

ASK THE TEAM

BY DANIELA DOYLE

August 2013

Leadership and Lattices: New Pathways Across the Teaching Profession

Question From the Field

How are states creating teacher-leader models that keep accomplished teachers in the classroom while building a sustainable leadership pipeline?

Teachers need career pathways that provide new challenges and sustained opportunities for leadership without leaving the classroom. Better opportunities for leadership and innovative pathways help to increase the retention of strong teachers. Although few such programs existed several years ago, a growing number of states, districts, charter schools, and other organizations have recently introduced some kind of teacher-leader program.

Our research aimed to identify successful teacher-leader programs. To do so, we first examined cross-sector research (e.g., business and medicine) that identified strategies for leadership programs that aim to increase the retention of high-performing employees. We then scanned dozens of teacher-leader programs¹ and identified programs with some evidence of a positive impact. Because so many of these models are new, however, little research or documentation exists to demonstrate their effectiveness. Our search identified only five programs with some evidence of success, such as increasing student achievement or teacher retention. Although these programs are not exemplars, they offer valuable lessons learned for developing teacher-leader systems.

In this brief, we overview the cross-sector research related to leadership programs, outline four best practices from existing teacher-leader programs, and provide next steps for state leaders interested in implementing a teacher-leader system. Throughout, we highlight different programs and strategies that have had some success in the field.

“Our failure in education to create a modern career progression for teachers where they have opportunities to apply their talents in different and more challenging ways while continuing to work directly with students is out of step with where we are as a society. Few people entering the workforce expect to do the same job for 10 years, let alone 40.”

—Amanda Kocon, Vice President, TNTIP

Tip

What Is a “Teacher-Leader” Model?

In this brief, we define a teacher-leader model as any program or policy that includes a career pathway (or “career ladder”) for teachers, whereby excellent teachers are recognized for their performance and leadership skills.

¹ Our scan included winners of Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants and Teacher Advancement Program sites, as well as school systems and other organizations with a reputation for being leaders in this field.

Lessons From Cross-Sector Research

- **Lesson 1. Opportunities for achievement, recognition, advancement, and growth matter to high performers in education and other professions.** Although salary increases typically accompany progress within an organization, opportunities for other types of advancement can boost retention among high-performing employees (Ableidinger & Kowal, 2010). Unlike pay increases, the ability to create or expand opportunities for career progress is not necessarily bound by budgetary constraints. Research also shows that high performers are more attracted to promotion opportunities compared with low-performing employees, and they also are more likely to leave a position because of a lack of opportunity for advancement (Griffeth & Hom, 2001; Steel, Griffeth, Hom, & Lyons, 2002).
- **Lesson 2. Differentiated pay structures make it more likely that high performers will stay in the profession.** When a company ties even a portion of its employee compensation to performance, the best workers increasingly remain, whereas low performers continue to depart (Ableidinger & Kowal, 2010). Sometimes these staffing changes improve the overall value of a company's workforce by increasing the number of high performers and decreasing the number of low performers. As a result, about 90 percent of major companies in the United States use performance pay to both retain employees and increase their motivation and productivity ("Driven to Distraction," 2010). It is not enough to offer high performers more, though. Performance pay systems also must be designed well, meaning that compensation is competitive and raises are timely (Ableidinger & Kowal, 2010).

Food for Thought

Researchers found that excellent teachers were more likely than low-performing teachers to cite dissatisfaction with career advancement opportunities as a reason for leaving the profession (TNTP, 2012). In addition, a 2012 survey indicated that teachers view higher pay as a key way of elevating the profession and boosting the quality of and the respect for teaching (Teach Plus, 2012).

Program Spotlight

Leading Educators is a nonprofit organization that offers a two-year fellowship to help teachers currently serving in leadership roles to develop their leadership skills. Fellows participate in a series of training sessions, visit excellent schools, work with a peer cohort, and work with a coach throughout the school year. In addition, all fellows must design and implement a two-year project aimed at raising the achievement of a target student group and developing the capacity of the adults they oversee.

- Although fellows do not receive additional pay as Leading Educators fellows, more than one half of all fellows have been promoted to new leadership roles since participating in Leading Educators.
- Ninety-eight percent of past and current fellows continue to serve high-need populations.
- In Kansas City, fellows' students showed five times the academic growth of their counterparts across the district.
- In New Orleans, fellows' students grew 12 times more than their counterparts across the district.

Sources: *Leading Educators Factsheet* (http://www.leadingeducators.org/resource/1362157767000/aboutus_impact_docs/LE_Factsheet_Nat_2012-1221.pdf) and *Leading Educators: What We Do* (<http://www.leadingeducators.org/whatwedo>)

Program Spotlight

Teach Plus runs three programs aimed at demonstrably effective urban teachers who want to stay in the classroom while expanding their impact as leaders. Its programs are designed to give urban teachers the skills and pathways to effect both school- and system-level change.

The **Teaching Policy Fellowship** is a highly selective, 18-month program for teachers who want to have a voice in the policy decisions that impact their classrooms. The **Teach Plus Network** is an expanding series of in-person and virtual forums that provides more than 12,000 teachers nationwide with opportunities to advocate for policies that elevate the teaching profession and retain effective teachers.

Finally, the **T3 Initiative** is a first-of-its-kind program designed to ensure that students have increased access to excellent, experienced teachers by placing cohorts of highly effective teachers as teacher leaders in the schools that need them most. The T3 Initiative recruits, develops, and supports experienced and highly effective teachers to become turnaround specialists who then serve as leaders in high-need schools.

- Data from the first two cohorts show that many T3 teachers have eliminated achievement gaps with other schools in the Boston Public Schools system and are now exceeding the district average.
- T3 schools' student achievement results also surpassed other turnaround schools in Massachusetts. Schools of both T3 cohorts have outpaced turnaround school gains in Massachusetts by 10 or more percentage points.

Sources: *T3: Closing the Gap: Progress Over Two Years in T3 Schools* (http://www.teachplus.org/uploads/Documents/1355156579_T3ClosingtheGap.pdf) and *Ready for the Next Challenge: Improving the Retention and Distribution of Excellent Teachers in Urban Schools: A Proposal by Teachers* (http://www.teachplus.org/uploads/Documents/1292958940_ReadyForTheNextChallenge.pdf)

Strategies From Current Teacher-Leader Systems

1. CREATE A CAREER LATTICE Ensure Multiple Routes to Advancement

Many teacher-leader models offer only one kind of advanced role—helping other teachers. Excellent teachers are diverse and may or may not have an interest in or the skill set to succeed as instructional coaches or mentors. An ideal career structure is a lattice in which great teachers can pursue different paths that best fit their strengths and career interests. The career lattice could include leading peers or providing roles such as reaching more students using technology, serving as a multiclassroom teacher, and specializing in a particular subject and/or grade combination.

District Spotlight

In **Denver Public Schools**, plans are under way to develop a career lattice that will go into effect in the 2013–14 school year. The career lattice will provide opportunities for not only upward mobility but also lateral movement into roles of equal status that require different teacher strengths and competencies. The developers envision creating the following teacher roles:

- **Teacher team leads.** These teachers are responsible for managing other teachers and staff.
- **Extended reach teams.** These teams serve as leaders with content expertise and teach more students or advise other teachers.
- **School development teams.** These teams help draft school improvement plans for new or struggling schools.

Source: Information for this spotlight was provided through private communications with Denver Public Schools; however, additional information can be found in the request for proposals to support the implementation of its TIF grant (<http://purchasingts.dpsk12.org/bids/openbids/BD1571.pdf>).

2. RESTRUCTURE YOUR BUDGET

Create a Sustainable Model Using Existing Funds

As cross-sector research illustrates, creating meaningful teacher-leader systems that provide opportunities for teachers to extend their impact and incentives to remain in the profession require that excellent teachers earn more. Although the research base on the effects of compensation reform in education is nascent and inconclusive (Allen, 2005; Hough, 2012), several studies have shown that salary increases or bonuses can increase teacher retention and attract new, high-quality talent to the field (Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Teach Plus, 2012). Funding pay increases in a sustainable fashion, however, has been a major challenge in new career pathways. In most systems, teacher-leader roles are funded on top of existing school budgets. As grants run out or the leader championing the program leaves the district, the program is likely to end if it does not have a sustainable funding mechanism.



The Missouri General Assembly launched *Missouri's Teacher Career Ladder Program* in 1985, which serves as an instructive case for the importance of financial sustainability. The program ended in 2010–11 as a result of budget cutbacks (Livengood, 2010), but it operated successfully for 25 years. The goals of this program were twofold: (1) Improve student achievement and (2) attract and retain effective teachers. It was a voluntary program for districts that offered teachers additional pay for performing additional teaching responsibilities. What were the characteristics of the program?

The program provided teachers who had at least five years of teaching experience supplemental pay in three stages. To earn additional pay, teachers had to assume additional responsibilities, such as private tutoring, participating in professional development, providing students with opportunities for enhanced learning experiences, and leading extended-day activities:

- **Stage 1.** Up to \$1,500 per year in additional pay for at least two additional teaching responsibilities requiring 60+ hours per year.
- **Stage 2.** Up to \$3,000 per year in additional pay for at least three additional teaching responsibilities requiring 90+ hours per year.
- **Stage 3.** Up to \$5,000 per year in additional pay for at least four additional teaching responsibilities requiring 120+ hours per year.

In one study, teachers in districts participating in the Teacher Career Ladder Program were less likely to leave their schools and less likely to leave teaching compared with teachers from nonparticipating districts (Booker & Glazerman, 2009).

Source: *Missouri's Teacher Career Ladder Program* (https://my.vanderbilt.edu/performanceincentives/files/2012/10/Booker_et_al_for_posting1.pdf)

District Spotlight

Financial sustainability is one of the five principles guiding the reform efforts of **Project L.I.F.T.** in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina. In 2012, Project L.I.F.T. became the first implementation site in Public Impact’s initiative to extend the reach of excellent teachers and build an Opportunity Culture for teachers and students (Public Impact, 2013). Four schools have worked with Public Impact to develop new staffing plans that include career pathways and higher pay for teachers filling those roles.

Teachers will receive additional stipends for taking on new roles that increase their responsibilities. Pay is dependent on the number of students they reach, and, in the case of teacher-leaders, the number of teachers they oversee. All pay increases, however, are supported through regular per-pupil funding resulting from school redesign. The district plans to expand the initiative to additional schools in the future.

Source: *Charlotte, N.C.’s Project L.I.F.T. New Teaching Roles Create a Culture of Excellence in High-Need Schools* (http://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Charlotte_N.C._Project_L.I.F.T._An_Opportunity_Culture_Case_Study-Public_Impact.pdf)

3. MOVE UP WITHOUT MOVING OUT Keep Great Teachers in the Classroom

New career opportunities often pull great teachers out of the line of responsibility for students. As a result, “moving up” means that many of the best teachers often have limited influence over their peers and even less opportunity to impact student learning. In addition, teachers who are pulled out of the classroom must be replaced, and there is no guarantee that their positions will be filled by equally effective educators.

Food for Thought

Teachers have indicated that leadership opportunities that keep them connected to their own classrooms can be a motivating force in remaining in the profession. The current lack of diverse career opportunities is a significant source of dissatisfaction within the profession (Hart, 1987, 1994, 1995; Rinehart, Short, Short, & Eckley, 1998).

State Spotlight

Recent recommendations from the Iowa Department of Education’s **Task Force on Teacher Leadership & Compensation** aim to provide new career pathways for teachers and increase compensation while making sure that excellent teachers can continue to teach.

In teachers’ first two years, they will be called “initial” teachers. When they enter their third year, they are promoted to “career” teachers and become eligible to apply for one of three leadership positions:

- **Model teachers.** These teachers become part of a database of teachers willing to invite others into their classrooms to observe their classrooms.
- **Mentor teachers.** These teachers teach 70 percent of the time and mentor other teachers 30 percent of the time.
- **Lead teachers.** These teachers teach 50 percent of the time and mentor other teachers 50 percent of the time.

Source: *Task Force on Teacher Leadership & Compensation* (http://www.educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2658&Itemid=5163)



WHAT'S MY ROLE? OPTIONS FOR STATE LEADERS

Our scan of teacher-leader programs showed that the majority of teacher-leader programs have been developed at the district level, not the state level. State departments of education can still play an important role in motivating and shaping programs at the district level by setting guidelines for robust teacher-leader systems. The guidelines should include career paths that have the following characteristics:

- Diversity.** The career paths are diverse, offering excellent teachers multiple routes toward advancement and to build on their skills.
- Expandable.** Expand the number of students for which teachers are responsible versus removing excellent teachers from the classroom by default.
- Pay commensurate with responsibility.** Pay teachers more in exchange for taking on additional responsibilities.
- Sustainable.** The career paths are financially sustainable on existing per-pupil funds.

A state department of education could create a model teacher-leader system that districts can adopt or propose different programs that meet the same standards. Alternatively, a state could help a few districts pilot new systems or sponsor a grant program for district proposals of teacher-leader systems that meet the guidelines. The state could also convene conferences or webinars to help districts share ideas and resources for creating a teacher-leader system.



The *Arizona Career Ladder Program* provides a clear path to career advancement for teachers who wish to remain in the classroom, and it is one of the oldest continuous teacher incentive programs in the United States. Although responsibility for funding the program has shifted from the state to individual districts in the years since the program's 1985 launch, 28 districts still participate. The characteristics of the program are as follows:

- **Pay with a purpose.** Participating districts must use a performance-based compensation system, which they create.
- **Opportunities for advancement.** Participating districts design their own career ladders, which must do the following:
 - Establish a multilevel system of teaching positions.
 - Provide opportunities for continued professional development.
 - Require improved or advanced teaching skills, higher-level instructional responsibilities, and demonstration of pupil academic achievement.
- **Impact.** Participating districts have seen significant improvements in student achievement in reading, mathematics, and writing.

Sources: *Evaluation Report: The Effects of the Career Ladder Program on Student Achievement* (<http://www.azed.gov/wp-content/uploads/PDF/CareerLadderReport.pdf>) and *Arizona Career Ladder Program: Participating Districts* (http://www.azed.gov/wp-content/uploads/PDF/Participating_Districts.pdf)



I WANT TO KNOW MORE!

Resources

Ableidinger, J., & Kowal, J. (2010). *Shooting for stars: Cross-sector lessons for retaining high-performing educators*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from http://opportunityculture.org/images/stories/shooting_for_stars_2010.pdf

Allen, M. (2005). *Eight questions on teacher recruitment and retention: What does the research say?* Denver: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/html/educationissues/teachingquality/trrreport/home/TeacherRecruitmentRetention.pdf>

Booker, K., & Glazerman, S. (2009). *The effects of the Missouri Career Ladder Program on teacher mobility and retention* (MPR Reference No. 6333-400). Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research. Retrieved from http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/education/MCL_mobility.pdf

Clotfelter, C., Glennie, E., Ladd, H., & Vigdor, J. (2008). Would higher salaries keep teachers in high-poverty schools? Evidence from a policy intervention in North Carolina. *Journal of Public Economics* 92, 1352-1370. Retrieved from <http://faculty.smu.edu/millimet/classes/eco7321/papers/clotfelter%20et%20al%2003.pdf>

Driven to distraction: Two and a half cheers for sticks and carrots (2010, January 14). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/15269569>

Griffeth, R. W., & Hom, P. W. (2001). *Retaining valued employees*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hart, A. W. (1994). Creating teacher leadership roles: The impacts of core group support. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30(4), 472-497.

Hart, A. W. (1995). Instruction-based teacher work redesign in schools. In S. B. Bacharach & B. Mundell (Eds.), *Organizational behavior in educational administration* (pp. 151-199). Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.

Hough, H. (2012). *Salary incentives and teacher quality: The effect of a district-level salary increase on teacher retention*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Center for Education Policy Analysis. Retrieved from http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Hough_SFUSD_Ret_20120912.pdf

Kocon, A. (2013, July 25). *What would a real teaching career look like?* Brooklyn, NY: TNTP. Retrieved from <http://tntp.org/blog/post/what-would-a-real-teaching-career-look-like>

Livengood, C. (2010, April 15). Career ladder is back in business. *News-Leader.com*. Retrieved from http://www.news-leader.com/article/20100415/NEWS04/4150361/1007/NEWS01/Career-Ladder-is-back-in-business?nclick_check=1

Public Impact. (2013). *Opportunity culture: Extending the reach of excellent teachers*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.opportunityculture.org>

Rinehart, J. S., Short, P. M., Short, R. J., & Eckley, M. (1998). Teacher empowerment and principal leadership: Understanding the influence process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34, 608-630.

Steel, R. P., Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Lyons, D. M. (2002). Practical retention policy for the practical manager. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(2), 149-164.

Teach Plus. (2012). *Great expectations: Teachers' views on elevating the teaching profession*. Boston: Author. Retrieved from http://www.teachplus.org/uploads/Documents/1350917768_Teach Plus Great Expectations.pdf

TNTP. (2012). *The irreplaceables: Understanding the real retention crisis in America's urban schools*. Brooklyn, NY: Author. Retrieved from http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf

For more examples or information on this topic, please e-mail gtlcenter@air.org.

Daniela Doyle is a senior consultant at Public Impact and provides technical assistance for the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders.