and the skills and commitment to spread their expertise to others—all while keeping one foot firmly in the classroom (p. 136).

In the recent past, the school's infrastructure has often times been put in place to support teacher leaders as they work alongside their colleagues, with the ultimate focus of improving student achievement (Berry, et al., 2011). Teacher leaders embrace the challenge of school improvement as they are given the opportunities to participate with their colleagues by facilitating the process of student inquiry, dialogue, and reflection in order to meet the challenge. A prevalent example can be seen in school-based literacy, coaches often seen in elementary schools and that have also emerged in the recent past in secondary schools (Steiner & Kowal, 2009)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles of teacher leaders have ranged from those who are recognized positions with formal titles, such as *instructional coaches*, *grade level chairperson* or *committee chairs*, to less formal roles such as being looked to as the instructional expert in a content area or being known for any number of strengths in an area that is consider a critical issue of the time—budget cuts, new technology, English Language Learners, etc. Often, a member of the school administrative team will recognize the leadership potential of a teacher, and work to foster those skills through committee assignments and professional development opportunities. In more recent years, teacher leader certifications have been designed and developed by state departments of education and supporting programs have been implemented in the university at the graduate level as a career path

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