Teacher Leadership

*Sustaining Improved Teaching and Learning Through Teacher Leadership*

**Why is Teacher Leadership Important?**
The development of teacher leaders is a critical component for sustainability. By developing teacher leaders, schools and districts can construct sustainable learning organizations. Although teachers are quite comfortable working with children, leadership requires an entirely different set of skills that allow them to effectively work with adult learners. Teachers have an extraordinary opportunity to exercise leadership because they are the most influential, next to students, on other teachers’ practice (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Creating teacher leaders in schools is an essential task in the process of creating schools in which all students and staff learn and perform at high levels.

**What is Teacher Leadership?**
Barr & Duke (2004) provide this definition of teacher leadership:

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

Teacher leadership should not replace, but augment principal leadership. A principal who engages teacher leaders in a collaborative, open and inclusive environment can accomplish major improvements in schools that affect student learning.

**What are the Essential Skills for Teacher Leaders?**
The teacher leadership framework builds educator’s knowledge and skills related to the impact teacher leaders have on student learning, leadership capacity strategies, issues related to the development of collaborative school cultures, participatory leadership, and the coaching and mentoring of colleagues. It requires an understanding of organizational change as well as adult development. Essential skills for teacher leadership include:

- Ability to apply strategies of adult learning
- Ability to demonstrate and apply expertise in observational skills and feedback to support reflective practice
- Ability to improve the quality of colleagues’ collaboration and interaction with families and other stakeholders
- Ability to initiate and facilitate colleagues’ design and implementation of action research and data analysis for individual and group decision-making
• Ability to develop and support collaborative teams
• Ability to identify and assess opportunities for educational improvement and advocate effectively for them
• Ability to inform and facilitate the design and implementation of differentiated professional development based on student and teacher needs

For more information on teacher leadership contact Sandi Cole at the Indiana Center for Assessment and Instruction.

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