TEACHER LEADERSHIP SKILLS FRAMEWORK

CSTP
Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession
2009

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www.cstp-wa.org

With the publication of this Teacher Leadership Skills Framework, the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) takes another step towards articulating and clarifying the specific professional development needs of teacher leaders that will positively impact learning for students in all of our schools.

This framework can be used to design professional development offerings, serve as a discussion tool to address the dilemmas that arise when leadership is shared, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the roles teacher leaders assume in efforts to improve student learning.

Special thanks to the many educators who gave their time and energy to this work, especially the following:

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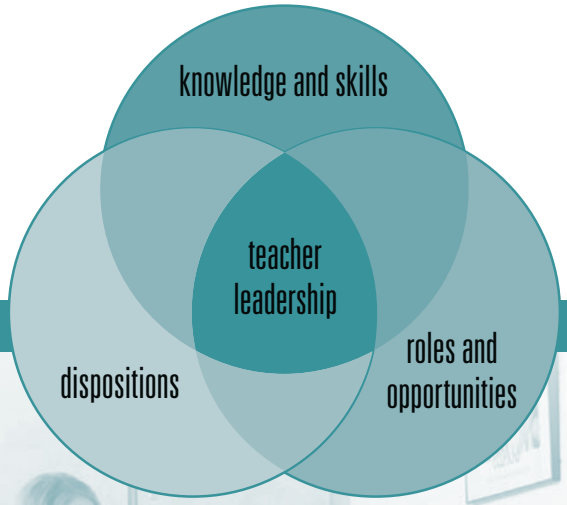
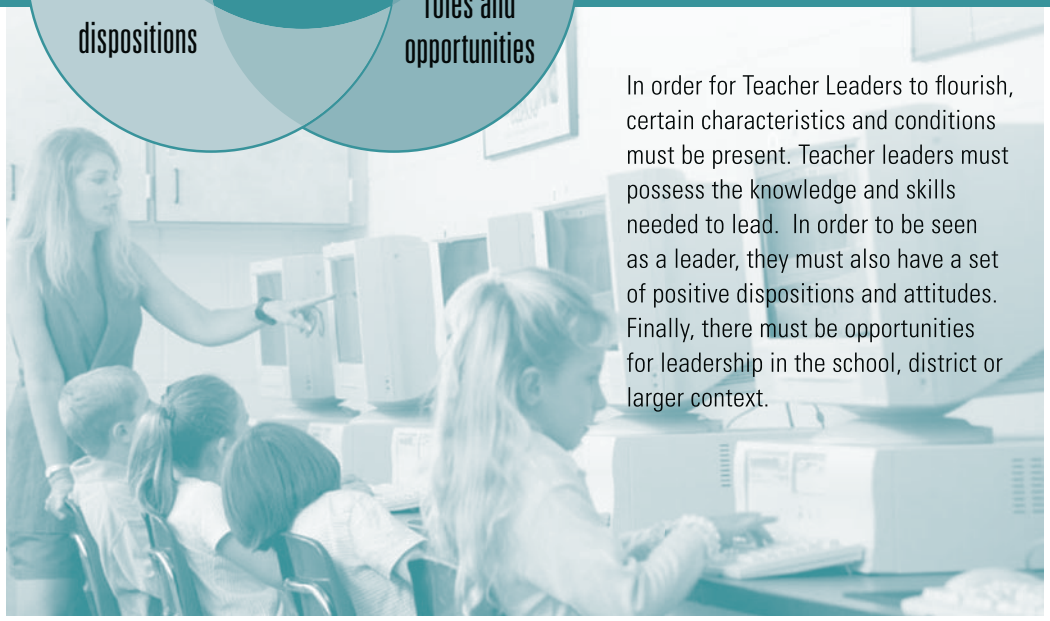
TEACHER LEADERSHIP SKILLS FRAMEWORK:

OVERVIEW



Definition of Teacher Leadership

Knowledge, skills and dispositions demonstrated by teachers who positively impact student learning by influencing adults, formally and informally, beyond individual classrooms



In order for Teacher Leaders to flourish, certain characteristics and conditions must be present. Teacher leaders must possess the knowledge and skills needed to lead. In order to be seen as a leader, they must also have a set of positive dispositions and attitudes. Finally, there must be opportunities for leadership in the school, district or larger context.

Knowledge and Skills Needed by Effective Teacher Leaders

The skills teacher leaders need to be effective in a variety of roles can be broken into five main categories. These skills sets are further defined on subsequent pages.

1. Working with adult learners
2. Communication
3. Collaboration
4. Knowledge of content and pedagogy
5. Systems thinking

Dispositions of Effective Teacher Leaders

Effective teacher leaders share a set of dispositions and attitudes. They are energetic risk takers whose integrity, high efficacy, and content knowledge give them credibility with their colleagues. Their desire to work with adults is grounded in their belief that systems-level change will positively impact student learning, and that their contributions to the profession are important and needed. The natural curiosity of teacher leaders makes them life-long learners who are open to new experiences and challenges. Juggling many important professional and personal roles, they effectively prioritize their work to maintain a sense of balance. Teacher leaders often seek like-minded colleagues with similar positive intentions as allies, however they also value different ideas and approaches that move the work forward. Difficult challenges require teacher leaders to tap into their deep sense of courage, and their unwavering perseverance helps them to follow through. When best-laid plans have unexpected outcomes, teacher leaders are open to constructive criticism. They reflect on their experience, learn from it, and then with resilience move forward to the next challenge.

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TEACHER LEADERSHIP SKILLS FRAMEWORK:

OVERVIEW, continued

Roles of Teacher Leaders

Working to Strengthen Instruction: Instructional/Curriculum Specialist

- Action researcher
- Assessment developer
- Assessment literacy
- Assessment specialist
- Content coach
- Instructional coach
- Data analyst
- Data coach
- Graduation expectation specialist
- Resource provider
- Teacher on Special Assignment
- Learning team leader
- Technology coach
- Technology expert

Advocate/Partner

- Association reps/leaders
- Advocate for teachers, students
- NCATE examiner
- OSPI committees
- Policy influence
- Publishing
- Partner with organizations
- Partner with universities (adjunct faculty, advisory boards)
- Professional content organization

Working to Strengthen Instruction: Classroom Supporter

- Assessment leader
- Grade level/team leader
- Instructional coaches
- Teacher on Special Assignment

Mentor

- Mentor lst or 2nd year teacher
- Mentor teachers new to the district
- Mentor student teachers

Learning Facilitator

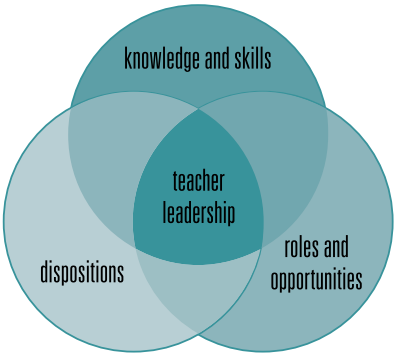
- Advanced certification facilitator
- Group facilitation (large, small)
- Lab classrooms
- Teacher trainer (Professional Development)

Learner

- Book study facilitator
- Critical Friends Group facilitator
- Lesson study facilitator

School Leader

- Committee work
- Curriculum work
- Department head/chair
- School improvement work
- Team leader



The following pages

detail the five categories of knowledge, skills and dispositions that teacher leaders need to be effective in a variety of roles. Each category includes a vignette illustrating the dilemmas teacher leaders face, as well as reflective questions to prompt thinking and discussion. A resource list for each category is also included.

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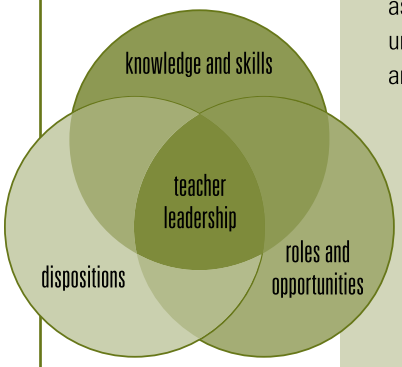
WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

"If teachers are to prepare an ever more diverse group of students for much more challenging work -- for framing problems; finding, integrating and synthesizing information; creating new solutions; learning on their own; and working cooperatively -- they will need substantially more knowledge and radically different skills than most now have and most schools of education develop."



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Knowledge and Skills

Building trusting relationships

- Fostering group membership
- Listening intentionally
- Taking an ethical stance
- Taking a caring stance
- Creating a safe environment
- Developing cultural competency

Facilitating professional learning for teachers

- Using reflection strategically
- Structuring dialogue and discussion
- Disrupting assumptions
- Fostering learners' engagement
- Encouraging collegial inquiry
- Understanding development of teacher knowledge both in terms of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge
- Foster responsibility for the group's learning by all group members

Dispositions

- Believe that teacher learning is interwoven with student learning
- Value the work of learners
- Accept and act on constructive feedback
- Possess courage to take risks
- Is reliable

Vignette

Jack will lead his first grade level team meeting in a few days. The task of the group will be to look at common assessment data. Jack confided to his building coach/principal that he knew one team member, Shane, was uncomfortable sharing his data with the team. Jack and Shane fish together on the weekends and go on an annual hunting trip. Asking Shane to share his students' results with the team makes Jack uncomfortable.

Reflection Questions

- What steps would you take if you were Jack?
- What advice would you give Jack if you were the coach or principal?
- How could the team meeting be structured to ease Shane into sharing data?
- What does this team need to address?
- What evidence of effective adult learning do you see in the vignette?

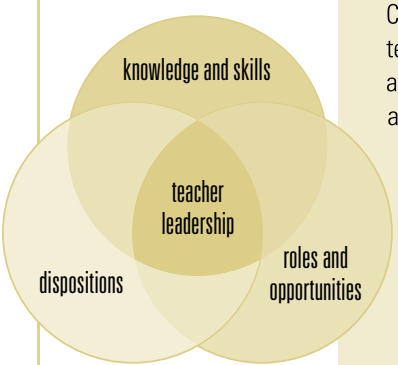
Resources

- NVAA specialized offering "The Ultimate Educator" by Edmunds, C., K. Lowe, M. Murray, and A. Seymour, 1999.
- 30 Things We Know for Sure About Adult Learning by Ron and Susan Zemke, *Innovation Abstracts* Vol VI, No 8, March 9, 1984.
- Characteristics of Adult Learners, *Cave, J., LaMaster, C., & White, S. (1998). Staff development: Adult characteristics. Batavia, Illinois: Fermilab, http://www-ed.fnal.gov/lincon/staff_adult.html (retrieved September 13, 2004).*
- *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School* edited by John Bransford, Ann Brown and Rodney Cocking (2000) National Academy Press, Washington DC. Also available on-line at http://www.nap.edu

COMMUNICATION

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when someone asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer."



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Knowledge and Skills

Building relationships through communication

- Maintains objectivity
- Develops cultural competency
- Understands adults as learners
- Risks inviting and honoring diverse views
- Comfortable with healthy, productive discussion

Technical skills

- Facilitate learning focused conversations
- Give and receive feedback
- Deep listening skills (i.e. paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions)
- Questioning strategies
- Lead data driven dialogue
- Know the difference between conversation, dialogue and discussion
- Synthesize and summarize, use mediation skills
- Facilitate large and small groups
- Effectively use technology to enhance communication (i.e. Powerpoint presentations)
- Written communication (i.e. memos, minutes, email)
- Strategies for setting up spaces, materials and pacing

Dispositions

- Honors all perspectives
- Holds a positive presupposition that all are working in the best interests of students
- Values professional expertise
- Fosters community

Vignette

Clare is a grade level team leader. At the last team meeting the discussion went badly and two of the team members left with hurt feelings. The disagreement centered on the creation of a common formative assessment. One team member thought the assessment should be multiple-choice to match the state assessment format, while another was invested in short answer response to get at student thinking. Clare met with them the following day. She spent the first part of the meeting objectively restating the issue and had the team find where there was common ground. The team members then focused on how to compromise and agree to disagree on the assessment format.

Reflection questions

- What questions do you think Clare asked to find common ground?
- What presuppositions did Clare make about her teammates?
- What would happen if the teammates would not compromise or agree to disagree?
- Are there other strategies that might have worked for Clare and her team?
- What evidence of or possibilities for effective communication do you see in the vignette?

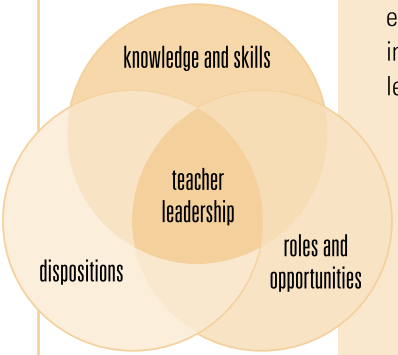
Resources

- Garmson, R., & Wellman, B. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers. *The Presenter's Fieldbook: A Practical Guide*, Garmston, Robert, 1997.
- Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (1998). *Pathways to Understanding: Patterns and Practices in the Learning-Focused Classroom*. Miravia, LLC.
- McDonald, J. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

COLLABORATIVE WORK

AFRICAN PROVERB

If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.



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Knowledge and Skills

Collaborative Skills

- Teaching, developing, and using norms of collaboration
- Conflict resolution/mediation skills
- Using protocols or other strategies
- Modeling/valuing diverse opinions
- Matching language to the situation
- Sharing responsibility and leadership
- Holding yourself accountable to the group's goals and outcomes

Organizational Skills

- Facilitating a meeting
- Documenting a meeting
- Moving a group to task completion
- Knowing resources and how to access resources
- Delegating responsibility to group members

Dispositions

- Knows when to compromise
- Able to read the group
- Admitting when wrong/don't know
- Honest courageous communication
- Desire to work with adults
- Passion for topic motivates others

Vignette

An ESD in rural Washington State has received a three-year math and science grant. The purpose of the grant is to improve student learning by improving instructional practices in math and science. At one elementary school, K-5 teachers are using the "Teaching and Learning Cycle" to collaboratively plan and implement lessons, analyze student work and make adjustments to their instruction. However, one grade level group is having difficulty collaborating. Sarah, a teacher leader on the team, shares the group's challenges with the principal. The principal responds by asking Sarah to assume leadership of the group to ensure success.

Reflection Questions

- How should Sarah approach her new role as team leader?
- Where should Sarah begin to help the group collaborate?
- What tools might Sarah use to help the group 'own' the work?
- What evidence of or possibilities for effective collaboration do you see in the vignette?

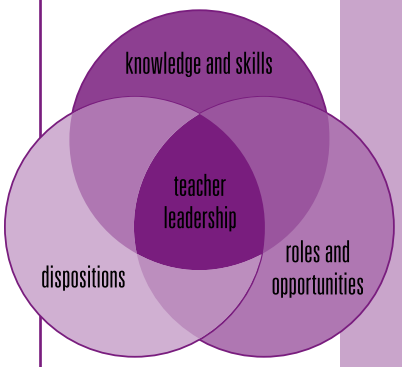
Resources

- *The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle: Implementing a Standards-Based Approach to Professional Development*, by Ed Tobia, published in the Southwest Education Development Laboratory Letter, Volume XIX, Number 1, April 2007
- McDonald, J. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dufour, R., Dufour, R. and Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting Professional Learning Communities that Work: New Insights for Improving Schools.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., and Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing: a handbook for professional learning communities at work.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

KNOWLEDGE OF CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY

DIANA RIGDEN

"Research demonstrates that there is a strong reliable relationship between teachers' content knowledge and the quality of their instruction. Teachers with a deep conceptual understanding of their subject ask a greater number of high-level questions, encourage students to apply and transfer knowledge, help students see and understand relationships between and among ideas and concepts, and make other choices in their instruction that engage students and challenge them to learn"



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Knowledge and Skills

- Strong subject matter knowledge including assessment strategies
- The ability to analyze both subject matter concepts and pedagogical strategies
- Personal experience using effective pedagogical strategies in the classroom
- Ability to assist colleagues at multiple entry points to increase content knowledge and classroom application

Dispositions

- Life-long learner
- Reflective
- Committed to supporting growth of others
- Enjoys challenges

Vignette

As an experienced middle school teacher with a math minor, Bill has built a good relationship with a colleague, Sally. It was 4:00 on a Thursday when Sally approached him for help on her next day's math lesson. Bill really wanted to go home but knew he needed to nurture this relationship, and deep down knew it would be valuable to share with her the reflective strategies he uses to deepen content knowledge and support students' conceptual understanding. He thought he could give her a lesson plan on the concepts, but felt it was more important to help her own the math so she could develop the lesson. So, Bill invited her into his room and asked a series of questions to find an entry point. What ideas do you have? Have you taught these concepts before? What do your students already know? Together they looked at recent student work so they could make connections. He also shared strategies he had used in the past and detailed the ways students thought about the concepts in response to these strategies, and how he revised his plans after analyzing their misconceptions. Finally, they looked at Sally's students' work and brainstormed a plan together. Bill pulled some of his resources and Sally added some of hers. They agreed to come back Friday during planning to talk about how the lesson went.

Reflection Questions

- In what ways does Bill's response to Sally acknowledge her content knowledge? How does Bill demonstrate his own?
- How does Sally receive the pedagogical strategies modeled and suggested by Bill?
- What skills and dispositions demonstrated by Bill and Sally align with your leadership/learning experiences?
- What evidence of or possibilities for effective content/pedagogy leadership do you see in the vignette?

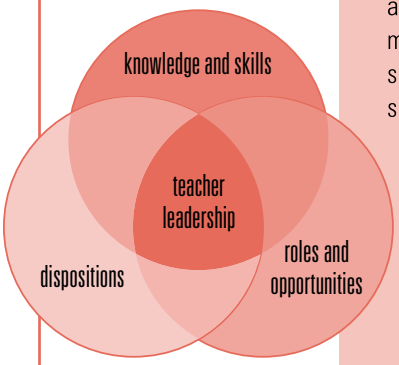
Resources

- Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org)
- National Staff Development Council (www.nsdc.org)
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (www.nbpts.org)
- National content standards
- Content practitioner journals

SYSTEMS THINKING

MARGARET J. WHEATLEY

There is a great deal of evidence for how well whole systems change processes work….We haven't yet absorbed the simple truth that we can't force anybody to change. We can only involve them in the change process from the beginning and see what's possible.



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Knowledge and Skills

Working effectively within system

- Recognize layers of system(s)
- Understand power structure and decision making in context
- Understand and work within rules of hierarchy (formal and informal)
- Garner support from and work with stakeholders
- Deal effectively with resistance
- Facilitate collective inquiry practices
- Understand and leverage finances/resource allocation
- Ask the right questions at the right time

Skills of advocacy

- Set achievable goals
- Create and implement plan to meet goals
- Build capacity for sustainability
- Identify decision makers
- Craft and deliver an effective message
- Mobilize people into action

Dispositions

- Interested in larger/bigger picture
- Attuned to relationships
- Ability to "read" people and situations
- Embraces the opportunity to work with those with diverse views

Vignette

Two teachers come back from a conference energized about a new initiative to implement in their district that will cost a small amount of money and meets a stated need. They meet to draft the proposal, inform and garner support from other staff and then present the idea to the person who they think is the decision-maker. To their dismay and disappointment, they get a no. After careful thought and analysis of the situation, they wonder if the person who turned down their proposal was actually the person who makes such a decision. They ask a lot of questions and find the proposal actually needs to be approved by a professional development advisory group, and they get permission to present the idea to this group. They know from past experience that this group has one person who will likely not be supportive.

Reflection Questions:

- How common do you think it is for teacher leaders to initially misidentify the decision maker for new ideas? How often do ideas stop there?
- After their proposal was turned down initially, how did the teacher leaders determine next steps?
- Knowing there will be an unsupportive member of the PD group, what might the teacher leaders do in advance of their presentation?
- What evidence of or possibilities for system thinking/learning do you see in the vignette?

Resources

- Katzenmeyer, M. & Moller, G. (2001). *Awakening the sleeping giant*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, Michael (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousands Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- NBPTS Advocacy Link: http://capwiz.com/nbpts/home/
- NBCT Policy Summit Report: www.cstp-wa.org