THE SILENT REVOLUTION: HOW TEACHER LEADERS RESHAPE SCHOOLS FROM WITHIN

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Teacher leadership has become a key element in transforming schools, disrupting traditional hierarchical structures, and promoting a culture of shared leadership. This literature review explores the development of teacher leadership, noting its shift from managerial functions to instructional coaching and, more recently, to collaborative leadership models. While recognition of teacher leadership's influence on student achievement, school culture, and teacher retention is increasing, systemic challenges remain. Numerous teacher leaders (TLs) face issues related to unclear roles, administrative pushback, and burnout from heightened responsibilities without proper support. The review emphasizes the need to empower TLs by redefining their roles in schools, affording them greater influence in policy choices, and encouraging professional development tailored to their leadership progression. It also highlights the necessity of removing hierarchical limits to ensure that TLs are fully integrated into decision making. With schools confronting teacher shortages and the pressing need for educational reform, adopting teacher leadership as a viable leadership model is essential. The study concludes with a proposed framework for implementing and sustaining teacher leadership, calling for policies that appreciate and formalize the contributions of TLs. By tackling these challenges and opportunities, the educational system can progress toward a more inclusive and efficient leadership structure, ultimately benefiting students, educators, and school communities.

Keywords: teacher leadership, shared leadership, educational policy, school culture, teacher agency, collaborative practices, teacher voice

Teacher leaders (TLs) were first defined as educators who "reflect teacher agency through establishing relationships, breaking down barriers, and marshalling resources throughout the organization in an effort to improve students' educational experiences and outcomes" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, pp. 287–288). TLs embodied leadership skills along with specialized knowledge in garnering student growth and achievement (Warren, 2016). They took autonomous policies and practices not cohesive to learning and changed them to attain success (Law, 2015). TLs collectively dispelled the hierarchical structure of school politics when collaborating with other educators (Huang, 2016). School policies gained acceptance by all teachers based upon the influences of the TLs because of their innate leadership abilities within and out of the classroom (Lovelace, 2019). Meanwhile, regardless of continual increase in leadership role or status, TLs refused to remove themselves from the classroom thus remaining invaluable during nation-wide teacher shortages (Qian & Walker, 2022).

The outdated hierarchy of educational leadership negated collective leadership by enforcing teacher initiatives and policies dictated by politicians not familiar with classroom needs and environments; even schools with recognized TLs battled the past hierarchical confines of authoritative leadership when collaborating (Torrance & Murphy, 2017). Having "chosen" leaders rather than a collective group with equal voice led to competition for roles hence negating the purpose of shared responsibilities (Wilson, 2016). The key was to decrease the focus on power and titles within an outdated structure and transfer to a shared servant leadership style (Lovett, 2018). Typically, teachers were only included on campus improvement teams if they held a formal role or were asked by the principal rather than TLs organically attending (Mount, 2018). Nevertheless, when TLs are granted the opportunity to lead the discussion in defining their role, collective efficacy grows and school culture naturally changes to shared leadership (Myers, 2020). Once TLs gained empowerment beyond the classroom, the school functioned better as a cohesive unit (Ross et al., 2016).

Angelle (2017) found that TLs generated the following positive outcomes for schools: they engaged with others as leaders regardless of title, shared their knowledge of content and educational practices, and performed their duties beyond traditional expectations inside and outside of the classroom. Lovelace (2019) added that TLs were student-centered, knew the groundwork of how schools function and the curriculum, and set the tone for the working environment and change. Furthermore, TLs impacted student achievement by pushing for improvement despite a defined role (Mowdy, 2015). Overall, TLs fostered emotional wellbeing in their colleagues (Cherkowski, 2018). TLs focused on changes for students and coworkers, directly impacting student achievement and teacher retention, while administrators have been forced to focus on state scores and district-wide curriculum (Mount, 2018). This included TLs being studied and confirmed as adaptable and fluid problem solvers during a school crisis (Sawyer et al., 2022).

Evolution of TLs

Unheard Voices

Throughout the educational reform and creation of the common core during the Bush administration, the lack of teacher voice was evident when teachers were not allowed input during the first educational summit (Mathis, 2010). Although left out of national decision making, teachers inherently made local decisions and split-second choices inside of the classroom (Sebastian et al., 2016). Ironically, teachers are the center of education yet are not traditionally granted national, state, or local say in decisions regarding the enforced education standards or policies (Gozali et al., 2017). Current policies ensured teachers focused on government mandates rather than effective educational practices (Greinke, 2017). Meanwhile, the daily demands of the educational environment required teachers to maintain leadership skills to be effective (Warren, 2016). Miller and Pinkerton (2017) queried why teachers were entrusted with the mental, developmental, emotional, and social growth of all children yet were not given voice in how the outcome was to be achieved. Teacher voices got lost amidst the mandates of those dictating policies beyond the classroom; politicians, state and federal policy makers, and administrators caused many educators to leave in frustration or continually change schools due to enforcing ineffective edicts (Rose, 2017). Political leaders, however, cannot continue to silence the voice of teachers or implement positive changes without listening to and understanding teachers' needs (Khan, 2019).

Unfortunately, current lawmakers viewed teachers as "nameless cogs in a product-driven system" and a place to lay blame when policies and initiatives fail (Smulyan, 2016, p. 9). Teachers often found their jobs are dependent on performing these unsubstantial policies without the voice to make the changes needed to improve educational practices (Law, 2015). The structure of schools start with mandates from a central office then passed to principals per campus and metered out to teachers with a primary focus on raising student state-testing scores with little say from teachers (Mount, 2018). Principals and teachers assumed the vision of the implementation is shared but often was interpreted in vastly different ways due to the nature of being in versus out of the classroom (Bridich, 2016). To attempt to bridge these gaps and correct inefficiencies, TLs were established.

Transitional Waves of TLs

Silva et al. (2000) first noted the three transitional waves of teacher leadership with the first being TLs acting as department heads with managerial tasks. The second wave implemented TLs as instructional coaches but still left them voiceless in leadership roles. The third wave attempted to incorporate TLs within shared leadership allowing voice and impact on policy and educational practices per campus. The latest yet unestablished wave took teachers away from the hierarchy and placed them as leaders in their own right from within the classroom and within the district (Silva et al., 2000).

First Wave

First phase schools utilized TLs as department heads who maintained status quos rather than inciting needed changes (Silva et al., 2000). Department heads had traditionally embodied operational tasks while TLs represented those working towards improving student and instructional concerns (Myers, 2020). Administrators were granted formal titles such as mentor teachers or department chairs, yet the role was used to control teachers rather than motivate change (Bradley-Levine, 2017; Silva et al., 2000). TLs were appointed a leadership position within the established hierarchy instead of changing the style of leadership (Vingelli, 2017); however, they were never intended to be just department heads but to be trained professionals in both content and leadership skills (Kerr, 2015). This first wave put TLs in roles that developed more issues for teachers by undercutting their potential leadership rather than establishing good practices (Shah, 2019; Silva et al., 2000). Additionally, those placed in these roles were often unqualified; most department heads were neither trained nor put through an interview process but rather were chosen by administrators at will (Bassett et al., 2014). This wave also neglected teachers leading beyond the classroom despite lacking a formal role (Coughlan, 2015).

Second Wave

Once school administrators realized the underutilization of TLs in the department head capacity, a new stage began with TLs as leaders of curriculum (Silva et al., 2000). TLs during this phase were defined as teachers sharing knowledge of pedagogy in various platforms (Nappi, 2014). Unfortunately, TLs were taken out of classrooms and off campuses to work in administrative offices. The new title granted TLs the opportunity to work in their field of expertise but still enforced their leadership style to control teacher actions and outcomes (Silva et al., 2000). The

new curriculum instructors were to establish one curriculum for all teachers to follow but did not consider individual styles of teachers nor individual talents (Vingelli, 2017). This role credited teachers with their insight into content and instruction yet still placed them within the hierarchy (Shah, 2019). The implementation was fragmented by administrators employing TLs to improve instruction only and not as collaborative members of the change process (Shirley & Miller, 2016). The first two waves positioned TLs as enforcers of policies and initiatives, but the roles did not give them a substantial voice or permission to evoke change (Shah, 2019). While the world around them became fluid regarding change, schools continued to employ hierarchical structures by maintaining levels of power rather than mimicking the dexterity of collaboration that was needed (Miller, 2017).

Third and New Wave

The third wave placed TLs in the midst of shared leadership, first as leaders for their students then as leadership models for their colleagues (Silva et al., 2000). TLs pushed for adding empowerment to go beyond the expected requirements to affect changes to the original definition (Bradley-Levine, 2017). Also, TLs readily attended to other issues beyond their job description as the need arose (Kanarek, 2020). Huang (2016) stated that TLs radiated a sense of self-efficacy and will to promote teacher and student growth, academically and socially. Coworkers found TLs to be student-centered, exhibiting a willingness to help in any capacity, and open-minded (Lovelace, 2019). Additionally, TLs exhibited strong teacher identities and cultivated a growth mindset (Allen, 2018). By ameliorating a growth mindset, they became integral in bettering others within the educational environment through reflection and modelling self-efficacy (Cherkowski, 2018). While previous waves placed TLs as controllers of teachers, the third wave placed them as agents of change and builders of future leaders (Silva et al. 2000). TLs consistently pushed for positive change, making for better leaders per campus (Wenner & Campbell, 2018). Unfortunately, Wronowski et al. (2024) claimed that even now with many TLs granted empowering roles, the constraining hierarchy continues to force them to leave the classroom rather than allowing them to lead from within one. This lack of fully deconstructing the hierarchy leads to a push for a fourth wave where TLs are embraced as empowered leaders while maintaining classroom relevancy.

Current Issues with the Role

The greatest issue centers on being able to discover TLs per campus because most do not self-identify (Hunzicker, 2017). TLs describe their call to action as coming from the heart and their emotional need to make changes for the betterment of students rather than climbing hierarchical ladders (Palmer, 2018). Many TLs do not emerge organically or by emotions alone; however, they do not lack motivation to lead. Instead, TLs see themselves as leaders only in the classroom which portray the acceptance of top-down leadership (Abramovich & Miedijensky, 2019). TLs do not view themselves as campus-wide leaders unless assigned the role (Wilson, 2016). Furthermore, Hunter (2023) noted TLs do not feel empowered or granted voice if the administration does not accept and embrace the role as transformative in a shared leadership environment. This concurs with Wronowski et al. (2024) who uncovered a fourth wave of TLs empowered to innovate but must still rely on administrative approval. To discover TLs, administrators should look for teachers seeking changes and improvements that center around student success and well-being (Cherkowski, 2018; Huang, 2016; Hutchinson-Belisle, 2004). However, administrator selections

of TLs do not always match the selection of TLs by coworkers; TLs are generally chosen from tested, core areas that are typically given the most support and professional development (PD) thus proving bias against noncore teachers as leaders (Alexander, 2018).

Negative aspects of being a TL include increased burnout, lack of identity due to a new role, and logistically establishing and balancing new responsibilities (Bagley & Margolis, 2018). On many campuses, teachers are not aware of what constitutes the role of a TL because it is not clearly instituted (Edwards, 2015). TLs without a defined role are pulled into leadership duties beyond their capacity or skill while interrupting their teaching duties and removing them from the class environment (Saltmarsh, 2016). Without exact roles and procedures during hiring, coworkers resent then lost trust in the leadership team and assume the job was given based on favoritism or nepotism (Robertson, 2018).

With the new responsibilities, many TLs struggle to maintain relationships with coworkers and, without guidance, are often isolated (Bradley-Levine et al., 2017). TLs tend to lose their teaching identity as they are consumed by the issues of others (Saltmarsh, 2016). TLs report feeling isolated because coworkers see them as a level above while administrators still see them as teachers (Struyve et al., 2014). The problem is compounded when TLs are required but unprepared to address conflict management between team members (Kanarek, 2020). Additional jealousy is seen when the TLs are handpicked by administration rather than going through a hiring committee; they are considered a favorite or a teacher's pet (Thomason et al., 2023). TLs, too, worry about negatively changing relationships with coworkers due to giving demoralizing news or feedback in the leadership role because they feel like moderators rather than collaborative leaders (Smith, 2019). TL roles in a hybrid model with extra conferred leadership tasks cause extreme stress and teacher burnout due to extra responsibilities without time needed to perform them (Kilinc et al., 2015). While TLs prove to increase organizational wellbeing, an unsupported, overworked TL's psychological wellbeing may decline thus leading to burnout (Thien & Liu, 2024).

TLs excel with content and self-efficacy; however, they lack training in the areas of coaching and relationship skills outside of coworkers (Kibe, 2015). In relation to other coworkers, when placed as trainers of trainers, TLs lose self-efficacy and feel underprepared in attempting to deliver content not self-created (Hobbs, 2017). For example, mentoring novice or student teachers fell to TLs, yet TLs were not granted the time necessary to support and provide feedback for growth (Baartman, 2020). Studies recommend TLs and mentees be assigned together for 2 years to build proper relationships and support where TLs thrive (Spoon, 2018). The mentees stated the most relevant lessons learned the first year of teaching came from time and classroom management tips from TLs (Coker, 2016). Unfortunately, some mentees perceive TLs negatively because the demands placed on the TL by administration were too difficult to achieve in the time allotted; this leaves many novice teachers feeling abandoned and less prepared (Davignon, 2016). TLs additionally note the extra time to mentor and train interns or clinical teachers is seen as an act of service yet is rarely monetarily compensated (Clark, 2016).

While teachers feel empowered through teacher leadership roles, the amount of additional work, pay, and time causes many to leave the position or even the profession (Moran & Larwin, 2017). TLs perceive that administrators do not place value on teachers' work-life balance, especially concerning the extra hours put in by TLs since they, too, put in additional time (Coker, 2016). This amplifies the problem because TLs struggle with balancing additional responsibilities that affect both family and work relationships (Greinke, 2017). Some TLs have to choose between demands of the role and making a difference or personal time for family and personal growth (Robertson, 2018).

When teachers were given a survey measuring the returns from employing TLs, 100% scored each positive item above average (Ankrum, 2016). Unfortunately, if TL voices amid the collective group had not achieved equality, their effectiveness diminished (Flood & Angelle, 2017). The current role of many TLs in distributed leadership have them inserted as leaders in controlled actions only without empowerment to make change (Wieczorek & Lear, 2018). Specifically, during leadership discussions, TLs note many times their ideas are overridden by administrators (Vingelli, 2017). Unfortunately, TLs often perceive principals as the head of the school limiting collaboration and empowerment (Ross & Cozzens, 2016). Even others who took leadership classes and formal roles still feel repressed by campus principals (Coughlan, 2015). Teachers notice many principals retain groups of insiders (i.e., those granted shared leadership and opportunities for growth) and outsiders (i.e., those not heard or granted voice) and feel a TL can be the go between for ensuring all voices are heard equally (Thomas, 2017). For TLs to effectively improve culture and student success, they have to be set up in a structured, collaborative environment with the empowerment to make campus as well as district decisions (Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2020).

The acceptance of shared leadership depends not just on principal perceptions but teacher perspective and acceptance of the role (Dampson et al., 2018). All stakeholders have to hold a shared belief in the educational change for the shift in leadership to work (Fullan, 2016). Hence, Yildirim and Özen (2018) ascertained all teachers in spite of age, race, or years of experience see TLs as an accepted role in regard to educational development. Finally, the shift in leadership relies on the current status of the school's culture and collaborative efficacy; if the teacher and leaders are not willing to recondition the status quo, the necessary transition and acceptance of new leadership will not occur (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016).

Future Action

The evolution of TLs demands a shift from traditional hierarchical structures to more collaborative approaches. Education reform through teacher leadership is crucial for the United States to remain globally competitive (Bradley-Levine, 2016). Research shows that many potential TLs identify as lifelong learners rather than leaders creating an untapped leadership resource in schools (Qian & Walker, 2022). The following is a recommended framework for enacting TLs based on current research.

Implementation Framework

Phase 1: Foundational Planning

Assessment and Goal Setting. The goal for leadership teams and policy makers is to first listen to teacher input then notice the school environment before addressing how to shift leadership styles (Kendall, 2019). Alternatively, the Ohio Department of Education (2019) recommended leadership begin by thoroughly defining the instructional goals for a campus first, dividing the responsibilities between the roles to achieve the goals, then setting support into place for all levels of leadership before implementing a defined TL role in the school. The difference is in whether or not a district has already identified its TLs. To aid in discovering TLs as well as further research into their sustaining qualities, Chen (2022) created the Teacher Leadership Inventory to survey teachers for potential leadership skills in the following areas: encouraging professional

development, learning processes and best practices, collaborative practices with coworkers and outside stakeholders, and decision-making engagement.

Infrastructure Development. Kershner and McQuillan (2016) added to this idea of needing a framework by requesting a decentralized network to assist in the shifts caused by adopting a new leadership style. As to building TLs to improve culture, schools have to begin by creating a leadership framework that addresses the needs of the individual school, especially focusing on a collaborative culture rather than obtainable levels (Göksoy, 2015). Unfortunately, in schools granting limited autonomy to TLs, the system collapses thus creating frustrations and mistrust between faculty and administration (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). Due to this inherent hierarchy, there still exists a lack of support for TLs, other teachers, and administrators for sustainable and effective changes (Miller & Pinkerton, 2017). Support has to be provided by leadership in leadership to establish more collaborative cultures that last with fidelity. Even schools with recognized TLs battle the past hierarchical impact of leadership when cohering with coworkers (Torrance & Murphy, 2017). However, TLs collectively overcome the hierarchy of school politics when conjoining with other TLs (Huang, 2016)

Phase 2: Cultural Transformation

Administrative Preparation. Despite the need or complexity in change, the shift from authoritative leadership to shared leadership begins with principals becoming agents of change thus embracing growth mindsets (Cooper et al., 2016). Established leadership teams with understood expectations create fluid policy changes between the school and the classroom (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). Administrative teams should have been provided professional development covering shared leadership to aid in the transition and growth of all the leaders simultaneously (Robertson, 2018). Concurrently, the key then to successfully employing collective leadership is through a democratic principal giving teachers time to experiment with classroom initiatives and the flexibility to fail and grow (Nicholson et al., 2016). When a set protocol is established for TLs to provide feedback and solutions to problematic policies and practices on a campus, teacher voices and concerns are heard (Dixon, 2018). Administrative activism for creating improved TL roles creates new school cultures where TLs rise and lead from within the classroom (Allen, 2018). Discovering future leaders for administrators has to start with teachers proving student successes since recognized TLs showcase the same drive for student achievement and best practices (Mowdy, 2015).

Building Trust and Voice. TLs note grouping teachers in professional learning communities is inclusively beneficial and aids in reducing the effect of the hierarchy and TLs' isolated feelings as a lead (Clark, 2016). TL-centered forums such as this foster TLs by letting them share educational issues and discussing potential solutions for ongoing issues (Yates, 2017). These meetings have to be structured where administrators act as references and support while teachers take the lead in actualizing the solutions (Tennett, 2019). By creating these necessary communication links between coworkers and leaders, TLs establish a strong, organized culture (Koşar, 2020). For further growth of TLs, an increase in teacher self-efficacy in TL-led meetings has to be nurtured to expand collaboration, organizational learning, and a better grasp of shared leadership (Türker, 2016). In doing so, more teachers gain self-efficacy, and the self-efficacy leads to them developing into potential TLs and developing others into TLs.

Phase 3: TL Development and Support

Professional Development. Congress passed the Teachers are Leaders Act to award grants for programs and PD to build TLs into school leadership, so they can lead while remaining in the classroom (Congressional Research Service, 2019). A recommended framework for professional development and training geared towards establishing TLs has to focus on the following eight topics: learning, techno-social, modalities, voice, sociopolitical, social capital and agency, role of the TL, and hybridity (Baker-Doyle, 2017). Bradley-Levine (2022) uncovered TLs utilizing PD as a chance to bridge connections between principal evaluations and campus goals to improve best practices for all campus teachers. Unfortunately, many TLs enter programs to learn leadership skills only to have their voices ignored once returning to campus (Coughlan, 2015). However, TLs feel PD and forums based on building them into leaders help to shape their identity and confidence to obtain a TL role (Koty, 2020).

Finally, a few districts now allow TLs to build PD based on needs discussed between faculty and TLs specific to their school and culture thus resulting in growth for teachers and students (Bennett & Bromen, 2019; Tennett, 2019). Furthermore, TL-led PD in leadership skills designed for teachers show an increase in growing potential, future TLs (Osmond-Johnson, 2017). A study has even begun to track preservice teachers receiving leadership classes to measure their future impact as TLs once they have gained classroom experience (Ado, 2016). These pathways, however, need to include noncore subjects, such as foreign languages and the arts, to ensure equality of TLs across curriculum (Alexander, 2018).

Role Implementation. The implementation of TL ideas has to begin with policymakers because the main goal is to make a positive impact with students (Saunders, 2018). To aid in abrogating the hierarchy of leadership in education, TLs have to be implemented as a campus practice rather than an official title at first (Nachtigall, 2019; Struyve et al., 2014). Tiering is recommended to allow TLs to reach a level of responsibility relative to their talents, time, and capabilities without undue stress (Campbell, 2015). For example, many TLs exhibit varying strengths that can benefit the collective in areas such as technology, pedagogy, communication, and content skills (Huggins et al., 2017). Roles can be established per talent to then have TLs lead in those areas of strength. Finally, an increase in responsibilities aligned with a pay increase proves a key factor because giving teachers an ability to advance without leaving the classroom aids in retention (Lazarev et al., 2017).

Advocacy. Programs such as Teach to Lead imagine "a world where teachers are valued as experts in instruction and leaders in informing, developing, and implementing policy and practice to steer systematic improvements to benefit student learning" (Effective Educator Development, 2025, para. 2). The work to establish TLs as advocates begins with teachers who encourage and promote change, regardless of title or role, and openly advocate for initiatives supporting best practices (Bradley-Levine, 2018). Many TLs attempt advocacy, but without preparation, PD, or practice, their voices and opinions are not considered relevant (Allen, 2016). According to Baker-Doyle (2017), TLs become better advocates for the school when they are "partnered *with* rather than trained *on*" (p. 211). Consequently, TLs are better suited to advocate for policies when their perspective is included rather than when policy is enforced without their consultation (Wawro, 2015). TLs begin their activism on their own campuses and districts by discovering an issue, establishing a plan, and voicing the solution to district leaders (Bennett & Bromen, 2019). In

addition, teachers see TLs as trustworthy when pushing for school-wide initiatives rather than just another mandate from administration (Thomason et al., 2023).

Phase 4: Sustainable Growth

Expanding Impact. To grow the impact of TLs, the following considerations should be made. Once campuses establish standards and define TL roles, the framework must be shared across the district then neighboring districts to share resources and create cultural forums (Sox, 2016). Once districts institute shared leadership positions with TLs, the job must be expanded to include state then national levels of support to legitimize TLs in leadership (Nachtigall, 2019). Another recommendation includes partnering TLs with universities to establish symbiotic relationships to build preservice teachers while TLs gain insight into the future of education (Grimmett et al., 2018). Utilizing TLs as trainers of trainers works because the TLs can then tailor what they learn to the specific needs of the teachers per department-grade level (Hobbs, 2017). Once TLs are integrated as trainers, TLs and mentees must be partnered based on personalities and goals (Spoon, 2018). Finally, research-centered TLs aid in discovering methods to improve school function and pedagogical practices thus need time to discover innovative discoveries in the field of education and content (Hammersley-Fletcher et al., 2018).

Measuring Success. The following areas need to be continually measured to ensure growth and success in actualizing TLs into school leadership: school culture and collective efficacy. School cultures varies vastly and impacts the ability of TLs to affect the changes needed to support and improve educational policy (Cooper et al., 2016). Schools creating buy-in to shared leadership with TLs discover improvement in culture, collective efficacy, and purposeful improvement in teacher development (McBrayer et al., 2018). For TLs to thrive and improve schools, an intentional cultural and organizational shift has to occur (Nachtigall, 2019). Once administrators grant TLs the opportunity to hone their skills and put faith in their leadership abilities along with necessary training, TLs model collaborative cultures and strengthen a school's collective efficacy (Yuet et al., 2016). Evidence links positive school cultures with campuses specifically employing TLs to act as models to raise up future leaders as well as provide a supportive culture for novice educators (Harris & Kemp-Graham, 2017). Most impactfully, TLs do not just empower themselves but strive to empower all their coworkers, building collective efficacy and even stronger school cultures (Lumpkin et al., 2014). Furthermore, a direct connection exists between schools utilizing collective leadership with TLs and improved wellbeing among all staff (Cherkowski, 2018). Due to the intricate nature of how TLs have materialized, further research must be conducted to understand how a factor like culture impacts the establishment of the TL role (Klein et al., 2018).

Keys to Success

The following are key elements of success to ensure TLs are implemented and supported with fidelity.

Administrative Support

Because TLs still fall under the hierarchy of principals, their voices are not regarded until heard outside of the classroom (Cemaloglu & Duran, 2018). Superintendents are perceived as highly

effective only if their perception and attitude advocates for shared leadership and autonomy among teachers (Björk et al., 2018). Administrators must combat the obstacles for TLs such as time, workload, and faculty responses before implementation begins (Palmer, 2018). Additionally, administrators need to construct a collective group of leaders with equal voice and weight or "chosen" leaders would lead to competition for TL roles (Wilson, 2016). DeSantis et al. (2023) reported that when TLs and administrators are fully trained together, a productive collaborative environment is achieved with shared impact from all leaders.

Clear Definition

To combat power struggles as a school transitions, clearly defined roles and responsibilities have to be outlined before implementation begins to be upheld collectively across the campus (Schenck, 2016). To establish an implementable framework, schools have to consider their own needs and follow the examples of districts and states who have successfully constructed a TL role (Bagley & Margolis, 2018). These needs then have to be outlined and translated to specific qualities each school needs from a TL prior to hiring (Hussain, 2015). Furthermore, educators need to have voice in redefining the role and definition of TLs to reflect a tone of collective leadership in tandem with the culture of the school (Frost, 2018). TLs have to be included in defining their role because they are aware of their own limitations concerning time and ability (Edwards, 2015). To aid in ensuring TLs are not overworked, administration has to prioritize the needs of the schools before outlining the qualifications of the role (Sox, 2016). Depending on the teacher identity established, TLs can be placed in various informal leadership roles based upon the needs of the schools and the specific skill set they exemplify (Huggins et al., 2017). For example, many TLs exhibit varying strengths that can benefit the collective in areas such as technology, pedagogy, communication, and content skills (Huggins et al., 2017).

Collaborative Culture

A synergistic connection is ascertained between administrators promoting teachers to share their voice and leadership skills leading to ethical school cultures (Sagnak, 2017). By doing so, ethical school cultures create a school environment open to the growth of TLs (Olsen & Huang, 2019). The encouragement and support of group efficacy can further establish a school culture when teachers collaborate and gain insight into each other's beliefs, cultures, and backgrounds (Miller, 2017). Combining TL support and growth with a collaborative culture leads to TLs being collaborative bridges between teachers and administrators to increase group efficacy, innovative practices, and digital transformations (Baker-Doyle, 2017). Advantageously, data further supports that TLs span the demographics regardless of race, gender, age, or level of experience thus allowing significant improvement in culture and understanding (Kibe, 2015).

Professional Growth

To begin empowering teachers, successful administrators support pedagogical training based on teacher needs rather than perceived needs of the whole school as well as delegating policy decisions to recognized TLs (Moran & Larwin, 2017). Moreover, the key to obtaining more TLs necessitates training programs and graduate degrees focused on TL-specific skills and not merely administrative content (Bradley-Levine, 2016). Because TLs tend to work well in collaborative

environments, professional forums geared towards the needs of TLs addressed by TLs should be utilized (Kendall, 2019).

Voice and Agency

Empowering TLs has to include implementing their own strategies to improve educational practices and policies within schools beyond being dictated by a higher authority (Vrhovnik et al., 2018). Without their voices, teacher-centered reform rarely assists teachers but rather forces more work with the same amount of pay (Mathis, 2010). TLs then should be moved to embracing an educator's stance by practicing continual, worldwide educational research to improve themselves, their classrooms, and their schools (Smulyan, 2016). Concerning voice, TLs embody and are granted the ability to be the voice for teachers and students through all levels of interactions, especially regarding educational policies (Dixon, 2018). As Carswell (2021) noted, developing teacher leadership capacity is a crucial investment in schools' future success. When implemented thoughtfully and systematically, teacher leadership programs can transform school cultures, improve collective efficacy, and create sustainable improvements in educational practices.

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