

Ten Roles for Teacher Leaders

The ways teachers can lead are as varied as teachers themselves.

Teacher leaders assume a wide range of roles to support school and student success. Whether these roles are assigned formally or shared informally, they build the entire school's capacity to improve. Because teachers can lead in a variety of ways, many teachers can serve as leaders among their peers.

So, what are some of the leadership options available to teachers? The following 10 roles are a sampling of the many ways teachers can contribute to their schools' success.

1. Resource Provider

Teachers help their colleagues by sharing instructional resources. These might include Web sites, instructional materials, readings, or other resources to use with students. They might also share such professional resources as articles, books, lesson or unit plans, and assessment tools.

Tinisha becomes a resource provider when she offers to help Carissa, a new staff member in her second career, set up her classroom. Tinisha gives Carissa extra copies of a number line for her students to use, signs to post on the wall that explain to students how to get help when the teacher is busy, and the grade-level language arts pacing guide.

2. Instructional Specialist

An instructional specialist helps colleagues implement effective teaching strategies. This help might include ideas for differentiating instruction or planning lessons in partnership with fellow teachers. Instructional specialists might study research-based classroom strategies (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001); explore which instructional methodologies are appropriate for the school; and share findings with colleagues.

When his fellow science teachers share their frustration with students' poorly written lab reports, Jamal suggests that they invite several English teachers to recommend strategies for writing instruction. With two English teachers serving as instructional specialists, the science teachers examine a number of lab reports together and identify strengths and weaknesses. The English teachers share strategies they use in their classes to improve students' writing.

3. Curriculum Specialist

Understanding content standards, how various components of the curriculum link together, and how to use the curriculum in planning instruction and assessment is essential to ensuring consistent curriculum implementation throughout a school. Curriculum specialists lead teachers to agree on standards, follow the adopted curriculum, use common pacing charts, and develop shared assessments.

Tracy, the world studies team leader, works with the five language arts and five social studies teachers in her school. Using standards in English and social studies as their guides, the team members agree to increase the consistency in their classroom curriculums and administer common assessments. Tracy suggests that the team develop a common understanding of the standards and agrees to facilitate the development and analysis of common quarterly assessments.

4. Classroom Supporter

Classroom supporters work inside classrooms to help teachers implement new ideas, often by demonstrating a lesson, coteaching, or observing and giving feedback. Blase and Blase (2006) found that consultation with peers

enhanced teachers' self-efficacy (teachers' belief in their own abilities and capacity to successfully solve teaching and learning problems) as they reflected on practice and grew together, and it also encouraged a bias for action (improvement through collaboration) on the part of teachers. (p. 22)

Marcia asks Yolanda for classroom support in implementing nonlinguistic representation strategies, such as graphic organizers, manipulatives, and kinesthetic activities (Marzano et al., 2001). Yolanda agrees to plan and teach a lesson with Marcia that integrates several relevant strategies. They ask the principal for two half-days of professional release time, one for learning more about the strategy and planning a lesson together, and the other for coteaching the lesson to Marcia's students and discussing it afterward.

5. Learning Facilitator

Facilitating professional learning opportunities among staff members is another role for teacher leaders. When teachers learn with and from one another, they can focus on what most directly improves student learning. Their professional learning becomes more relevant, focused on teachers' classroom work, and aligned to fill gaps in student learning. Such communities of learning can break the norms of isolation present in many schools.

Frank facilitates the school's professional development committee and serves as the committee's language arts representative. Together, teachers plan the year's professional development program using a back mapping model (Killion, 2001). This model begins with identifying student learning needs, teachers' current level of knowledge and skills in the target areas, and types of learning opportunities that different groups of teachers need. The committee can then develop and implement a professional development plan on the basis of their findings.

6. Mentor

Serving as a mentor for novice teachers is a common role for teacher leaders. Mentors serve as role models; acclimate new teachers to a new school; and advise new teachers about instruction, curriculum, procedure, practices, and politics. Being a mentor takes a great deal of time and expertise and makes a significant contribution to the development of a new professional.

Ming is a successful teacher in her own 1st grade classroom, but she has not assumed a leadership role in the school. The principal asks her to mentor her new teammate, a brand-new teacher and a recent immigrant from the Philippines. Ming prepares by participating in the district's three-day training on mentoring. Her role as a mentor will not only include helping her teammate negotiate the district, school, and classroom, but will also include acclimating her colleague to the community. Ming feels proud as she watches her teammate develop into an accomplished teacher.

7. School Leader

Being a school leader means serving on a committee, such as a school improvement team; acting as a grade-level or department chair; supporting school initiatives; or representing the school on community or district task forces or committees. A school leader shares the vision of the school, aligns his or her professional goals with those of the school and district, and shares responsibility for the success of the school as a whole.

Joshua, staff sponsor of the student council, offers to help the principal engage students in the school improvement planning process. The school improvement team plans to revise its nearly 10-year-old vision and wants to ensure that students' voices are included in the process. Joshua arranges a daylong meeting for 10 staff members and 10 students who represent various views of the school experience, from nonattenders to grade-level presidents. Joshua works with the school improvement team facilitator to ensure that the activities planned for the meeting are appropriate for students so that students will actively participate.

8. Data Coach

Although teachers have access to a great deal of data, they do not often use that data to drive classroom instruction. Teacher leaders can lead conversations that engage their peers in analyzing and using this information to strengthen instruction.

Carol, the 10th grade language arts team leader, facilitates a team of her colleagues as they look at the results of the most recent writing sample, a teacher-designed assessment given to all incoming 10th grade students. Carol guides teachers as they discuss strengths and weaknesses of students' writing performance as a group, as individuals, by classrooms, and in disaggregated clusters by race, gender, and previous school. They then plan instruction on the basis of this data.

9. Catalyst for Change

Teacher leaders can also be catalysts for change, visionaries who are “never content with the status quo but rather always looking for a better way” (Larner, 2004, p. 32). Teachers who take on the catalyst role feel secure in their own work and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. They pose questions to generate analysis of student learning.

In a faculty meeting, Larry expresses a concern that teachers may be treating some students differently from others. Students who come to him for extra assistance have shared their perspectives, and Larry wants teachers to know what students are saying. As his colleagues discuss

reasons for low student achievement, Larry challenges them to explore data about the relationship between race and discipline referrals in the school. When teachers begin to point fingers at students, he encourages them to examine how they can change their instructional practices to improve student engagement and achievement.

10. Learner

Among the most important roles teacher leaders assume is that of learner. Learners model continual improvement, demonstrate lifelong learning, and use what they learn to help all students achieve.

Manuela, the school's new bilingual teacher, is a voracious learner. At every team or faculty meeting, she identifies something new that she is trying in her classroom. Her willingness to explore new strategies is infectious. Other teachers, encouraged by her willingness to discuss what works and what doesn't, begin to talk about their teaching and how it influences student learning. Faculty and team meetings become a forum in which teachers learn from one another. Manuela's commitment to and willingness to talk about learning break down barriers of isolation that existed among teachers.

Roles for All

Teachers exhibit leadership in multiple, sometimes overlapping, ways. Some leadership roles are formal with designated responsibilities. Other more informal roles emerge as teachers interact with their peers. The variety of roles ensures that teachers can find ways to lead that fit their talents and interests. Regardless of the roles they assume, teacher leaders shape the culture of their schools, improve student learning, and influence practice among their peers.

What is the role of a Teacher?

Schools are one of the first places where kid's behavior and future educational success is shape. Teachers are carriers of either positive or negative behavior toward students. The reason why the first years of school are so critical is because kids learn the base of their educational life. I believe that teachers must love their career in order for them to pass enthusiasm, to assists, and to provide a warm environment to the students. In my opinion teachers are the second mothers for the students because students spend a lot of time with their teachers. At the same time. I believe a real teacher becomes through many years of training and experiences in the field. The same way, mothers are not born being great mothers but as their experiences with their kids expands, they become experts on the field. We know that mothers look the best for their kids and one of their goals is to raise their kids so they can become professionals and pioneers for the society. Some of the mother's role toward kids is to give them care, love, respect, lead, instruct and to try to form a safe and pleasant environment at their homes. Are these attitudes of the mothers toward their kids related to what the role of the teacher should be with the students in the classroom? If not, what should be the role of the teachers then?

I believe that a teacher is someone who becomes through many years of training and experiences in the field. I have not found a teacher who is an expert the first day of their profession. I believe that is urgent for everyone who is a teacher or is planning to become one to get prepared in the field the best they can. All teachers who get prepared will know how to set up rules in the classroom. Those kinds of teachers will probably have less problems in their classroom because they will be able to control the classroom.

There are all types of teachers some are better than others. Through my life I had some professors who were well prepared and some who were not. I had some teachers who just came into the class and started teaching. They did not get involved with the students. I rarely talked to them. Those teachers did not show any concern about what the students were feeling. One way for a teacher to get students involved in the classroom is to ask them questions. I remembered there were some students at the class that were shy including me who did not have the chance to get involved in the class or to participate. Therefore, I believe the way students act depends on the teacher's attitude. That is why I strongly recommend all teachers to invite the student to participate in the class. It is very important that teachers encourage students because students will benefit from it.

A teacher carries a big responsibility in her classroom. One reason is that all students depend on her/him. Everything the teacher says will have an impact on the students. If the teacher feels joy or feels anger, it will be spread among children because the attitudes of the teacher get contagious. If the teacher laughs, students also laugh, why? Because teachers are responsible for the social behavior in the classroom. If something goes wrong the only responsible is the teacher even if it was not their fault.

The teacher must create a warm and protective environment but at the same time professional. If students feel secure in the classroom the result will be shown in the academic progress. A good start could be a mutual trust with each student. Teachers have the responsibility to know his/her students in the classroom. Each day, the teachers show one of their attitudes that the students are unaware of. Also, the students do the same in order for the teacher to get to know them, too. This is a good exercise to do because it benefits the whole class to break the ice. The first days most of the students are afraid of the teacher because they do not know how is the teacher's personality. It will change until the point that the teacher and students discover to have common hobbies with each other.

I think that school is a place where one goes to learn but I also believe that there should be times where fun is a necessity. That is why I think that a teacher should also have fun with the students. Kids learn faster when they feel attracted to an exciting lesson. Teachers must not forget that kids get bored fast that is why creative lessons must be planned ahead. There should be interest in what people want to learn says Mr. Spayde in his article "Learning the Key of Life" (59-62).

I believe a teacher should also be someone who guides student rather than someone who is a totalitarian in the classroom. The teacher needs to show respect toward the students so the students also respect the teacher. Teacher must not forget the s/he teaches to different students who brings different students who brings different traditions and customs because the students come from different backgrounds. "One of the keys that is useful for teachers is to understand and accept the way students are acting the way Thomas says in his article "The Mind of Man" (120-124)

Therefore, teachers need to create a curriculum that guides students to a path of success. Consequently, they need to receive guiding depending on their students need.

Sometimes, the teacher's caring attitudes could have a long positive or negative influence on students. Student's self-esteem could be lift up because it could create ambitions in their minds for future academic success. As Mike Rose explains in "Lives in Boundaries" that an educator must be an open mind person that must respect the student's diversity and give love and caring attitudes toward students. I believe that is crucial to make students believe in themselves. One of the roles that a teacher carries is to encourage students in the issues that bother them about school in their personal life. It could make a big difference in the student's life if he/she is lift up to keep going and to not let anything put us down. Psychologically, students could be affected if they have problems with their teachers. One of the results could be that students will avoid going to school. As professional teachers, we do not want any conflict with the students.

Sometimes, the behavior of students demonstrates that something is not going right. Therefore, I think teachers must pay attention to any suspicious sings that could bother the student. As teacher is our responsibility to find out what is going on with the students in the classroom. Kids deep in their hearts feel that teachers could help them but sometimes they are afraid to ask the teacher. This issue that I see almost every day at the school where I work as a teacher's assistance. The students prefer to talk to their friends about their problems and sometimes teachers are the last person to find out about the problem. Sometimes is the teacher's foul that students do not seek his/her help because sometimes the teachers do not form a bound of communication. The teachers must let students know how she feels when students do not trust her maybe it would help students to change their minds about telling the teacher his/her problem. One of the teachers that I work with is one of these persons. Students do not seek for her help but they rather look for my help instead. I help them in everything I can but sometimes it gets really hard for me to know what to do. I believe that she is with her students. I do not see that she has a connection with the students.

I believe, that teachers need to think about what are the students feeling. As teachers, one good way to do this is to look back in our school years and remembered what we went through when we were students. We will realize that most of the kids have problems with their teachers. I do not believe that there are students who have not encounter a problem with the teacher. Therefore, I do not think there is a perfect relationship between teachers and students because the relationship of teachers and students is perfect. Therefore, teacher's priority should only be the benefit of the student's feelings.

Often, there is a debate about if a teacher should be a role model for students. Teachers are respect by society because they are view as knowledgeable about different subjects of school. I believe that even if teachers do not like to be point out as being role models, I certainly think they are. Teachers have the qualities to be or become role models for students. Why? Because most teachers respect, love, care, instruct, and guide their students to become a successful person. Students view teacher as being wise therefore they look up for them. Students know that if they need something they just need to ask them. Kids learn from every lesson the teacher gives. Therefore, I believe that a teacher has an enormous responsibility on his/her actions. Even if teachers are considered to be role Models, I believe they still make mistakes. It is normal to make mistakes because is our nature of being humans. At the same time, students should not look to their teacher to copy them but

rather to compare and to see the mistakes to not do them in our lives. Students should concentrate in doing their work and being proud of the way they are.

All teachers have the key to provide a good environment for the students. The benefits of having a pleasant environment are for the teacher and students. But before that happens a teacher needs to be well prepared in order that the students receive the best treat. It is essential and crucial for teachers to be prepared because the first years of school are very important for the students. The future education success of the students depends on their first years. It's never late to start a bound of a relationship between teacher and students. Consequently, the contact of the students with the teacher is an everyday act. Even though, there will be some days in which students will have inappropriate but other days where there will not be a problem at all. As humans, sometimes teachers do things that are not correct however we always have another chance to do it better. In conclusion, I strongly believe that teachers need to show respect, caring, become role models, make a pleasant environment, treat students right, instructs them but not be totalitarian, and guides them through the road of success. The only who gets the benefits are the students and sometimes it could be a negative or positive. Throughout my life I have learned valuable lessons from great teachers but I also had negative impact in my life as well.

Works Cited

Rose, Mike. "Lives on the Boundary." *The Presence of Others*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruskiewicz. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 97-110

Thomas, David. "Lives on the Boundary." *The Presence of Others*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruskiewicz. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 120-125

Spayde, Jon.. "Lives on the Boundary." *The Presence of Others*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruskiewicz. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 58-64