

TO: Lauren Hubbard

RE: Advancement Pathways for Educators Final Project Memo

Introduction

Project Overview

Education Trust - Midwest seeks to find methods to improve teacher performance and student achievement. Our research examines efforts in Tennessee, New Jersey, Illinois, and Louisiana to improve teacher instructional quality through the development of different teacher leadership pathways. We will provide recommendations to Michigan based on our insights below.

Methodology

Our recommendations are based on a literature review of teacher leadership pathways, a qualitative analysis of case study interviews conducted with Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Tennessee, and interviews with Michigan stakeholders.

Defining Teacher Leadership

Through our research, we have found that some states - like Illinois and Louisiana - do not have a formal definition of teacher leadership. However, New Jersey views teacher leaders as individuals who build relationships among fellow educators and the administration. They must be experienced, approachable, collaborative, innovative, and supportive so that best practices can emerge in the classroom and improve student achievement.¹ Tennessee has defined a teacher leader as “a professional educator, who through transparent practices, acts as a change agent to capacity in self and others to increase effective educator practices and improve student learning.”² One commonality is that the definition is adaptable to meet the needs of schools.

Case Studies

New Jersey

The Teacher Leadership program in New Jersey is comprised of a network and endorsement within the AchieveNJ initiative. The network is made up of ambassadors from higher education, nonprofit entities, and education organizations. They exchange ideas and best practices to support teacher leaders and have the option of participating in the Teacher Leader Endorsement (TLE) process.³ TLE is a set of state standards that can be met through coursework at a university, training at an organization like AFT NJ, or through a third party group. According to an employee at the DoE, the endorsement is key to the “Do No Harm” principle. This principal empowers districts to do what is best for them while also being aligned with the DoE’s standards. This is seen as vital because NJ districts are incredibly diverse. Districts are urban,

¹Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium. “Model Teacher Leader Standards.” 2011.

²TN Department of Education. “Tennessee Teacher Leader Network 2015-16 Guidebook”

³“New Jersey Department of Education.” The Official Web Site for The State of New Jersey, www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/leadership/tln.shtml.

suburban, or rural and they serve an equally diverse body of students. The flexibility of the endorsement allows for districts to use their discretion.⁴ The endorsement standards will be solidified through legislation in Spring 2019. The standards will reflect the principles laid out by the Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium (TLEC).

TLE recipients must create a productive and collaborative workspace with teachers, principals, and staff to implement best practice based on the latest data and research. They must advocate for continuous professional development and improvement in instruction methods. These best practices partnered with community building with parents and students result in providing students the highest quality education possible⁵. The teacher leader's role may not result in increased compensation; however, the hope is that the formal endorsement will incentivize schools to provide compensation for their skills and expertise.

A key strength of the AchieveNJ Teacher Leader program is the ability to leverage flexibility and collaboration between the state, local districts, and education organizations. A member of the Teacher Leader Endorsement Advisory Board and AFT NJ believes that the endorsement will make children's and teachers' lives better through effective communication and support.⁶

Illinois

Illinois has a non-mandatory Teacher Leadership Endorsement (TLE) which is referred in the IL Public Act 097-0607. The Act created a new teacher endorsement that recognizes the career continuum of educators, from pre-service teacher to classroom teacher, teacher leader, principal, and beyond.⁷ Illinois has a well-organized network of private agencies and grassroots organizations (such as the Illinois Teacher Leadership Network - ITLN) that, along with some more active districts, pushed for legislation (TLE) and are the main actors behind teacher leadership in the State.⁸

The ITLN is a politically relevant actor, and through the network, a number of relevant initiatives in teacher leadership take place⁹. Despite the TLE, there is no standard approach to teacher leadership in Illinois; so, the role of a grassroots organizations like ITLN becomes even more important in promoting and standardizing practices. Districts also have autonomy in how teachers are identified and recruited. The network does include the State Government, mostly in policy level. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is mainly responsible for the guidelines in designing teacher leadership programs that are then supposedly implemented by universities offering programs that certify teacher leaders.¹⁰ Still, private agencies and the informal networks participated in the guideline discussions and are constantly working on its

⁴ Torres, Rachel. "Teacher Leader Interview with Peter Mazzagatti." 31 Oct. 2018.

⁵ Teacher Leader Exploratory Consortium. "Model Teacher Leader Standards." 2011.

⁶ Torres, Rachel. "Teacher Leader Interview with Rob Barbier." 2 Nov. 2018.

⁷ P20 Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness Committee. "Teacher Leadership Report." 2016.

⁸ Lorenzon, Flavia. "Teacher Leader Interview with Benjamin Boer", 1 Nov. 2018.

⁹ Lorenzon, Flavia. "Teacher Leader Interview with Jacob Carlson", 30 Oct. 2018.

¹⁰ Lorenzon, Flavia. "Teacher Leader Interview with Erika Hunt. 13 Nov. 2018.

promotion. The TLE and the guidelines it produced are an important step in standardizing teacher leadership in Illinois.

The case of Illinois shows that a well played role by civil society can bring positive results. However, it also shows the work at the policy level is equally important to sustain change. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of teacher leadership, Illinois is still working to make the endorsement mandatory across State or to make guidelines enforced in all universities' programs offered for pursuing teacher leaders.

Louisiana

In 2012, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) launched a set of system-wide reforms to support high quality teaching and learning. Teacher Leader, Teacher Leader Advisor, and Content Leader positions were established to support teachers in implementing a new set of academic standards. Teachers assuming leadership positions collaborate with the LDOE to vet and rank high-quality standards-aligned curriculum, receive training and train peers on best instructional practices, and develop high quality instructional and assessment resources. Recently, the Mentor Teacher leadership position was established to support teacher candidates, and the LDOE codified new teacher preparation requirements and standards. Trends in students achievement on the NEAP and ACT suggest that Louisiana's system for supporting teachers through leadership opportunities may be correlated with improved instructional practices, and improved student outcomes.¹¹ Further, Louisiana teachers are more likely to demonstrate a better understanding of Common Core-aligned standards and use Common Core-aligned instructional materials at a higher rate.¹²

Louisiana's system reform approach to teaching and learning preserves local decision-making and positions districts to capitalize on teacher leadership roles to best suit the needs of the district.¹³ The LDOE employs a set a policy levers to signal high-quality instructional materials, professional development resources, and accountability mechanisms to district leaders.¹⁴ The system is grounded in common core-aligned, high-quality resources, that work together to support instruction.

Tennessee

State-level teacher leadership began with a small allocation of Race to the Top (RTTP) funds dedicated to focus on teacher leadership and leadership in general in 2011.¹⁵ Tennessee's Teacher Leader Network is an optional program that involves a network of districts that come together and create their own teacher models within Tennessee's Teacher Leadership Standards. Districts that do opt into the Network must create and implement teacher leader models and

¹¹ Kaufman, et al. (2018). Raising the bar: Louisiana's Strategies for Improving Student Outcomes. Rand Corporation

¹² Kaufman, H., Thompson, L., & Opfer, V.D. (2016). Creating a coherent system to support instruction aligned with state standards: Promising practices of the Louisiana Department of Education. Rand Corporation.

¹³ Barrett, Lindsey. "Interview with Rebecca Kocker". 21, Nov. 2018.

¹⁴ Kaufman, et al. (2018). Raising the bar: Louisiana's Strategies for Improving Student Outcomes. Rand Corporation

¹⁵ Washington, Kelia. "Interview with Paul Fleming". 28, Nov. 2018.

provide continuous professional development and support for teacher leaders.¹⁶ The Tennessee Department of Education is responsible for providing a framework for developing and refining district teacher leader models, embedding teacher leadership into evaluation systems, and mandating differentiated teacher compensation systems.¹⁷

Tennessee has a well-developed teacher leadership program. However, one drawback of having a voluntary program is the inability to keep track of those districts that at one point joined the Network, developed their district teacher leader model, and left the Network after implementation.¹⁸ Aside from that, the Teacher Leader Network offers districts the right mix of autonomy, guidance, and mandates which help districts feel supported but also take ownership of the design, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability of their teacher leader model.

Recommendations for the State of Michigan

- Capitalize on the shifts in party power.
- Engage with stakeholders outside of governmental institutions.
- Rethink the way universities can offer teacher leadership programs.
- Establish system-wide supports in order to maintain a standard of high quality while allowing for local decision-making.
- Leverage financial resources through Title II funding and state appropriations, and partnerships with professional development and curriculum vendors and local teacher preparation programs

Conclusion

ETM's efforts to inform policy and initiatives that provide quality education to all students can be bolstered by this research. We conclude our literature review and state case studies with recommendations that will help foster teacher leadership in Michigan. this work is a piece of a bigger puzzle to improving schooling in this state. Our hope is that the upcoming shift in political power in Michigan will create an opportunity for progress in education reform, including teacher leadership.

¹⁶ Chiefs for Change. (2018). The Network Effect: Harnessing the Power of Teacher Leadership Networks to Sustain Progress in Tennessee.

¹⁷ Chiefs for Change. (2018). The Network Effect: Harnessing the Power of Teacher Leadership Networks to Sustain Progress in Tennessee.

¹⁸ Washington, Kelia. "Interview with Paul Fleming". 28, Nov. 2018.