



# UNLEASHING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

**A Toolkit for Ensuring Effective  
Instruction in Every Classroom**

**JOSHUA H. BARNETT**

# Unleashing Teacher Leadership: A Toolkit for Ensuring Effective Instruction in Every Classroom

## | Study Guide

This study guide is designed to enhance your understanding and application of the information presented in *Unleashing Teacher Leadership: A Toolkit for Ensuring Effective Instruction in Every Classroom*, written by Joshua H. Barnett and published by ASCD in February 2024.

These reflective questions will support you in developing your knowledge and skills with teacher leadership. They are meant to create opportunities for reflection through probing questions that will inspire connections among educators, both individually and collectively.

# Chapter 1

## Examining Teacher Leadership in Your Context

1. What roles and responsibilities does your school or district currently have for teacher leaders? What needs to occur to strengthen teacher leadership in your school or district?
2. Why are teacher leaders needed to support teacher and student learning? How has a teacher leader supported your growth as a teacher?
3. We have found that when teacher leaders establish a sense of trust, demonstrate their knowledge, and have credibility, they are more effective. How can you better establish yourself as a teacher leader through trust, knowledge, and credibility?
4. How can your questioning techniques help to build capacity in others? Why is it important to ask questions that prompt teachers to examine their teaching through the student lens?
5. Being an effective communicator is essential to being a successful teacher leader; however, it is also a skill that can be honed and developed over time. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher leader in communicating with others?
6. How do you reflect on your instructional practices? Why is this reflection important?

# Chapter 2

## Understanding Your Approach to Leadership

1. Why are you a teacher leader, or why do you aspire to be a teacher leader?
2. Effective teacher leaders are reflective. What are your strengths as a teacher leader? In what areas would you like to improve?
3. Which strengths-based leadership domain is most aligned with your leadership style and why? In what ways are you already developing and growing these skills?
4. We have also found that effective teacher leaders are aware of how they interact with others, have the specific traits needed to support instruction, and build the capacity of others in their school or district. How can understanding the traits of each domain help you to interact with others with different strengths?

# Chapter 3

## Developing Expertise in Evidence-Based Instructional Practice

1. How do you ensure that your lessons are aligned with the rigor and intent of the standard and are personally meaningful to students?
2. Why is it important that students understand the expectations of a lesson? What might this look and sound like in a lesson?
3. How can you support teachers in implementing high-quality curriculum with effective practices that engage students?
4. What does student ownership look like and sound like in a classroom? What teacher actions support student ownership of learning?
5. Reflect on your classroom. How can you shift the learning more to students throughout a lesson to encourage student ownership of learning?
6. How can you support teachers in shifting their classroom culture to ensure that students are not just doing the work but rather owning the work?
7. As a teacher leader, how can you support the development of evidence-based instructional practice in those you support?

# Chapter 4

## Examining Teacher Leadership in Your Context

1. Why is it important for teacher leaders to model being the lead learner when implementing new initiatives and curriculum? When can teacher leaders model this learning process?
2. What are your roles and responsibilities for supporting other teachers with the implementation of a high-quality curriculum?
3. How might effective teacher-led, job-embedded professional learning influence teacher and student learning? Identify the key people in your building who can support you with implementing effective teacher-led professional learning.
4. What are NIET's Steps for Effective Learning? What is the purpose of each step?
5. How might NIET's Steps for Effective Learning protocol strengthen your current professional learning communities?
6. Examine Figure 4.1 Learning Progression on Curriculum Implementation. How might the learning progression support you when coaching others?

# Chapter 5

## Building an Effective Classroom Learning Environment

1. When you think about creating a school learning environment that is welcoming, productive, and values student engagement, consider reflecting on your own classroom. What changes would you like to implement?
2. How does your classroom learning environment affect student success? How might you coach and support others in establishing a positive classroom learning environment? Why is it important that students have these opportunities?
3. What strategies do you use to help students monitor their engagement and behavior during a lesson? Why is it important that students have these opportunities?
4. The physical environment is an important factor that affects student learning. How does your room arrangement help to create a positive classroom culture that maximizes student collaboration and learning? Why is it important that students have these opportunities?
5. We have found that it is informative to observe firsthand what students experience each day. The student experience can inform the support you provide to teachers because it prioritizes student needs. Using Figure 5.5 Key Steps to Plan Effective Student Walks, develop a plan for a student walk in your building. Implement the plan and discuss your key takeaways with your colleagues.

# Chapter 6

## Using Data to Support Student Learning

1. Data-driven instruction begins with the examination of what teachers ask students to produce as a part of the learning process and then shifts to analyzing how the data from that work inform instructional practice. How can analyzing instructional plans and student work support teachers in making data-driven decisions?
2. Why is it important for students to understand not only the lesson's learning intention but also the lesson's success criteria? How might students use the lesson's success criteria to monitor their learning?
3. A data-driven teacher leader is able not only to review, summarize, and take action based on data but also to support other teachers in this work. Identify a recent student assessment. Use Figure 6.1 Analyzing Assessments to reflect on the quality of the assessment. Identify areas for improvement in future assessments.
4. Examine Figure 6.3. Student Work Analysis Process and Figure 6.4 Student Work Analysis. Which element of the process is a strength for teachers you support? Which element is an area for growth? How can a teacher leader support others by analyzing student work?
5. A teacher leader helps teachers do the following:
  - Analyze data across grade levels or content areas to develop and monitor student progress,
  - Develop individual classroom goals that drive instruction, and
  - Engage in reflection to monitor impact and implement feedback focused on targeted goals.
6. What might a data-driven classroom look like? Write your own data-driven classroom goal, and seek feedback from a colleague.



# Chapter 7

## Coaching for Impact

1. In our work, we have seen that teachers who receive feedback and coaching are more likely to make instructional changes that affect student outcomes. Reflect on your own experiences, and consider a time when a coach's influence on you resulted in a direct impact on your students' learning. What occurred during this coaching experience that empowered you as a teacher?
2. Reflect on the teachers you currently coach. What are the strengths of each teacher? How can you leverage each teacher's strength to address student needs in a future coaching session?
3. We have found that placing students at the center of the coaching cycle is critical. Examine the coaching questions below. Revise the questions so that they each have a student-focused lens.
  - How will you communicate the focus of the lesson?
  - How will the activities and materials in the lesson promote thinking and problem solving?
  - How will you know that students have mastered the lesson's objectives?
4. In the book, we focus on elevating teacher engagement and ownership in the coaching cycle. The ultimate goal is for teachers to own their practice and use student learning to guide instructional decision making and instructional improvements. Examine Figure 7.2 Student-Centered Coaching Cycle. How might implementing this coaching cycle influence student and teacher growth? Identify and coach a teacher through the coaching cycle. Evaluate the impact of the process.
5. Examine the coaching strategies in Figure 7.4 Example Coaching Strategies. Which strategy do you find yourself implementing most often? Why? Reflect on the teachers you coach and support. Which coaching strategy do you think would have the greatest impact on teacher and student growth for each teacher you support?

# Chapter 8

## Leading Effective Collaboration

1. When teachers work together, they can refine their own thinking—and ultimately their craft—by honing complex instructional practices and behaviors that are most effective with all students. Examine Figure 8.1 NIET Cluster Framework. How does this framework compare to your current professional learning communities? What components are the same and different? How might this framework strengthen the collaboration and learning for the teachers you support?
2. Examine the descriptions of each step in Figure 8.7 The Steps for Effective Learning. Identify an area of student or teacher need in your school or district. When planning for cluster meetings, think through how you could address a student or teacher need by using the Steps for Effective Learning.
3. Why is it important to synthesize data before determining the cluster need? What might occur if the cluster need is not grounded in current and relevant data?
4. Why are support and coaching important following a cluster meeting? What will be evidence that the teacher has transferred their new knowledge from the cluster meeting to their classroom? How might you support your teachers with this transfer of new knowledge?
5. Read the following statement, and discuss connections you make to it with a colleague: “Field testing is critical because teacher leaders can’t coach what they haven’t learned themselves or what they don’t know from their own experience.
6. Revisit your identified need from question 2. Using Figure 8.12 Example Cluster Meeting Agenda, draft a cluster meeting agenda for your identified need. What parts of the meeting agenda were more challenging to complete than others? Why should teachers spend the greatest amount of time in a cluster in the development portion of a cluster?

# Chapter 9

## Using Your Voice

1. Why is it important for teacher leaders to know current research? How can your knowledge influence others in your building or district?
2. There is no one better positioned than a teacher leader to serve as a voice for students. How might you use your voice to advocate for students' needs related to a current state, district, or school initiative?
3. How can you engage other stakeholders to implement innovation or change? What stakeholders would benefit from implementing the change?
4. Examine Figure 9.1 Opportunities for Leadership in Action. Where can you have the greatest impact when implementing change? What might these actions be for each of the levels you identified?

# A field-tested toolkit to help teacher leaders maximize their effectiveness.

---

**“The most effective leaders create an environment that attracts and retains teachers by opening doors for teachers to grow their leadership skills and take on new roles. This book provides a practical guide for teachers and leaders to build their own skills and improve their student’s classroom experiences.”**

- **Dr. Ted Sanders**, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education, past president of the Education Commission of the States, and previous Chief State School Officer in Nevada, Illinois, and Ohio